Essential Studies—Diversity and Information Literacy

What students are saying about Information Literacy and Diversity

Concluding our series of clips on the Essential Studies goals of the University of North Dakota, this edition focuses on the final two areas: Information Literacy and Diversity.

Information Literacy

According to the ES website, students should be able to evaluate information for effective, efficient, and ethical use in a variety of contexts. To improve these skills, ES courses ask students to practice the following:

- Access needed information effectively, efficiently, ethically, and legally.
- Evaluate the credibility of information and its sources.
- Use information to effectively and ethically accomplish a specific purpose.

This IR Clip reviews key survey data, of the three populations of students that we have survey responses for (freshmen, sophomores, seniors).

Freshmen

Of the UND freshmen respondents of the 2009 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 72.7% report they “often” or “very often” worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources. While high, this percentage is slightly lower than their national peers who report 77.6% in the same categories. Further, 53.0% of UND freshmen “often” or “very often” put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussion compared to 51.1% of their national peers.

Another important survey of UND freshmen, the 2009 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, reveals that 75.8% (79.2% natl.) “frequently” used the internet for research or homework with more women (83.2%) reporting than men (69.1%); 37.8% (45.3% natl.) “frequently” used the internet to read news sites, and 21.8% (25.5% natl.) “frequently” used it to read blogs. However, 32.3% (38.0% natl.) report that they “frequently” evaluate the quality or reliability of the information they received; an additional 63.2% (57.4% natl.) report they do so “occasionally.”

Sophomores

Respondents of the 2009 UND Sophomore Satisfaction Survey reveal a number of things concerning their experience with information literacy at UND. First, 35.9% believe that UND contributed “very much” to their personal growth in understanding written information with sophomore women (41.0%) feeling stronger than men (29.7%) in this category. An additional 52.4% of UND sophomores report that UND contributed “somewhat” in their personal growth in understanding written information.

Second, 32.6% believe UND contributed “very much” to their personal growth in evaluating the credibility of information, yet again there is a notable difference between female (42.8%) and male (20.0%) respondents. An additional 53.4% believe that UND contributed “somewhat” to their personal growth in evaluating the credibility of information.

Also, 33.9% of UND sophomores believe that UND contributed “very much” in their personal growth in using the library. Once again, UND sophomore women (41.0%) feel more strongly than men (25.5%) in this area. An additional 37.9% feel that UND contributed “somewhat” to their personal growth in using the library.

For more detailed information about any of our surveys, please refer to http://www.und.edu/dept/datacol/reports/surveydesc.html
Seniors
In addition to the CIRP Freshman Survey discussed above, a CIRP Senior Survey is also administered in an attempt to gauge the potential impact of students’ college career. Of these UND senior respondents, 93.9% (91.5% natl.) “frequently” used the internet for research or homework which is markedly higher than freshman respondents (75.8%). As with the freshmen, senior women (96.4%) report higher frequencies than men (90.5%), though the difference is not as large as between freshman respondents. In addition, 79.6% (74.9% natl.) of senior respondents “frequently” used the internet to read news sites and 27.6% (35.4% natl.) “frequently” used the internet to read blogs. Also, 33.7% “frequently” used the library for research or homework which is significantly lower than the 52.7% reported by national peers; senior women (42.9%) report higher frequencies than men (21.4%) within the “frequently” category.

Specifically, CIRP Senior Survey respondents were asked to what degree UND has contributed to their learning in information literacy. Of the respondents, 46.4% report “greatly” while 52.6% report “somewhat.” As this was a local (UND-only) question, there is no national comparison. Further, 80.2% (83.5% natl.) of respondents feel either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the library facilities on campus.

Diversity
According to the ES website, students should be able to demonstrate understanding of social-cultural diversity and use that understanding to address issues, solve problems, and shape civic, personal, and professional behavior. To improve these skills, ES courses ask students to practice the following:

- Use concepts like culture, difference, and diversity.
- Recognize your own diversity in relationship to the larger society, and understand and respect the social-cultural diversity of others.
- Analyze and apply knowledge about diversity to domestic and global issues.

Briefly, moving from freshmen to seniors, we explore the attitudes and beliefs of UND students concerning the impact the university has had on their skill sets in diversity.

From the 2009 NSSE Survey, 58.8% (63.5% natl.) of freshmen respondents “often” or “very often” included diverse perspectives in class discussions and writings. In terms of communication, 30.8% (54.1% natl.) report having serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own while 46.8% (59.3% natl.) report having serious conversations with students who are very different from them in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values. In addition, 54.0% (59.3% natl.) feel that UND emphasized and encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Of the 2009 Sophomore Satisfaction Survey respondents, 62.3% report increasing participation in cultural and social events as a college related goal with more female (73.4%) than male (49.0%) respondents reporting; 69.8% report becoming more aware of diverse cultures as a college related goal while 81.3% believe that UND contributed “somewhat” or “very much” to their personal growth in understanding diverse cultures.

Specifically, CIRP Senior Survey respondents were asked to what degree UND has contributed to their learning in information literacy. Of the respondents, 46.4% report “greatly” while 52.6% report “somewhat.” As this was a local (UND-only) question, there is no national comparison. Further, 80.2% (83.5% natl.) of respondents feel either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the library facilities on campus.

From the CIRP Senior Survey participants, compared to when they first entered college, 82.7% (77.5% natl.) believe their knowledge of people from different races/cultures is “stronger” or “much stronger,” while 69.4% (65.7% natl.) believe their ability to get along with people of different races or cultures is “stronger” or “much stronger.” In terms of the institution itself, 83.7% (74.8% natl.) of respondents are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with respect shown for the expression of diverse beliefs.