

AY 2018-19 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 2018 and spring 2019. 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 AY 2018-19, the CAPS report form was revised to improve CAPS assessment by providing descriptors of student performance for *meets expectations for graduating senior*, while maintaining a short form that is not burdensome for instructors to complete. Fall 2018 focused on the four required Learning Goals in CAPS courses: Critical & Creative Thinking, Information Literacy, Communication (written only), and Integration of Learning, while the spring 2019 CAPS report form focused on Communication (written and oral), Quantitative Reasoning, Scientific Literacy, and Diversity.

A total of 150 reports were submitted by 128 instructors, representing **83%** of CAPS courses and **82%** of students enrolled in CAPS courses in fall 2018 and spring 2019. In **68%** of reports, instructors indicated that their students were primarily (>90%) seniors. Instructors indicated that their students were primarily (>90%) majors in **73%** of reports. Approximately 80% of students enrolled in all CAPS courses in fall 2018 and spring 2019 were seniors.

Overall Achievement of WSU's Learning Goals

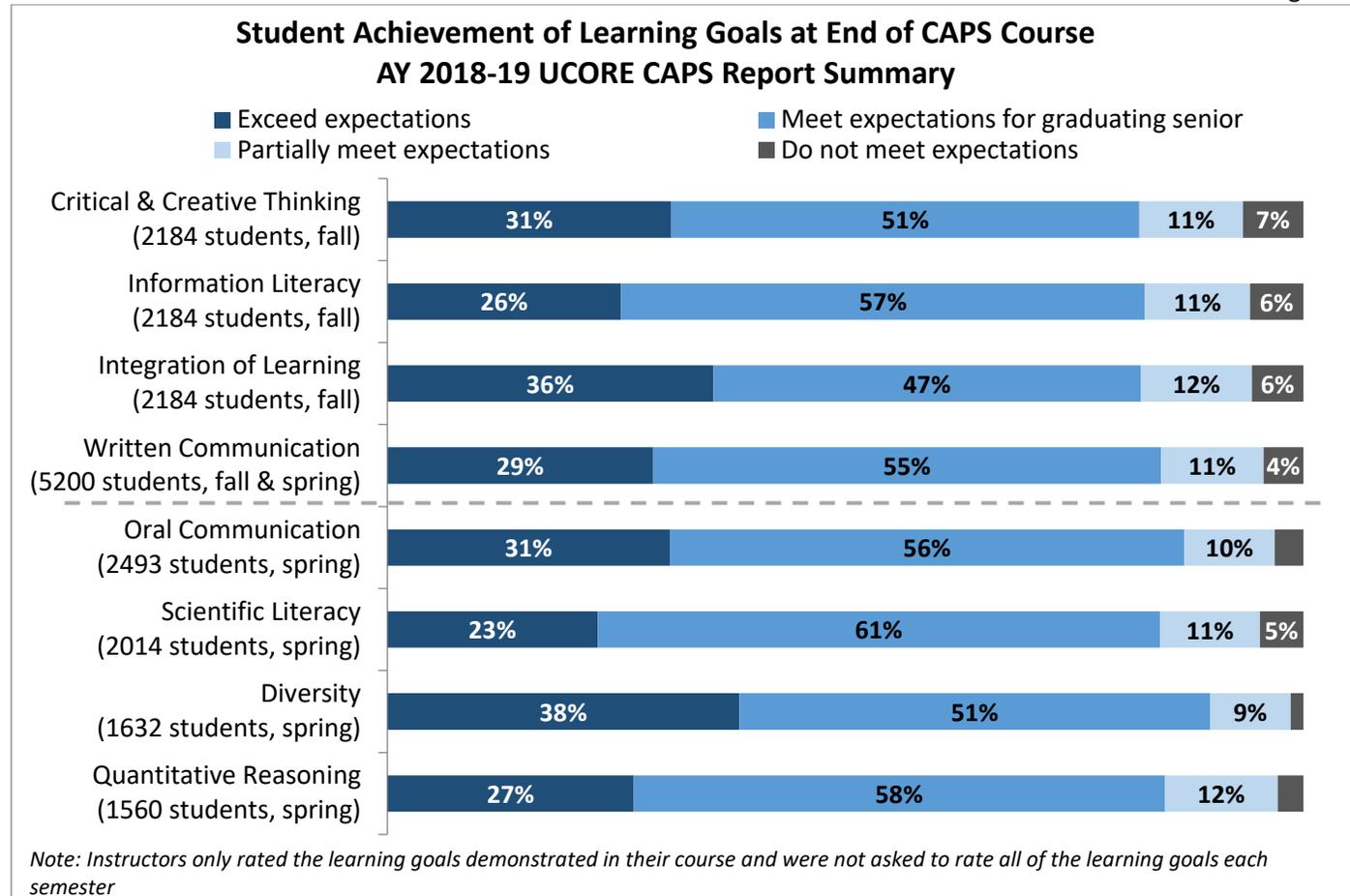
Instructors rated students on their ability *at the end of the CAPS course* on WSU Learning Goals, basing their evaluation on students' holistic performance in the course. Instructors only rated the learning goals demonstrated in their course and were not asked to rate all of the goals each semester in AY 2018-19.

Four Required Learning Goals. Overall, fall 2018 instructors indicated that **82%** of students met or exceeded expectations at the graduating undergraduate level for Critical & Creative Thinking, **83%** for Information Literacy, **82%** for Integration of Learning, and **83%** for written communication (*Figure 1*). In spring 2019, instructors indicated that **85%** of students met or exceeded expectations at the graduating undergraduate level for written communication.

Additional Learning Goals. In spring 2019 courses where instructors found enough elements to evaluate student learning on additional learning goals, instructors indicated that **87%** of students met or exceeded expectations for oral communication, **84%** for Scientific Literacy, **90%** for Diversity, and **85%** for Quantitative Reasoning (*Figure 1*).

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

Figure 1



Instructor Feedback on Assessment

Feedback about Learning Goal Descriptors. In fall 2018, instructors were asked to provide feedback on the learning goal descriptors for the four required learning goals (Critical and Creative Thinking, Information Literacy, Communication-written only, and Integration of Learning). Overall, instructors largely indicated that they were able to find one or more descriptors of student performance that fit their capstone course context and assignments/audiences. One instructor indicated they were able to find descriptors for “all but one” of these four learning goals, but did not specify which goal.

In spring 2019, instructors were asked to provide feedback on the learning goal descriptors for written communication, along with the additional learning goals that were demonstrated in their course. Overall, instructors largely indicated that they were able to find one or more descriptors of student performance that fit their capstone course context and assignments/audiences, and that these descriptors helped them determine assessment results for their class. However, two instructors indicated they were not able to find descriptors for Written Communication, one for Oral Communication, two for Scientific Literacy, and three for Diversity.

Time to Complete Assessment. In fall 2018, most instructors (**83%**) indicated that it took them 30 minutes or less to complete this assessment. In spring 2019, instructors indicated that completing this assessment, on average, added **27 minutes** to the time they would have normally spent grading, with most instructors (**76%**) indicating that it added 30 minutes or less.