

# **Behavioral Sciences General Education Performance Task Report**

## **Background**

During the spring 2018 assessment day 42 students with 90 or more credit hours were randomly chosen and participated in the behavioral sciences general education performance task. Students were allotted 90 minutes for completion of the task. Professors in the general education behavioral sciences distribution agreed upon a performance task and scoring rubric to assess student learning of the general education behavioral sciences outcome and performance indicators.

## **Behavioral Sciences General Education Outcome and Performance Indicators**

**Student Learning Outcome:** Students should be able to illustrate the relationship between the self and the social world.

**Performance Indicators –** Students should be able to:

1. Describe the ways in which the social world shapes the self.
2. Describe the ways in which the self alters the social world.

## **Performance Task Overview**

Students were provided with a letter from a fictitious United State senator asking them (the senator's aide) for assistance in taking a stance on a social issue, Net Neutrality. Students were given articles regarding the issue which included varying perspectives of the issue. Students were asked to make a recommendation if the senator should bring forth a bill recommending the reinstatement of Net Neutrality or take a backseat on the issue. Students were also asked a series of questions: 1) how the passage or repeal of the bill would affect individuals, small businesses, and internet providers, 2) how the bill would impact constituents and individual's ability to impact the social world, and 3) describe future consequences of the recommendation on communities. The task components included:

- An introduction to the task
- Letter from a United States senator asking for assistance regarding a current issue
- Articles from a variety of sources about the issue
- Scoring rubric
- Questions and answer form

Students were scored on a rubric from 0-3 points:

- 0 points=Not evidenced
- 1 point=Beginning
- 2 points=Proficient
- 3 points=Exemplary

Based on two performance indicators:

1. Describe the ways in which the social world shapes the self
2. Describe the ways in which the self alters the social world.

## **Scoring Team Composition**

The scoring team was comprised of two professors teaching in the behavioral sciences department and one professor outside the department and an Assistant Professor of Communication. The communication faculty member served as the external scoring team member because they do not teach within the GE behavioral sciences distribution, yet have an understanding of communication content. The team felt this was important because Introduction to Human Communication is a course taught in this GE distribution. Faculty teaching in the GE behavioral sciences distribution and the behavioral sciences department proctored the task.

