

2010

University Studies Annual Assessment 2009-2010

Portland State University. University Studies Program

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**UNIVERSITY STUDIES
ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
2009 – 2010**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the University Studies program continued to use existing survey instruments to conduct assessment at the Freshman, Sophomore and Senior levels. Prior Learning, Early-, Mid- and End-of-year Surveys were administered in the year-long Freshman Inquiry courses. Prior Learning and End-of-term evaluations were administered in Sophomore Inquiry courses and Capstone Student Experience surveys were administered in Capstone courses. Qualitative analysis of student comments and faculty reflection were used to supplement the Capstone surveys. Student learning related to University Studies goals was directly assessed through student portfolios at the Freshman-level and course portfolios at the Capstone level.

From student responses to the End-of-year, End-of-term and Capstone Student Experience surveys it is clear that University Studies goals are being addressed at all levels of the program. Across all of the surveys, students were asked whether they had opportunities to engage in learning related to University Studies goals. On all but one item, FRINQ, SINQ and Capstone students' average agreement rating was 4.0 or higher on a 5-point agreement scale (4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree), remaining stable or increasing from last year. In FRINQ student agreement was higher on all survey items when compared with responses over the last four years. For the 2009-2010 school year, more students in SINQ agreed that they had improved their writing skills than in previous years. This follows an emphasis in that part of the program on teaching writing as a process. At the Capstone level, student ratings remained at a consistently high level.

At the FRINQ level, student portfolios were reviewed using the Critical Thinking and Ethics and Social Responsibility rubrics. The portfolio review suggests that students' learning related to critical thinking has remained relatively stable over the last four reviews (2003, 2006, 2008, 2010), and students' learning related to ethics and social responsibility improved between 2008 and 2010. In addition to the rubrics, the end of year survey in FRINQ included questions about the portfolio process. Last year, most students reported that they had begun the portfolio process during winter term. Beginning term was related to students' self-reported learning, such that students who engaged in portfolio activities during fall term reported higher levels of learning in the process than students who first engaged in activities during winter or spring. During spring 2010, the majority of students reported beginning their portfolio process during fall term, an improvement we attribute to having shared our previous findings with FRINQ faculty during their fall retreat. Fewer than half of the respondents reported that they had shared their portfolios with classmates to get feedback. Students generally agreed that the portfolio process helped them learn about the UNST goals, but were less likely to agree that the process helped them understand connections among topics in the course or better understand themselves as learners.

At the SINQ level, there was no additional assessment beyond student surveys. A continuing focus this year has been working toward the revision of the SINQ/Cluster sequence. Information collected through surveys and focus groups last year informed the process of SINQ/Cluster revision. Two new Clusters were developed this year, both of which have developed assessment plans for both the SINQ and Cluster level. An emphasis in the 2010-2011 academic year will be to help those groups implement their assessment and to work with other groups to include assessment in their Cluster proposals.

At the Capstone level this year, reviewers conducted two analyses of faculty reflections produced for Capstone portfolios; one related to diversity and one related to sustainability. Through this analysis, reviewers identified theoretical principles, elements of classroom culture, and teaching strategies that promote student learning related to UNST diversity goals. Similarly, reviewers identified definitions, concepts, and pedagogical practices that faculty used to address sustainability. These reflections provide rich examples that will can be shared with others. As a result of these analyses and the Capstone course portfolio review, a best practices web site for Capstone faculty has been developed.

A second project at the Capstone level examined the long-term effect of having participated in the Kiwanic Camp Capstone, an experience where students work and live for two weeks at a camp for children with disabilities. Students who had graduated from PSU and participated in this Capstone were interviewed about their learning at PSU and the impact of their Kiwanis Camp experience. A preliminary examination of interview transcripts reveals that graduates valued PSU's emphasis on learning beyond the classroom and identified the Kiwanis camp as a significant learning experience, even before the specific course was brought up. Students also expressed that of living with the campers, and being immersed in the experience helped them to build relationships that led to a deeper understanding of persons with disabilities as individuals instead of "others."

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the mentor program initiated a pilot survey of peer and graduate mentors to understand their experiences with their training, their relationships with their faculty partners, and their needs. The program was also examined through student end-of-term evaluations. At the FRINQ level, as discussed above, student responses were

more positive for all items related to peer mentors' performance than in 2008-2009. However, there is still room to work on the connection between mentor session and main class. At the SINQ level, improvements seen between 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 were maintained. A focus for development with SINQ mentors will be creating clear learning goals and expectations for mentor sessions and creating activities that actively engage students in the learning process. Results from the survey of mentors indicate that mentors generally feel positive about the level of autonomy to plan mentor sessions, that they are able to give feedback to their faculty partners and that the feedback is used. Mentors agreed less that their training helped them understand how to communicate effectively with their faculty partners or that their training helped them teach writing skills.

Finally, student retention and success during the first year remained a focus for the program and the Retention Associate. To inform the quantitative findings, a series of conversations were conducted with FRINQ faculty and mentors about students who were not succeeding in their courses. These faculty and mentors talked about a wide variety of reasons students do not do well and do not return to PSU between fall and winter terms including issues with personal motivation, difficulty with academic preparedness, second language barriers, problems adjusting to the campus context, and changes in life circumstances such as illness and family emergencies. These findings along with the quantitative data have been used by a group of faculty to create recommendations for action.

FRESHMAN INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

TOOLS AND METHODS

Prior Learning Survey

Purpose: The Prior Learning Survey asked about students' academic experiences prior to attending PSU, reasons for and concerns about attending college, and early college experiences and plans. The survey results provide information to individual faculty about their students and to the program about the overall preparation and needs of the incoming freshman class.

Method: During the first two weeks of Fall 2009, Freshman Inquiry students completed a Prior Learning Assessment. This on-line survey was administered during FRINQ mentor sessions. 1,339 students completed the survey for an 86% response rate.

FRINQ End-of-year Survey

Purpose: The FRINQ End-of-year Survey asked students to rate their experiences in their FRINQ course over the 2009-2010 academic year. Students responded to questions about the course format, faculty pedagogical practices, and mentor contribution to the course. The survey also asked about experiences with advising, comfort on campus and plans for the fall term. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students' overall experience in FRINQ. Students were also asked about their experiences assembling and constructing their ePortfolio.

Method: During the final three weeks of Spring term 2010, FRINQ students completed the End-of-year survey. This on-line survey was administered during mentor sessions. 1030 students responded to the survey for a response rate of 80%.

FRINQ Portfolio Review

Purpose: The FRINQ Portfolio Review process scores student portfolios against rubrics developed to measure student learning related to University Studies goals. The results provide information to faculty teams about student learning in FRINQ themes and to students' overall learning in FRINQ.

Method: Over the course of FRINQ courses, students develop portfolios representing their work and reflection relating to the four University Studies goals. During Spring 2010, students were asked for permission to evaluate their portfolios as part of program assessment for University Studies. 765 (61.9%) students returned consent forms and 494 (67%) of those returning forms gave consent. Of these, 265 student portfolios were randomly selected for review. When electronic portfolios with bad URLs were excluded, we ended up reviewing 230 portfolios. This year, the portfolio review process focused on the Critical Thinking and Ethics and Social Responsibility goals. Each goal was assessed using a 6-point rubric,

where 6 is a score expected of a graduating senior. In addition to using the rubrics, each portfolio was assessed against a checklist developed to provide information about the types of assignments included in student portfolios. Inter-rater reliability for the rubrics were: Ethics and Social Responsibility, 70%; and Critical Thinking, 80%.

ASSESSMENT DATA

FRINQ End-of-year Survey

In the FRINQ course students had the opportunity to...

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	2004-2005	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
	Mean (Std. Deviation)	Mean (Std. Deviation)	Mean (Std. Deviation)	Mean (Std. Deviation)	Mean (Std. Deviation)
Apply course material to improve critical thinking	4.1	3.95 (0.87)	4.05 (0.892)	4.02 (0.85)	4.20 (0.81)
Acquire skills in working with others as a member of a team	4.1	4.01 (0.873)	4.07 (.87)	4.05 (0.84)	4.24 (0.81)
Explore issues of diversity such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity	4.2	4.11 (0.896)	4.13 (0.91)	4.11 (0.91)	4.11 (0.95)
Develop skills in expressing myself orally.	3.9	3.74 (0.951)	3.86 (0.94)	3.86 (0.9)	4.02 (0.89)
Develop skills in expressing myself in writing	4.1	3.98 (0.89)	4.08 (0.91)	4.04 (0.88)	4.20 (0.85)
Learn how to find and use resources for answering or solving problems	3.9	3.81 (0.91)	3.93 (0.89)	3.89 (0.87)	4.07 (0.85)
Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas; arguments and multiple points of view	4.1	3.97 (0.882)	4.08 (0.91)	4.05 (0.85)	4.22 (0.81)
Explore ethical issues	4.2	4.04 (0.892)	4.09 (0.98)	4.07 (0.9)	4.26 (0.83)

The FRINQ Faculty...

