

## 2012-13 Summary Report of the Assessment of the General Education Program

UNCG's General Education Program provides undergraduates "foundational knowledge, skills, and values necessary to be critical and creative thinkers, ethical decision-makers, effective communicators, and collaborative and engaged global citizens." (UNCG General Education Mission and Goals, approved by the Faculty Senate and General Faculty in April 2009). Currently, this breadth of knowledge is offered to undergraduates through General Education courses distributed across five learning goals (LGs):

- LG1. Foundational Skills (critical thinking, effective communication, quantitative and information literacies)
- LG2. The Physical and Natural World (math and science)
- LG3. Knowledge of Human Histories, Cultures, and the Self
- LG4. Knowledge of Social and Human Behavior
- LG5. Personal, Civic, and Professional Development

In the 2012-13 academic year, assessment data were collected on all five of the above Learning Goals. The recently developed General Education Program assessment process was used to evaluate a portion of the General Education Program for Learning Goals 1, 3, 4, and 5. The Natural Science (GNS) student learning outcomes of LG2 were assessed using a faculty-developed standardized test, the JMU Scientific Reasoning test. The Mathematics (GMT) student learning outcomes of LG2 were assessed by a process developed by the UNCG Mathematics Department. The assessment of LG5 was accomplished within the 2012-13 Learning Communities Program. This report presents a summary of these four assessment efforts.

### ***General Education Program Assessment Process***

In May 2011, about 12 faculty participated in a planning workshop sponsored by the General Education Council (Council) and facilitated by the then Office of Academic Assessment (now called the Office of Assessment and Accreditation). Faculty developed a two-part process to assess the General Education Program. This process, including a timeline, was approved by the Council in Oct 2011, piloted in a few sections in fall 2011, and used in spring 2012 to evaluate Fine Arts (GFA), Literature (GLT), and Philosophical/Religious/Ethical Perspectives (GPR) for their Learning Goal 3 student learning outcomes.

In the 2012-13 academic year, approximately 20 percent of General Education courses were selected to participate in the assessment of the program, using this newly faculty-developed process. Faculty whose course carried a Fine Arts, Historical Perspectives, Reasoning & Discourse, or Social Behavioral Sciences designation and/or a Global Perspectives, Global Non-Western Perspectives, Speaking Intensive, Writing Intensive marker were notified in early September by the General Education Council Chair that their course section had been selected for the assessment process. In all, 143 sections were selected.

The assessment process includes course faculty assessment, peer faculty validation, and data summary/presentation.

In the course faculty assessment:

1. Faculty choose existing course assignments aligned to student learning outcomes (SLOs) specific to the course's General Education category and/or marker(s).
2. Faculty send unmarked student work products for six students, along with the assignment, to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation (OAA). The students are selected by OAA, through a

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random-selection process, and their student identification numbers are provided to the instructors.

3. Faculty apply a three-point rating scale (Highly Proficient, Proficient, Not Proficient) to all students' work for each SLO.
4. Faculty complete an on-line survey, recording aggregate (class) results for each SLO.

In the peer faculty validation:

1. The General Education Council invites faculty to participate in a workshop (held in early January before classes begin) to evaluate student work products. A monetary incentive is provided to eligible participants.
2. Workshop reviewers are grouped by General Education category/marker and paired within each group. Each pair receives the same set of student work.
3. Using the same three-point scale as course faculty, reviewer pairs rate student work products provided by the course faculty. Each member scores the work independently. Two scores are gathered for each student work.
4. The workshop concludes with large-group discussion.

In the data summary and presentation:

1. OAA summarizes data from the course faculty assessment and from the peer faculty validation workshop.
2. The General Education Council presents these summarized data to the University in open forums.
3. Forum participants make observations, suggestions, recommendations, etc., to the Council.
4. A summary report is prepared and posted on the Council's website.

Throughout October, the OAA provided faculty training sessions as well as departmental training sessions and one-on-one consultation for the assessment process. Later, in November and December, OAA provided open labs to assist course faculty with their participation in the assessment process. Student work products from participating sections were received by OAA through December 21, 2012.