## **Scoring Team Observations**

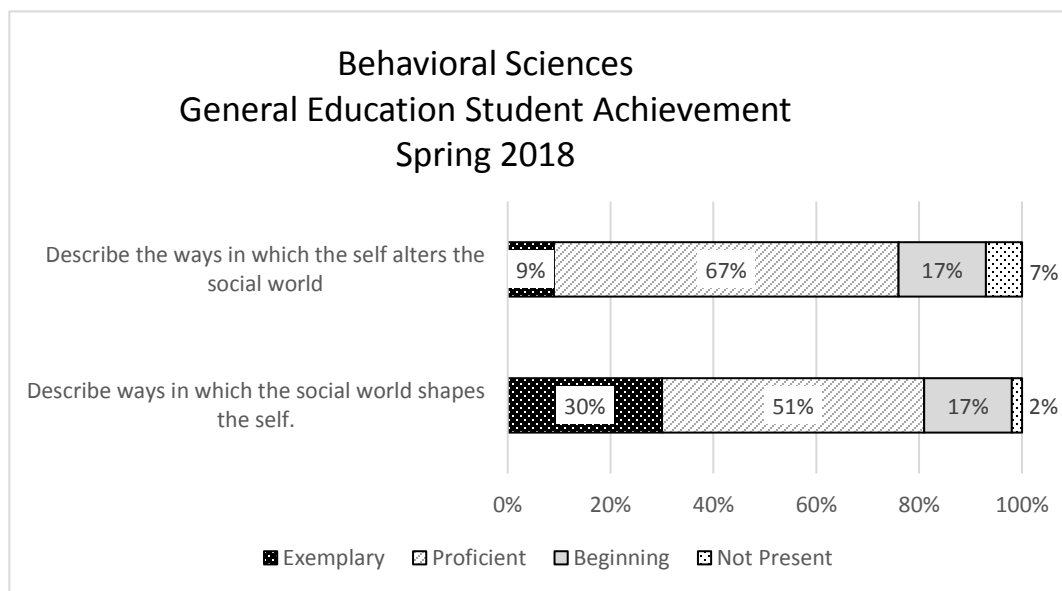
- Creating the task, I think the hardest part was identifying a timely issue that would resonate with students but would not inflame strong opinions so that we would not be reading rhetoric but yet would still be something they would find interesting.
- Topic, Net Neutrality, was timely and relevant. Task issue will need to change so it is relevant to students at the time of the next administration.
- As we created the rubric we saw the two skills as being different but interrelated. I believe we put in sufficient time to make sure that the categories were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. I believe the norming process helped us stay on task and kept us straying from the rubric. I appreciated that we normed pre-test this showed us that some words needed to have definitions because the three pre-test subjects were not entirely sure what the words meant. We scored the first few responses while we were all together to check for inter-rater reliability. We did this again with the responses from the students who took the exam at a later time. This gave us another chance to verify our consistency in evaluating the responses using the rubric. From a research point of view I found this to be quite helpful.
- The scoring rubric is not specific to the GE task, it can be used in behavioral sciences GE courses between performance task administrations for formative assessment of student learning of the GE SLO/PIs.
- Made changes to rubric, source packet, and questions as a result of piloting the task with students.
  - We dropped one of the readings as our pre-test demonstrated that it was labor intensive for our students. Based on the feedback from the pre-test we dropped the longest article. Dropping this article meant we lost all references to the fact that small entrepreneurs might be at a disadvantage from an advertising point of view.
  - Added definitions of terms to the rubric
- Was harder for scoring team to score the SLO “how the social world shapes the self”, but students achieved proficiency or better at a higher rate on this PI. Is the higher level of student learning a product of more intentional scoring by the scoring team?
- I was disappointed over the general lack of critical thinking. Students demonstrated that they were quite able to read and synthesis information but less able to evaluate that information.
- Calibration/recalibration sessions with other graders were very helpful to clarify the criteria on scoring, substantially enhancing reliability of scoring.

## **Changes and Suggestions**

- Balance questions equally between two performance indicators, seems PI #1 emphasized more heavily than PI #2.
- One question and space for writing answer per page of the answer packet.
- Recommend provide equal answer space for each question. Noticed that when the question is placed at the bottom part of the sheet, leaving relatively small space for response, students’ answer for that question tended to be rather shorter.

- Include student self-reported motivation on a separate page or back of the answer packet so scorers won't see students' self-reported motivation while scoring student work. You could not help but see students' self-reported motivation when you turned to the page and it was difficult not to let that influence your evaluation of the responses.
- Not sure of response rate (76%), do have a concern about those who failed to showed up and reason why. We may need some incentives or tools to encourage all of them to take the test.
- To increase spring attendance:
  - IRA send save the date emails to fall and spring task students at beginning of the year.
  - Send reminders at key times during fall/interterm to spring task students.
- Administration and calibration sessions went smoothly.
- Assessment office needs plenty of time to scrub student identifiers from work, make copies of student work for group scoring, etc. Suggest begin scoring student work the next day or later in the afternoon (4 p.m. or after).
- Remember to organize student IDs on scoring sheet in chronological order.
- For the sake of consistency and reliability among scorers, it would be desirable to state in advance that the difference between “Beginning” and “Proficient” category in our rubric using the number of logical and supported examples, NOT the quality of answers. Having said that, I am still not convinced whether using the number of examples provided by students as a criterion for scoring is a good idea or not. Want to find a way to balance adequate number of examples and quality of the examples.