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	2004-2005	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
	Mean	Mean (Std. Deviation)	Mean (Std. Deviation)	Mean (Std. Deviation)	Mean (Std. Deviation)
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	4.2	4.01 (0.985)	4.09 (0.98)	4.07 (0.95)	4.30 (0.85)
Scheduled course work (class activities; tests; projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up to date in their work.	3.9	3.63 (1.123)	3.83 (1.01)	3.78 (1.06)	4.02 (0.99)
Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning.	4.1	3.91 (0.97)	4.05 (0.9)	4.04 (0.91)	4.23 (0.87)
Made it clear how each topic fit into the course.	3.8	3.55 (1.138)	3.69 (1.12)	3.75 (1.08)	3.92 (1.00)
Explained course material clearly and concisely.	3.7	3.51 (1.176)	3.65 (1.13)	3.72 (1.02)	3.85 (1.04)
Related course material to real life situations	4	3.78 (1.044)	3.9 (1.03)	3.93 (0.96)	4.11 (0.93)
Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them.	3.8	3.5 (1.071)	3.69 (1.09)	3.69 (1.04)	3.89 (1.00)
Asked students to share ideas and experiences with others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from their own.	4.1	3.9 (1.004)	4.01 (0.99)	3.98 (0.97)	4.18 (0.84)

Provided timely and frequent feedback on test; reports; projects; etc. to help students improve.	3.8	3.71 (1.061)	3.86 (1.05)	3.68 (1.16)	3.96 (1.02)
Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (office visits; phone calls; e-mail; etc.)	4	3.82 (0.976)	3.91 (1.01)	3.79 (1.03)	4.08 (0.89)
Used a variety of methods-papers; presentations; class projects; exams; etc.- to evaluate student progress.	4.2	3.98 (0.941)	4.09 (0.93)	4.06 (0.93)	4.26 (0.84)

In the FRINQ course students had the opportunity to...

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	2004-2005		2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010	
	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*
Apply course material to improve critical thinking	26.7	70.0	26.5	70.6	23.3	74.4	18.9	78.4	6.1	91.8
Acquire skills in working with others as a member of a team	20.0	80.0	35.3	61.8	25.6	69.8	24.3	75.7	16.3	87.8
Explore issues of diversity such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity	13.3	80.0	14.7	79.4	25.6	69.8	29.7	67.6	22.4	73.5
Develop skills in expressing myself orally.	40.0	50.0	55.9	29.4	34.9	51.2	48.6	48.6	38.8	63.3
Develop skills in expressing myself in writing	30.0	66.7	47.1	52.9	23.3	72.1	21.6	75.7	10.2	89.8
Learn how to find and use resources for answering or solving problems	43.3	53.3	58.8	41.2	34.9	58.1	40.5	56.8	24.5	75.5
Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas; arguments and multiple points of view	23.3	73.3	32.4	64.7	18.6	76.7	18.9	78.4	8.2	93.9
Explore ethical	13.3	83.3	32.4	64.7	30.2	67.4	24.3	73.0	8.2	91.8

issues										
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**In courses with high agreement 75-100% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Moderate agreement represents 50-74% of students and low agreement indicates that less than half of students agreed with the statement.*

	2004-2005		2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010	
	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*	Moderate Agreement*	High Agreement*
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	16.7	76.7	29.4	61.8	23.3	69.8	27.0	67.6	12.2	87.8
Scheduled course work (class activities; tests; projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up to date in their work.	30.0	46.7	32.4	38.2	32.6	48.8	56.8	35.1	46.9	57.1
Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning.	26.7	66.7	23.5	61.8	30.2	62.8	29.7	67.6	18.4	81.6
Made it clear how each topic fit into the course.	30.0	50.0	33.3	36.4	39.5	46.5	51.4	35.1	49.0	42.9
Explained course material clearly and concisely.	36.7	36.7	33.3	36.4	44.2	37.2	54.1	35.1	38.8	51.0
Related course material to real life situations	26.7	63.3	24.2	51.5	37.2	55.8	43.2	45.9	30.6	71.4
Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them.	36.7	36.7	30.3	27.3	39.5	34.9	32.4	40.5	42.9	46.9
Asked students to	23.3	70.0	27.3	57.6	34.9	55.8	18.9	75.7	16.3	81.6

share ideas and experiences with others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from their own.											
Provided timely and frequent feedback on test; reports; projects; etc. to help students improve.	36.7	43.3	36.4	42.4	44.2	44.2	27.0	59.5	28.6	61.2	
Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (office visits; phone calls; e-mail; etc.)	40.0	50.0	48.5	39.4	34.9	44.2	32.4	54.1	24.5	73.5	
Used a variety of methods-papers; presentations; class projects; exams; etc.- to evaluate student progress.	23.3	73.3	39.4	57.6	23.3	69.8	16.2	81.1	10.2	89.8	

**In courses with high agreement 75-100% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Moderate agreement represents 50-74% of students and low agreement indicates that less than half of students agreed with the statement.*

Student responses to portfolio survey questions

Percent of students reporting activities they did during fall, winter or spring terms to prepare for their ePortfolios.

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Collect course assignments	70.5	77.5	81.9
Assemble a paper portfolio	22.2	21.4	23.3
Mindmap/brainstorming	38.3	45.9	41.5
Journal/freewrite/written reflection/blog	54.2	59.6	57.7
Formal reflective assignment	47.6	56.5	75.6
Create a website	45.9	49.2	54.4
Received feedback from	27.9	40.3	43.0

faculty or mentor			
Revised the portfolio	20.3	38.1	64.7
Publicly presented portfolio to classmates or others	11.7	17.5	27.1
Received a grade on the portfolio	47.1	57.6	71.3

FRINQ Portfolio Review

Mean Portfolio Scores

	Academic Year							
	2002-2003		2005-2006		2007-2008		2009-2010	
	N =150		N = 198		N = 196		N = 234	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>University Studies Goal</i>								
Critical Thinking	3.1	0.7	3	0.9	2.89	0.82	3.10	0.89
Ethics and Social Responsibility	2.53	0.85	2.8	1	2.44	0.87	2.87	1.03

Percentage of portfolios that included:

	2006-2007		2008-2009		2009-2010	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>General Evidence Included</i>						
Analytical Writing	179	88.2	157	78.5	188	79.9
Creative Writing	62	30.5	60	30	87	37.2
Research Paper					154	65.4
Assignment Instructions	39	19.2	86	43	102	43.6
Evidence of a First Draft	17	8.4	54	27	72	30.8
Charts and graphs	142	70.0	72	36	90	38.0
Appropriate use of grammar throughout	153	75.4	135	67.5	166	70.5

FINDINGS

FRINQ End-of-year Survey

Course Evaluation

- In general, students agreed that they had the opportunities to address all four of the University Studies goals in their FRINQ courses. Means on these items ranged from 4.02 to 4.24 on a 5-point agreement scale. For all items, mean scores increased from the 08-09 to the 09-10 school year. Students also generally agreed with statements about their faculty members' teaching practices. All items had means above 3.0 on a 5-point scale.
- Another way to look at course evaluation data is to look at the percentage of courses where there were high levels of agreement among students regarding UNST goals and faculty teaching practices. For 91% of UNST courses, there

was high agreement among students that they had opportunities to improve their critical thinking skills and to explore ethical issues. However, there were fewer courses where students agreed that their faculty explained material clearly and concisely or made clear how the topics fit into the course.

Student Portfolios

- Related to student portfolios, most students reported beginning to work on portfolios during Fall term (58%), with 22% beginning the process in the winter, and 17% beginning the process during Spring term. This is a shift from last year when the largest group of students reported starting their portfolios during winter term.
- 78% of students reported using Googlesites to construct their ePortfolios.
- When asked about how strongly they agreed with statements about the portfolio process, students reported the strongest agreement with the statement that “creating my portfolio helped me understand the University Studies goals” (51%). Students were less likely to agree or strongly agree that creating the portfolio had helped them “understand connections among topics in the course” (39%) or “understand themselves as learners” (35%).

FRINQ Portfolio Review

Rubric

- For three of the last four reviews, the mean Critical Thinking score was around 3 on a 6-point scale. The mean Ethics and social responsibility score has varied between 2.4 and 2.8 over the last four reviews.

Checklist

- In 2007, students generally did not include evidence of a first draft of their writing (8.4%), or assignment instructions (19.2%) because those were not required elements of student portfolios. Since changing the portfolio requirements, many more students are now including first drafts (27.0%) and assignment instructions (43%), but after increasing last year, there was no additional increase this year.

REFLECTION

The findings indicate marked gains in student assessment of a number of the opportunities for learning provided them. We are not yet certain what has produced these gains but it should be noted that the mix of Freshman Inquiry faculty has changed with the inclusion of a number of new tenure-line faculty in shared UNST/departmental positions. Whether this new mix explains the gains remains to be seen. On the basis of the 2008-2009 assessment (and other data in hand) our focus on improving quantitative literacy has sharpened. It was among the subjects of discussion at the FRINQ Spring 2010 Retreat and the need for a repository of QL materials came to the fore. The repository will be developed during the 2010-2011 academic year.

SOPHOMORE INQUIRY ASSESSMENT

TOOLS AND METHODS

SINQ End-of-term Survey

Purpose: The SINQ End-of-term Survey asked students to rate their experiences in their SINQ course. Students responded to questions about the course format, faculty pedagogical practices, and mentor contribution to the course. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students’ overall experience in SINQ.

Method: During the final three weeks of each term during the 2009-2010 academic year, SINQ students completed the End-of-term survey. This on-line survey was administered during mentor sessions. 3321 students responded to the survey.

