

SPECIAL POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- “That is, students who believed messages more often were more likely to report...” (p. 4)
- “Ninety-seven percent of respondents reported...” (p. 9)
- “Similarly, scores on the writing portions of the exam...” (p. 14)
- “These results indicated that first-year students at Illinois State University...” (p. 19)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Evaluation of the Operation Beautiful Program</i>	2
<i>Patient Satisfaction Survey Results</i>	8
<i>General Education vs. Advanced Placement</i>	10
<i>First-year Student Engagement</i>	16

From the Director

In 2013, a [survey](#) of Provosts by the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) found that regional and program accreditation continue to be the main drivers of assessment. This has been the case for many years, and the NILOA survey results are similar to a survey of Illinois State University department chairpersons/school directors conducted through our participation in the [HLC Assessment Academy](#).

What is new, however, is an increasing interest in using assessment results for improvement. In the NILOA survey, for example, the second most frequently reported reason for engaging with assessment were institutional and faculty/staff interest in and commitment to student learning.

Obviously, faculty and staff have always been committed to learning and continually improving their courses and programs. These survey results reflect a shift in thinking in terms of the purposes of assessment. Historically assumed to be about compliance and producing data, assessment is becoming more about creating forums for conversations and dialogue (not to be confused with two-way monologue!)

It is hoped that the information in this issue will stimulate conversations about what learning means for us.



Some of the questions addressed in this edition include:

- How are general education standards measured, and do certain approaches work better than others? ([p. 10](#))
- Are body image issues among college students exclusive to females only? ([p. 2](#))
- How much time do first-year students spend on out-of-class learning experiences? ([p. 16](#))
- How does one turn the results of a unit's student satisfaction survey into actionable results? ([p. 8](#))

Congratulations on another successful academic year, and have a great summer!

Ryan Smith, Ph.D.
Director, University Assessment Services

The Mission of UAS:

“University Assessment Services is responsible for conducting a variety of assessment activities related to student learning outcomes using qualitative and quantitative research techniques, providing support services to other units engaged in such assessment, and sharing best practices for and results of assessment activities.”

Evaluation of the Operation Beautiful Program at ISU

Amanda N. Fisher, Graduate Student, Department of Psychology

Maria K. Anchacles, Undergraduate Student, Department of Psychology

Dr. Dakesa Piña, Staff Counselor, Student Counseling Services

It is no secret that our culture places great value on appearances, idealizing thinness as a beauty standard and primary indicator of health. The “Freshman 15” (the idea that students will gain 15 pounds during their first year of college) is a widely held belief that may encourage students to take dieting and exercise to unhealthy extremes; however, a recent study found that freshman participants only gained 2.5 to 3.5 pounds on average during the first year of college (Zagorsky, 2011). The problem seems to be increasing: a study at one college found that total eating disorders increased in both females (from 23% to 32%) and males (from 7.9% to 25%) during a 13-year period (White, Reynolds-Malear, & Cordero, 2011). Recently, Jacobi, Fittig, Bryson, Wilfley, Kraemer, and Taylor (2011) reported that 11.2% of college-age women who endorsed high weight concerns developed an eating disorder over a three-year follow-up period, independently replicating previous work regarding risk of eating disorder onset in this high-risk group. According to the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA; 2013), eating disorders may begin with preoccupations about food and weight, but they are often about much deeper issues and emotions, often arising from a combination of long-standing behavioral, biological, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, and social factors.

In general, students coming to college tend to be more overwhelmed than they have been in previous years. In a national survey of counseling center directors, 70% reported a recent increase in the number of students with severe psychological problems in the last year alone, and 95.6% report that this is a growing concern for counseling centers (Mistler, Reetz, Krylowicz, & Barr, 2012); 78% report that it is impacting administration, and 69% report that it is even impacting university faculty (Gallagher, 2004). Many of the centers that participated in this survey received evaluation information from the clients; 67% of the students believed that counseling services helped their academic

performance (Mistler et al., 2012), and 54.6% of students reported that counseling helped them to remain in school (Gallagher, 2004). Good mental health services help institutions retain students (Bishop, 2010; Wilson, Mason, & Ewing, 1997). However, students are not always aware of the resources available on campuses or may be reluctant to use them due to the stigma attached with receiving counseling. Additionally, it is common for people to deny the existence or seriousness of a problem, which hinders help-seeking (NEDA, 2013). It is therefore important to provide outreach, prevention, and educational campaigns (Kitzrow, 2003). According to NEDA, education and prevention programming takes place annually during National Eating Disorders Awareness Week on 65.6% of campuses, and nearly half (46.9%) reported having programs/workshops about eating disorders and body image issues at least once per semester.

Current Study

One of the outreach programs sponsored at Student Counseling Services is the Operation Beautiful campaign. This yearly campaign is conducted with the goal of decreasing body image issues that are typically prevalent, especially among college campuses. Ways in which the program works towards this goal is by encouraging students to reduce or eliminate negative self-talk and “fat-talk” and by promoting acceptance and appreciation of diversity in body shapes and sizes. The Operation Beautiful post-it note campaign is perhaps one of the most visible prevention programs.

Method

Participants

A total of 169 students completed the online survey. The sample was primarily female (89.4%). Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 45 years [Mean (M) = 21.45, Standard deviation (SD) = 5.25] with the most common age being 21. The most represented races

Evaluation of the Operation Beautiful Program (cont'd)

Table 1. Differences in Negative Self-Talk Based on Perceptions of Operation Beautiful as a Worthwhile Campaign

Responses to "...Operation Beautiful is a worthwhile campaign".	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Disagree	2.0	0.0	2
Neutral	2.1	0.3	17
Agree	2.2	0.4	73
Strongly Agree	2.5	0.5	78

Note. Scores ranged from 1 (increased negative self-talk) to 3 (decreased negative self-talk).

were European American/Caucasian (72.4%), African American (10%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (4.7%).

Materials and Procedure

A list of the messages on the post-it notes can be found in the Appendix. Student Counseling Services, in collaboration with the Student Wellness Ambassador Team (housed in Health Promotion and Wellness), worked to post anonymous post-it notes with positive messages in various campus buildings. Twenty-five buildings were targeted, and 15 to 20 notes were placed in each building. The notes remained posted for approximately one week. Afterwards, students were invited to take an online survey that included questions about body image issues and responses to the post-it notes. The following data are student responses to the campaign.

Results

A majority of respondents (71.8%) reported noticing the Operation Beautiful post-it notes on campus. The most common places students reported seeing notes were in academic buildings (47.6%) and in the Bone Student Center (31.2%). Of the students who saw the notes, 63.5% were able to recall some of the messages. The messages students remembered the most were "You are beautiful!" (34.7%), "Be beautiful, Be you!" (26.5%), and "Don't worry. You look great!" (20%).

Change in Negative Self-Talk

Students were asked if they decreased their own negative self-talk after seeing the notes. In examining which students reported decreasing their own negative self-talk, there was a significant main effect of finding the Operation Beautiful campaign worthwhile, $F(3, 166) = 4.46, p = .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$. That is, the more worthwhile the students felt the campaign was, the more likely they were to decrease their own negative self-talk (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). Furthermore, there was a significant effect of noticing a decrease in "fat talk" among other students on the extent to which students believed the campaign was worthwhile, $F(2, 167) = 3.52, p = .032$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. In other words, students who noticed a change (increase or decrease) in "fat talk" among others found the campaign more worthwhile (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics). This suggests that any conversation about "fat talk," regardless of the tone, increases feelings of worth about the Operation Beautiful campaign.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine whether participant reports of decreasing negative self-talk, intention to decrease negative talk, and noticing decreases in "fat talk" among others were significantly different as a function of biological sex. The analysis revealed that there was a significant main effect of sex, Wilks' $\Lambda = .91, F(3, 165) = 5.32, p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$. Biological sex explained the largest amount of variance in noticing decreases in "fat talk" among others (partial $\eta^2 = .04$), followed by inten-

Table 2. Differences in Beliefs that Operation Beautiful is a Worthwhile Campaign Based on Noticing Changes in Fat Talk Among Others

Responses to "Have you noticed a change in fat talk among other students?"	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Noticed Increase	4.6	0.9	9
Notice No Change	4.3	0.7	129
Noticed Decrease	4.6	0.6	32

Note. Scores ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Evaluation of the Operation Beautiful Program (cont'd)

Table 3. Differences in Negative Talk (Self and Others) as a Function of Biological Sex

Item	Sex	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
I am more likely to try to decrease negative talk about my body because of OB.	Male	3.2	1.0	17
	Female	3.7	0.8	152
Have you noticed a decrease in fat talk among other students?	Male	2.4	0.5	17
	Female	2.1	0.5	152
After reading the OB notes, have you decreased your own negative self-talk?	Male	2.5	0.5	17
	Female	2.3	0.5	152

Note. Scores on the first item ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores on the second and third items ranged from 1 ([noticed an] increase in negative self-talk) to 3 ([noticed a] decrease in negative self-talk).

tion to decrease negative self-talk (partial $\eta^2 = .03$), and reports of actual decrease in negative self-talk (partial $\eta^2 = .01$). Women reported higher intentions of decreasing negative self-talk, but men reported noticing decreases in “fat talk” in others more, as well as more actual decreases in negative self-talk (descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3).