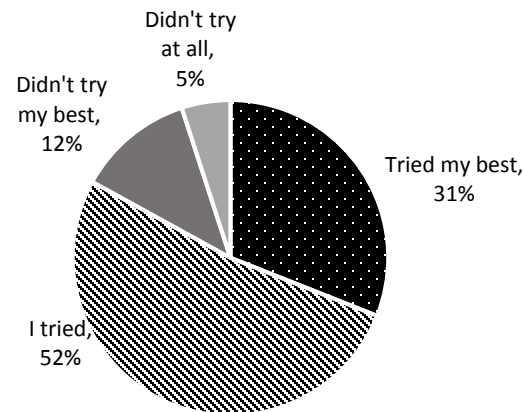
**Student Achievement** Overall Student Achievement (N=42)



## Observations:

- 76% of students achieved at the exemplary or proficient performance level in describing ways in which the self alters the social world.
- 81% of students achieved at the exemplary or proficient performance level in describing ways in which the social world shapes the self.
- 17% of students scored at the beginning level for each outcome.
- Scoring team members' observations:
  - Impression that overall, students have done much better job in answering the questions intended to measure the first criteria – ways the social world shapes the self-that the second criteria, ways the self alters the social world. Does it reflect the relative absence of campus activism in our time? Or the lack of emphasis by instructors on the significance of social justice/transformation? Or the individualistic tendency on the part of students? Based on this assessment, I feel I need to allocate more time and energy on this issue in my courses.
  - As we created the rubric we all were confident that we taught both performance indicators (PIs) equally well. What I learned is that we are not as even handed as we thought. I thought the evaluation of student work would demonstrate that the two skills were interwoven and the score on one skill would be predictive of the score on the other PI that was not necessarily the case. To me, the idea that the two PIs are interrelated is obvious but it is not as obvious to a student which means that I need to re-assess the way I teach and evaluate this SLO-perhaps all faculty teaching in the GE area should/need to do so.
  - Harder for students to see how they impact the world as an individual than how the world impacts them.

## Student Self-Reported Motivation



Describe the ways in which the self alters the social world.

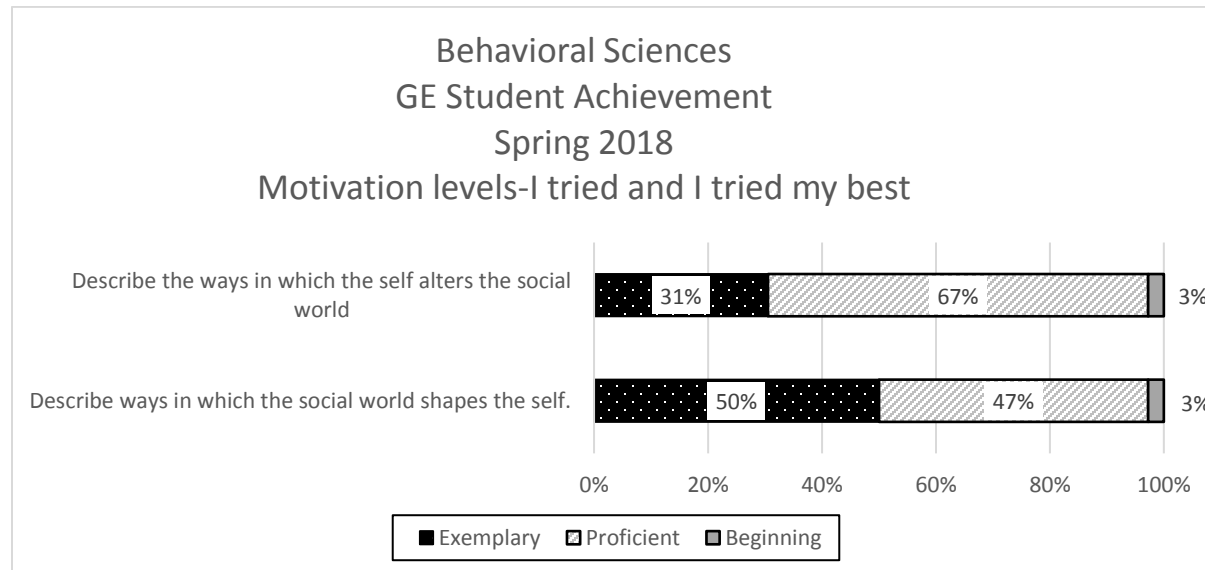
Motivation Level	Rubric Score			
	0	1	2	3
I didn't try at all	1	1		
I didn't try my best	1	3		
I tried		1	17	5
I tried my best			7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>11</b>

Describe ways in which the social world shapes the self.