Of the 143 sampled sections, 94 sections provided *total class* data, 32 sections provided *sample only* (n=6) data, and 17 sections provided only the work products of their six sampled students for the peer validation workshop.

In all, 38 departments from six academic units and five special programs were represented, with an overall response rate of approximately 88 percent.

The peer validation of non-language course faculty ratings took place in a January 2013 workshop. Of those faculty invited to participate, 34 faculty attended, 4 of whom were Council members and 16 of whom had participated in the fall 2012 course assessment. At the two-day workshop, which took place before classes started in spring 2013, faculty peers used the three-point scale (Highly Proficient, Proficient, Not Proficient) to evaluate work products from only those students who had been randomly selected in the participating course sections.

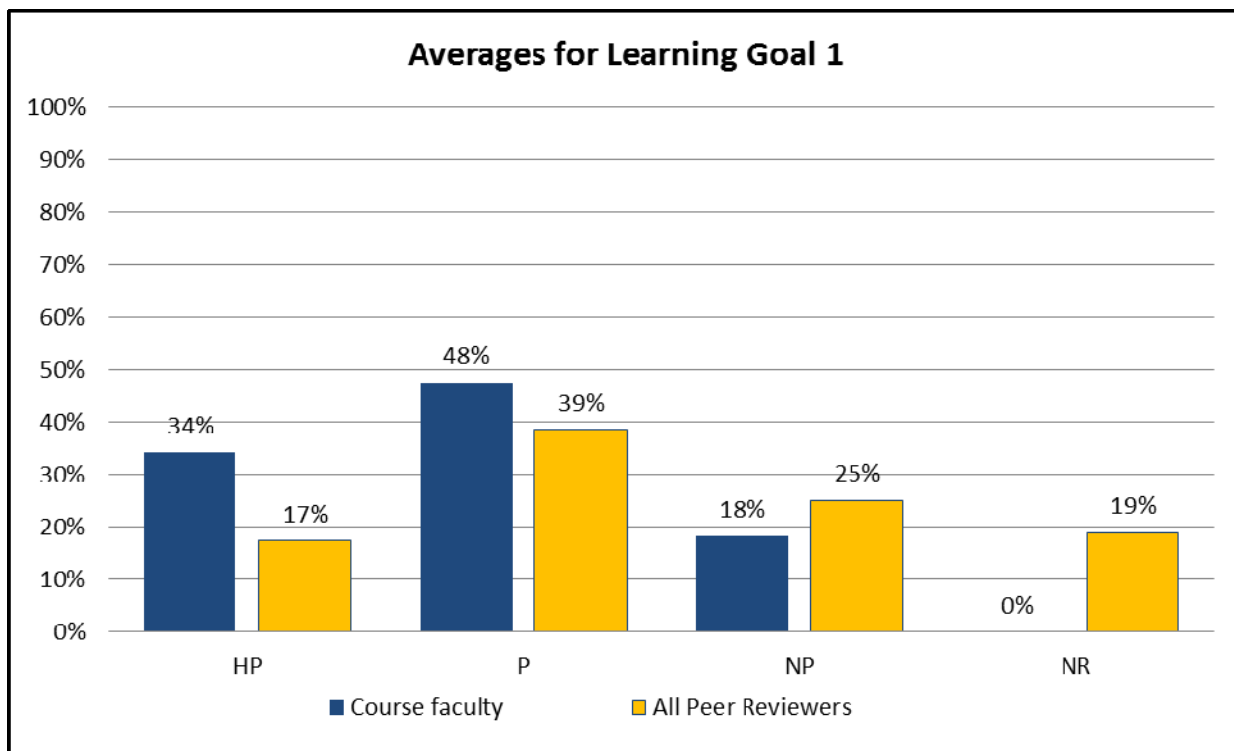
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The January 2013 workshop was followed by February 2013 forums in which comparative data collected through the January workshop were presented.

Of the 143 sampled sections, 25 were foreign language sections. Because student work products generally required demonstrated competency in the language, the Language Department performed its own peer review later in the spring 2013 semester. None of the peer reviewers were participants in the fall 2012 course assessment.

