

AY 2017-18 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 undergraduate education.

Methods and Responses

CAPS course instructors were asked to complete course assessment reports for fall 2017 and spring 2018. 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. For more information, see the [UCORE Assessment Website](#).

A total of 133 reports were submitted by 111 instructors, representing **83%** of CAPS courses and **77%** of students enrolled in CAPS courses in fall 2017 and spring 2018. In **65%** of reports, instructors indicated that their students were primarily (>90%) seniors. Instructors indicated that their students were primarily (>90%) majors in **68%** of reports. Approximately 80% of students enrolled in all CAPS courses in fall 2017 and spring 2018 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 **53%** of courses, Quantitative Reasoning in **43%** of courses, and Diversity in **42%** 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 **81%** of their courses also included oral communication and **49%** included visual communication.

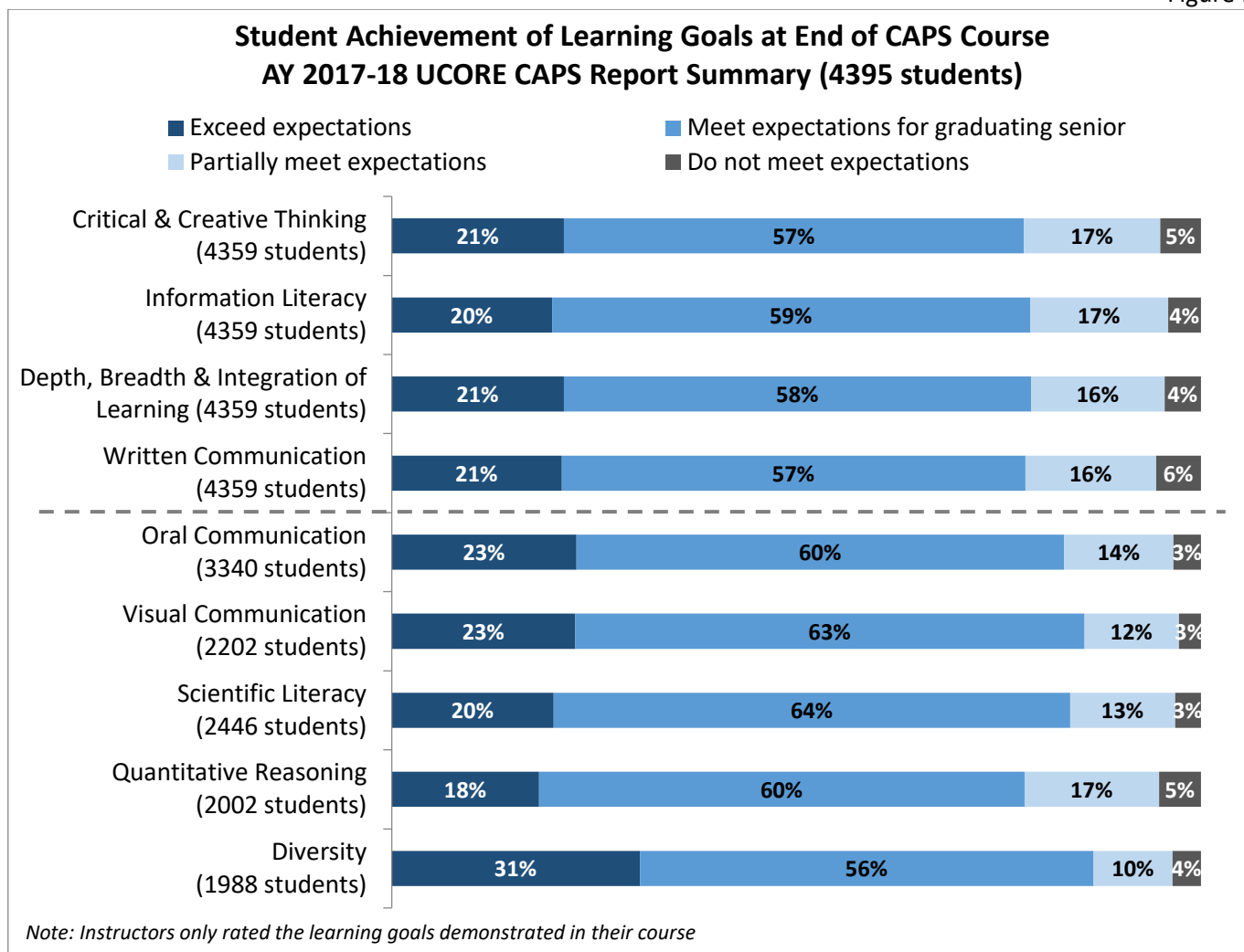
2. Student Achievement: Instructors rated students on their ability *at the end of this CAPS course* in each of the WSU Learning Goals demonstrated in their course, basing their evaluation on students' holistic performance in the course. Instructors indicated that they used their overall impressions 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 **78%** of students met or exceeded expectations at the graduating undergraduate level for Critical & Creative Thinking, **79%** for Information Literacy, **79%** for Depth, Breadth & Integration of Learning, and **78%** 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, **86%** for visual communication, **84%** for Scientific Literacy, **78%** for Quantitative Reasoning, and **87%** for Diversity (*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, **68%** 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 **64%** were *prepared or well prepared* for Critical & Creative Thinking, **65%** for Information Literacy, **60%** for Depth, Breadth & Integration of Learning, **62%** for written communication, **63%** for oral communication, **62%** for visual communication, **65%** for Scientific Literacy, **57%** for Quantitative Reasoning, and **68%** for Diversity (*Figure 2*). Instructors also had the opportunity to provide suggestions of how students could be more prepared for their course. Instructors most frequently indicated that students could be more prepared in the areas of written communication, depth, breadth, & integration of learning, information literacy, and critical & creative thinking (*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

