

OIR Assessment Tool
2013 CIRP College Senior Survey (CSS)
January 2014 Review

Purpose of Survey:

The College Senior Survey (CSS) is one of three Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) surveys designed to measure the impact of the college experience related to academic, civic, and diversity student learning outcomes. Another CIRP survey, The Freshman Survey (TFS), has been used by UND for over thirty years. Longitudinal observations can be made when both TFS and CSS scores are available for survey respondents. The University is able to compare itself with all public and peer institutions that used the survey.

Survey questions are correlated to 15 constructs (previously nine) and 12 themes (previously nine). The constructs include habits of mind, interaction with faculty, academic disengagement, academic self-concept, satisfaction with coursework, positive cross-racial interaction, negative diversity interaction, pluralistic orientation, social agency, sense of belonging, civic awareness, civic engagement, leadership, social self-concept, and overall satisfaction. The themes are academic outcomes; academic enhancement experiences; written and oral communication; active and collaborative learning; interaction with faculty; satisfaction with academic support and courses; satisfaction services and community, health and wellness; religiosity and spirituality; diversity; civic engagement: participation, awareness, and values; and career planning. Generally questions related to the frequency of specific behaviors and the degree of satisfaction with specific items related to university experiences; only three questions were based on self-assessment of abilities and traits.

1. The data collected addresses information relating to what university group or situation? (i.e., from whom is the university collecting this information? Whose perceptions are we reading?)

For the 2013 CSS, UND emailed the survey to 1000 seniors with a sample size of 172 students, representing a 17% response rate. Of the 172, 54 students completed both the TFS and CSS. This longitudinal data can provide insight into the cognitive and affective growth of the students during their college years.

2. How often is this tool used and analyzed? What time of year?

This is the fifth time UND has administered the CSS. Previous years included 1995, 2000, 2004, and 2009. The CSS is considered an exit survey.

3. To whom does the assessment group believe that an analysis of this report would be beneficial? In other words, what individuals, departments, or programs need this information in order to have reliable information to 'close the loop' on their assessment process?

Because of the comprehensive scope of the survey, the findings would be relevant for most academic and non-academic units. Those non-academic units that would relate most closely to the constructs and themes include—

Student Services, Dean of Students (e.g., Counseling Center, Student Success Center)

Career Services

Health & Wellness (e.g., Wellness Center, Counseling Center)

Residence Services

Academic Advising

International Centre, Multicultural Student Services, American Indian Student Services

University Program Council

Student Involvement and Leadership, Center for Community Engagement

4. What UND student learning goals are assessed?

- a. Use Y, N, to indicate whether the instrument collects data relevant to each of the following Institutional and/or Essential Studies goals:

 Y 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
 Y 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
 ? 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)
 N 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)
 ? 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
 Y 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
 ? 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
 Y 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

The “?” noted above indicates there was some data that could align with the student learning goal but inferences were needed. For example, students may have indicated they intended to pursue graduate studies but that wouldn’t necessarily relate to committing themselves to lifelong learning.

Constructs, themes, or questions that represent student learning goals—

- 1. Communication (“written and oral communication”)*
- 2. Thinking and reasoning—critical thinking (“logical argumentation, problem solving, and information analysis, quantitative and qualitative [habits of mind]”)*
- 3. Thinking and reasoning—creative thinking (“explore topics on your own”)*
- 4. Information literacy (“evaluating the reliability of information”)*
- 5. Diversity (“pluralistic orientation, negative diversity interaction, positive cross-racial interaction”)*
- 6. Lifelong learning (“habits of mind, plans for graduate professional education”)*
- 7. Service/citizenship (“civic awareness, civic engagement”)*

- b. Additional goals

5. What are the findings/results of this tool?

- a. From Question 4a above: For the goals with a Y, describe the relevant findings/results from this survey:

Data are provided by all respondents, graduating seniors, and non-graduating seniors. The results provided below represent all respondents.

1. Communication

- Compared to the 2009 data, respondents were “less likely to have asked questions in class than they were as incoming freshmen.”
- Opportunities were available within classes for students to improve their written and oral communication skills. Approximately 91% to 99% either frequently or occasionally took a class that required multiple short papers or one or more longer length papers (10 pages or more). Similarly, over 99% had frequently or occasionally made a class presentation.
- About 98% had frequently or occasionally revised their papers.
- Students self-rated their writing ability as better than their public speaking ability (63.4% compared to 48.5% rated themselves in the top 10% or above average).

