

AY 2016-17 Summary of Key Evidence for UCORE UCORE Capstone [CAPS] Course Assessment Reports, Washington State University

Background

Established as part of WSU's general education curriculum (UCORE) beginning in 2012, Integrative Capstone [CAPS] courses bring opportunities for integration, application, and closure to the undergraduate experience. All CAPS courses require students to demonstrate at least four of the seven university learning goals: Critical & Creative Thinking, Information Literacy, Depth, Breadth, & Integration of Learning, and Communication. In addition, Quantitative Reasoning, Scientific Literacy, and/or Diversity may be included as appropriate to the discipline or course. CAPS courses are 400-level courses and students should have at least junior-level standing as a general prerequisite. CAPS may be for majors-only or open to non-majors.

Each department, school or program determines its CAPS policy for its majors. Students may be required to take a CAPS course inside the major OR outside the major; or the choice may be left to the student. Given their position within the UCORE curriculum, CAPS courses carry a strong responsibility for culminating evidence of student achievement of the learning goals of the baccalaureate.

Methods and Responses

CAPS course instructors were asked to complete course assessment reports for fall 2016 and spring 2017. The report asked instructors to provide an overall holistic assessment of student performance (direct qualitative measure, using faculty expert judgement) of all students in their CAPS course. AY 2016-17 was the first year that instructors had the option to a) report on Quantitative Reasoning, Scientific Literacy, and/or Diversity, and b) distinguish levels of achievement for written, oral, and visual communication. For more information, see the [UCORE Assessment Website](#).

A total of 139 reports were submitted by 119 instructors, representing **86%** of CAPS courses and **86%** of students enrolled in CAPS courses in fall 2016 and spring 2017. In **66%** of reports, instructors indicated that their students were primarily (>90%) seniors. Instructors indicated that their students were primarily (>90%) majors in **62%** of reports. Approximately 80% of students enrolled in all CAPS courses in fall 2016 and spring 2017 were seniors.

Results

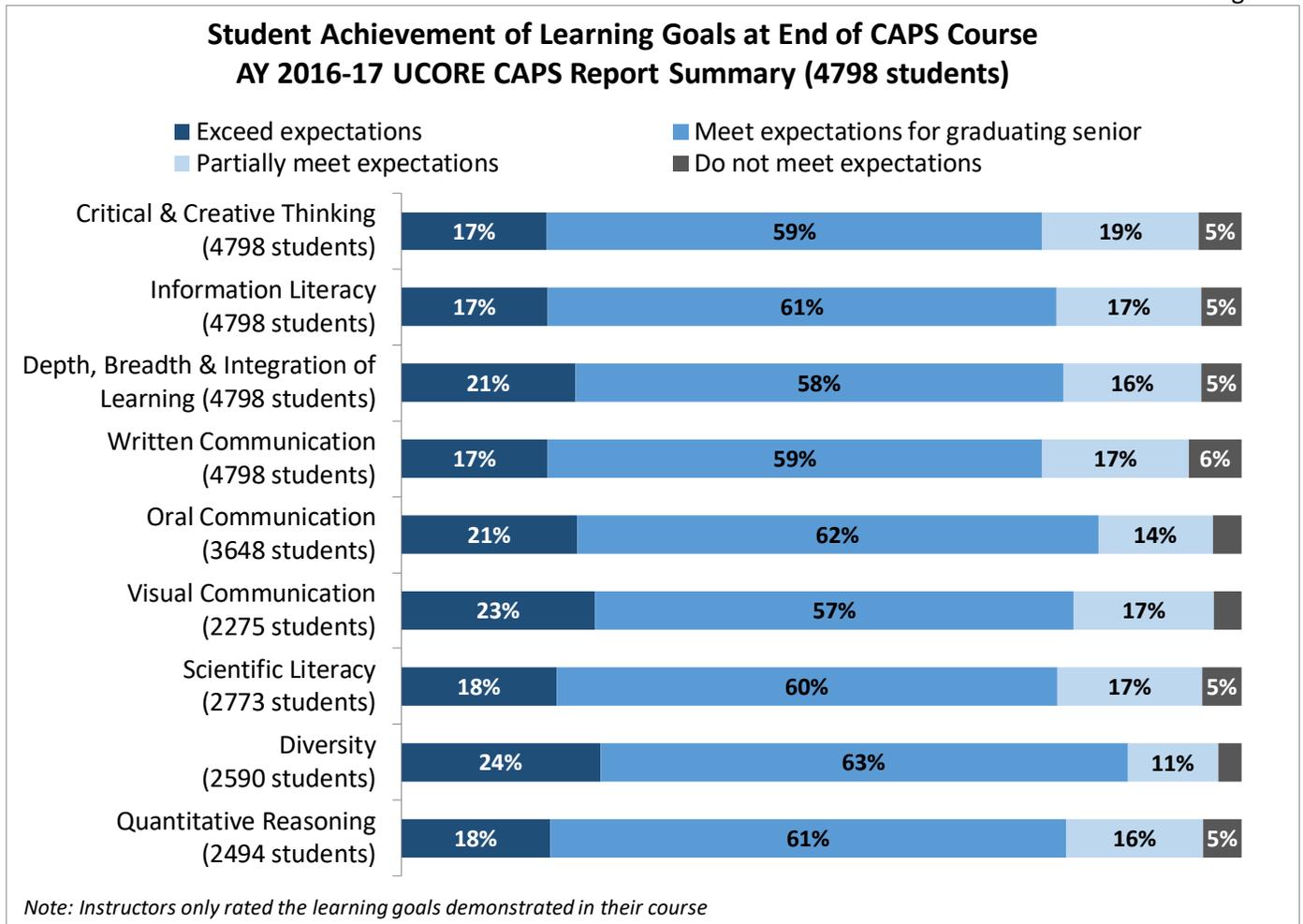
1. Learning Goals Demonstrated in CAPS Courses: All CAPS courses (**100%**) required students to demonstrate Critical & Creative Thinking, Information Literacy, Depth, Breadth, & Integration of Learning, and Communication. Additionally, instructors reported that students demonstrated Scientific Literacy in **55%** of courses, Quantitative Reasoning in **48%** of courses, and Diversity in **45%** of courses. Instructors were also asked to report on the Communication skills that students demonstrated in their CAPS course; while all CAPS courses (**100%**) include written communication, instructors reported that **78%** of their courses also included oral communication and **49%** included visual communication.