ASSESSMENT DATA

The Sophomore Inquiry *Learning Experience*

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
The course provided opportunities to learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and multiple points of view	4.03	0.95	4.15	0.93	4.12	0.9	4.17	0.92
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in working with others as a member of a team	3.9	0.97	3.87	1.04	3.97*	0.92	3.99	0.95
The course provided opportunities to explore issues of diversity such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity	3.95	1.075	3.95	1.08	3.93	1.05	4.09*	1
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in expressing myself orally.	3.73	1.005	3.84*	1.03	3.89*	0.98	3.95	0.97
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in expressing myself in writing.	3.93	0.964	4.02*	0.97	4.03	0.94	4.1	0.92
The course provided opportunities to explore ethical issues and dilemmas	4.01	1	4.06	0.98	3.98*	0.97	4.07*	0.99
It was clear how the work from the mentor session connected to the overall course.	3.85	1.11	3.83	1.12	3.93*	1.04	3.94	1.07
I understand how this course fits into my PSU general education requirements			3.79	1.17	3.74	1.16	3.84*	1.15
Overall, I was satisfied with my experience in this class.			3.88	1.13	3.82	1.1	3.89	1.11

* score differs significantly from the previous year, $p < .05$

The SINQ Faculty...

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	4.13	0.965	3.99*	1.01	3.98	0.98	4.02	0.98
Scheduled course work (class activities; tests; projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up to date in their work.	3.92	1.057	3.95	1.03	3.93	1.023	3.98	1.01
Provided timely and frequent feedback on test; reports; projects; etc. to help students improve.	3.75	1.1	3.79	1.11	3.85*	1.076	3.88	1.08
Used a variety of methods-papers; presentations; class projects; exams; etc.- to evaluate student progress.	3.98	0.99	3.89*	1.04	3.95*	0.96	4.01	0.96
Clearly stated the learning objectives for the overall course	n/a		3.95	1.03	3.92	1.03	4.01	0.99
Clearly stated the criteria for grading	n/a		3.81	1.12	3.85	1.08	3.94	1.06
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.	n/a		4.08	1.03	4.04	1	4.11	1.02
Used activities and assignments that allowed me to feel personally engaged in my learning.	n/a		3.93	1.05	3.89	1.05	3.96	1.04

* scores differ significantly from the previous year, $p < .05$

Percentage of SINQ courses where students agreed or strongly agreed that...

	2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010	
	N=93		N=130		N=133		N = 143	
	Mod Agree*	High Agree*	Mod Agree*	High Agree*	Mod Agree*	High Agree*	Mod Agree*	High Agree*
The course provided opportunities to learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and multiple points of view	21.5	71	16.2	77.7	21.8	74.4	15.4	81.1
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in working with others as a member of a team	26.9	58.1	17.7	59.2	20.3	70.7	31.5	62.2
The course provided opportunities to explore issues of diversity such as race; class; gender; sexual orientation; ethnicity	21.5	59.1	22.3	55.4	28.6	57.1	23.8	65.0
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in expressing myself orally.	53.8	29	38.5	43.1	36.8	50.4	39.2	54.5
The course provided opportunities to develop skills in expressing myself in writing.	30.1	62.4	32.3	63.1	30.8	66.2	23.8	72.7
The course provided opportunities to explore ethical issues and dilemmas	28	64.5	26.2	64.6	35.3	57.9	23.8	66.4
It was clear how the work from the mentor session connected to the overall course.	37.6	55.9	36.2	45.4	39.8	54.1	36.4	55.2
I understand how this course fits into my PSU general education requirements	73.1	18.3	51.5	36.9	48.1	40.6	41.3	49.7
Overall, I was satisfied with my experience in this class.	NA	NA	36.2	50	33.1	49.6	32.2	55.2

**In courses with high agreement 75-100% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Moderate agreement represents 50-74% of students and low agreement indicates that less than half of students agreed with the statement.*

Percentage of SINQ courses where students agreed or strongly agreed that the faculty member...

	2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010	
	N=93		N=130		N=133		N = 143	
	Mod Agree*	High Agree*	Mod Agree*	High Agree*	Mod Agree*	High Agree*	Mod Agree*	High Agree*
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	23.7	72	33.1	58.5	29.3	61.7	29.4	64.3

Scheduled course work (class activities; tests; projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up to date in their work.	34.4	58.1	38.5	53.1	28.6	61.7	28.7	61.5
Provided timely and frequent feedback on test; reports; projects; etc. to help students improve.	38.7	45.2	32.3	46.9	38.3	51.1	30.8	51.0
Used a variety of methods- papers; presentations; class projects; exams; etc.- to evaluate student progress.	26.9	65.6	32.3	53.1	34.6	58.6	33.6	62.9
Clearly stated the learning objectives for the overall course	31.8	60.5	33.8	55.4	29.3	58.6	29.4	62.9
Clearly stated the criteria for grading	38	46.5	36.9	43.1	30.8	54.1	34.3	57.3
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.	25.6	65.9	24.6	64.6	24.8	67.7	25.2	69.2
Used activities and assignments that allowed me to feel personally engaged in my learning.	37.2	54.3	36.9	51.5	36.8	50.4	33.6	57.3

FINDINGS

- In general, students agreed that they had the opportunities to address all four of the University Studies goals in their SINQ courses. Means on these items ranged from 3.95 to 4.17 on a 5-point agreement scale. Compared to 08-09, SINQ students in 09-10 had higher mean ratings on items related to diversity and ethics and social responsibility. When looking at the proportion of courses where students showed consistent agreement with 'goal' items, there was agreement across more courses that courses addressed diversity and that students improved their writing and critical thinking skills.
- Students also generally agreed with statements about their faculty members' teaching practices. All items had means above 3.88 on a 5-point scale. Students were most likely to agree that faculty created an atmosphere that encouraged active participation ($M = 4.11$). Over the past five years, there is broader agreement across SINQ courses that faculty clearly present the criteria for grading.

REFLECTION

One emphasis of SINQ faculty and mentor development this year was helping students improve their writing. SINQ faculty and mentors participated in workshops where they developed assignments to help the students in their courses approach writing as a *process* consisting of multiple steps or stages. In this year's assessment data there was high agreement among students in 73% of SINQ sections that they had opportunities to develop their writing skills; compared to 66% of sections from last year. In contrast, one area that has not improved from last year is that there was only high agreement among students in 55% of sections that it was clear to them how the work from mentor session connected to main session. This relatively low rating suggests an opportunity for faculty and mentor development activities for the coming year.

UPPER-DIVISION CLUSTER ASSESSMENT

REFLECTION

In response to the findings of the an online survey and the focus groups of students conducted during AY 08 – 09, a major emphasis of for AY 09 – 10 was on beginning an overall revision of the Upper-division Cluster curriculum. The goals of this revision were to:

1. Improve students' abilities to enroll in cluster courses to allow for the timely completion of their cluster requirement.
2. Improve the overall coherence of the clusters by organizing clusters around cluster-specific student learning outcomes.
3. Developing assessment plans for cluster-specific student learning outcomes.
4. Providing opportunities for PSU faculty to engage in the cluster curriculum.

During AY 09 – 10, faculty working groups proposed two new clusters, titled Interpreting the Past & Global Perspectives, which were approved by the PSU faculty senate to begin in AY 10-11. A major focus of the upper-division cluster assessment effort for this year has been working with these faculty working groups to develop cluster-specific student learning outcomes and a plan for assessing those outcomes. For the coming year the focus will be on working with the cluster coordinators for the new clusters to begin to implement the cluster assessment plans. In addition, we will be working with several faculty teams to develop student learning outcomes for proposals for new clusters.

CAPSTONE ASSESSMENT

Summative End of Term Course Evaluations

Capstone Student Experience Survey: Quantitative

Purpose: The Capstone Student Experience Survey asked about students' experiences in UNST Capstone courses as well as instructor pedagogical approaches and course topics. The survey results provide information to individual faculty about their courses and to the program about the overall student experience in Capstones.

Method: Students enrolled in Capstone courses complete paper-based course evaluations in class at the end of their course. During the 2009-2010 academic year, 2652 students completed surveys.

Capstone Student Experience Survey: Qualitative

Purpose: Each year the Capstone Office analyzes students written comments from the end of term course evaluations in order to learn about the lived-experience our students have in Capstone courses. The data is collected to assist individual faculty in improving the teaching and learning in their courses and it allows us to document students' most important learnings as well as their suggestions.

Method: The Capstone Office created a data base which randomized all of the students' comments from 2009-2010. 200 random comments were selected for analysis from the question regarding what were the students most important learnings and 200 random comments were selected representing students' suggestions for improvements. As in previous years, two PSU researchers analyzed the comments separately according to the procedures outlined by Creswell, 1994.

Capstone Course Portfolio Review

Capstone Course Portfolio Assessment: Ethics and Social Responsibility

Purpose: Capstone course portfolios were developed as a method to assess student learning at the Senior Capstone level of the University Studies program. In the past, we have assessed common reflection assignments, course-specific reflection assignments and Capstone final products for evidence of student learning in Capstone courses. None of these approaches was able to capture and display the complexity of student learning in a community-based group-focused course. Last year we developed course-based portfolios for Capstones which include syllabi, assignment instructions, examples of student work produced in the course, and faculty reflection.

Method: All Capstone instructors were invited to create course portfolios during Spring Term 2010. The group that was coordinating this project chose to focus on the University Studies ethics and social responsibility goal. Capstone instructors were offered a \$250 stipend to provide the materials needed for the portfolios as well as complete a reflection about how they incorporate diversity into their courses. Nineteen course portfolios were constructed for assessment. These represent 56 sections of Capstone during the 2009-2010 academic year, which enrolled 823 students (approximately 27% of the courses and students in the Capstone program during the school year).