Of the 25 sampled foreign language sections, 23, or 95%, participated in the fall 2012 assessment process. Of these 23 sections, 17 submitted student work products, 8 used multiple choice questions (thus no student work submitted), and 15 sections were included in the peer review process. Figures 1 through 4 provide the comparative average ratings of course faculty and peer reviewers (language and non-language) for each of the four Learning Goals. The average for each Learning Goal is calculated by using the results from the student learning outcomes included in the Learning Goal.

- Figure 1: Learning Goal 1 (Foundational Skills) – represented by the assessment of 11 student learning outcomes across four categories (GFA, GHP, GRD, GSB) and four markers (GL, GN, SI, WI).
- Figure 2: Learning Goal 3 (Knowledge of Human Histories, Cultures, and the Self) – represented by three student learning outcomes across one category (GHP) and two markers (GL, GN).
- Learning Goal 4 (Knowledge of Social and Human Behaviors) – represented by two student learning outcomes in one category (GSB).
- Learning Goal 5 (Personal, Civic, and Professional Development) – represented by three student learning outcomes across one category (GFA) and two markers (GL, GN).



**Figure 1. Average ratings by course faculty and by all faculty peer reviewers for Learning Goal 1**

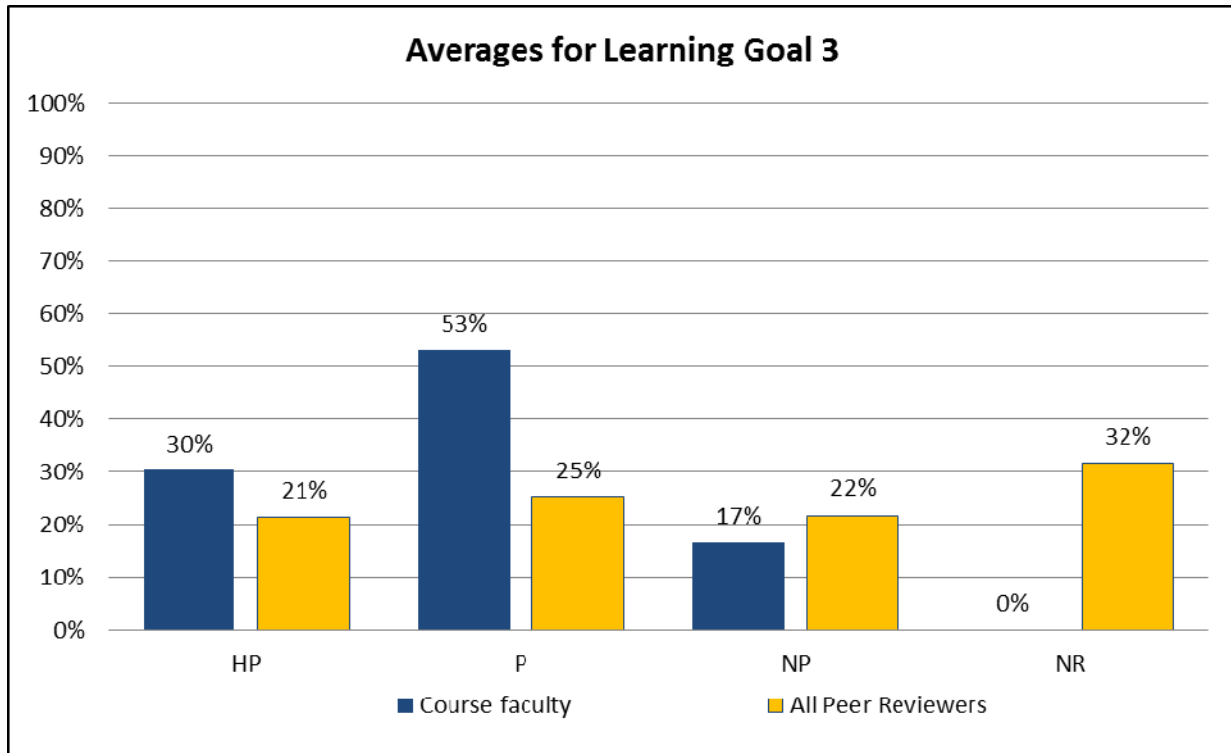


Figure 2. Average ratings by course faculty and by all faculty peer reviewers for Learning Goal 3