2. Student Achievement: Instructors rated students on their ability *at the end of this CAPS course* in each of the WSU Learning Goals demonstrated in their course, basing their evaluation on students' holistic performance in the course. Instructors indicated that they used their overall impressions of student performance or impressions of student performance on a particular assignment, grades on assignments or components of an assignment, course grades, participation, student self-assessment, and/or peer evaluation to determine their ratings.

Four Required Learning Goals. Overall, instructors indicated that **76%** of students met or exceeded expectations at the graduating undergraduate level for Critical & Creative Thinking, **78%** for Information Literacy, **79%** for Depth, Breadth & Integration of Learning, and **76%** for written communication (*Figure 1*).

Additional Learning Goals. In courses where faculty members found enough elements to evaluate student learning on additional learning goals, instructors indicated that **83%** of the students met or exceeded expectations for oral communication, **80%** for visual communication, **78%** for Scientific Literacy, **86%** for Diversity, and **79%** for Quantitative Reasoning (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1



Achievement by Seniors. Instructors generally rated more students as *meeting or exceeding expectations for graduating seniors* in courses that were primarily (>90%) seniors or primarily (>90%) seniors and majors (data not shown).

Uses of Assessment by CAPS Instructors. Overall, **62%** of instructors indicated that they had made or planned to make a change to their capstone course based on assessment. Most commonly the changes were to assignments or instructional approach.

3. Student Preparedness for Learning Goals: Instructors reported on the extent students were prepared *at the beginning of this CAPS course* for the WSU Learning Goals demonstrated in their course. Overall, CAPS instructors indicated that **48%** were well prepared for Critical & Creative Thinking, **48%** for Information Literacy, **45%** for Depth, Breadth & Integration of Learning, **50%** for written communication, **54%** for oral communication, **50%** for visual communication, **55%** for Scientific Literacy, **56%** for Diversity, and **51%** for Quantitative Reasoning (*Figure 2*). In Spring 2017, instructors had the opportunity to provide suggestions of how student could be more prepared for their course. Instructors most frequently indicated that students could be more prepared in the areas of written communication, critical & creative thinking, information literacy, and integrative learning (*Table 1*). Instructors generally rated more students as well prepared in courses that were primarily (>90%) seniors or primarily (>90%) seniors and majors (data not shown).

