

Critical Thinking 2004

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Results

Outcome

Through the General Education Core 300: Values and Critical Thinking course and other course work students will learn to think critically and evaluate their own values and the value systems of other persons, groups, and nations.

Method

The NSSE items below deal with community service and civic engagement in and outside of class. Among the respondents, traditional students compose 65% of the freshmen and 13% of the seniors.

Findings

- Freshmen and seniors report equally and no differently than the doctoral intensive norms that ULV courses emphasize memorization of facts as well as application of theory to practice. They report similarly that ULV has contributed to their skills in analyzing quantitative skills.
- Freshmen and seniors report that ULV has contributed to an equal degree to developing their skills in thinking critically and analytically, and do so to a significantly higher degree than doctoral intensive norms.
- Seniors report to a higher degree than freshmen that ULV courses emphasize skills in synthesizing and organizing ideas, and do so to significantly higher degrees than doctoral intensive norms.
- Seniors report to a higher degree than freshmen that ULV courses emphasize skills in making judgments about the value of information, arguments, methods and inferences, and do so no differently than doctoral intensive norms.
- Overall, ULV seniors report higher engagement with critical thinking than freshmen, and to a similar or higher degree than doctoral intensive norms.

Action Recommendations

- Encourage faculty to place less emphasis on memorization in their courses
- Encourage faculty to increase application of theory to practice, and to make classroom learning more directly relevant to everyday issues
- Consider ways of increasing skills in quantitative analysis

Dissemination and action planning

During the 2006-2007 academic year this information will be shared during luncheon meetings with stakeholder, such as students, faculty who teach the values and critical thinking course (Core 300) and other faculty to generate action plans.

Table 1
 NSSE (04) Comparison of ULV Freshman and Senior Scores to Doctoral Intensive Universities
 on **Common Competencies (Life Long Learning): Critical Thinking** items. (Means based on
 4-point rating scale)

	Freshman		Seniors	
	ULV (n=84)	Doctoral Int	ULV (n=98)	Doctoral Int
	mean	mean	mean	mean
2a. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities: <i>Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form?</i> (1=Very Little, 4=Very Much)	2.83	2.97	2.67	2.79
2b. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities: <i>Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components?</i> (1=Very Little, 4=Very Much)	3.31	3.11*	3.35	3.29
2c. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities: <i>Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships?</i> (1=Very Little, 4=Very Much)	2.99*	2.84	3.26	3.03*
2d. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities: <i>Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the</i>	2.78**	2.82	3.10	2.95

soundness of their conclusions?
(1=Very Little, 4=Very Much)

2e.	During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities: <i>Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations?</i> (1=Very Little, 4=Very Much)	2.99	3.02	3.12	3.23
11e.	To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in: <i>Thinking critically and analytically?</i> (1=Very Little, 4=Very Much)	3.37	3.09**	3.50	3.30*
11f.	To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in: <i>Analyzing quantitative problems?</i> (1=Very Little, 4=Very Much)	2.72	2.65	2.97	2.90

Asterisk Under ULV indicates significant difference between the two ULV samples, and under Doctoral Intensive indicates significant difference between the ULV sample and the Doctoral Intensive norms.
*p<.05; **p<.01