Motivation Level	Rubric Score			
	0	1	2	3
I didn't try at all	1		1	
I didn't try my best		3	1	
I tried		1	11	11
I tried my best			6	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>

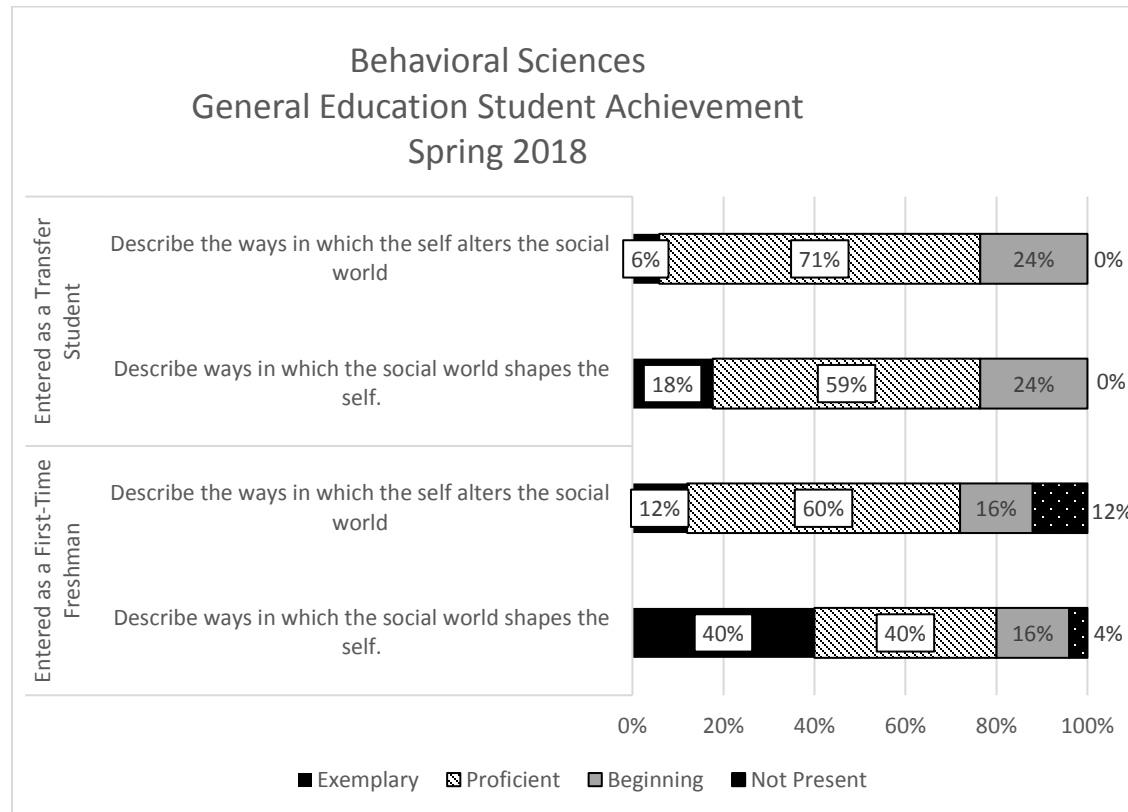
### Observations:

- The majority of students, 83%, said they tried their best or tried when taking the performance task.
- 13 no shows, 10 had above a 3.0 GPA, 10 were males, 10 were transfer students.
- Scoring team observation: During task administration, pleased so many students worked with diligence, vast majority took their time, read the material and tried to formulate a meaningful answer, did not think that so many students would pay this much attention to it. Students' reported motivation supports this observation.