Students were also asked about whether or not they engage in activities to decrease negative self-talk. Forty students gave examples of activities in which they engage, such as encouraging friends to not engage in “fat talk” (40%, e.g., “I’ve told my friends to stop it and that they are pretty just the way they are.”), using different words to describe themselves (20%, e.g., “Instead of saying I have fat thighs, I tell myself that I have strong ones because of how much I can squat. Instead of thinking I have a larger body frame, I tell myself I can pull off clothes that wouldn’t fit others so well.”), and being aware or conscious of their attitudes about their body (7.5%, e.g., “I consciously make myself aware of when it’s happening and try to stop it coming from myself.”).

Seeing and Believing the Post-it Notes

In examining how the Operation Beautiful post-it notes impacted participants, we found that 51.8% of students reported believing the messages sometimes, 30% reported believing the messages often, and 10% reported believing the messages always. There were no significant differences between men and women in reports of believing the messages, $t(18.09) = .75, p = .47$.

A MANOVA revealed that believing the messages on the notes had a significant omnibus effect on reports of decreasing negative self-talk, belief that the campaign is worthwhile, and reports of attempts to implement activities to decrease “fat talk,” Wilks' $\Lambda = .89, F(9,$

$399.28) = 2.18, p = .022$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Believing the notes explained the largest amount of variance in decreasing negative self-talk (partial $\eta^2 = .06$), followed by belief that the campaign is worthwhile (partial $\eta^2 = .05$) and reports of attempts to implement activities to decrease “fat talk” (partial $\eta^2 = .02$). That is, students who believed messages more often were more likely to report decreasing in negative self-talk, higher levels of agreement that the campaign was worthwhile, and more attempts to implement activities that decrease “fat talk” (descriptive statistics are provided in Table 4).

Students were also asked about initial thoughts/feelings when first reading the Operation Beautiful notes. After examining the qualitative data and categorizing the responses into ‘Positive,’ ‘Negative,’ and ‘Neutral’ reactions, it was found that 89% of students believed the messages to be positive, while 6% were negative and 5% were neutral with their reactions. Students that believed that the notes were positive wrote responses such as, “I smiled because a stranger wanted to help me (and everyone) have a great day and try to love themselves. I was glad that people were spreading positive.” An example of a negative response was, “Part of me wanted to think that it is sad that we have to remind ourselves we are in control of our image and positivity, and the other part of me felt sad because some people really do struggle keeping their images up and leading a healthy lifestyle.” Finally, a neutral reaction was, “I was a little confused as to what the poster was, but it was cool.”

Body Image Issues (Past and Present)

In examining which students report struggling with their body image, there was a marginally significant difference between men and women, $t(167) = -1.80, p = .074$. That is, women reported greater levels of cur-

Evaluation of the Operation Beautiful Program (cont'd)

Table 4. Differences in Positive Changes and Opinions as a Function of Believing Messages

Item	Believe Message	M	SD	n
After reading the OB notes, have you decreased your own negative self-talk?	Never	2.1	0.3	14
	Sometimes	2.2	0.4	88
	Often	2.5	0.5	51
	Always	2.5	0.5	17
Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statement: "OB is a worthwhile campaign".	Never	4.4	0.9	14
	Sometimes	4.2	0.7	88
	Often	4.4	0.6	51
	Always	4.8	0.4	17
Have you tried to implement any activities to decrease fat talk in yourself or others?	Never	1.4	0.5	17
	Sometimes	1.3	0.8	88
	Often	1.3	0.5	51
	Always	1.5	.05	17

Note. Scores on the first item ranged from 1 (increased negative self-talk) to 3 (decreased negative self-talk). Scores on the second item ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The third item was dichotomous and coded 1 (No) and 2 (Yes).

rent struggle with body image than men. We suspect that a sample with greater numbers of men would produce larger differences. To examine these differences in a different light, we conducted a MANOVA to determine the extent to which current body image struggles, frequency of body image struggles, and past body image struggles would differ as a function of biological sex. The analysis revealed that there was a significant main effect of sex, Wilks' $\Lambda = .90$, $F(6, 330) = 3.05$, $p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. Biological sex explained the largest amount of variance in frequency of body image struggles (partial $\eta^2 = .25$), followed by past body image struggles (partial $\eta^2 = .19$) and current body image struggles (partial $\eta^2 = .05$). Women reported higher levels of current struggle, greater frequency of struggle, and greater degrees of past struggle (descriptive statistics are provided in Table 5).

Students were also asked to share qualitative information about their current and past struggles with body image. In regards to current struggle, there were 97 var-

ying responses, including believing they were overweight (e.g., "I feel like my face is fat and it makes me self-conscious"), comparing themselves to others (e.g., "I feel that I constantly compare myself to my thinner friends. I feel that people are open to be my friends regardless of my weight but then other times I feel like they judge me or don't give me a chance."), and pressures from the media (e.g., "Today it seems impossible with the media to feel like you have the perfect body and to be comfortable being you. There always seems to be some way that you can be 'perfecting' your body."). Other students who reported not having body image struggles provided responses such as, "I think we all have our days where we are unhappy with ourselves (inside and outside), but at the end of the day, I know who I am as an individual and I am confident and great with that person."

In regards to past struggle, 78 students provided varying responses, including struggling with eating disorders (e.g., "I had symptoms of anorexia for awhile. I was al-

Table 5. Differences in Struggles in Body Image as a Function of Biological Sex

Item	Sex	M	SD	n
To what degree do you currently struggle with your body image?	Male	2.1	1.0	17
	Female	2.5	0.9	152
How often do you struggle with your body image?	Male	2.8	1.3	17
	Female	3.3	1.1	152
To what degree have you struggled with your body image in the past?	Male	2.5	1.1	17
	Female	2.8	1.0	152

Note. Scores on the first and third items ranged from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much). Scores on the second item ranged from 1 (I do not struggle) to 5 (always).

Evaluation of the Operation Beautiful Program (cont'd)

Table 6. Differences in Beliefs About ISU's Support Based on Believing Messages

Do you believe the message you saw?	M	SD	n
Never	2.9	1.0	14
Sometimes	2.7	0.8	88
Often	3.0	0.7	51
Always	3.2	0.9	17

Note. Scores ranged from 1 (not at all supportive) to 4 (extremely supportive).

most 20 lbs underweight.”), bullying (e.g., “I have always been made fun of for my weight, and coming to college has almost been worse.”), or past issues that are the same as their current ones.

ISU and Body Image/Eating Disorders

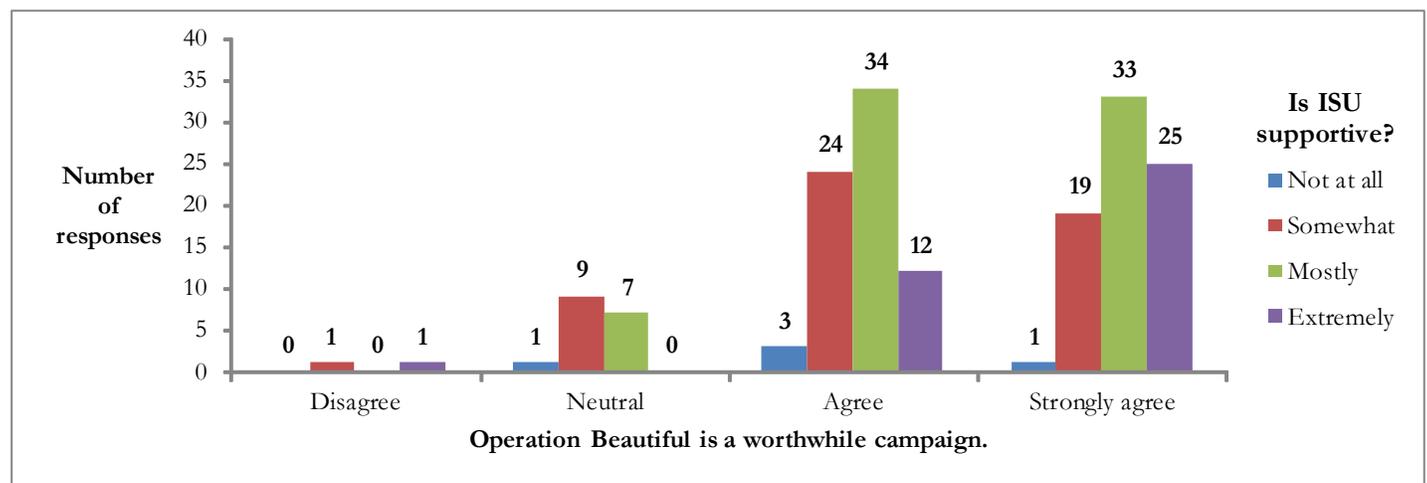
In examining differences in perceptions about how supportive ISU is of diversity among body types, shapes, and sizes, there were no significant differences between men and women, $t(167) = -.83, p = .41$. However, there was a significant difference in perceptions about ISU support based on the degree to which students believed the messages on the post-it notes, $F(3, 166) = 2.85, p = .039$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. Students who believed the messages more often felt that ISU was more supportive of body diversity (descriptive statistics are provided in Table 6). Additionally, participants who believed Operation Beautiful is a worthwhile campaign were more likely to report that ISU was more supportive of diversity in body types, shapes, and sizes, $F(166) = 4.51, p = .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