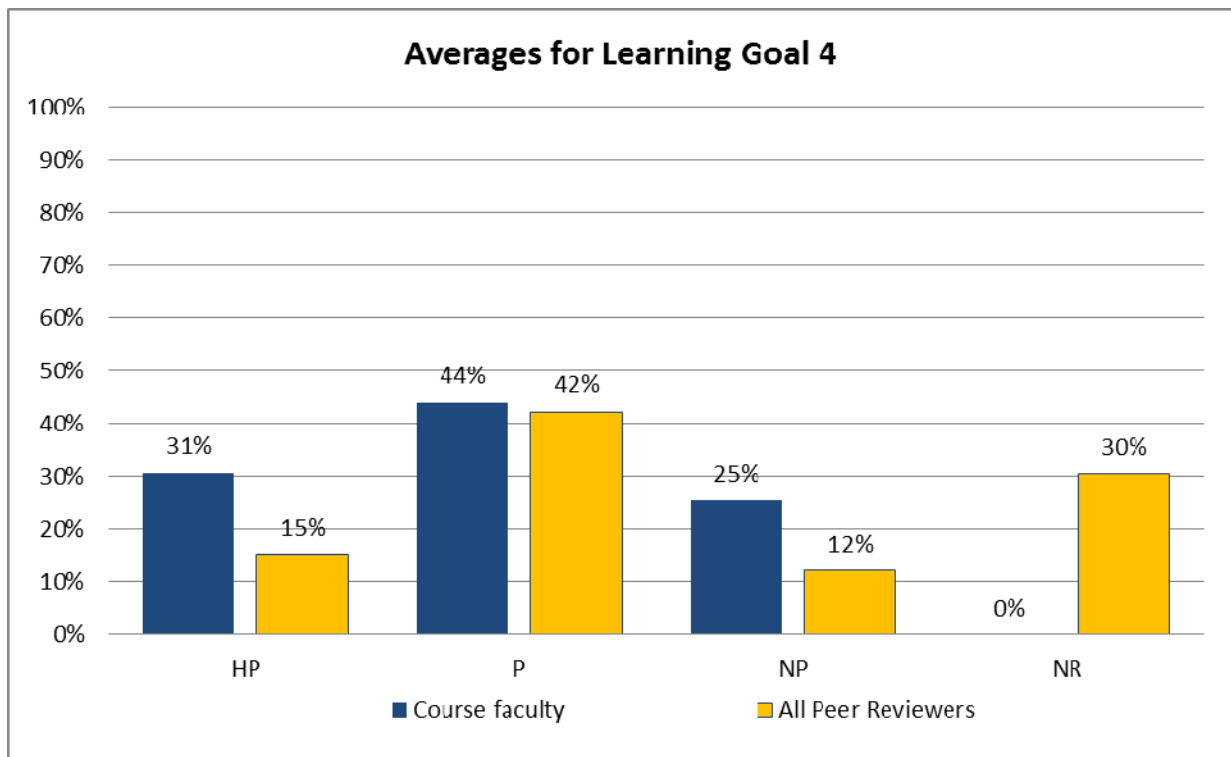
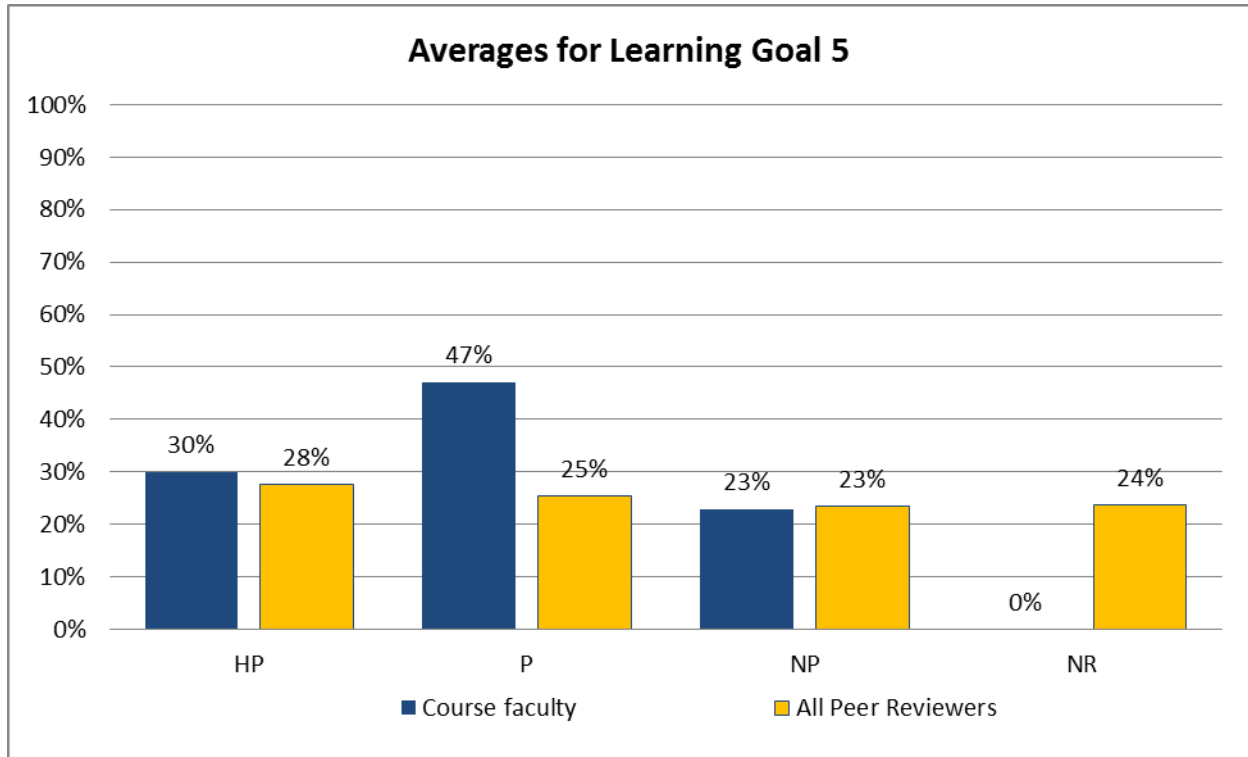