To assess the course portfolios a group consisting of the Capstone Director, the Assessment Coordinator and a Capstone faculty member constructed a framework for evaluating ethnics and social responsibility in these course portfolios. This framework included a list of the types of learning related to diversity that occur in Capstone courses and a scoring guide that included information on scoring portfolios as inadequate, adequate, or exemplary. On the portfolio review day, four Capstone faculty members reviewed the 19 portfolios, with each portfolio being scored twice. Inter-rater reliability was 80%. In addition to an overall rating, reviewers rated each element of the portfolio as well to give the program additional information and to identify components that could be used as examples for other faculty

Capstone Faculty Reflection Analysis: Diversity

Purpose: The “faculty reflection” component of the e-portfolio was introduced to help us better understand how and in what ways student learn about diversity in the context of a capstone course. Year after year over 75% of capstone students reported that they explored issues of diversity in their capstone. However, we didn’t know how the course was structured to facilitate this exploration. Furthermore, over 75% of students reported that they better understand others who are different from themselves as a result of their capstone experience. Again, we didn’t know how the capstone contributed to that understanding. For many years we analyzed student work samples to gain this knowledge. Recently, we shifted our focus to faculty reflections so that we could learn more about the pedagogy that helps to facilitate student learning. Ultimately, we wanted to study faculty written reflections to identify best practices in teaching students about diversity.

Method: The Capstone Office collaborated with the University’s Office of Institutional Research to recruit 20 capstone faculty to submit a written response to the following question. Of the 20 recruits, 19 submitted written reflections.

In what ways do your course structure, community partnership, classroom activities and assignments facilitate student learning in the area of diversity of human experience?

Three researchers from the Capstone Office (one administrator and two faculty) analyzed the data using the qualitative analysis methods out lined by Creswell (1994). The researchers read through the faculty reflections, coded them individually, and recoded them collaboratively to determine the final themes in accordance with Creswell’s methodology.

Capstone Sustainability Review

Purpose: As Portland State University focuses increasing attention on sustainability as a practice and a learning outcome, the Capstone program decided to invite faculty to participate in documenting sustainability practices and learning in Capstone courses. Specifically, we were interested in documenting faculty definitions of sustainability, documenting current pedagogical practices used to teach students about sustainability and to explore whether and how faculty see sustainability as related to the UNST goal of ethics and social responsibility.

Method: Capstone instructors teaching sustainability related courses were invited to participate in by submitting course materials and reflections about sustainability in their courses. In order to understand the ways in which sustainability is represented and addressed in Capstone courses the Capstone Director and the Assessment Coordinator conducted a content analysis of the faculty reflections. Each developed a list of themes independently and then met to compare their lists, identify areas of agreement and to refine a final list of themes.

Long-term Impact of Community-based Learning on College Graduates:

Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp Qualitative Study

Purpose: The purpose of this study is two-fold: First, the researchers intend to explore what college graduates report as they most important learning experiences and the impacts of those learning experiences in later life. Secondly, the researchers expect to learn the impacts that a community-based learning course focusing on direct service with persons with disabilities—namely, the Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp Capstone course—have on participants’ subsequent life experiences.

Method: As of this writing, the researchers are in the final stages of conducting a qualitative study involving 30-minute phone interviews with PSU graduates who were students of the Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp Capstone. Potential interviewees were initially located through the PSU Foundation database cross-matched with course information from Banner. As of 2009, more than 2,000 graduates comprise this group, with about 60% of those possible participants because a) current contact information is available and b) they have given permission to be contacted by the University. Stratified random

sampling was used to identify 60 potential participants from a variety of time periods (14-16, 9-11, and 4-6 years after they completed the Capstone course).

To date, 15 phone interviews have already been conducted, with another 6 interviews pending. Transcription of those taped interviews has begun, and a very preliminary read-through of the data from the earliest interviews has been initiated for the purposes of this report. Analysis of the data conforms to the processes described by Creswell (1994) and involves the review of the data by two readers, who identify the predominant themes in the interviews, code the data according to these themes, and compare their results with each other. A third reader confirms these themes through an independent analysis of the data.

ASSESSMENT DATA

Summative End of Term Course Evaluations

Capstone Course Evaluations

Capstone Learning Experience	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
The community work I did helped me to better understand the course content in this Capstone.	4.28	4.39*	4.43	4.46	4.45
I feel that the community work I did through this course benefited the community.	4.27	4.36*	4.42*	4.42	4.39
I felt a personal responsibility to meet the needs of the community partner of this course.	4.15	4.36*	4.40	4.39	4.40
I was already volunteering in the community before taking this course.	3.12	3.02	3.05	3.15*	3.10
I improved my ability to solve problems in this course	3.83	3.84	3.91*	3.95	3.96
My participation in this Capstone helped me to connect what I learned to real life situations.	4.14	4.33*	4.33	4.36	4.28
This course enhanced my communication skills (writing, public speaking, etc.).	3.96	4.00	4.00	4.02	4.05
This course helped me understand others who are different from me.	4.23	4.29*	4.29	4.26	4.37
This course enhanced my ability to work with others in a team.	4.07	4.09	4.12	4.15	4.18
This course explored issues of diversity (such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation).	4.13	4.26*	4.23	4.12*	4.17
In this course I improved my ability to analyze views from multiple viewpoints.	4.14	4.20	4.17	4.18	4.19
I will continue to volunteer or participate in the community after this course.	4.00	3.98	3.99	4.03	4.04
The syllabus clearly described how the course content connected to the community work.	4.05	4.26*	4.26	4.34*	4.30
I believe this course deepened my understanding of political issues.	3.92	3.81*	3.76	3.84*	3.81
I believe this course deepened my understanding of local social issues.	4.24	4.26	4.29	4.34	4.33
I now have a better understanding of how to make a difference in my community.	4.15	4.25*	4.19*	4.20	4.21
I had the opportunity to apply skills and knowledge gained from my major.	n/a	n/a	3.93	4.02*	4.03
I had the opportunity to engage with students from different fields of specialization	n/a	n/a	4.51	4.55	4.54

* The score is significantly different than the score for the previous year, $p < .05$

Capstone Instructor	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
Showed an personal interest in my learning	4.47	4.54	4.51	4.54	4.54
Scheduled work at an appropriate pace	4.35	4.33	4.38	4.43	4.45
Provide clear instructions for assignments	4.27	4.32	4.33	4.38	4.39
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active participation	4.58	4.60	4.59	4.62	4.63
Presented course material clearly	4.37	4.39	4.43	4.47	4.47
Created an atmosphere that helped me feel personally engaged in my learning	4.45	4.48	4.48	4.50	4.50
Provided helpful feedback	4.31	4.38	4.38	4.42	4.43
Related course material to real-life situations	4.51	4.56	4.55	4.59	4.60
Encouraged interaction outside of class	4.43	4.45	4.39	4.48	4.43
Provided clear grading criteria	4.21	4.22	4.27	4.34	4.37

Course design question: Within your Capstone, what forms of learning did the instructor use?	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
Reflective journals	76.0%	79.1%	75.7%	76%	67%
Required class attendance	80.8%	80.6%	81.5%	81%	78%
Collaborative projects	82.7%	82.4%	74.3%	83%	77%
Readings on racial and ethnic issues	51.7%	59.4%	53.9%	55%	53%
Extensive lecturing	20.7%	18.4%	17.3%	19%	18%
Readings on women and gender issues	34.3%	40.8%	40.2%	41%	39%
Group decision-making	82.0%	80.4%	78.6%	81%	81%
Readings on civic responsibility	61.5%	67.8%	69.3%	74%	73%
Student presentations	72.6%	71.4%	73.4%	76%	72%
Discussions on political issues	52.7%	55.3%	51.8%	56%	53%
Discussions on social issues	77.7%	83%	83.45%	87%	88%
Class discussions	89.5%	88.1%	79.2%	95%	93%
Exams	3.8%	3.0%	4.1%	5%	4%
WebCt or blackboard	31.4%	42.2%	58.5%	49%	52%
Portfolio	20.0%	19.5%	16.4%	18%	18%
Discussions on ethical issues	40.4%	58.2%	n/a	n/a	n/a

Capstone Course Portfolio Review

Portfolio Rating	Number of Portfolios
Inadequate (the portfolio did not show that the course provided students with clear opportunities to demonstrate their learning related to ethics and social responsibility)	2
Adequate (the portfolio showed that the course provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning related to ethics and social responsibility)	14
Exemplary (the course syllabi, assignments, and activities consistently and clearly provided opportunities for students to demonstrate learning related to ethics and social responsibility. This course is an example for others)	3

Portfolio element	Number exemplary
Syllabus	2
Assignment instructions	4
Student work samples	3

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS:**Capstone Student Experience Questionnaire: Quantitative**

- When compared with data from previous years, Capstone students continue to agree that their courses emphasize the university studies goals and help them become aware of and committed to community issues. There were no significant differences between student responses in the 08-09 academic year and students in the 09-10 academic year.
- Students also reported on pedagogical techniques used and course topics covered in capstone. With few exceptions, the percentage of students reporting the use of particular techniques remained stable or increased. There was a decrease in the use of electronic communication tools.

Capstone Student Experience Survey: Qualitative

From the random sample of 200 comments on the question “What was your most important learning?,” five major themes emerged. Some student responses fell under more than one of the following themes:

1. Engagement in community-based learning, including direct service and indirect service (63)
2. Deep learning about and engagement with important issues related to the theme of the Capstone (58):
3. Group work and a sense of community (29)
4. Raised consciousness and sense of agency (25)
5. Learning about and experiencing diversity, both at the site and within Capstone classrooms (23):

Additional comments touched on the small class size (1) and the connection to student majors (1).