Students were asked to share why they felt ISU's campus was or was not supportive of diversity among

body types, shapes, and sizes. A number of responses were provided, including highlighting the programs and campaigns provided on campus (e.g., “I feel like ISU does a good job promoting and encouraging diversity because it offers a wide assortment of activities students of different cultures or with different interests can become engaged in. I have been actively involved with alternative breaks and diversity is a huge part of what the trips seek to promote and open the eyes of students to see.”), seeing a diversity of body types across students, and believing the many flyers and ads posted around campus supporting body image.

For students who did not believe that ISU's campus is supportive, most replied that the University does not do a good job with adjusting classrooms for larger people (e.g., “Well, as a bigger woman, I wish the desks were bigger, I seriously do not fit into most of them and have to have a chair and table brought in.”) or they believe their peers are not supportive of one another. Many students (16%) also commented on the effects that media has on students, therefore not making diversity ISU's issue but society's as a whole (e.g., “It's a world where you're expected to be thin. It's not ISU's problem alone- it's just a society thing. There are peo-

Figure 1. Interaction between perceived support of ISU and Operation Beautiful as a worthwhile campaign



Evaluation of the Operation Beautiful Program (cont'd)

ple that just make you feel terrible about yourself everywhere you go.”).

Finally, there were significant differences between men and women in reports of whether or not they would seek help from Student Counseling Services if they were to experience body image issues, $t(167) = -2.80, p = .006$. Women were significantly more likely to report that they would seek help from Student Counseling Services for body image issues.

Discussion

College students do appear to struggle with body image issues, and while women seem to struggle more, this problem is not exclusive to women. Additionally, a stigma remains for seeking help at Student Counseling Services. Outreach campaigns such as Operation Beautiful help reach around the stigma to reach students who might be struggling in silence. We found that students did notice the Operation Beautiful post-it notes on campus and that the notes did have an impact on “fat talk”/negative self-talk and also on perceptions of support received from the University. Based on survey responses, we do believe the Operation Beautiful campaign was worthwhile and hope to continue the it in future years. This project helps us see where the Operation Beautiful campaign is strong and what issues might exist that we are currently not addressing within the campaign. Results of previous campaigns have suggested also targeting men who might be struggling with body issues. These results seem to corroborate this as men did report struggling with body image and were far less likely to report that they would seek help from Student Counseling Services for body image issues. A limitation of our findings is the small number of men in our sample. In the future, we hope to target more men for survey responses.

References

Bishop, J. B. (2010). The counseling center: An undervalued resource in recruitment, retention, and risk management. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 24*(4), 248-260.

Gallagher, R. P. (2004). *National survey of counseling center directors*. Alexandria, VA: International Association of Counseling Services.

Jacobi, C., Fitting, E., Bryson, S. W., Wilfley, D., Kraemer, H. C., & Taylor, C. B. (2011). Who is really at

risk? Identifying risk factors for subthreshold and full syndrome eating disorders in a high-risk sample. *Psychological Medicine, 41*(9), 1939-1949.

- Kitzrow, M. A. (2003). The mental health needs of today's college students: Challenges and recommendations. *NASPA Journal, 41*(1), 165-179.
- Mistler, M. J., Reetz, R. D., Krylowicz, B., & Barr, V. (2012). *The association for university and college counseling directors annual survey*. Retrieved from http://www.aucccd.org/support/aucccd_directors_survey_monograph_2012_public.pdf
- National Eating Disorders Association. (2013). *Eating disorders on the college campus: A national survey of programs and resources*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/CollegiateSurveyProject>
- White, S., Reynolds-Malear, J. B., & Cordero, E. (2011). Disordered eating and the use of unhealthy weight control methods in college students: 1995, 2002, and 2008. *Eating Disorders, 19*(4), 323-334.
- Wilson, S., Mason, T., & Ewing, M. (1997). Evaluating the impact of receiving university-based counseling services on student retention. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 44*(3), 316-320.
- Zagorsky, J. L., & Smith, P. K. (2011). The freshman 15: A critical time for obesity intervention or media myth? *Social Science Quarterly, 92*(5), 1389-1407.

Appendix

- You are fantastic!
- Just be yourself!
- Be beautiful, Be You!
- You are beautiful!
- Start a revolution, stop hating your body!
- Change the way you see, not the way you look!
- You are perfect just the way you are!
- You are a beautiful person in your own unique way!
- You are magnificent!
- Do you want to meet the love of your life? Look in the mirror!
- You are extraordinary!
- Be you and you will never fail!
- You are strong!
- The key to success is to not set any limits. You can do it! Believe in yourself!

Evaluation of the Operation Beautiful Program (cont'd)

- Don't follow someone else's shadow.... its best to just make your own!
- Don't Worry. You Look Great!
- You are a beautiful soul
- You are enough... just the way you are!
- I'm not perfect but that's okay!
- What if I stopped comparing myself to others?
- Believe me. You are beautiful. Own it!
- No matter your age, your size, or your shape – you are beautiful!

An Overview of the Spring 2014 Student Health Services Patient Satisfaction Survey Results

Laura Frey, Administrative Clerk, Student Health Services

Student Health Services (SHS) has a full staff of providers including licensed/board certified physicians, nurse practitioners, psychiatrist, and physician assistants along with nurses, radiology, lab, and pharmacy staff. Last year, the clinic provided medical services to over 15,000 patients. To assess patient satisfaction with our services, surveys are conducted at least once a semester. These satisfaction surveys are used to address any issues and assess patient perceptions regarding the quality of care provided.

Method

The survey questions are determined by the Quality Improvement Committee, Executive Committee, and the SHS Student Health Advisory Board. Surveys are administered during a two-week time span. This semester, SHS used a new survey tool through Campus Labs Baseline. The survey has a total of 28 questions with pre-categorized options and open-ended comment boxes. Patients are asked at the time they check out from their appointment if they could take a moment to complete a survey regarding their visit. Surveys were conducted on a mini iPad provided by Student Affairs Information Technology. Questions in-

clude satisfaction ratings for providers and individual departments such as Pharmacy, Radiology, Lab, Student Insurance, Business Office, and Medical Records. The rating scale consisted of Very satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied, and Did not visit this department during today's visit. Questions are also asked regarding satisfaction with the way students were respected in regards to age, race, ethnicity, and gender.

Students were able to leave comments on any questions they rated as dissatisfied, encouraging them to list why they marked dissatisfied and what SHS can do to improve the service. The survey concluded by asking students to provide any feedback they had regarding SHS or a specific staff member they would like to recognize for superior service. All answers are anonymous unless the student wishes to leave their name and contact information. Results are tabulated through Campus Labs Baseline and available to the administrator. Reports are then generated and shared with SHS supervisors and select committees.

Results

A total of 806 patients completed the satisfaction survey between March 24th and April 4th, 2014. Of

**UAS will again be offering the Assessment Initiative Awards
during the 2014-2015 academic year!**

Look for an announcement early in the fall semester and submit a proposal!

For more information, visit

<http://assessment.illinoisstate.edu/about/award.shtml>

Spring 2014 Patient Satisfaction Survey Results (cont'd)

Table 1. Percent of Satisfied/Very satisfied responses for SHS individual departments

Department	Percent
Laboratory	99
Radiology	99
Pharmacy	100
Business Office	99
Medical Records	99
Student Insurance	99

those patients, 85% were repeat users of SHS services. When asked how they knew SHS was located inside of the Student Services Building, 37% looked online, 32% asked a friend, and 20% knew from being in the building for another purpose. This is of interest to SHS as there is no signage on the outside of the building alerting students that SHS is located inside. Ninety-seven percent of respondents reported they were satisfied with the convenience of filing an insurance claim, and 98% of patients were satisfied or very satisfied with the availability of convenient appointment times. Ninety-nine percent of patients felt that their personal values were respected by SHS staff and that they felt respected in regards to their race, age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, and/or sexual orientation. Between 99 and 100% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received from individual departments (see Table 1). Almost all patients were satisfied or very satisfied with the care received by the provider (see Table 2).