Figure 3. Average ratings by course faculty and by all faculty peer reviewers for Learning Goal 4



**Figure 4. Average ratings by course faculty and by all faculty peer reviewers for Learning Goal 5**

*Summary*

For Learning Goals 1, 3, 4, and 5, course faculty determined that at least 75 percent of student work was proficient or highly proficient. None of the course faculty found student work to be unratable. Course faculty determined that, for Learning Goals 1 and 3, almost 20 percent of student work was not proficient, and for Learning Goals 4 and 5, almost 25 percent of student work was not proficient.

For Learning Goals 1, 3, 4, and 5, peer reviewers found from 19 to 32 percent of student work to be unratable either because the assignment did not elicit the student learning outcome or did so partially, or because the student work was not provided for a particular student learning outcome (e.g., WI-slo3).

At the January workshop, one group (GRD) defined the key terms in the GRD student learning outcomes and then defined three proficiency levels for the GRD student learning outcomes before they proceeded to rate student work products. Of the 127 student work products evaluated for GRD slo-2, only 4 percent were scored “unratable”. However, for GRD slo-1, 22 percent were scored “unratable” mostly because the reviewers found that the assignments did not elicit the particular learning behavior (i.e., critically evaluate, as defined by the GRD group).

**Suggested Actions**

Actions suggested by course faculty included:

1. Provide notification to course faculty *before* the semester begins.
2. Provide guidelines for the proficiency levels.

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3. Provide professional development regarding the General Education student learning outcomes and address the overlap of GE student learning outcomes across categories and/or markers.
4. Incorporate more speaking assignments into other courses.
5. Require that students take a basic writing course.
6. Provide opportunities for first-time instructors to meet with experienced instructors (across disciplines) to learn ways to improve learning, e.g., faculty-staff learning communities.