2. Thinking and reasoning—critical thinking

- Almost 89% of the respondents felt their critical thinking skill was a major strength or somewhat strong. Comparing gender, 57.4% of the men and 36.1% of the women categorized this skill as a major strength.
- Regarding problem solving skill, 91.7% thought that to be a major strength or somewhat strong. Comparing gender, 68.9% of the men and 37.3% of the women categorized this skill as a major strength.
- Referencing the past year, 77.8% of the respondents reported they had frequently “integrated skills and knowledge from different sources and experiences.” No survey questions related to a self-assessment of the skill, only this singular frequency question.

3. Thinking and reasoning—creative thinking

- Referencing the past year, 43.9% of the respondents reported they had frequently explored topics on their own.
- Over 52% of the respondents rated themselves as being above average or in the top 10% (compared to the average person their age) regarding creativity. About 43% noted themselves as average. The creativity trait may not necessarily relate to the descriptors of explore, discover, and engage used to define this Essential Studies goal.

4. Information literacy

- Referencing the past year, 62% of the respondents reported they frequently evaluated the quality or reliability of information they received. No survey questions related to a self-assessment of the skill, only this singular frequency question.

5. Diversity

- Referencing behavior since entering college, 37.9% attended a racial/cultural awareness workshop, about 25% had a roommate of a different race/ethnicity, 48.4% took an ethnic studies course, and almost 20% took a women’s studies course.
- About 33% thought it essential or very important to help promote racial understanding.
- About 55% thought it essential or very important to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures.
- Almost 57% of the respondents perceived their ability to get along with people of different races/cultures as a major strength. Comparing gender, 49.2% of the men and 62.7% of the women reported this skill as a major strength.
- Over 80% of the respondents rated themselves as being above average or in the top 10% (compared to the average person their age) regarding their ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective, tolerance of others with different beliefs, and the ability to work cooperatively with diverse people. A lower number, about 70%, assessed their ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues at this level.

- *“Students are reticent to challenge professors, classmates, and colleagues in their beliefs particularly in terms of race or ethnicity.”*

6. Lifelong learning

- *Overall, a higher proportion of the sample had plans to pursue advanced degrees in law, medicine, or enter a doctorate program) than the national average. This represents a significant increase from the 2009 responses in those intending to pursue a Ph.D. (22% compared to 10%) but a drop for law and medicine (J.D.—3.4% compared to 6.1%, M.D.—9.3% compared to 11.2%). Regarding plans for a Master’s degree, the percentage is well below the national average (36.4% compared to 46.2%) and lower than the 2009 data, 39.8%.*
- *Contrary to this (comparing 2009 data), respondents felt they received less encouragement from faculty to pursue graduate study.*

7. Service/citizenship

- *Of those responding to particular behaviors occurring frequently or occasionally—45.8% had helped raise money for a cause or campaign, 44.6% had publicly communicated their opinions about a cause, and 51.2% had performed community service as part of a class. Women reported higher percentages than men in all behaviors.*
- *Working for social change in one’s career was essential for 10.3% and very important for 27.0% of the respondents. Comparing genders, about 10% more women than men rated this as essential or very important.*
- *Participating in a community action program was essential or very important to 36% of the respondents. Women, compared to men, regarded this more highly (44.2% and 23.5%, respectively).*

b. Other findings/results of note for faculty or in reference to student learning

- *Men, more so than women, ranked themselves as being in the top 10% of academic ability (40% compared to 26.6%), mathematical ability (29.1% compared to 3.8%), computer skills (21.8% compared to 6.3%), drive to achieve (47.3% compared to 38%), intellectual self-confidence (36.4% compared to 6.3%), and leadership ability (41.8% compared to 16.5%).*
- *Students were less satisfied in 2013 than 2009 with the overall quality of instruction (based on those reporting very satisfied or satisfied to the survey item; 75.5% and 90.9%, respectively).*
- *Students were less satisfied in 2013 than 2009 with the general education or core curriculum courses (based on those reporting very satisfied or satisfied to the survey item; 65.2% and 84.7%, respectively).*

6. Does this tool measure student learning or behaviors associated with student learning? If it measures student learning, does it do so directly or indirectly?

The CSS is an indirect assessment measure as its questions relate to frequency of behaviors and self-assessment of skills.

7. Does this tool empower individuals or the university to better understand and assess student learning at the university? If so, how?

The CSS provides insight into students’ perceptions of their behaviors related to student learning. It can be a complement to other data that directly assesses student learning.