Over half (52%) of the students surveyed were seen the same day that their appointment was made, while 38% were seen by the following day. When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with SHS, 100% responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied. Several positive comments were left, expressing gratitude to providers and staff for the high quality of care and con-

cern they were shown during their visit at SHS.

Discussion

SHS uses the results from the patient satisfaction survey in several ways. A summary of the overall results are shared with the Student Health Advisory Board. Individual staff members are recognized for outstanding service at the SHS in-service each semester for positive comments left in regards to the quality of care they provided. The results and comments are also used as part of the annual performance appraisal process. Any dissatisfied comments are used to address any trends/patterns. If a patient provides their name and contact information indicating they would like someone to contact them, an SHS administrator follows up with the student. The Executive Committee and Quality Improvement Committee evaluate these issues and take necessary steps in making improvements to provide better service.

In conclusion, SHS strives to provide Illinois State University students with high quality health care and insurance services provided by knowledgeable and caring staff. Patient satisfaction surveys is one way that SHS monitors user satisfaction to ensure we meet our goal of being viewed by the campus community as providing superior health care and insurance services to students enrolled at Illinois State University.

Table 2. Percent of Satisfied/Very satisfied responses for SHS provider care

Provider care	Percent
Listening and understanding skills of provider	99
Understanding of diagnosis and treatment plan provided	99
Explanation of any prescribed medication and side effects	99

Testing our Standards — Testing our Teaching: Illinois State University’s General Education vs. the Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations

Elizabeth Doorn, Former Teaching Assistant, Department of History¹

Dr. Patrick O’Sullivan, Director, Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology at California Polytechnic State University

Dr. Stewart Winger, Associate Professor, Department of History

The purpose of a liberal arts education is to provide students with the skills and knowledge to become active citizens and more fully realized human beings. Having been exposed to richer worlds of thought, liberally educated students should better understand their place in the world and should be better empowered to shape that world. The student of music will be familiar with the general theory of relativity, enhancing both the understanding of music and of life. The student of chemistry will be able to communicate effectively in the spoken and written word, perhaps even in more than one tongue. The student of agriculture will appreciate the Mona Lisa, perhaps inspiring a renaissance in the taste of food, as well as a tastier personal life. How can students claim real expertise in any field (music, chemistry, agriculture, etc.) without an understanding of the connections and contributions to these other facets of humanity? According to the University’s General Education Task Force (2012), “Illinois State University’s General Education Program prepares students to be globally engaged citizens who seek knowledge, appreciate diversity, think critically, communicate effectively, act responsibly and work collaboratively.” In an attempt to fulfill this mission, 42 credit hours, or about one third of an undergraduate student’s total coursework, is dedicated to general education coursework at ISU.

But with the decline of the public sector in the United States since the mid-1980’s, almost all universities have become dependent on tuition revenue. And generally speaking, no one department or college on campus has as its primary calling the duty to safeguard this vital and, dare we say sacred, mission. Lacking powerful enough defenders in the give and take of bureaucratic life, general education has often become a source of

revenue to support other priorities. In addition, the desire for tuition revenue has led to a scramble for transfer students. Credit is extended promiscuously to any and all community colleges without investigation because the cost to any one university of unilaterally rejecting potentially subpar transfer credit would be too great.

But does this system actually work? Is there a downside to using general education courses primarily as revenue stream while, somewhat contradictorily, teaching our students to ‘get their gen ed credits out of the way’ as cheaply as possible even if that means taking a short summer course at a community college? Are our students learning much from general education experiences in which intensively monitored reading and writing are often precluded by class sizes that bring in more revenue? Several recent national studies suggest probably not².

Turning to the specific context at Illinois State University, who sets the standards for our General Education program, and how are those standards measured? Do certain approaches work better than others? Do courses at ISU outperform community college courses which cost about a third as much per credit hour? It is a vast and multifaceted subject matter, and so in this project we restricted our scope to two general education courses: POL 106 (one of five *Individuals and Civic Life* courses) and HIS 135 (one of seven *United States Traditions* courses). In the fall of 2012, we compared them to their respective course-equivalent Advanced Placement (AP) examinations to see whether and what

² For a brief review, see Anthony Grafton (2011, Nov. 24), “Our universities: Why are they failing?” *New York Review of Books*. In this context, see especially Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (2011), *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

¹ Elizabeth Doorn graduated in 2013 and currently teaches social studies at El Cuarto Año High School in Chicago.

ISU General Education and the AP Exams (cont'd)

our students were learning against that widely accepted measure.

The Courses

The courses being evaluated in this study were HIS 135 and POL 106. HIS 135 (History of the United States to 1865) is a general education course required for all history majors that is also available to other majors as an elective. The Illinois State University (2014) Undergraduate Catalog defines HIS 135 as “Political, economic, social, and cultural developments from the colonial period to the Civil War” (p. 178). Different faculty members teach this course each semester, and the course structure is largely determined by the instructor. The fall 2012 HIS 135 course taught by Dr. Stewart Winger was designed to engage students in historical writing, analysis, and discussion, while also ‘covering’ the broad time period. In no way was the course altered to ‘teach to the AP exam.’ Dr. Winger remained scrupulously aloof from the details of AP, leaving those aspects to researcher Elizabeth Doorn.

Following a model that Dr. Winger has used in previous classes, students wrote analyses of brief primary and secondary historical sources in response to a series of prompts before nearly every class. The heavy grading load of twice-weekly assignments was handled by a graduate assistant and two undergraduate teaching assistants who had taken Dr. Winger’s courses before and who had internalized and enthusiastically accepted his grading rubrics. Only occasionally was a quiz, in-class response, or in-class group writing assignment substituted.

These twice-weekly writing assignments helped prepare students for the three papers they wrote throughout the semester in which they demonstrated their understanding of the course content through thesis-centered historiographical writing using primary sources to evaluate the claims of other historians. These papers of increasing length were posted to electronic peer editing groups. Editors were required to root out basic grammatical errors under stringent penalty. They were also required to apply the grading rubric to give and justify a provisional grade. Students then rewrote their papers in response to the peer editing and handed in a hard copy. These papers were graded by the graduate assistant and Dr. Winger and were worth 60% of the course grade (10%, 20%, and 30%, respectively).

There were no formal tests or multiple choice as-

essments used in class. Students did, however, engage in an online reading comprehension activity called LearnSmart which was provided by McGraw Hill along with the shortest available textbook. Organized in multiple-choice, short answer, and true/false questions, each Sunday night students responded to online questions that coincided with each textbook chapter. LearnSmart does not accept incorrect answers; incorrectly answered questions return in differing formats until each question has been answered correctly. If students miss too many questions, the module times them out, instructing them to re-read the textbook section in question. Students cannot simply accept their C- and go home. Textbook content was almost never referenced directly by the instructor in class. Course time was reserved for discussion of the reading assignments, written responses, and other interpretive issues.

In contrast, POL 106, defined as a course that “Examines the sources and effects of practices and institutions of participation, influence and cleavages in United States politics” by the Illinois State University (2014, p. 208) Undergraduate Catalog, is generally structured as more traditional lecture course. Each student attending ISU must have taken one course in the *Individuals and Civic Life* category, or received equivalent credit from AP or from another institution, before graduation (AP credit is accepted only for POL 106 or POL 105). Because of this, the student enrollment per semester is much higher, and the classes are larger. The larger class size, as well as the significantly greater percentage of non-major students enrolled (as opposed to HIS 135), makes it more difficult to take a writing-intensive approach to the material. It is because of these differences that the two courses work well together in this study. How does class structure and student assessment affect a student’s ability to do well on the corresponding AP exam?

Why Advanced Placement?

Advanced Placement is a program of study created by the College Board that gives high school students the opportunity to earn college credit for advanced coursework in certain fields. College Board assesses AP students with a test designed to determine their mastery of the material as well as their readiness for more advanced college courses in the subject. Scores

ISU General Education and the AP Exams (cont'd)

on the exam range from 0 to 5. College Board defines a score of '3' as 'qualified,' meaning the test-taker has essentially 'passed' the examination with College Board's approval and confidence that he or she has earned credit for a introductory college course on the material. For example, in 2012 a passing score of '3' for the AP United States History exam earned an incoming ISU student course credit for U.S. History overview courses (HIS 135 and HIS 136; this has recently been changed to '4' or '5'). The Department of Politics and Government at ISU requires a score of at least '4' on the AP United States Government and Politics exam in order for a student to receive credit for - and exemption from POL 106. In contrast, the Department of Political Science at Southern Illinois University accepts a score of '3' in place of its introductory course, while the Department of Political Science at Northwestern University requires a score of '5.'