Actions suggested by the 2012-13 peer reviewers (as well as the 2011-12 peer reviewers) included:

1. Offer faculty development on the General Education Program and on the student learning outcomes.
2. Provide accessible examples of “good” assignments (i.e., those clearly meeting the category-specific, or marker-specific, student learning outcomes).
3. Define levels of proficiency.
4. Provide four levels on rubric to allow for student work that was minimally proficient.
5. Communicate earlier (i.e., before classes begin) about the assessment process.

### ***Assessment of Learning Goal 2***

- ***Natural Sciences (GNS) Student Learning Outcomes***

In spring 2013, a sample of 11 General Education courses that carried the GNS category designation were selected for the administration of the Scientific Reasoning test (SR-9), a 49-item multiple-choice test developed by science and mathematics faculty from James Madison University. The SR-9 was developed for use at the program level, and any inferences about learning or mastery should be made only in the aggregate. (*The Scientific Reasoning Test, Version SR-9 Test Manual (2008).*)

The SR-9 was selected to assess the GNS category because it was determined by UNCG faculty that the test aligned well with the GNS student learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of scientific inquiry (i.e. the “scientific method”) (LG1, LG2, LG5)
2. Demonstrate knowledge of basic principles as they apply to broader concepts (e.g. global warming) (LG1, LG2)
3. Evaluate the credibility of sources of scientific information. (LG1)
4. Analyze qualitative and quantitative empirical data. (LG1)
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of science on technology and society. (LG1, LG2, LG5)

Approximately 325 UNCG students, of the 1,454 students enrolled in the 17 GNS sections taught by 11 faculty, or 23 percent, took the SR-9. Figure 5 shows the SR-9 mean scores for all students as well as by student class. On average, UNCG students did not meet the SR-9 Faculty Standard (a faculty-determined cut score). There was little difference between the mean scores of the freshmen and sophomores and between the juniors and seniors.