Comments on Areas for Course Improvement

From the random sample of 200 comments on the question “What could be improved about the course?,” four major themes emerged. Some student responses fell under more than one of the following themes:

1. Improvements to Class Structure and Work Load (40)
2. Community Partnerships and Partnership Development (Inappropriate, Relationship Building Needed) (19)
3. Capstone Class Logistics (13)
4. Management of grading, accountability, and feedback (8)

Capstone Course Portfolios**Capstone Course Portfolio Assessment: Ethics and Social Responsibility**

- The course portfolios demonstrated that, by and large, students are given opportunities to engage in and demonstrate learning related to ethics and social responsibility. Seventeen out of 19 courses were assessed as adequately meeting expectations for addressing ethics and social responsibility or as exemplary courses, incorporating many aspects of ethics and social responsibility throughout the course.
- For courses that were judged to be exemplary, student work samples and faculty reflection were specifically influential. Students in these courses identified social structures and began to explore their relationships with those structures. The faculty reflection clearly discussed how the examples of assignment instructions and student work samples supported student learning related to ethics and social responsibility.
- For courses that were assessed as inadequate, the materials compiled in the portfolio did not clearly reflect the type of learning opportunities that were defined. Ethics and social responsibility may have been addressed in the course, but that wasn’t evident in the portfolio. These courses tended to provide opportunities for only one type of learning related to ethics and social responsibility and did not clearly state ethics and social responsibility as a learning goal in

the syllabus or provide specific assignment instructions related to ethics and social responsibility. We want to emphasize that while Capstone courses should incorporate all four UNST goals, it is difficult to focus on all of the goals equally in one course. The courses that did not provide adequate learning opportunities related to ethics and social responsibility likely focus more heavily on other UNST goals.

Capstone Faculty Reflection Analysis: Diversity

The researchers found that the faculty reflections illuminated many best practices for fostering an appreciation for “the diversity of the human experience” among capstone students. Faculty insights about the pedagogy in their courses fell into three broad categories: theoretical principles that served as a foundation for diversity education, classroom culture, and specific teaching strategies to enhance students’ appreciation of diversity.

The first category focused on the **theoretic principles** which served as an **intellectual framework** for the diversity education they chose to implement in their course. The five main themes found in this category were:

1. Oppression Theory (an examination of underlying social causes at the root of the social issue)
2. Social Justice Education (similar as above, but addressing justice issues as well)
3. Diverse Learning Perspectives (using learning inventories and learning styles to explore the diversity of the human experience)
4. “Whole Student” Development Approach (reflection for the purpose of learning about oneself, one’s own history, one’s social location, identity wheel).
5. Constructivist Philosophy of Education: knowledge is constructed and the course helped students make meaning of experiences.

The second category focused on the conscious development of a “classroom culture” to support diversity learning in the capstone. Faculty described a variety of elements that must be in place in order for the course to address diversity in deep and meaningful ways. These included:

1. A small class size (The average enrollment for a PSU capstone is 15 students.)
2. Some form of a “group charter” developed early in the term and kept visible throughout the course which focused on issues such as confidentiality, respect for diverse perspectives, and equal time during class discussions.
3. The development of a “Community of Learners” where students knew each other by name and engaged with and learn from their peers in the classroom setting.
4. A shared commitment to the work of the community partner, the community-based learning experience, and the final group project.

The third category focused on **concrete teaching strategies** that faculty used in the course to enhance student appreciation for the diversity of the human experience:

Teaching Strategies to Enhance Student Learning for Appreciation of the Human Experience:
1) Making diversity an explicit learning goal in the syllabus, assignments, and final project
2) Reflective Assignments (writing assignments, journals, etc.) that a) challenge previously held beliefs, b) encourage new insights, and c) reflect on the service-learning experience.
3) Create safe learning environment: Opportunities for students to process painful information (how remain agents of change, how to stay committed. Space and place to process emotions
4) Class Discussions on Diversity <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. in person B. on blackboard C. in groups
5) Films focused on diversity themes
6) Guest Speakers (those in the trenches, those effecting change, clients served by community partner agencies)
7) Examination of a “text” (books and articles) related to diversity

8) Student Presentations on diversity topics (to peers or community groups)
9) Case Studies/Role Play
10) Faculty/Mentor /Site Supervisor (faculty and community partner) modeled appreciation of human diversity in the ways they treated other students, colleagues, clients
11) Faculty framed diversity education in terms of a life-long career development skill-interacting with diverse populations over the lifespan
12) Embed in actual course content: not a separate topic but as an essential element of the course content
13) Opportunities for students to stay involved after course is over to remain engaged with diverse populations

Capstone Sustainability Review

After review of faculty reflections on how their courses addressed and incorporated themes of sustainability, the reviewers reached consensus on the following themes.

Theme	Description
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common: ability to endure • Brundtland Commission (U.N., 1987): meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. • Described multiple dimensions: 3 e's = environmental, economic, equity; 3 p's = planet, political, profit • These definitions spanned across many contexts (bio-cultural, agriculture, criminal justice system, water, local history)
Values/Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdependence • Importance of "place-based" learning (learning on the land learning from the land, learning in the garden, learning from interviews with those that are deeply connected to the land, local history...Importance of the sites! • Importance of learning being relational with peers and with land (cooperative learning practices) • Importance of service/application/real world connection • Sustainability as a Practice • Sustainability as a Process • Understanding of the past (knowing where we have come from) • Connect theory with personal practice/choices/daily living • Critique of public policy
Pedagogical Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability woven throughout the entire course • Value first hand (hands-on) experiences • Learning takes place in the class AND on sites • Deep value of guest speakers, local experts (mentioned in almost every course) • Experts came from a variety of backgrounds (ethnic, socioeconomic, those on the margins) • Readings from scholars/activists • Importance of class discussion • Importance of written reflection to link the theory with PERSONAL practice! • Important weekly work in the community resulting in meaningful final projects • Importance of learning about public policies that impact sustainability(lectures, written reflection, class discussions) • Some classes included research and scientific analysis as an approach to learning

Connection with Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty saw it as goal of course to have students deeply reflect on personal choices in relationship to the course material on sustainability
SURPRISE: connection with DIVERSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty emphasized the importance of diversity and equity when framing sustainability. All wanted to engage marginalized populations (kids, prisoners, native people, poor) in the framing of the sustainability efforts.. Greater focus on equity and diversity than expected
Importance of student voice/reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many included it even though we never specifically asked for it!

Long-term Impact of Community-based Learning on College Graduates:

Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp Qualitative Study

A casual analysis of the first several interviews confirms that graduates report powerful and positive impacts resulting from both their key learning experiences in college and their participation in the Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp Capstone. The findings include the following themes identified in this preliminary analysis:

- Graduates report that many of their memorable and most significant learning experiences result from working across difference in groups with others.
- Graduates express that the opportunity to attend university in a vibrant urban setting opened their learning beyond the confines of the classroom.
- In several instances, graduates identify their participation in the Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp interview as one of their most significant learning experiences, naming this particular Capstone course in response to a general question about key learning experiences before the interviewer asked any questions explicitly about their participation at Kiwanis Camp.
- Kiwanis Camp participants articulate that a meaningful impact of their experience in the Capstone has been overcoming a previously-unexamined tendency to “other” those with disabilities and learning to see those persons as subjects. Interviewees repeatedly express that the “24/7” nature of the camp, in which they engaged in an immersion experience that necessitated the building of relationship in order to navigate difference, contributed to this kind of personal growth and learning.

REFLECTION

Capstone Student Experience Survey: Quantitative

The Capstone Office is pleased to see that the Capstone evaluations this year remained remarkably stable. The Capstone Program Director worked intentionally with colleagues in the Center for Academic Excellence and the Office of Diversity and Equity to provide ongoing support to our newer faculty to maintain this high quality of teaching and learning throughout our broad offering of courses. One experienced Capstone faculty worked directly with a handful of faculty whose courses had low scores in previous year in order to help enhance the quality of the student learning experience. Through our rigorous Capstone review process and faculty development efforts including a standardized 1:1 Capstone faculty orientation done by CAE we are able to maintain quality even as we develop new course offerings to meet the interests of our students, faculty, and community partners. Three years ago UNST initiated a partnership with CAE to give faculty more support in developing effective syllabi. That syllabi support appears to be working well as evidenced by the consistently strong scores in that area. We are encouraged by the scores on that item and hope to continue the trend of positive ratings for the Capstone syllabi.

Finally, this year the Capstone Office initiated a partnership with the PSU Office of Diversity and Equity. We collaborated to support faculty who taught Capstones with low scores on the diversity item. We were pleased to see the scores on the two items related to diversity did increase this year. It appears that it was indeed helpful to have a diversity expert actually go into Capstone courses to model exemplar activities, exercises, and reflection to reinforce this goal.

Capstone Student Experience Survey: Qualitative **Contributed by Zapoura Calvert**

It is first important to note that 70 out of the 200 respondents commented that they were satisfied with their Capstone classes and did not see areas for course improvement. Among those commenting on areas for course improvement, the greatest concentration of comments was on improvements to class structure and workload. In terms of organization, students mentioned the layout and communication in the syllabus and assignments, noting, for example, “several changes to syllabus,” a desire for “more structure for syllabus and expectations” (mentioned by multiple students), “redundant assignments,” a need for “clearer direction,” and “better pacing.”

In the related area of comments on grading, accountability, and feedback, students seemed most concerned with getting responses from the instructor on both homework assignments and the community-based learning work. A sampling of student comments demonstrate that students “would like to have feedback from the teacher,” want to “receive feedback on assignments faster,” and need for the instructor to “be clear about what’s expected.” In addition, students in research-based Capstones mentioned needing more support in their research endeavors.