Despite the varying expectations for AP scores throughout the state, the exam itself remains relatively constant. Each year, thousands of students nationwide take an AP exam. For this reason, we chose to use the exam in an effort to examine the effectiveness of HIS 135 and POL 106. In both AP exams (United States History and United States Politics and Government), students would have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning through both multiple choice and essay questions. The results would hopefully help determine which teaching and assessment strategy (information and memory-based versus critical thinking and skills-based) would help students do better on the overall test.

Many important objections to the AP exams and to testing itself could be raised. Most importantly, teachers often feel forced by their administrators to teach to the test to the detriment of what they love about their subjects and what they feel is truly most important. Also the method AP uses to grade written responses can be gamed by those who understand the rubrics; investigator Doorn expressed frustration at not being able to reward especially creative and informed written responses that did not satisfy the narrowly tailored points in the AP rubric. But while deeply unfortunate, none of these weighty objections invalidate the exams for the purposes of this study. Apart from the grading rubrics, the AP exams are very impressive tests and no student can achieve a '5' without real mastery of the

material and understanding of the discipline. We are not here advocating high stakes testing or teaching to the AP standards. At this point, we are merely using the AP exams as a measuring stick for program assessment. For this purpose, the exams are, on the merits, superb, and their validity is already accepted by most departments at most universities, including ISU.

Method

Participants

The 37 participants in this study were all current students enrolled in Dr. Winger's fall 2012 HIS 135 course. Eighteen of these participants had no politics and government experience, meaning they had not completed POL 106 or POL 105 at ISU or earned equivalent credit through another higher education institution or an AP exam.

Procedures

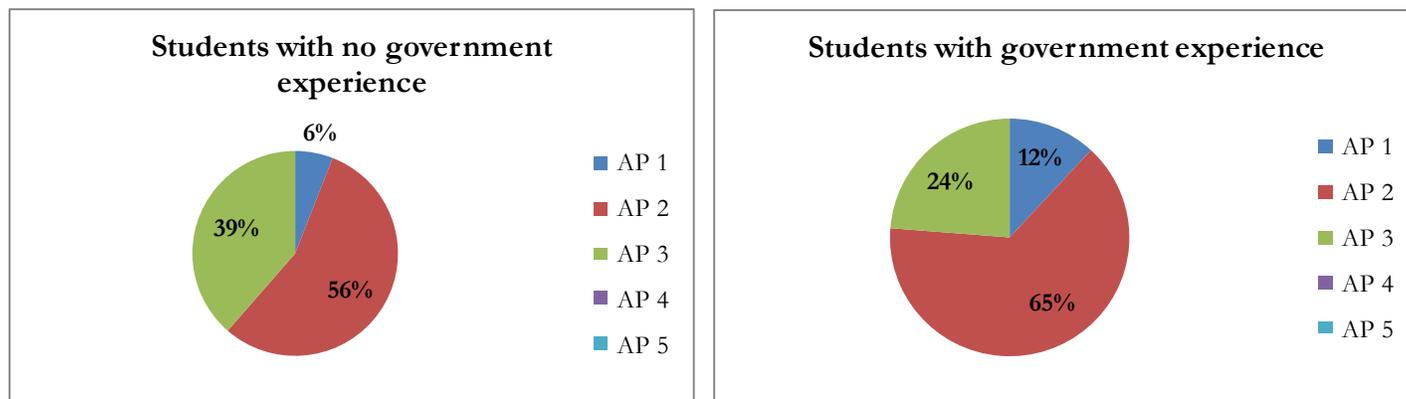
Participants were asked to take three tests throughout the semester: one AP United States Government and Politics exam, and two AP United States History exams (a pre-test and a post-test). Dr. Winger did not choose the versions of the tests that were used or know which version would be used when planning coursework and material for HIS 135, and no modifications were made to the course materials, expectations, or methods of teaching and evaluation based on any AP exams or teaching methods. To insure student motivation, the pre-test for the AP history and the AP government and politics exams were taken for credit as part of the homework grade. The post-test for the AP history exam counted as the final exam, but scores were curved for the purposes of course grading.

Government and politics. One version (1999) of the AP politics and government exam was given to the participants. Students answered all 60 multiple-choice questions. The original exam requires test-takers to answer four free response prompts. Participants answered one of the four questions, which was selected using a random drawing, and their scores were weighted to provide an estimated score for each student had he or she answered all four prompts.

History. The multiple choice (MC) portion of the AP history exam, worth 50% of the overall score, con-

ISU General Education and the AP Exams (cont'd)

Figure 1. Overall AP U.S. government and politics exam scores



sists of 80 questions. After questions pertaining to U.S. history after 1865 were removed from the test, the condensed version that participants took consisted of 28 of the original 80 questions. The Free Response Question (FRQ) section, worth 27.5% of the overall score, requires test takers to respond to an essay prompt. Participants chose one of the two FRQ prompts relevant to U.S. history before 1865. The Document Based Question (DBQ), worth 22.5% of the overall score, also requires test takers to respond to an essay prompt but includes primary source documents, several of which should be used to support the claims in the written response. These include data charts, personal testimonies, political cartoons, and official documents among other types of sources. The DBQ measures the test taker’s historical writing skills, as well as his or her ability to read and interpret various primary source documents.

The pre-test consisted of 28 multiple-choice questions and 2 essay response prompts, while the post-test consisted of 36 multiple-choice questions and 2 essay responses. Each question was weighted in order to provide a final point total that could be scored on the AP scale. At the beginning of the fall 2012 semester, participants took the course-relevant MC portion of the 2006 AP history exam. A week later, the FRQ portion of the pre-test (2012) was distributed, and the DBQ portion of the pre-test (2011, Form B) was distributed three weeks later. The post-test was administered on the designated date of the final exam at the end of the semester. Participants reported to the designated testing room and were given the 1996 AP history exam, excluding the portions of the test that referred to material not covered in the course’s designat-

ed time period. The MC portion was graded using Scantron, while the FRQ and DBQ portions were graded by investigator Doorn using the AP scoring guidelines (see http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam_information/2089.html for more information). Ms. Doorn received training in grading the exams from faculty experienced in grading for AP.

Results

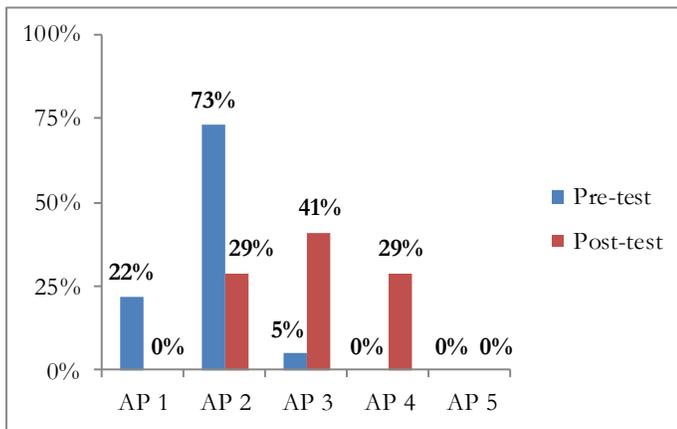
Government and Politics Scores

Students with no college-level coursework in government and politics earned an average overall score of ‘2’ on the AP exam. Students with ISU course credit (from POL 105 or POL 106) also earned an average overall score of ‘2,’ as did students with transfer course credit (see Figure 1). Community college and ISU courses had a negligible impact on student performance against a nationally-accepted standard accepted by ISU.

On the writing section, students with no experience earned an average score of 1.56 out of 9, while students with ISU credit earned an average of 1.53. While the difference is seemingly trivial, it speaks volumes. Not only do students who have earned college credit fail to distinguish themselves from those who have not, they actually underperform in comparison. Students with POL 105 or POL 106 credit marginally outscored students with no credit on the multiple-choice section with an average of 25.85 (no credit average: 24.50). This time, the experienced group did outperform their classmates who had yet to earn course credit, but again, the two groups are nearly indistinguishable.