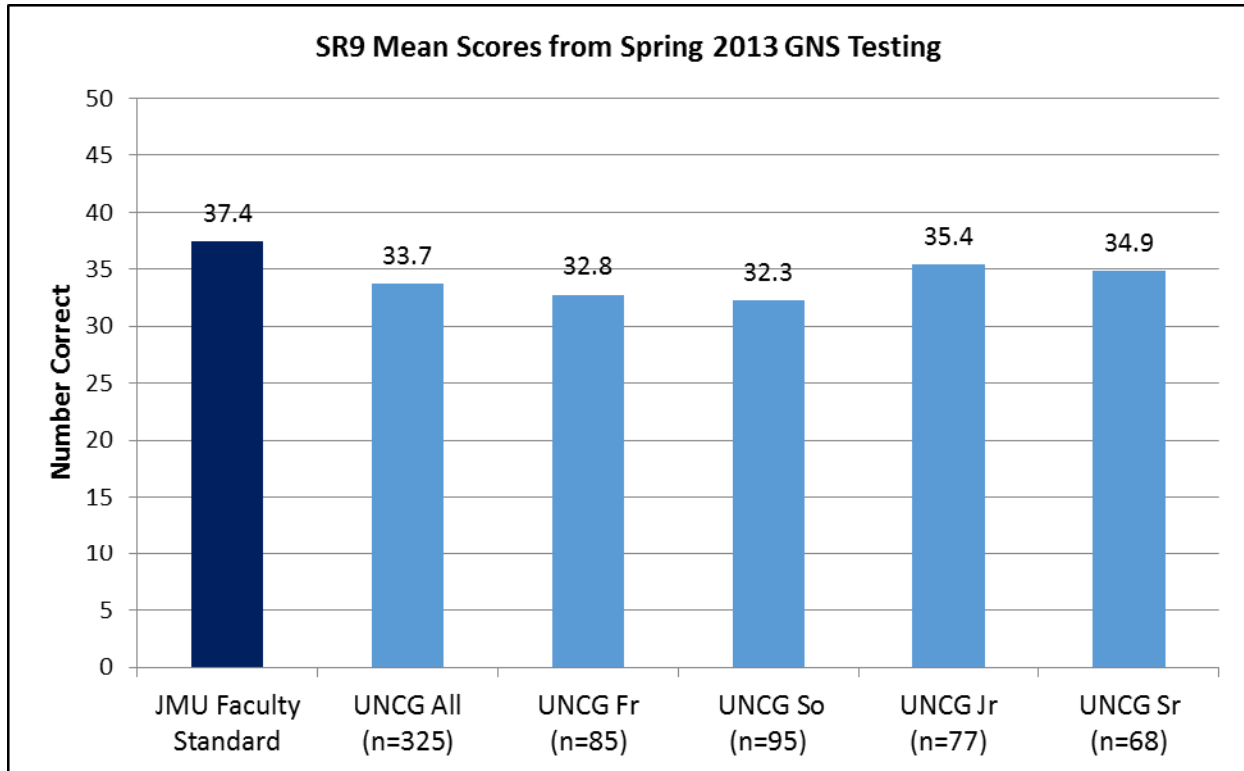


Figure 5. SR-9 Mean Scores from Spring 2013 GNS Testing

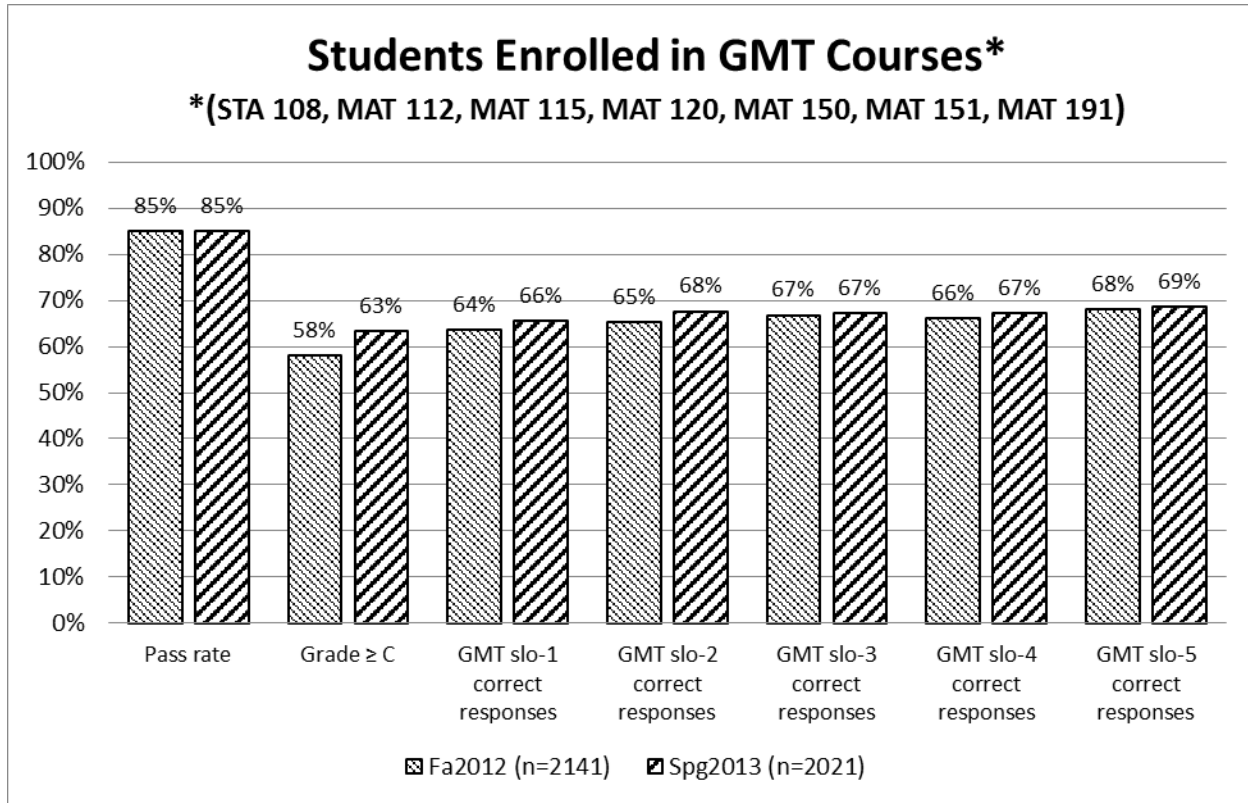
However, of the 325 UNGC students who took the SR-9, approximately 27% met the SR-9 Faculty Standard. In addition:

- 20% of the freshmen met the SR9 Faculty Standard,
  - 21% of the sophomores met the SR9 Faculty Standard,
  - 35% of the juniors met the SR9 Faculty Standard, and
  - 37% of the seniors met the SR9 Faculty Standard.
- **Mathematics (GMT) Student Learning Outcomes**

A process developed by the UNGC Mathematics Department included embedding multiple choice questions, based on course content, in the final exam in every GMT class. Each semester, Math faculty map the final exam questions of each course to the five GMT student learning outcomes. The number of questions varies by course by GMT student learning outcome.

Figure 6 presents aggregated results from the fall 2012 and spring 2013 semesters.

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**Figure 6. 2012-13 GMT results for all students**

(source: February 6, 2014 email from Dr. Igor Erovenko, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics)

### ***Assessment of Learning Goal 5 within the 2012-13 Learning Communities Program***

In fall 2012, the Office of Learning Communities (OLC) collected data regarding students' perception of the Integrated Studies Laboratory (ISL) course in regard to the skills and competencies outlined in the General Education Program's Learning Goal 5, which states:

*LG5. Personal, Civic, and Professional Development:* Develop a capacity for active citizenship, ethics, social responsibility, personal growth, and skills for lifelong learning in a global society. In so doing, students will engage in free and open inquiry that fosters mutual respect across multiple cultures and perspectives.

The OLC collected data from first-year students who completed Washington Center's 2011 and 2012 National online Surveys of Students' Experiences of Learning in Learning Communities and from first-year students who responded to a prompt related to LG5 in the fall 2012 Integrated Studies Laboratory Course Evaluation.

The OLC then used these data to explore the early stages of students' introductions to the topics within LG5 and to benchmark students' progress during their entry to the University. For its analysis, OLC used



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those questions related to problem solving, integrated learning, ethics, civic engagement, lifelong learning, and intercultural knowledge.

Overall, student responses indicated a gain in the areas of lifelong learning, problem solving, and intercultural knowledge. This result, however, appeared to be a coincidence of integrated learning rather than through direct course instruction. This result, along with those from a second survey of students conducted at the conclusion of fall 2012 specifically asking students to report on their perceived inclusion of the LG5 topics in ISL, showed a promising platform for re-envisioning the ISL 101 course (and its variants) to intentionally support LG5.

The results from the end-of-year course survey for ISL 101 in fall 2012 suggested that a shift of ISL 101 away from study and success skills toward engagement in lifelong learning, ethics, citizenship, problem solving, and global/cultural competencies appeared to be in order. The transition to ISL 101-LG5 was undertaken for fall 2013 *after* a May 2013 OLC Instructor Institute on Learning Communities and Integrated Learning was held for ISL 101 faculty.

Upon completion of the Institute, eight faculty members met with the Director of Learning Communities as they finalized course syllabi. Faculty members expressed greater excitement to teach the course as scholarship has been made a central component of the student learning experience. In addition, the course explicitly addresses ethics, citizenship, lifelong learning, and personal growth in global context; and it provides regular opportunities for students to record self-reflections and progress. Additionally, faculty members were encouraged to begin thinking of interesting presentations of course content.

### ***April 2014 General Education Forum***

Results from the 2012-13 assessment of the General Education Program were included in the April 2014 General Education Forum. Based on faculty feedback in previous workshops and forums, a narrated Powerpoint was posted on the Office of Assessment and Accreditation's website. Announcements were made in the Campus Weekly of August 20, August 27, and November 5, 2014 as well as during fall 2014 General Education Council meetings.

Viewer feedback to the posted results were solicited through a live link to an online survey that was included in the Powerpoint. However, because few viewers responded, their comments were not included in this report as they may or may not be representative of the University as a whole.