Comments on workload revealed that students seek a balance between class and community partner work and a challenging, although not unrealistic, amount of work outside of class. Some students requested that instructors “spread the workload out more evenly.” One student wrote, “I didn’t feel the coursework was particularly demanding,” and another stated, “It was hard to meet the requirement for hours.” These comments indicate some concerns related to overall course organization and planning of workload and community-based learning schedules. Additional students also focused on issues surrounding final project logistics (needing to start earlier, requesting time to work on final projects in class, etc.) and general feelings of lacking a “more structured plan for project progression.”

In recommendations for community partnerships and development of the partnership itself, student concerns centered on communication and clarity. One requested that the instructor help “refine how we deal with our community partners,” and another requested “more of a connection with the nonprofit.” Multiple students indicated that a more structured plan from both the community partner and the instructor would be helpful to student learning.

Recommendations

Capstone students are clearly engaging in positive learning in the areas of direct and indirect community-based learning, learning about Capstone themes (both as individuals and in groups), experiencing diversity, and developing their own sense of agency in the area of social change. This reveals that students respond well to experiential learning situations. It also indicates that instructors, community partners, and Capstone peers are working together well to facilitate learning in these areas.

The Capstone Office can draw upon these positive experiences when analyzing and addressing areas for Capstone course improvement. While many Capstone students were satisfied with their courses, the themes of course organization and planning, negotiation of the community partner relationship, and management of course assessment and accountability of students and community partners are areas that can be looked at and strengthened. Within these four themes, the issue of course construction, clarity, and organization in instruction appears to be the single greatest area for continued training for Capstone instructors. This data can be used to support faculty through Brown Bag forums, retreats, and 1:1 meetings to address course-specific concerns.

Capstone Course Portfolios

Capstone Course Portfolio Assessment: Ethics and Social Responsibility

Based on the experience of reviewing Capstone portfolios during the summer of 2009, the review process was changed slightly this year. Portfolios were given a rating for each of four areas: syllabus, assignment instructions, student work, and faculty reflection. They were also given an overall holistic rating. This process allowed reviewers to provide feedback

about each section of the portfolio and provides program administrators with information which can be used to identify best practices for syllabi and assignment development as well faculty pedagogical approaches. There were four reviewers for the 19 portfolios and those portfolios were reviewed on the same day as the freshman portfolios. A suggestion for next year is to bring on at least one more reviewer and to schedule the portfolio review for a different day.

Capstone Faculty Reflection Analysis: Diversity

Our review team gained some new insights through their analysis of the faculty reflections. In short, a combination of intentional classroom culture, a strong theoretical framework, and targeted teaching strategies enhanced student learning related to the “diversity of the human experience.” Student learning was further enhanced by faculty members’ ability to integrate these components into the course in a seamless and sustained manner.

Our review efforts made clear that faculty varied in their ability to facilitate each of these course components. However, the combined lessons from these reflections will contribute greatly to ongoing faculty development related to the diversity goal.

Recommendations:

As we move forward, the review committee offers a few recommendations for future assessment efforts rooted in capstone e-portfolios:

- 1) To date, the University has offered monetary compensation to faculty in exchange for the development of these pilot e-portfolios. In the future, we hope that all capstone faculty will be required to develop an e-portfolio for their capstone course as a standard expectation of the program. This would allow for a random assessment of capstone e-portfolios at the close of each academic year. The Capstone office acknowledges that this may take several years as many of our faculty are not familiar with this technology nor the pedagogical benefits of portfolios.
- 2) Eventually each e-portfolio should be housed within a larger capstone website accessible to faculty, community partners, and students. This will allow faculty to access and learn from each other’s work. In addition, students and community partners will have greater access to capstone information before, during, and after their participation in a capstone course. Of course there may be issues with informed consent that will need to be addressed before this innovative idea is launched.
- 3) The review committee recommends that the Capstone Website include a separate section for “Best Practices” that faculty can reference when teaching their own courses. This section of the website will include descriptions and electronic samples for teaching strategies in a range of areas relevant to capstone courses.
- 4) Finally, our faculty development program draws heavily on the expertise of faculty teaching within our program. With this in mind, program administrators plan to “tap the strengths” of individual faculty members to provide peer-on-peer training to their colleagues within and outside of Portland State University.

Capstone Sustainability Review

Contributed by Celine Fitzmaurice

A review of capstone faculty essays related to Sustainability and Social Responsibility yielded key observations and recommendations for the Capstone program. The capstone website and future faculty development efforts can serve as vehicles for transmitting these lessons to the broader Capstone community.

Defining Sustainability and Sustainability Education

Reviewers noted that while faculty addressed the topic of sustainability through a variety of course themes, they seemed to share a common definition of sustainability. Almost all of the faculty we surveyed recognized that sustainability must be viewed through an environmental, economic and social justice lens. Faculty agreed that sustainability education is most powerful when it is place-based, collaborative, and draws on the knowledge of diverse experts (including marginalized populations.) Finally, many faculty commented that the concept of sustainability should not be relegated to privileged classes. Rather, “everyone, especially low-income members of society, can benefit from sustainable practices.”

In general, faculty looked to the Brundtland definition for sustainable development as a starting point for exploration of this theme. The Brundtland report was published in 1987 by the United Nation's World Commission on Environmental and Development. This definition laid the groundwork for future international gatherings on sustainability and reads as follows.

“Meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” (Brundtland, 1987)

Integrating Sustainability into the Capstone Experience

Faculty drew on the concept of sustainability to strengthen students' understanding of 'social and ethical responsibility' in a number of ways. The following quotes provide a sample of these approaches.

“Ultimately, the Natural Food Industry Capstone personalizes students' relationship to sustainability concepts of the environment, the economy and society by focusing on something all students must do three times a day: they eat. ...students must come to terms with the decisions they make around their personal food choices, increasing their awareness to the broadest implications of their role in creating a more or less sustainable future.”

“The Meditation for Global Healing Capstone gives students the opportunity to examine concepts of sustainability through the perspective and practice of Qigong. Students consider their state of being, followed by their impact on the class, their families, the community and, by the end of the term, the world they live in.”

“In this course students review the business, ecological, and social justice aspects of the Triple Bottom Line approach to business and apply their learning by working with low-income business owners.”

“We ask our students to apply the concepts of sustainability to describe reforms to the criminal justice system moving forward that would offer the best use of our shared resources for improved outcomes for individuals and communities.”

“Students are invited to explore their own heritage for its rich traditions and links to the environment through weekly reflections on readings, class discussions, deep listening and observation in nature, lecture, and guest speakers.”

Linking Sustainability and Social and Ethical Responsibility

Faculty members identified a natural link between the concepts of sustainability and social and ethical responsibility. Students in capstones that integrated concepts of sustainability found that they had to exercise social and ethical responsibility in their own life in order to contribute to sustainability on a global scale. In short, sustainability could only be realized if individuals acted in social and ethically responsible ways. In the words of two faculty members:

“Almost all of social responsibility is fundamental to the notion of sustainability which is based on the understanding that it is our individual and collective choices around the use of resources determine the well-being of the communities and environment in which we live.”

“At the end of this course, it goes without saying that to make sustainable choices one must be thinking with social responsibility.”

Applying these lessons to Capstone Faculty Development

The reviewers learned a great deal from these faculty work samples and we are eager to share these findings with the broader Capstone community. In the future, a brown bag session could be organized to share best practices related to sustainability education in the Capstone experience. Secondly, the Capstone Website is a natural place to disseminate best practices related to the themes of sustainability education and social and ethical responsibility. We propose adding the following items to the website in order to strengthen sustainability education within the Capstone community:

1. A list of commonly used definitions for sustainability (Brundtland Commission, etc.)
2. Discipline-specific resources related to sustainability (i.e. the Natural Step Framework for Businesses)
3. Examples of ways that faculty have integrated sustainability concepts into the capstone experience (see quotations above)

Long-term Impact of Community-based Learning on College Graduates:

Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp Qualitative Study

Contributed by Vicki Reitenauer

It has been a pleasure for each of the researchers (Ann Fullerton, Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp faculty supervisor; Seanna Kerrigan, Capstone Director; and Vicki Reitenauer, Women's Studies/Capstone faculty) to collaborate on this project. The quality of graduates' reflections during the interview process has been quite rich and revealing. In particular, the researchers have been struck by participants' articulation of positive impacts in ways that align with the intentions of the Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp Capstone in particular and with PSU's institutional commitments more generally. With few exceptions, interviewees voice deeply positive regard for PSU and for the Kiwanis Camp Capstone and quite easily identify a number of concrete examples of significant learning experiences that have impacted them constructively in later life.

Future steps: Interviews and the transcribing of these interviews are scheduled to be completed by the end of Summer term 2010, at which time formal data analysis will proceed. The researchers plan to complete their analysis, write up the data, and produce one or more articles and presentations in order to disseminate the findings. Project assistants are currently identifying a number of potential markets for this dissemination.

OVERALL CAPSTONE REFLECTION:

In summary the faculty and staff associated with the Capstone Office are pleased by the consistency of high quality teaching and learning that is evidenced in this year's evaluation of Capstone courses. The wealth of assessment data collected this year is remarkable. Five years ago administrators hoped the Capstone Program would be able to triangulate more data by moving beyond simply assessing students through the Capstone course self-report evaluation form. This year we see evidence of that triangulation as we assessed students written reflections on social responsibility, faculty reflection on sustainability and social responsibility, analysis of faculty's writing on the goal of diversity as well as interview projects with faculty and students. The data we have collected clearly is moving us toward our goal of documenting best practices of teaching and learning in Capstones and we look forward to finding ways to publish our learnings via our Capstone e-portfolio site as well as regional and national conferences.