Figure 2

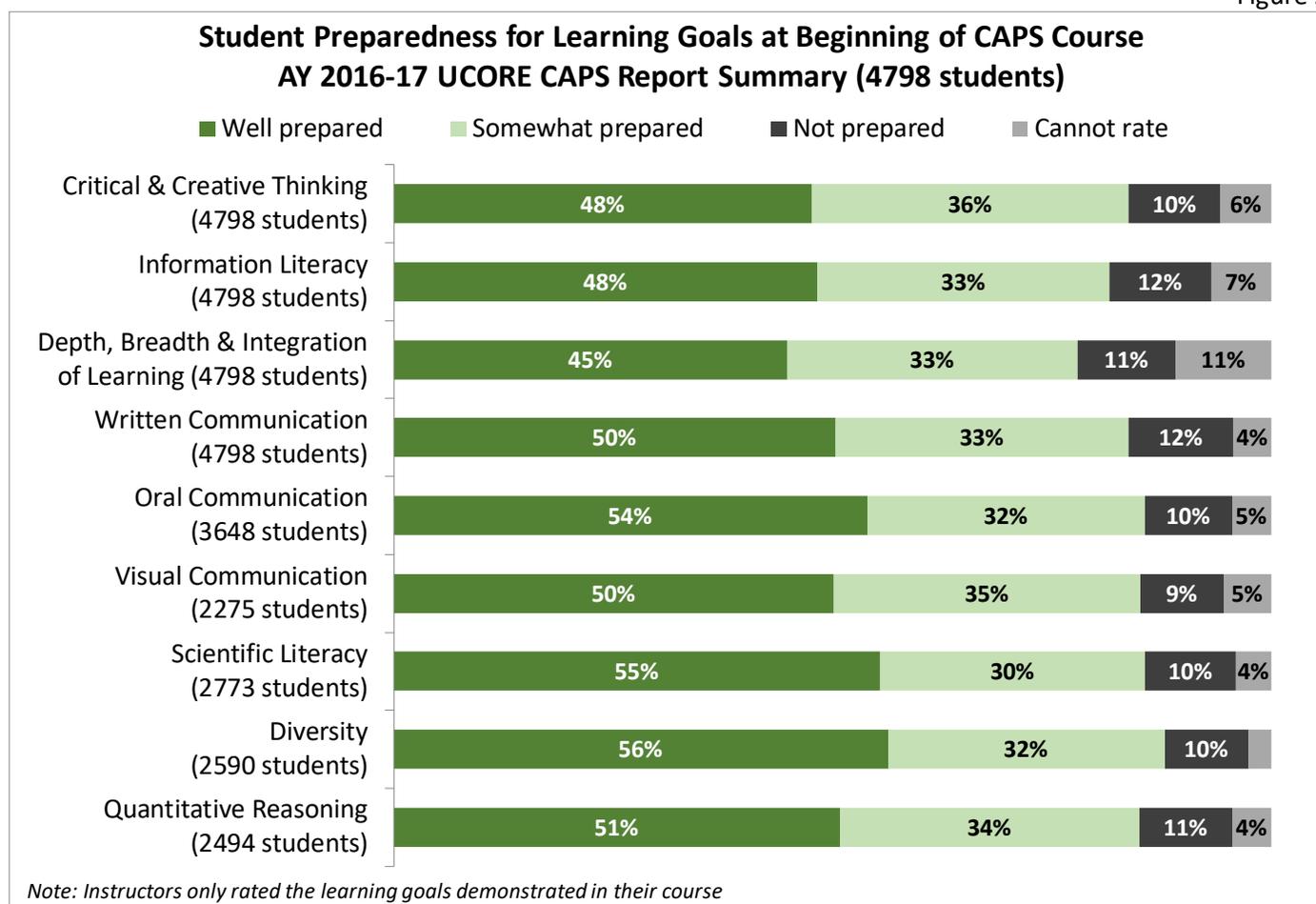


Table 1

Instructor Suggestions for How Students Could Be More Prepared Spring 2017 UCORE CAPS Report Summary (80 reports)		
Category	Count	Instructor Quotations - Selected Sample
Written Communication	23	"Better general writing skills and better scientific writing skills"
		"Continue to encourage proper use of academic writing"
		"The biggest deficits lie in their written work and reading comprehension"
Critical & Creative Thinking	13	"Better critical thinking skills to analyze research and synthesize the concepts"
		"Creative imaginative thinking"
Information Literacy	11	"More experience conducting literature searches and integrating information"
		"Better prepared with research skills, finding and evaluating suitable sources"
Depth, Breadth, & Integration of Learning	10	"More opportunities to integrate their learning in earlier classes"
		"They could use exposure to more explicitly interdisciplinary courses using theories from different disciplines to examine issues"
Oral Communication	5	"Comfort in oral presentation"
		"Many students seemed to lack confidence in speaking during class"
Quantitative Reasoning	4	"Ability and understanding of how to apply quantitative skills"
		"Students have limited skills in reducing and presenting data in graphical form"
Other	27	"Project management and team management skills"
		"It simply comes down to more practice"

Note: Categories were assigned by ATL staff; will not sum to 80 because some instructors indicated multiple suggestions, 6 instructors felt that students were adequately prepared, and 13 instructors did not provide a response.