ISU General Education and the AP Exams (cont'd)

Figure 2. Overall AP U.S. history exam scores



History Scores

Participants' pre-test scores provided a benchmark for evaluating the course's ability to increase student knowledge and ability in U.S. history. As the test is scored out of 180 total points (MC = 90; FRQ = 45; DBQ = 45), each AP exam score (ranges from 1 to 5) includes a range of point values. The Department of History at Illinois State University required a score of '3' on the exam for HIS 135/HIS 136 credit and now requires a score of '4.' Pre-test scores indicated an average score of 29, which falls in the overall score '1' range. This is not alarming, as the participants taking the pre-test had yet to complete the HIS 135 coursework. On the post-test, participants scored an average of 86.24, falling in the overall score '3' range (see Figure 2).

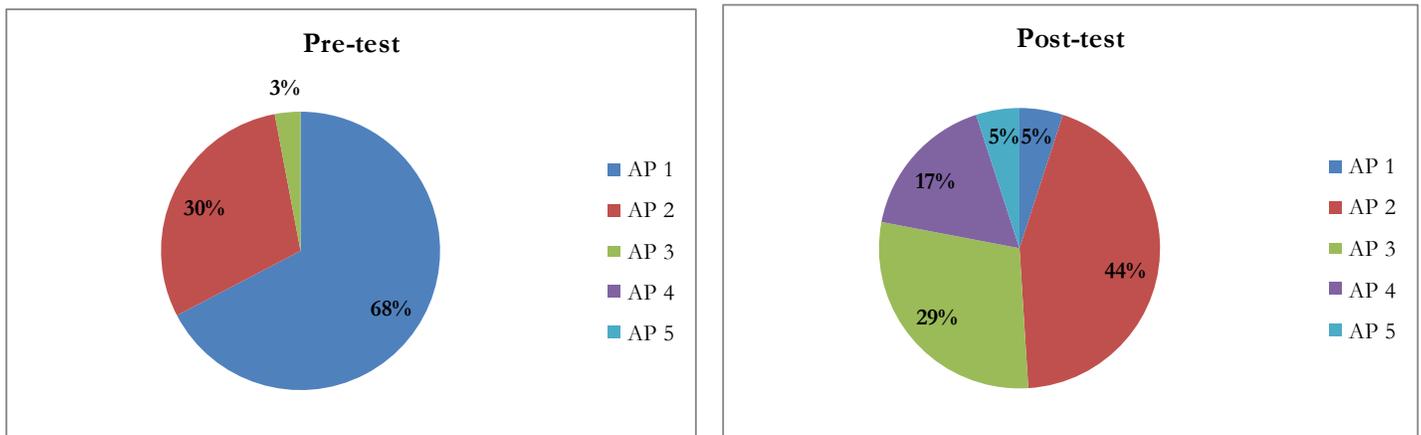
Breaking these numbers down, we can better examine in which areas participants experienced the greatest improvement. Pre-test scores for the MC section av-

eraged 11.3 out of 28, with a range of 6 to 15. The MC section as a whole accounts for 50% of the final test score. If given a final score based on only this section, pre-test participants averaged a score of '2.' Post-test MC results indicated an average of 19.6 out of 36, with a range of 11 to 30. If given a final score equivalent based only on this section, the group averaged a score of '3.' Similarly, scores on the writing portions of the exam increased from the pre-test to the post-test. However, these sections' scores increased more dramatically. Participants' exams were weighted and scored on the AP scale out of 180 points. On average, the group increased this raw score by 35.5 points (19.7%) on the FRQ portion (see Figure 3) and by 29.7 points (16.5%) on the DBQ portion (see Figure 4).

Discussion

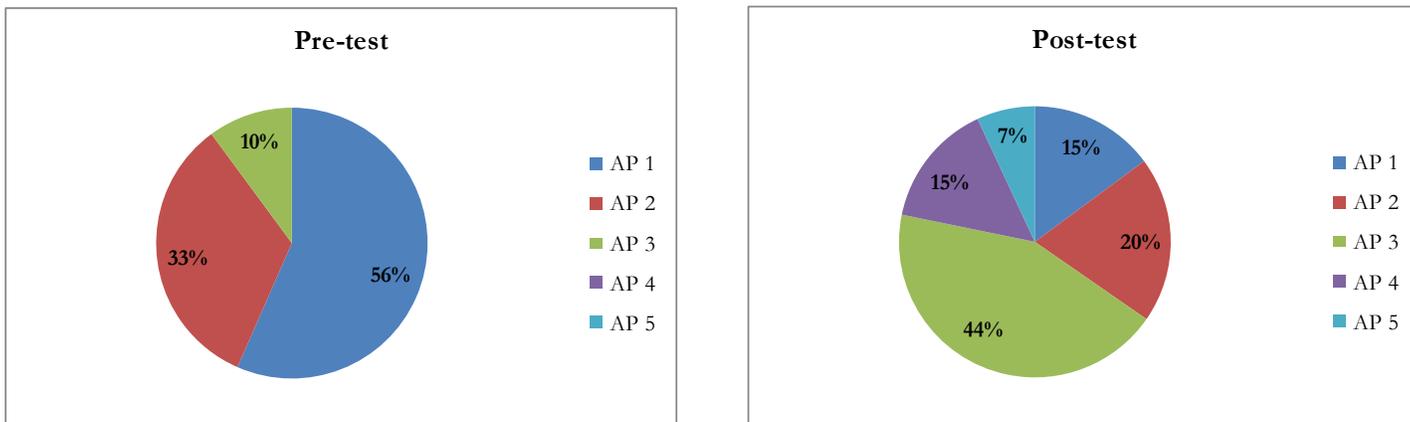
Based on these results, it appears as though a writing-intensive approach to course curriculum is the most effective way to increase both content knowledge and content skill. While there was significant improvement in AP history exam scores at the semester's end, this was not the case for the AP government and politics exam. Exam-based teaching in large sections appears to create a 'teach, learn, test, forget' pattern. A telling exception proved this rule: the one student who scored a '4' on the AP government and politics exam had taken AP government in high school and scored a '4.' The student retained the knowledge and ability. As students engaged in a rigorous curriculum that required a use of the skills necessary to succeed on the written FRQ and DBQ por-

Figure 3. Preliminary final scores on the AP U.S. history exam based only on the free response questions (FRQ)



ISU General Education and the AP Exams (cont'd)

Figure 4. Preliminary final scores on the AP U.S. history exam based only on the document based questions (DBQ)



tions of the AP history exam, they did not sacrifice the basic content knowledge they were promised in the course description. In fact, rather than detracting from the amount of information students were able to retain and use, spending more time practicing critical thinking and writing skills appears to prepare students for the MC portion of the exam more than an information-based course curriculum does.

On the downside, University High School in Normal, IL, and Maine South High School in Park Ridge, IL, both expect an 80% pass rate (a score of '4' or '5') from AP history preparatory classes. Only 29% of students in HIS 135 were able to achieve a '4' on the AP history exam, and none earned a '5' overall, even with a writing-intensive approach. This might be attributed to any number of factors including quality of instruction, the fact that no AP-specific preparation was provided in Dr. Winger's course, and the self-selection of students for high school AP courses, as well as intrinsic student motivation or ability. Finally, it may be difficult to square a demanding '4' on the AP exams for credit at ISU when only 29% of students in our own course were able to reach that mark. Only 51% of students achieved a '3' or higher on the post-test FRQ portion of the exam, easily the most difficult portion, so there is definitely room for improvement in this key category.

On the other hand, 70% of HIS 135 students were able to achieve a passing overall score of '3' at the end of the semester. Impressive gains were achieved in a writing-intensive environment, even on the multiple choice section of the exam, and because writing and document analysis were so central to the course, we

especially take consolation in the post-test DBQ scores as 65% of students passed this section with an overall of '3' or higher.

The AP exam is only one measure, and if not quite objective, it is an independent measure, one that is widely accepted, including by ISU. The results here strongly suggest that smaller sections of writing-intensive general education courses would serve our students far better than mass sections supported by 'clickers' and other electronic gadgets intended to provide general education on the cheap. If carefully trained, a graduate assistant and even undergraduate teaching assistants can provide essential support for slightly larger classes, but there are limits to what can be done by any one instructor. Like a golf-swing, critical thinking and writing requires individual instruction. They require practice and repetitive scrutiny. This in turn requires writing, correction, and rewriting. Without working through information in this way, it appears little is actually retained. There can be no substitute for making students think and write again and again about challenging issues, supporting their arguments with evidence from difficult sources.

There are limits to the use of the AP exam in this way. It is labor intensive, and the test is subject to critique on the merits. But it does provide a useful benchmark. The AP exam might be used to evaluate the program performance of our writing courses, ENG 101 and COM 110, for instance, and we call upon our colleagues in relevant disciplines to do this. Any discipline that has a corresponding AP exam has a ready-made widely-accepted benchmark. This information might also be used to check rampant grade inflation driven in

ISU General Education and the AP Exams (cont'd)

part by the reliance on student course evaluations in the assessment of faculty. Although 30% of students in HIS 135 did not achieve a passing score of '3' on the AP history exam, they did not fail the course. Perhaps they should have. Had they been warned of that possibility from the beginning, perhaps they would have worked much harder and scored much higher. More importantly, they might have learned something and grown intellectually in exchange for their tuition dollar. Whatever else one says about the AP exams, they have had the effect of enforcement, reinforcing intellectual seriousness in the high school environment. Using the AP exams or similar exams, such as the International

Baccalaureate, in program analysis might do the same for ISU.

