

University of La Verne

Capstone Assessment of University Values and Competencies:

Diversity and Community Subsection

SEPTEMBER 1, 2009



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Note: This report presents the Diversity and Community subsection of findings of the full report available at:
<http://www.laverne.edu/institutional-research/assets/CAPSTONE-FULL-REPORT-08-09%20COMBINED.pdf>.

Thanks to Denise Shiokari and Michelle Alfaro for assisting with data analysis and presentation

Purpose

The purpose of the capstone assessment project was to evaluate the extent to which the following learning outcomes and Mission elements were attained in capstone projects at the undergraduate, masters and doctoral levels institution-wide: Diversity and Community, Values Orientation, Life-long Learning (Critical Thinking), and Writing.

Method and Procedure

Through the office of Institutional Research a total random sample of 127 capstone projects were collected from across the university: 41 undergraduate senior projects/papers, 40 masters projects and 46 doctoral dissertations. Five different types of capstone projects were identified: 65 were empirical in nature, 22 were applied, 17 were theoretical, 1 was creative, and 19 were business strategic analyses. The projects were completed between 2006 and 2008, and came from three colleges: College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business and Public Management, and College of Education and Organizational Leadership.

Four learning outcomes were assessed: Diversity and Community, Values Orientation, Lifelong Learning (Critical Thinking) and Written Communication (Mechanics, Organization, Development of Thesis, Project Appropriate Formatting and Citation). Global rubrics accompanied by articulated criteria especially developed for different types of capstone projects addressing each of the learning outcomes were developed and used to assess the projects. The rubric ratings were made on a 4-point scale: 4=Accomplished, 3=Developed, 2=Developing, 1=Undeveloped.

A pilot study was conducted in the summer of 2008 that established the sensitivity of the rubrics to identify the variability in the projects, and reliably assess the degree to which the four learning outcomes were attained in capstone projects. Another sample of projects was collected in 2009 and compared to the 2008 pilot data. Showing no significant differences, the two samples were combined. Group comparisons were made among different degree levels (undergraduate, masters and doctoral) and different types of projects (empirical, applied and other types of projects that combined theoretical, creative and strategic analysis). If 70% or more of the projects received ratings of Accomplished or Developed on a particular learning outcome it was considered high level of attainment; between 50% and 69% was considered moderate level of attainment (needing improvement), and below 50% was considered low level of attainment (needing serious attention).

Findings

Diversity and Community

While for the **overall sample** (N=127), the mean score on Diversity and Community is 2.38 on a 4-point scale, and 47% of the projects are at the Accomplished or Developed levels, the mean comparisons of the **degree levels** show that doctoral dissertations (3.0) are significantly higher than undergraduate (1.8), and masters (2.3) projects, which are not different from each other. Diversity and Community themes are present in 74% of the doctoral dissertations at the Accomplished or Developed levels. However, only 43% of masters and 20% of undergraduate projects are at the Accomplished or Developed levels. Mean comparisons of **types of projects** show that empirical projects (2.8) are significantly higher than the applied (2.1) and other types of projects (1.9), which are not different from each other. Diversity and Community themes are present in 64% of the empirical projects at the Accomplished or Developed levels. However, only 37% of applied and 25% of other projects are at the Accomplished or Developed levels. In **summary**, it appears that at the institutional level doctoral dissertations reflect the Diversity and Community learning outcome at high levels of attainment, and empirical projects do so at a moderate level of attainment. Applied and other types of projects and projects at the undergraduate and masters levels reflect the Diversity and Community learning outcome at low levels of attainment.

Recommendations: (a) To improve the institutional level of attainment of the Diversity and Community learning outcome in capstone projects faculty in various colleges should develop action plans to address the issue in applied and other types of projects and in projects at the masters and undergraduate levels; (b) Individual departments across the university are encouraged to use the rubric and the articulated criteria for Diversity and Community to continuously assess this learning outcome in their capstone courses.