8. Are there recommendations for changes (e.g., additional or better tools, different means of analysis, etc.) that might improve the university's ability to use this information?

The CIRP CSS is sponsored by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles, therefore the only means for an institution to customize the survey is through taking advantage of the option of adding up to 20 additional questions. The University did not use this option for the 2013 survey.

Care should be taken in comparing UND data with national data. For the 2013 survey, there was only one other public institution noted (University of Northern Colorado). From the list of participating institutions, it is not evident which were deemed peer institutions as there was no alignment with UND's noted peers.

There was only a negligible improvement in the response rate from the 2009 to 2013 survey, 15% to 17%. Thought should be given to developing a strategy to increase the rate as this would increase the number of students who took the TFS and CSS, providing more opportunity to look longitudinally at the students with greater, more representative numbers.

9. What value does the committee place on this tool for helping to achieve the university's assessment plan?

Its value is getting data on student behaviors that relate to student learning.

10. Review Summary (one or two sentences).

The CSS is a fairly comprehensive survey of students' attitudes and behaviors regarding University services, University culture, classroom experiences, faculty interchanges, social lifestyle, abilities, and cultural issues. When data are compared to The Freshman Survey, the longitudinal findings will provide insight into the influence of the University on student development (i.e., attitudes, behaviors, and abilities) that relates to student learning.

11. What might faculty want to know about this survey? (Please provide one to two paragraphs describing some findings from this survey. These paragraphs will be forwarded to academic departments as a means of keeping them informed about the existence of information that might be useful to them.)

The CIRP College Senior Survey, administered at UND in Spring 2013, measures the impact of the college experience related to academic, civic, and diversity student learning outcomes. Used in conjunction with The Freshman Survey, it assesses how students' attitudes, behaviors, and abilities have changed since entering college.

Within the 2013 report there were findings of particular interest to faculty that were positive. Of particular note, students overwhelmingly reported that their classroom experiences required frequent writing (91-99%), revised writing (98%) and gave class presentations (99%). In addition, students perceived and believed that they engaged and had strong abilities in critical thinking (98%), problem solving (72%), and integration of skills and knowledge (78%). A greater percentage of students had goals of pursuing a Ph.D, unfortunately plans to pursue law, medical, and master's degrees fell from 2009.

In addition to positive indications related to student learning, there were some areas of concern as well. First, student perceptions of their critical thinking and other areas of strength showed a gender differential, with men overwhelmingly identifying critical thinking, problem solving, integration, leadership, intellectual self-confidence, math, computer skills, and overall academic ability as a strength more often than women. It raises a question about where this differential stems from, particularly if grades and other outcomes do not reflect this differential. The exception to this trend was that women more often reported the ability to get along with diverse people than men. Second, of significant concern to faculty should be the finding that students were less satisfied with instruction (75.5% vs. 90.9%) and general education courses (65.2% vs. 84.7%) in 2013 as compared to 2009.

12. What results about this survey would students find interesting? *(Please provide a few sentences or bullet points of highlights, written in student-friendly language. This will be posted on the assessment website and distributed to students via other means as well.)*

- *Students were less satisfied in 2013 than 2009 with the services received for career planning (based on those reporting very satisfied or satisfied to the survey items); specifically, career counseling and advising (60.0% and 79.5%, respectively) and job placement services for students (43.6% and 62.7%, respectively). This could be influenced by only 58.3% of the respondents reporting in 2013 they met with an advisor/counselor to discuss their career plans compared with 92.9% in 2009.*
- *In addition, students were less satisfied with instruction (75.5% vs. 90.9%) and general education courses (65.2% vs. 84.7%) in 2013 as compared to 2009.*
- *Students perceived and believed that they engaged and had strong abilities in critical thinking (98%), problem solving (72%), and integration of skills and knowledge (78%).*
- *Students also increased in their goals of pursuing a Ph.D, unfortunately plans to pursue law, medical, and master's degrees fell from 2009.*
- *Over 80% of the respondents rated themselves as being above average or in the top 10% (compared to the average person their age) regarding their ability to see the world from someone else's perspective, tolerance of others with different beliefs, and the ability to work cooperatively with diverse people.*

13. Should review of this instrument be continued as part of the UAC review cycle? If so, how frequently?

Because the survey does provide an indirect assessment of student learning related to UND's Institutional and/or Essential Studies goals, it adds value to the assessment process. Its review every four years should follow its administration schedule.

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