References

General Education Task Force (2012). *Mission, Goals, and Outcomes*. Normal, IL: Illinois State University. Retrieved from <http://provost.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/gened/MissionGoalsOutcomeFinal.pdf>

Illinois State University (2014). *Undergraduate Catalog 2014-2016*. Normal, IL: Office of Enrollment Management and Academic Services. Retrieved from <http://illinoisstate.edu/catalog/pdf/undergrad.pdf>

A Longitudinal Examination of First-Year Student Engagement at Illinois State University

Derek Herrmann, Assistant Director, University Assessment Services

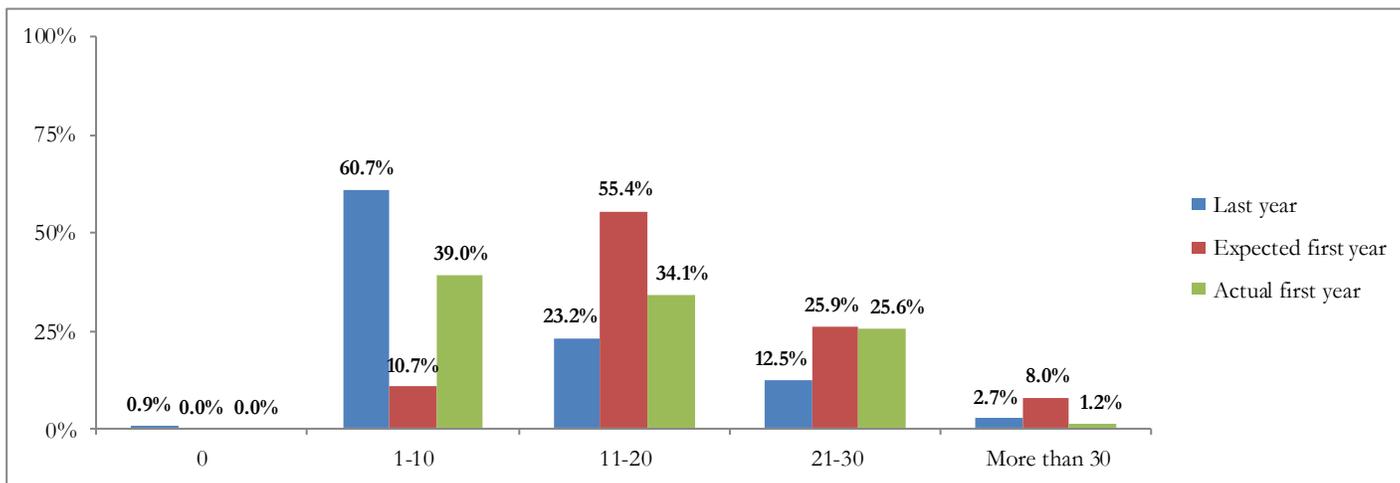
University Assessment Services coordinates the administration of three surveys of student engagement at Illinois State University: the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). Each of these is administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research every year, but their administration at Illinois State University occurs on a three-year cycle. The BCSSE was last administered during the summer 2012 Preview Orientation sessions to incoming first-year students; the NSSE was last administered during the spring 2013 semester to first-year and senior students, and the FSSE was administered this past spring semester to faculty members who taught at least one undergraduate course during the 2013-2014 academic year. This article will examine the responses of those first-year students who responded to both the 2012 BCSSE and the 2013 NSSE ($n = 112$, see Table 1 for the demographic information of those who completed both questionnaires). Examining the survey responses with this group of students can provide a longitudinal perspective on students' engagement during their last year of high school, their expected engagement during their first year of college (both from the BCSSE), and their actual engagement during their first year of college (from the NSSE).

Table 1. Demographic information for the population and sample of first-year student survey respondents.

Demographic	Population (N = 1,310)		Sample (n = 112)	
	#	%	#	%
<i>Enrollment</i>				
Full-time	1,309	99.9	112	100.0
Part-time	1	0.1	0	0.0
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	800	61.1	84	75.0
Male	510	38.9	28	25.0
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>				
Black or African American	94	7.2	9	8.0
Asian or Asian American	31	2.4	3	2.7
Hispanic, Latino/a, or Chicano/a	67	5.1	5	4.5
Multi-racial/ethnic	99	7.6	15	13.4
American Indian, Native American, or Native North American	2	0.2	0	0
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0	0	0
White or Caucasian	1,014	77.4	80	71.4
Other	0	0.0	0	0
Foreign or Non-resident alien	0	0.0	0	0
Unknown	3	0.2	0	0

First-Year Student Engagement at ISU (cont'd)

Figure 1. Number of hours first-year students spent preparing for class in a typical week



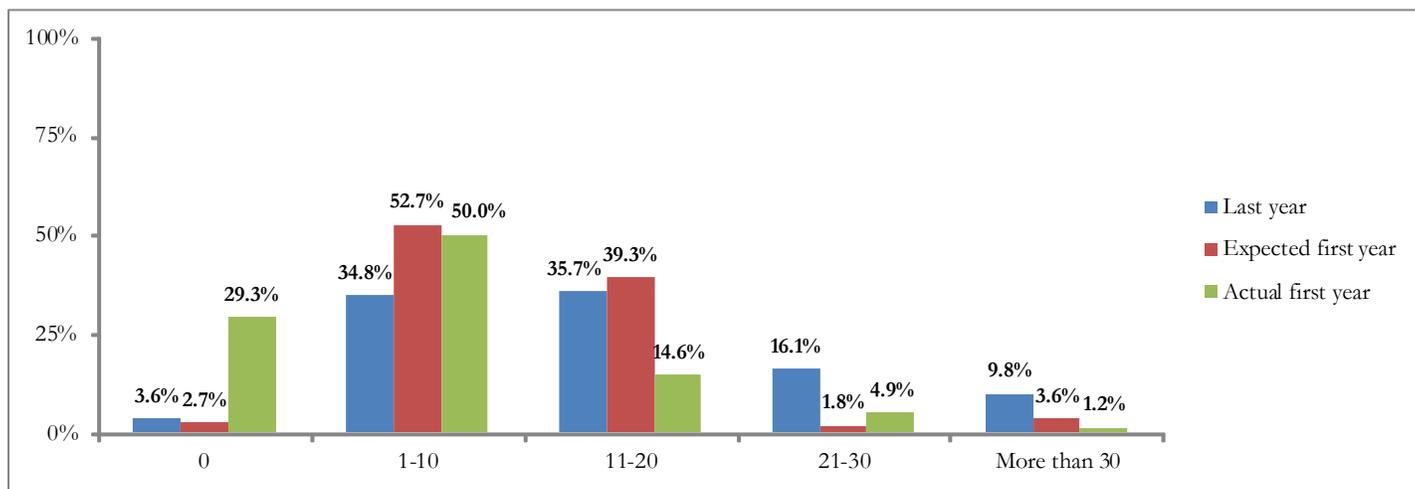
Because of the low number of responses, the characteristics of the sample were compared to those of the population of first-year students who completed both questionnaires to determine how similar these two groups were (with more similarities indicating greater confidence in the generalizability of the results). This analysis indicated that there was a significantly higher proportion of female students in this sample than in the population, $\chi^2(1, N = 112) = 9.1, p = .002$; however, there were no significant differences in the race/ethnicity and enrollment status between the sample and the population. Thus, the sample seems to be representative of the population of students who completed both the BCSSE and the NSSE, but the results should not be interpreted as generalizable to the overall population of first-year students.