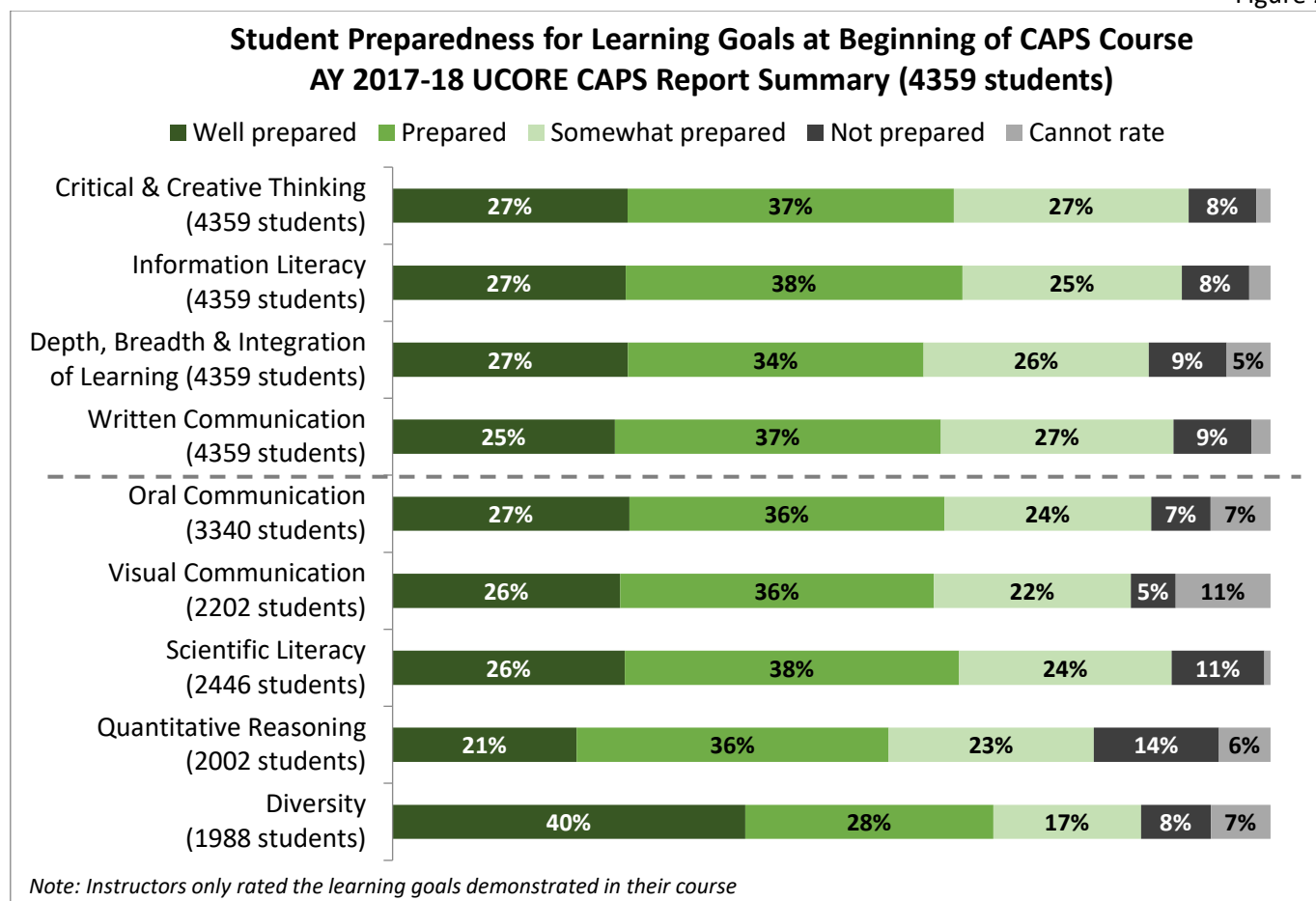


Table 1

Instructor Suggestions for How Students Could Be More Prepared AY 2017-18 UCORE CAPS Report Summary (133 reports)		
Category	Count	Instructor Quotations - Selected Sample
Written Communication	52	"Better writing skills"
		"They would be more prepared if lower level courses required more writing "
		"Students still need to improve technical writing skills"
Depth, Breadth, & Integration of Learning	29	"Students found it difficult to integrate prior accumulated knowledge"
		"A stronger grasp of foundational thinking across all disciplinary subfields"
Information Literacy	25	"Incorporation of and identifying scholarly sources"
		"More experience with searching WSU libraries databases"
Critical & Creative Thinking	22	"Use of critical thinking to gather information and make sense of information"
		"Taking information and drawing creative conclusions and applications"
Oral Communication	16	"Students need more opportunities to want to communicate orally"
Scientific Literacy	14	"Scientific literacy should be engaged more heavily in 100-level courses"
Quantitative Reasoning	12	"They are weak in translating data into meaning"
Diversity	3	"There was room for my knowledge about diversity and intersectionality"
Other	44	"Take appropriate courses prior to enrollment in the class"
		"The students just need more experience."
		"Better time management skills"
		"Mostly basic skills in digital media"

Note: Categories were assigned by ATL staff; will not sum to 133 because some instructors indicated multiple suggestions, 4 instructors felt that students were adequately prepared, and 6 responses were unclear.