MENTOR PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

FRINQ End-of-year Survey

Purpose: The FRINQ End-of-year Survey asked students to rate their experiences in their FRINQ course over the 2009-2010 academic year. Students responded to questions about the course format, faculty pedagogical practices, and mentor contribution to the course. The survey also asked about experiences with advising, comfort on campus and plans for the fall term. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students' overall experience in FRINQ. Students were also asked about their experiences assembling and constructing their ePortfolio.

Method: During the final three weeks of Spring term 2010, FRINQ students completed the End-of-year survey. This on-line survey was administered during mentor sessions. 1030 students responded to the survey for a response rate of 80%.

SINQ End-of-term Survey

Purpose: The SINQ End-of-term Survey asked students to rate their experiences in their SINQ course. Students responded to questions about the course format, faculty pedagogical practices, and mentor contribution to the course. The results provide information to individual faculty about their course and to the program about students' overall experience in SINQ.

Method: During the final three weeks of each term during the 2008-2009 academic year, SINQ students completed the End-of-term survey. This on-line survey was administered during mentor sessions. 3321 students responded to the survey.

Peer and Graduate Mentor Survey

Purpose: University Studies mentors Jacob Sherman and Krys Roth designed a survey to collect feedback from peer and graduate mentors about their experiences in the mentor program. They designed a survey in consultation with the Assessment Coordinator that gathered information in a number of areas: Mentor-faculty relationships; skills and training, the

mentor community and relationship with UNST structure, and roles, activities and success as a mentor. They were particularly interested in creating a feedback mechanism for mentors that hadn't existed before.

Method: During Fall 2009, an electronic survey was administered to mentors. 68 out of 90 mentors responded for a 75.5% response rate. Jacob Sherman performed the data analysis of the survey results and the data presented below are a result of his work.

ASSESSMENT DATA

The FRINQ Mentor...

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	06-07		07-08		08-09		09-10	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	4.29	0.821	4.37	0.854	4.36	0.82	4.50*	.750
Made it clear how mentor session work fits into the course.	4.12	0.914	4.2	0.915	4.21	0.89	4.30*	.844
Related course material to real life situations.	4	0.952	4.20*	0.875	4.17	0.9	4.29*	.832
Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them.	3.93	0.981	4.11*	0.933	4.09	0.94	4.19*	.896
Asked students to share ideas and experiences with others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from their own.	4.21	0.866	4.31*	0.865	4.31	0.84	4.45*	.798
Encouraged interaction outside of class (phone calls; e-mail; etc.)	3.96	0.975	4.14*	0.911	4.12	0.95	4.23*	.888
Provided opportunities to help students complete assignments successfully.	4.24	0.867	4.32	0.835	4.3	0.86	4.39*	.808
Help students feel more comfortable at PSU.	4.28	0.843	4.33	0.904	4.35	0.86	4.43*	.832
Helped students improve their academic skills (e.g.; writing; time management; study skills).	4.01	0.915	4.17*	0.914	4.15	0.91	4.28*	.853
The mentor sessions connected well with the class.	3.82	1.1	3.94*	1.11	4	1.07	4.00	1.132

* scores differ significantly from the previous year, $p < .05$

Percentage of *courses* where students agreed that the mentor.....

	06-07		07-08		08-09		09-10	
	Moderate Agreement *	High Agreement *	Moderate Agreement *	High Agreement *	Moderate Agreement *	High Agreement *	Moderate Agreement *	High Agreement *
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	12.5	87.5	8.1	89.2	7	93	2.0	98.0

Made it clear how mentor session work fits into the course.	31.3	62.5	13.5	83.8	16.3	81.4	14.3	89.8
Related course material to real life situations.	18.8	65.6	18.9	78.4	23.3	74.4	16.3	87.8
Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them.	37.5	43.8	37.8	62.2	30.2	67.4	26.5	73.5
Asked students to share ideas and experiences with others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from their own.	12.5	84.4	8.1	89.2	14	86	8.2	91.8
Encouraged interaction outside of class (phone calls; e-mail; etc.)	31.3	50	40.5	59.5	39.5	60.5	12.2	87.8
Provided opportunities to help students complete assignments successfully.	18.8	81.3	8.1	89.2	9.3	90.7	6.1	93.9

Help students feel more comfortable at PSU.	12.5	87.5	16.2	81.1	11.6	88.4	14.3	87.8
Helped students improve their academic skills (e.g.; writing; time management; study skills).	28.1	59.4	24.3	73	25.6	72.1	18.4	83.7
The mentor sessions connected well with the class.	34.4	46.9	37.8	56.8	34.9	60.5	26.5	71.4

**In courses with high agreement 75-100% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Moderate agreement represents 50-74% of students and low agreement indicates that less than half of students agreed with the statement.*

The SINQ Mentor...

Ratings made on a scale of 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

	06-07		07-08		08-09		09-10	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	4.26	0.83	4.17*	0.93	4.26*	0.85	4.21	.900
Provided opportunities to help me complete assignments successfully.	4.13	0.89	4.17	0.93	4.24*	0.85	4.23	.884
Clearly stated expectations of students in mentor session.	n/a		4.11	0.97	4.19*	0.89	4.18	.929

Helped me understand the resources available to me at PSU.	n/a		4	1.03	4.07*	0.94	4.06	.993
Clearly stated the learning objectives for the mentor session	n/a		4.05	0.99	4.16*	0.89	4.15	.958
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.	n/a		4.28	0.9	4.34*	0.82	4.31	.899
Used activities and assignments that allowed me to feel personally engaged in my learning.	n/a		4.01	1.04	4.11*	0.93	4.10	1.005

* score differs significantly from the previous year, $p < .05$

Percentage of SINQ courses where students agreed that the mentor...

	06-07		07-08		08-09		09-10	
	Moderate Agreement *	High Agreement *	Moderate Agreement *	High Agreement *	Moderate Agreement *	High Agreement *	Moderate Agreement *	High Agreement *
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	9.7	89.2	19.4	79.1	13.8	85.4	16.0	79.7
Provided opportunities to help me complete assignments successfully.	22.6	75.3	20.2	78.3	14.6	84.6	13.2	86.0

Clearly stated expectations of students in mentor session.	n/a		31.8	65.9	20.8	76.9	23.7	70.6
Helped me understand the resources available to me at PSU.	n/a		36.4	55.8	36.2	60	13.9	83.9
Clearly stated the learning objectives for the mentor session	n/a		34.1	62.8	17.7	80	19.5	75.5
Created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.	n/a		14.7	83.7	9.2	89.2	29.3	64.3
Used activities and assignments that allowed me to feel personally engaged in my learning.	n/a		36.4	58.9	25.4	70.8	36.3	58.7

**In courses with high agreement 75-100% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Moderate agreement represents 50-74% of students and low agreement indicates that less than half of students agreed with the statement.*

Peer and Graduate Mentor Survey (Tables contributed by Jacob Sherman)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Main session and mentor session connect well.	68	4.18	0.913	0.834
I give my faculty partner advice about how I think we could improve the class.	68	4.22	0.861	0.742

My faculty partner uses my advice about how to improve the class.	68	4.1	0.9	0.81
I am satisfied with my level of autonomy to plan mentor sessions.	68	4.43	0.779	0.606
Feel confident connecting students to campus resources (e.g. Women's Resource Center, Student Health and Counseling, etc.)	66	4.45	0.56	0.313
The mentor community : Provides advice about my students and my mentor sessions	67	4.25	0.841	0.707

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
My faculty partner helps in my academic/professional development.	68	3.54	1.227	1.505
My faculty partner and I work as a team to plan lessons and assignments	68	3.5	1.027	1.149
I have a plan for an emergency situation in my classroom or on campus	65	3.32	1.047	1.097
Mentor training : helped me learn how to teach writing skills to my students	67	3.31	1.117	1.249
Mentor training : helped me learn how to communicate with my faculty partner	67	3.15	1.048	1.099
Please indicate how frequently you do the following. : Use the Ways of Writing guidebook	67	2.72	1.139	1.297

FINDINGS

FRINQ and SINQ End-of-term evaluation

- Students' average ratings of FRINQ mentors improved across all but one item between 2009 and 2010. The mean rating for that item (mentor session connecting well with main class) remained high (4 on a 5-point scale). When looking at the number of FRINQ courses where there was high agreement with statements about mentors, well over half of all FRINQ courses in 2010 had high agreement that mentors performed the duties that were covered on the

survey. There is most consistent agreement that mentors display a personal interest in students' learning and that mentors provided opportunities for students to successfully complete assignments.

- Students' ratings of SINQ mentors increased in all areas between 2008 and 2009 and remained stable in 2010. In 2008, the survey questions were revised to more closely reflect the expectations for SINQ mentors and since then, mentors have improved in all areas. Students expressed the highest levels of agreement with statements that SINQ mentors provide opportunities for students to successfully complete assignments and helped them understand the resources available to them at PSU.

FRINQ and SINQ Mentor Survey

- Graduate and peer mentors generally agreed that they were able to provide feedback to their faculty partners about their courses and that that feedback was used. They also felt satisfied with their level of autonomy to plan mentor sessions and they felt comfortable referring students to campus resources.
- Graduate and peer mentors showed less agreement (means between 3 and 3.5 on a 5-point scale) that their training had helped them know how to communicate with their faculty partners and that their partners contributed to the mentors' professional development. They were also less certain that they had a plan for emergency situations in the classroom or that they felt confident teaching writing skills.
- A few differences emerged between new graduate and peer mentors. New graduate mentors were less likely to agree that they were comfortable as a bridge between faculty and students, that they and their faculty partners worked as a team to plan mentor session and they were less likely to attend mentor support groups.
- When differences were examined between returning graduate and peer mentors, returning graduate mentors reported being less likely than returning peer mentors to ask for help with classroom issues from other mentors, to attend mentor social gatherings or to feel like the mentor community made them feel welcome in the mentor room.
- Among peer mentors, new mentors felt more able to identify at risk students and were more likely to use the Ways of Writing text book than returning peer mentors. Returning mentors were more likely to have led a mentor workshop or support group than new peer mentors.
- Among graduate mentors new graduate mentors felt more welcome in the mentor room, and were more likely to attend skills workshops than returning mentors.