Results

General Indicators of Student Engagement

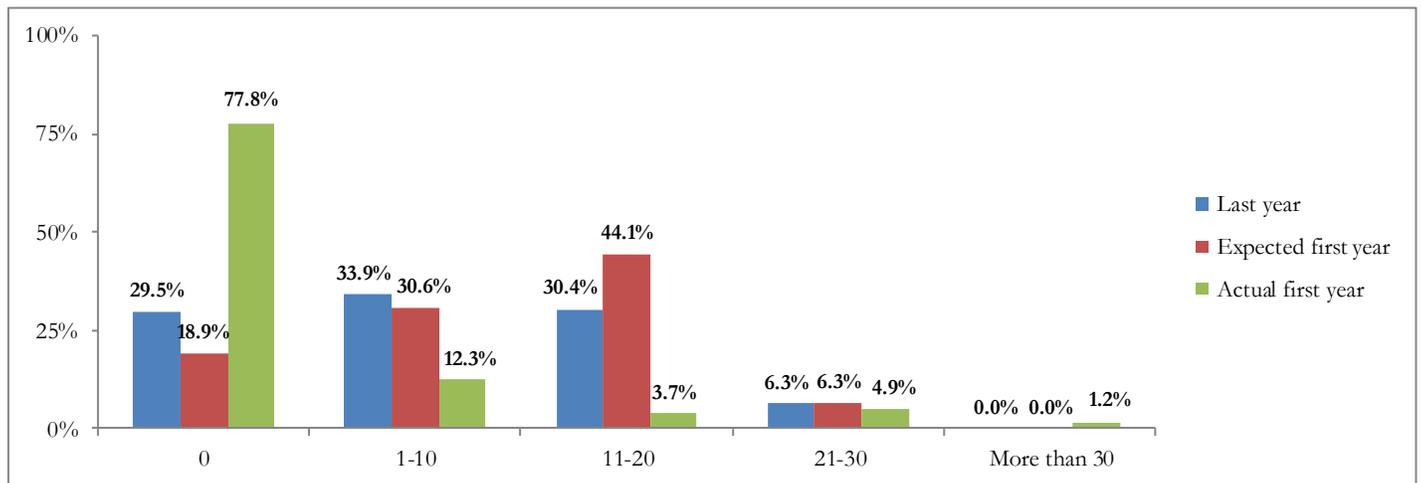
Four items on both questionnaires provide an overall indication of how students spent their time during their last year of high school and their first year of college. Figure 1 contains students' responses to how many hours in a typical week they spent preparing for class during their last year of high school, how many hours they expected to spend during their first year of college, and how many hours they did spend during their first year. On average, students spent 1-10 hours per week preparing for class during their last year of high school and expected to spend 11-20 hours during their first year of college. They reported spending an average of 11-20 hours per week during their first year. Figure 2 provides the same information but for hours spent participating in co-curricular activities. During

Figure 2. Number of hours first-year students spent participating in co-curricular activities in a typical week



First-Year Student Engagement at ISU (cont'd)

Figure 3. Number of hours first-year students spent working for pay in a typical week



their last year of high school, students spent an average of 11-20 hours per week doing this. They expected to spend 1-10 hours per week participating in such activities, and they reported spending 1-10 hours during their first year.

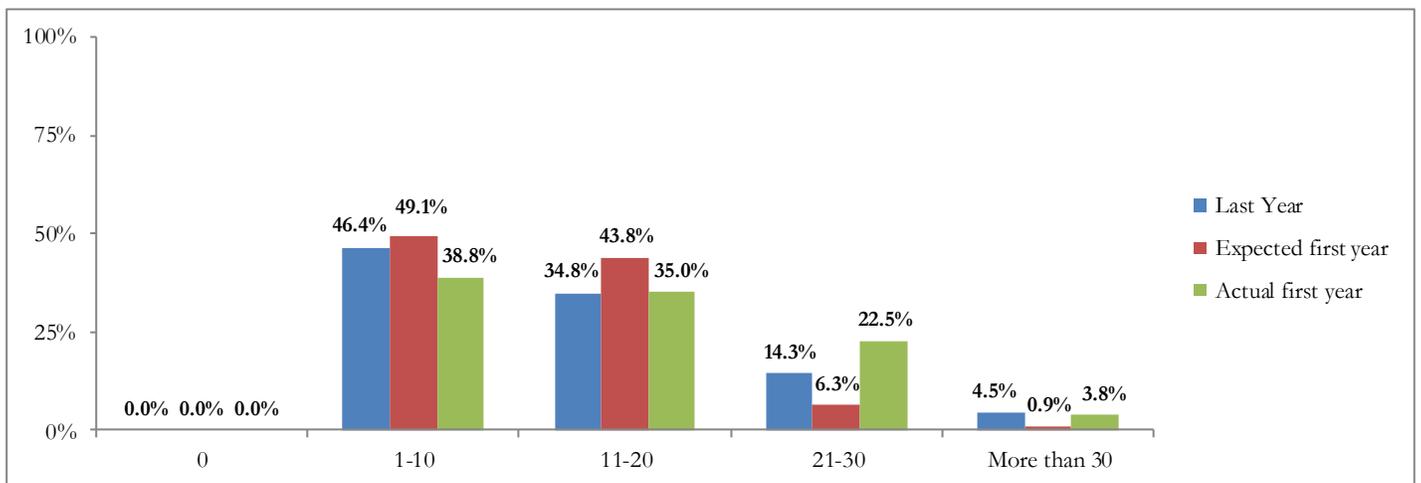
Figure 3 contains the number of hours students spent/expected to spend working for pay. On average, students spent 1-10 hours a week working during their last year of high school, and they expected to spend 11-20 hours a week during their first year of college; however, they spent an average of 0 hours working during their first year. Figure 4 contains the number of hours in a typical week students spent/expected to spend relaxing and socializing. During their last year of high school, students spent an average of 11-20 hours a week doing this, and they expected to spend the same amount during their first year of college.

They reported that they did spend this much time relaxing and socializing during their first year of college.

Specific Indicators of Student Engagement

In addition to the previous four items, several items related to specific activities on the BCSSE have counterparts on the NSSE. Each of these items was rated on the following scale in terms of how often students did them or expected to do them: Never, Sometimes, Often, and Very often. During their last year of high school, students on average often asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions; they expected to do this often during their first year of college, and on average, they did this often during their first year. Students on average often made a class presentation during their last year of high school, and they expected to do so as frequently during their first year of college. But

Figure 4. Number of hours first-year students spent relaxing and socializing in a typical week



First-Year Student Engagement at ISU (cont'd)

on average, they did this only sometimes during their first year of college.

During their last year of high school, students on average often discussed grades or assignments with a teacher and they expected to do this often during their first year of college; however, they only sometimes did this. On average, students sometimes discussed ideas from their reading or class with a teacher outside of class; they expected to do this sometimes during their first year of college, and they reported that they did. During their last year of high school, students on average sometimes had serious conversations with students of a different race/ethnicity than their own. They expected to do this often during their first year of college, and they reported that they did.

Discussion

These results indicated that first-year students at Illinois State University accurately predicted how often they would ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions and how often they would discuss ideas with a faculty member outside of class, both of these continuing in frequency during their first year of college with which they did them during their last year of high school. Although they expected to make a class presentation and discuss grades or assignments with an instructor during their first year of college as often as they did during their last year of high school, they did both of these less often during their first year. In addition, first-year students accurately predicted how often they would have serious conversations with students of a different race/ethnicity than their own, which was more often than they did during their last year of high school. Regarding how first-year students spent their time, more hours were spent preparing for class but less hours were spent participating in co-curricular activities during their first year of college than during their last year of high school (and both were accurately predicted). The same number of hours was spent relaxing and socializing during their last year of high school and their first year of college and also was accurately predicted. Although students worked during their last year of high school and expected to work more during their first year of college, they reported that they did not work.

There are some limitations that need to be stated regarding these results. As mentioned previously, these results are based on 112 first-year students, and there was a significantly higher proportion of female students in this sample than in the population of students who completed both the BCSSE and the NSSE (although there were no differences among other demographic variables). So these results may not be generalizable to the overall population of first-year students at Illinois State University. The average scores (medians as appropriate given the ordinal scales of the items) were reported and used as the basis for this article; although this statistic provides a measure of central tendency, it cannot tell the whole story. And so the figures for the overall engagement items were provided (and further results can be found on the University Assessment Services [website](#)).

Despite these limitations, the results provide a longitudinal examination of student engagement across the last year of high school and the first year of college. As would be expected, first-year students are spending more time preparing for class, less time participating in co-curricular activities, and about the same amount of time relaxing and socializing as they did during their last year of high school. What is surprising is that students are working less than they did and than what they expected. Interestingly, similar results were found when we examined first-year student engagement longitudinally with the 2009 BCSSE and the 2010 NSSE (see the UAS staff's article in the [Spring 2011 issue](#) of *Progressive Measures*). One thing that precluded further examinations at the individual item level was that all three student engagement surveys were revised in 2013. Thus, only a few items between the 2012 BCSSE and the 2013 NSSE were similar enough to make meaningful comparisons regarding first-year student engagement. In the future, such investigations, including comparisons between student (from the NSSE) and faculty (from the FSSE) perceptions of student engagement, will be possible because the items will be aligned across the three questionnaires. For now, however, these results provide a unique, longitudinal perspective on how first-year students are engaged, both in and out of the classroom, here at Illinois State University.

Contact University Assessment Services for all of your program assessment needs!
