

AY 2019-20 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 2019 and spring 2020. The report asked instructors to provide an overall holistic assessment of student performance (direct measure, using faculty expert judgement) of all students in their CAPS course. For AY 2019-20, the CAPS report form focused on Critical & Creative Thinking, Written Communication, Oral Communication (optional), and Diversity (optional). *Note: For the spring 2020 semester, WSU made the emergency move to distance learning beginning March 23 as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. While nearly 90% of spring 2020 CAPS instructors indicated that they made substantial changes to course assignments, learning activities, instruction, and/or grading, in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, roughly 90% of instructors also indicated that they had confidence in their ability to assess student achievement of these WSU Learning Goals spring semester.*

A total of 159 reports were submitted by 132 instructors, representing **83%** of CAPS classes and **84%** of students enrolled in CAPS courses in fall 2019 and spring 2020. In **65%** 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 83% of students enrolled in all CAPS courses in fall 2019 and spring 2020 were seniors.

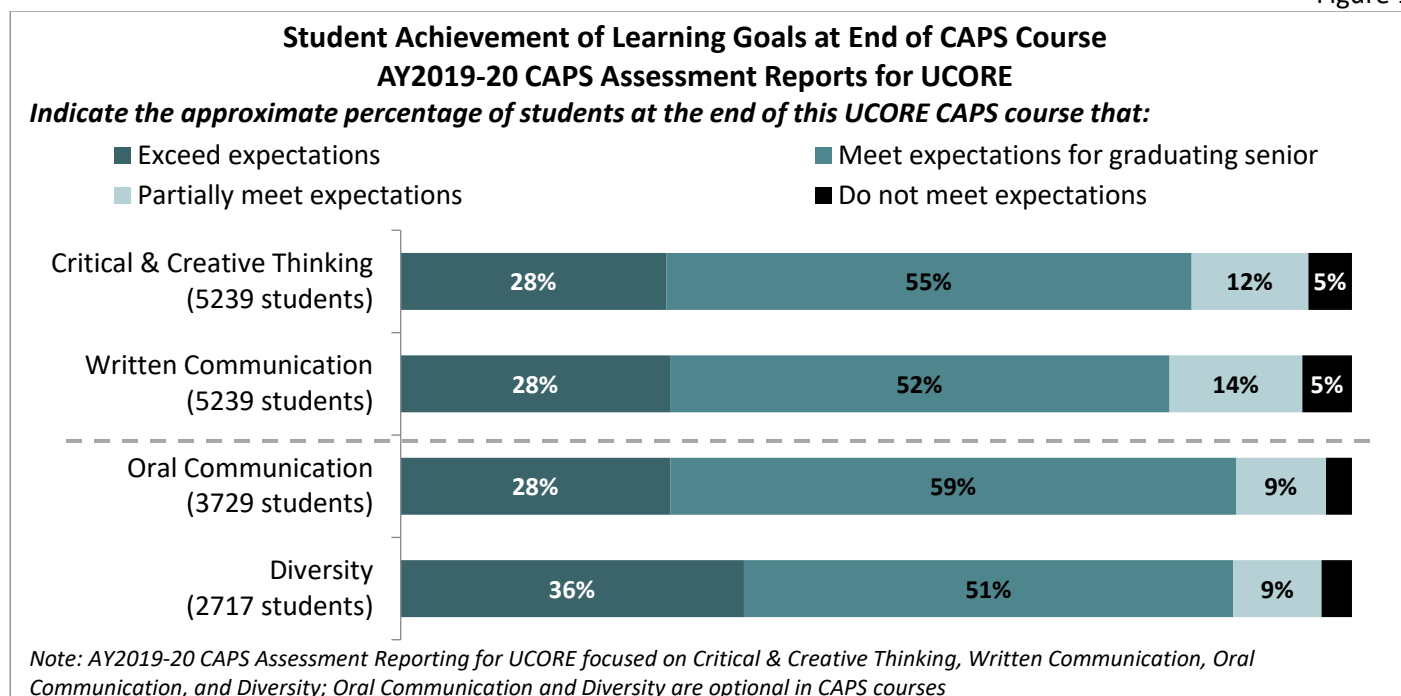
Overall Achievement of WSU's Learning Goals

Instructors rated students on their ability *at the end of the CAPS course* on four WSU Learning Goals, basing their evaluation on students' holistic performance in the course. Instructors only rated the learning goals demonstrated in their course.

Required Learning Goals. Overall, AY 2019-20 CAPS instructors indicated that **83%** of students met or exceeded expectations at the graduating undergraduate level for **Critical & Creative Thinking**. Additionally, instructors indicated that **81%** of students met or exceeded expectations at the graduating undergraduate level for **Written Communication**. See *Figure 1*.

Additional Learning Goals. In AY 2019-20, 71% of reports indicated that the course syllabus required students to demonstrate Oral Communication and 48% required students to demonstrate Diversity. In these courses where instructors found enough elements to evaluate student learning on additional learning goals, instructors indicated that **88%** of students met or exceeded expectations for **Oral Communication** and **88%** met or exceeded expectations for **Diversity**. See *Figure 1*.

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).

Achievement Over Two Academic Years. The percentage of students *meeting or exceeding expectations* at the graduating undergraduate level was larger (average +5%) in AY 2019-20 compared to AY 2017-18 for the four Learning Goals assessed. See Figure 2. *Note: Instructors optionally rate Diversity and Oral Communication if demonstrated in their course. Additionally, in AY 2019-20, instructors used a revised version of the CAPS report form that included descriptors of student performance for meets expectations for graduating senior. AY 2018-19 results are incomplete due to testing of the performance descriptors.*

Figure 2