Mentors were asked to provide comments about the structure and value of MDT's (Mentor Development Times):

- Negative: Extra requirement, hoop to jump through, mandatory roundtables are disliked, don't understand the purpose, not useful, not defined, poorly scheduled
- Positive: Incentive to develop, build community, share advice, skill building workshops, enjoy the mentor room
- Recommendations: Create calendar, screen MDT options, weekly/biweekly, faculty-led MDT's, MDT's focused on skill-sets rather than talking about problems

Mentors were also asked about how they would describe their role and the activities they do:

- The Usual: Hold workshops, discussions, ask questions, role model good behavior, tutor writing, advertise resources & events, build community, get to know students, analyze content, listen, act like a bridge.
- Something New? The mentor as a translator.

REFLECTION:

It is ideal to be able to see this kind of data including student perspectives about the impact of mentor sessions, along with data about the mentors' experiences in the mentor program related to their development and work in the mentor community. The data in this program should reflect both, and that is a goal to continue this type of data gathering for the future in the program.

Student Surveys

The survey results and comments in this report demonstrate that the mentor program appears to have a positive impact on students related to their feedback in the FRINQ and SINQ surveys. The improvements shown over time are also encouraging. With the transition of directors in the past year this also speaks highly of the capacity of the mentors themselves who continued to bring their strengths to the table and benefit students with their commitments.

There are areas that indicate a need for attention by the Mentor Director and FRINQ mentors related to items such as "mentor session connected well to class" and "inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenge them." While

this evidently varies also depending on the individual mentor (as evidence in those survey results each term), it also indicates an ongoing need for training and support that improves mentor performance on issues of class connection to main session and the setting of challenging goals for all students.

There are areas for SING mentors that also require further attention by the Mentor Director and mentors. These are items such as “clearly stated expectations of students in mentor sessions,” “clearly stated the learning objectives for the mentor session,” and “created an atmosphere that encouraged active student participation.” Another area for attention is “used activities and assignments that allowed me [student] to feel personally engaged in my learning.” It appears some of the scores went down on that in the past year significantly in the program, so it will be interesting to watch this in the coming year as well as implement immediate opportunities for GR mentors to articulate and work on these areas to increase engagement and elicit stronger connections.

This brings to mind questions about why the FRINQ mentors appear to score higher overall than SING mentors on similar issues:

- If mentors essentially take the same training, which was not true in the last year prior to my arrival (UG and GR mentors were trained separately for this year of the data set), does this help improve these for both?
- Is the difference possible related to the nature and time spent with students in FRINQ versus SING (one year together with more meetings per week versus a SING’s one term together with fewer meetings per week)?

The Peer and Graduate Mentor Survey

Having the mentor program pilot survey data (Sherman & Roth) is helpful for the program. Since this is only one year and the first run, this survey should be revised and offered again for results that are more valid for interpreting over time. However, the initial items that showed lower means (e.g., using the *Ways of Writing* book, mentor training and faculty communication, mentor training and specific skills, etc.) are things that programmatically can be addressed through spring and fall training, as well as MDT opportunities. It would be helpful to have an annual survey of mentors to view the impact of the program and training opportunities, as well as such items as on-the-ground mentoring experiences, the nature of mentor-faculty relationships, and the impact of mentoring on the academic and leadership success of mentors (e.g., retention and graduation, leadership at PSU and in the community, etc.).

Looking Forward

With the opportunity to have a directorship that is stable combined with the hiring of a GAA for 10-11, there are some opportunities to review and extend meaningfully the assessment and research within the UNST Mentor Program. Additionally, the 10-11 year includes many changes, such as the offering of a new, revised model for mentor fall training, enhanced MDT opportunities, and a centralized form of program communication (new Web site and eNews, etc.). This is an opportunity to learn more about the program itself through assessment of this side of mentoring.

Assessment Goals for 10-11

- Create and offer an online fall training evaluation survey, which is currently in development to be sent out to mentors on September 23, 2010.
- Meet early fall term with Rowanna, Yves, Dana, and Jacob regarding the review and creation of any new forms of mentor program assessment that are needed or would be useful to gain programmatic information.
- Develop a clear and manageable means for tracking mentor retention and graduation over time with an annual report to the UNST Director.
- Revise and run UG and GR Mentor Survey again early spring term.
- Discuss a dissemination plan for the program data (i.e., publication, conferences).
- Involve the GAA with Returning Mentor Leaders (advanced UG or GR mentors) in the assessment process of the program where valuable to both.
- Explore connections to other programs on campus, such as CIMR or the education program faculty, that may wish to connect other researchers with our large program for research opportunities or partnerships.

RETENTION RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT

Barriers to Success in Fall Term FRINQ: Faculty and Mentor Stories about Their Students

Purpose: At the beginning of Winter term 2010, Freshman Inquiry faculty and mentors were invited to a series of conversations about the students in their courses who had earned poor grades fall term (D, F, W or I) or had not returned to Freshman Inquiry or Portland State for Winter term. Students who earned low grades or did not finish FRINQ courses represented the range of academic majors on campus. While the program has been collecting quantitative information about student success and retention for the last two years, faculty and mentors, people who have direct insight into the reasons students aren't successful, had not been asked for their thoughts.

Method: Twenty-one faculty, many with accompanying mentors, representing 29 of the 45 sections of Freshman Inquiry agreed to share their students' stories. The conversations focused on two broad questions:

- 1) What can you tell us about your students who were struggling academically fall term?
 - Were there predominant issues they seemed to deal with?
 - English Language issues
 - Writing proficiency
 - Attendance
 - Emotional/personal issues
 - Finances/work
 - Were there parts of the University or UNST that they struggled with?

- 2) What can you tell us about your students who did not return for winter term, particularly those who were doing well?
 - What were the main reasons they did not return?
 - Were there parts of the University or UNST that they had difficulty with?

FINDINGS:

Seven broad themes relating to student success and retention emerged from these conversations. The themes are listed below along with the number (and percentage) of faculty, or faculty-mentor teams who mentioned that area as an issue for one or more of their students.

Life circumstances - Many students who struggled in FRINQ faced challenging life situations. Some students got the flu and missed classes; some students were dealing with substance abuse. Others experienced an illness in the family, family pressure or lack of family support that contributed to their lack of success. Financial challenges including a lost job, finding money for food, and being able to afford reading materials were factors for some FRINQ students.

- Finances: 9 (43%)
- Health (physical illness, learning disabilities): 9 (43%)
- Mental Health: 9 (43%)
- Family issues: 9 (43%)
- Other life circumstances: 6 (29%)

Academic Issues. Some FRINQ students arrived at PSU unprepared for college course work. They did not have experience reading and writing at a college level, which made their success very difficult. Another academic issue, which sometimes overlapped with preparedness, was related to performance. Faculty described students who attended class regularly and seemed engaged, but who turned in no work; other students seemed well prepared but missed a number of classes.

- Academic difficulty - including writing, general unpreparedness, reading difficulty: 10 (48%)
- Academic performance - may not have difficulty, but has absences, does not turn in work, falls behind: 18 (86%)

Motivation and Purpose. A large number of faculty [15 (71%)] and mentors were frustrated with students who seemed to lack motivation. Some students did not understand the relevance of the course to their lives or career aspirations. Others

didn't seem to understand why they were in college and what they would get out of it. There were also some students who reported not being challenged in the class. For many students a lack of purpose or motivation was related to issues with academic performance.

Campus Context. Campus overwhelming, lack of cultural capital [7 (33%)].

For some students, often first-generation students, the experience at PSU was overwhelming. They did not understand how college works or the kinds of work they would be expected to do.

Language/Culture. Difficulty based on limited English skill or lack of knowledge about the U.S. culture [12 – (57%)]. Asked about whether international students or English language learners had specific challenges, faculty responses were mixed. They noted that many international students and students whose first language was not English were very successful. However, there were also a substantial number of students for whom language difficulties, spoken and written, were getting in the way of their academic success.

Transfer. More than half of the faculty [13 (62%)] and mentors mentioned that students left FRINQ or PSU to transfer elsewhere. In many of these cases, students were from out of town or out of state and were returning home. In other cases, students had found completely different paths to pursue and were transferring to trade schools.

Other. Scheduling conflict with second term of course, needing only one term [6 – (29%)].

REFLECTION:

While all the themes identified in our conversations were mentioned by a fairly high proportion of faculty, four emerged as a concern by more than half of the faculty who participated in the project: academic performance (86%), motivation, purpose (71%), transfer (62%) and language/culture (57%). The question is what kind of implications do these findings have for our efforts to improve student success and retention in Freshman Inquiry and beyond? What can Portland State University do in some or all of these areas to help students succeed despite the difficulties they face? What is the role of FRINQ faculty in these efforts? What issues would be better addressed by other services or departments on campus? What is the best way to facilitate faculty – student services collaboration to support students with problems? What is the role of faculty development in alleviating some of the pressures faculty face in dealing with students who have these difficulties?