## Student Achievement by Enrollment Category

Enrolled as a first-time freshman N=25, Enrolled as a transfer Student N=17



### Observations:

- 72% of students enrolled as first-time freshmen when entering M.C. scored at the exemplary or proficient levels in describing ways in which the self alters the social world. 77% of transfer students scored at the exemplary or proficient levels.
- 80% of students enrolled as first-time freshmen when entering M.C. scored at the exemplary or proficient levels in describing ways in which the social world shapes the self, 77% of transfer students scored at the exemplary or proficient levels.
- 76% (13 of 17) of transfer students did not take a GE behavioral sciences course at M.C.
- Scoring team observations:
  - No transfer students were at the “not present” level for either PI.
  - Noted difference in freshman and transfer students’ performance in PI #2’s exemplary category, but when combined with “proficient” level results even out.

## National Survey of Student Engagement

### Sample Size

2013: Freshmen n=136

2013 Seniors n=99

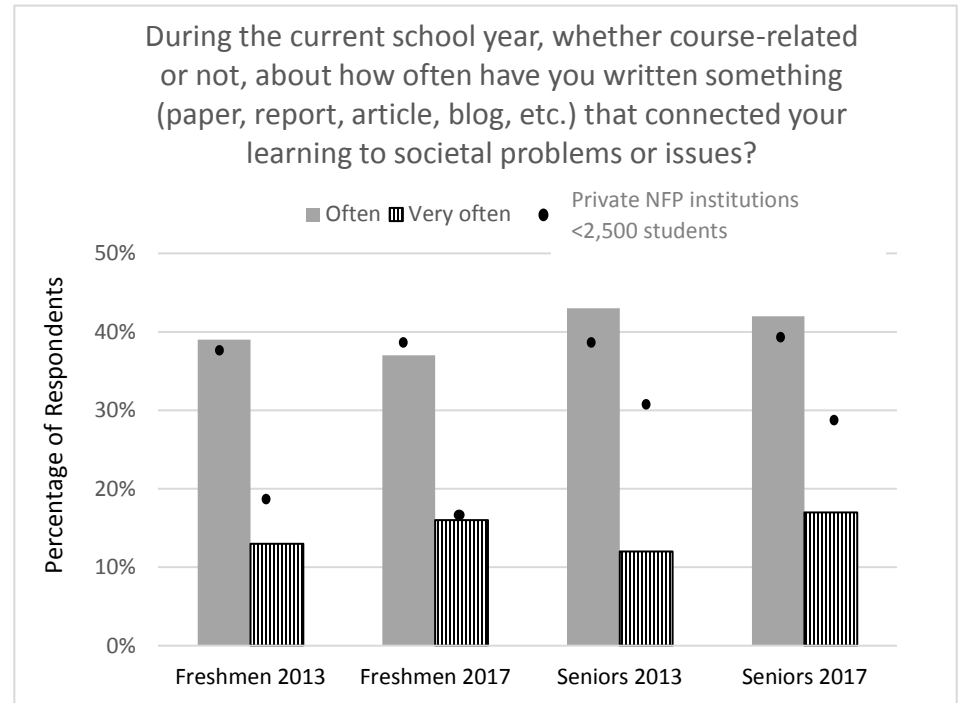
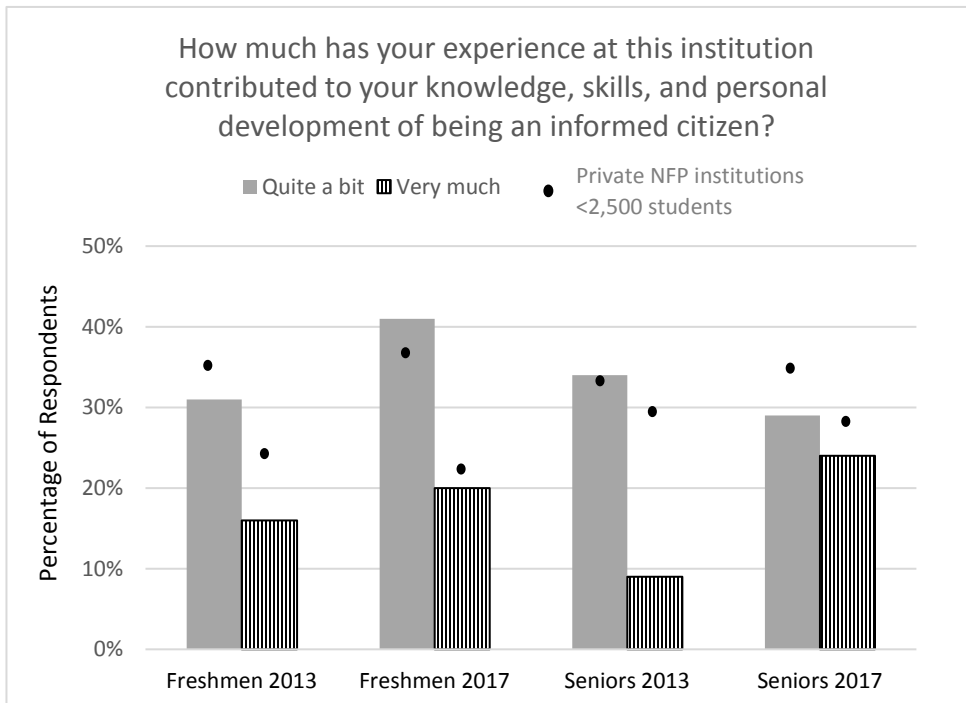
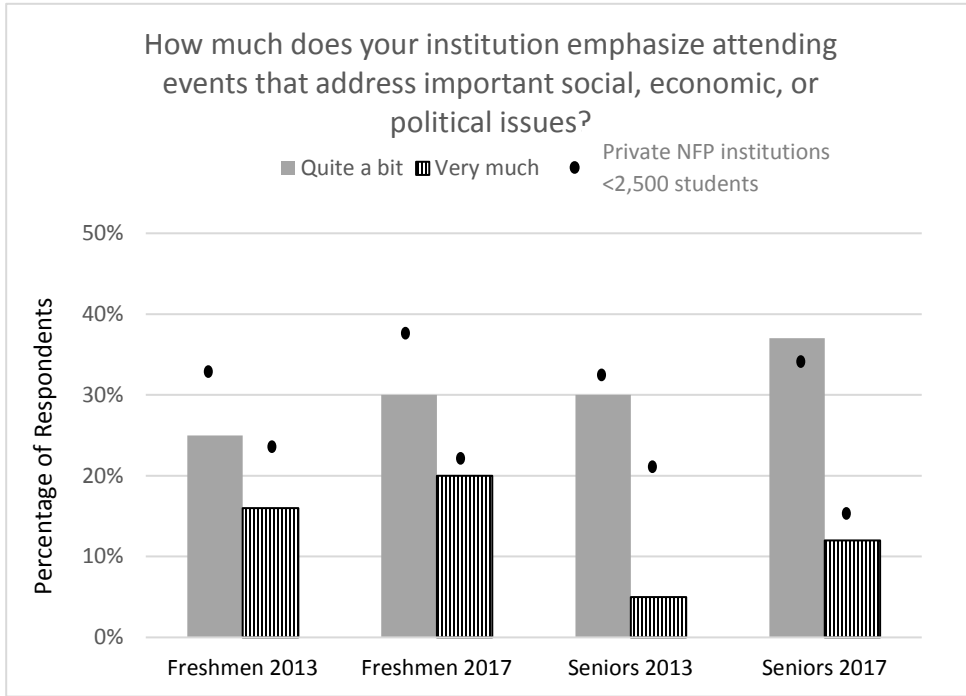
2017: Freshmen n=180

2017 Seniors n=112

*Chart: Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number, percentages may not equal 100.*

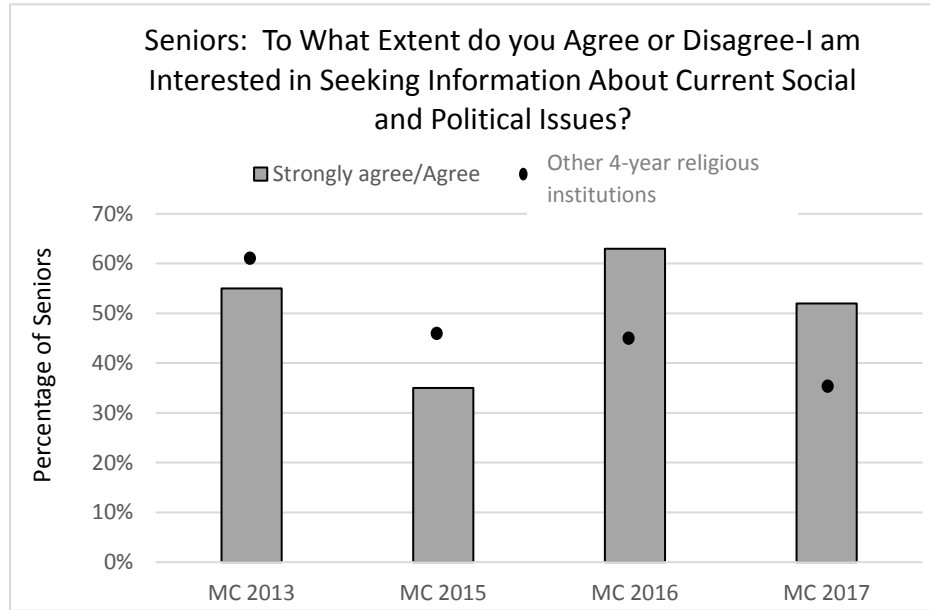
### Scoring Team Observations

- Overall responses gained some ground in 2017 vs. 2013, still lag behind nationally comparable institutions in each of these NSSE areas.
- MC made progress from 2013 to 2017 in contributing to students' knowledge, skills, and personal development of being an informed citizen (freshman 47%-61% and seniors 43% to 53%).
- Connecting writing to societal problems or issues-minimal gains overall from 2013-2017. There are increased responses from MC students in the "very much" category in 2017, however, responses still lag behind other comparable institutions in the nation.



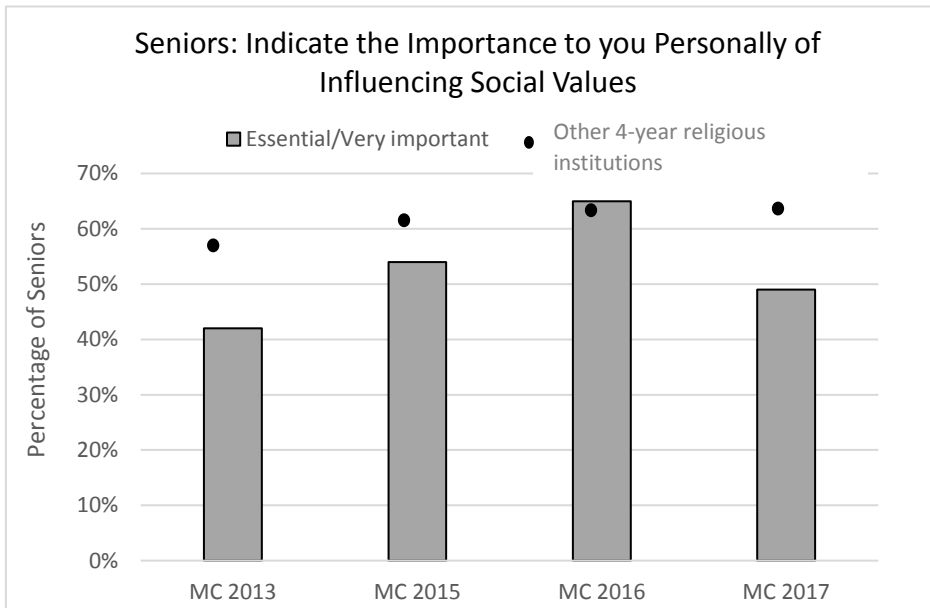
## College Senior Survey 2013-2017

The College Senior Survey (CSS) is administered each spring to graduating seniors. The college's survey return rate is typically 80+ percent. Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number, percentages may not equal 100. 2014-data excluded due to different sampling technique



### Scoring Team Observations

- Fluctuations may not be surprising because it seems election years may be impacting the results. 2013 was right after an election and 2016 was gearing up for an election.
- Question is: Are faculty incorporating more political content into the curriculum and class discussions prior to an election year, i.e. 2016?
- Thought 2017 might be lower, may be this high because of an increase in the number of politically related headlines.





## Scoring team recommendations for Education Policies Committee

1. In 2020 when a general education plan is being considered, the scoring team recommends analyzing transfer student general education assessment results from 2017-2020 to determine if the college should continue to waive general education requirements for students with associate degrees? The IMGs are the purpose statement for general education and the college expects all graduates to be able to demonstrate proficiency of the IMGs.

## Scoring team recommendations within the general education behavioral sciences distribution:

1. Most faculty have already begun placing more emphasis on SLO 1, “Students should be able to describe the ways in which the self alters the social world” when teaching the qualifying general education courses.
2. Determine if and how to balance the rubric’s qualitative and quantitative criteria. Adjust the rubric criteria as needed.
3. In 2020 use the general education rubric for formative assessment in Junior Seminar, PY/SO 375 or Senior Seminar, PY/SO 475, particularly to inform if the increased emphasis on SLO 1 is impacting student proficiency levels. Use the results to inform teaching and learning before the next institutional behavioral sciences general education assessment.

## **Group Discussion Notes**

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*(asked to pair into groups of 2-4 people w/at least one person not in your own academic department)*

### 1. What are your groups’ questions about the data?

We should consider that society DOES impact us more than we impact society.

About indirect data-why are we not measuring up to our comparison institutions?

Conclusions not related to data no previous relations to compare so cannot make the conclusions that were reached.

How might the data be impacted by wording of questions? Or order of questions?

How much change is needed when 83% tried hard and 81% were at least proficient?

If older students generally try to do well-seems more like an assessment effort, not of knowledge.

Proficient and exemplary? Great job!

Is the sample size large enough?

## 2. What does your group think about the scoring team's recommendation to EPC?

This data may not indicate pulling apart transfer data. But it's \*fine\* to answer that questions.

Blanket...instead of being selective about gen. ed. courses, being selected.

How would not accepting general education programs for associate degreed students affect recruitment of these students?

How big is the gap between transfers and first-time freshmen at MC? Where are the gaps specifically? Example: some transfers don't need a philosophy and religion or 2 science classes.

Does the question imply we do have power?

## 3. What other recommendation(s) would the group make to EPC?

Perhaps student should be required to take philosophy and religion classes which increase introspection (and address that objective about influencing society).

We need to do more to encourage activism out of the classroom.

Campus ministry need to lead some of this too.

Like the recommendation to EPC, it is not a conclusion about data, rather a request to look at aggregate data to make a conclusion.

Recommend finding way to get more students to attend enrichments, like lecture series.

Explore only counting transfer credits of C or higher even if part of an associate degree.

Don't cap waiting lists so we have true data on the number of students' needing/wanting a class-to determine if we need another section.

Suggestion to EPC: create a positive incentive to participate in assessment (instead of avoiding punishment). For example, students get opportunity to enter drawing for great prizes.

Keep results of data (and interpretations) and share more often with faculty.

How can we safely know what a 2 year transfer student has learned? Or the quality of learning? 1) a scoring system should exist for 2 year (associate degree) transfer students to make sure they fulfil gen-ed requirements. 2) Equivalency exam (perhaps the safer option).

## Actions

1. Faculty in general education area are placing more emphasis on SLO 1 when teaching behavioral science general education courses, "Students should be able to describe the ways in which the self alters the social world" when teaching the qualifying general education courses.

2. In 2020 the general education rubric will be used for formative assessment in Junior Seminar, PY/SO 375 or Senior Seminar, PY/SO 475, particularly to inform if the increased emphasis on SLO 1 is impacting student proficiency levels. Use the results to inform teaching and learning before the next institutional behavioral sciences general education assessment.
3. After using rubric in courses and for formative assessment in 2020, determine if and how to balance the rubric's qualitative and quantitative criteria. Adjust the rubric criteria as needed.