

## College 60 Learning Outcomes Pilot Study

### Introduction:

The following are the results of the pilot study for College 60 in gathering indirect evidence of student learning; that is student self-perception of their level of learning in outcomes associated with general education, active learning, mission of the college, and department specific goals. In addition, student survey data was compared to Faculty Information Form (FIF) data to assess students' perceptions of their learning compared to how well faculty felt they addressed particular goals in their courses. Student data was collected from 87 surveys submitted by students who were taking College 60 classes in the spring of 2008. Faculty data came from Faculty Information Forms, which asked similar questions to those being asked of the students. Four faculty members responded to the FIFs, providing a much smaller data set. When reviewing the faculty data, the small survey set should remain in mind.

In order to present the data in a concise and familiar format, the model is based on the output of the Course and Instruction Evaluation Forms the faculty receive at the end of each semester. However, the reporting scale on this survey differs from the evaluation forms. The ranks used on these evaluations were: rank 5 for students who felt they significantly improved in a particular learning goal, rank 4 for above average improvement, rank 3 for average improvement, rank 2 for somewhat, rank 1 for students feeling as if they did not improve at all in a particular area, and rank 6 for a question not applying to the course.

### Report Organization:

The frequencies of responses for each rank are reported on the data sheets under the Course Evaluations sections. Some surveys had blanks or multiple bubbles filled in, and while not included in this report, they are counted toward the total of n=87. In order to reflect the Course and Instruction Evaluation forms which contain data on percent (%) below good, included on this report are percent below average ( $\% < 3$ ), and percent above average ( $\% > 3$ ) for comparison. These percentages do not take into account rankings of 6 (does not apply), or 3 (average.)

The means of the students' responses and the means of the faculty's responses are also included in order to compare these values to see how well the students felt they were learning in particular classes in relation to how well the faculty felt they incorporated certain learning goals into their courses. (Please note: Our faculty sample was very small, so the data on faculty means is fairly limited.)

There are two sections to this report; the first includes all of the frequencies of responses, % above and below average, and student and faculty means. The second section compares student means to faculty means by showing the difference between the two means. Each section is broken into the following sub-sections: General Education Learning Goals, Active Learning Goals, College Mission Goals, and College 60 course goals. These sub-sections represent all forms of learning pedagogy valued by the college.

In the first section, all percentages reported at 50% or more above average are shaded. In the “Differences between student and faculty means” section, means with a difference of 0.25 or less are shaded. The last section highlights the differences between what learning goals the students feel were incorporated in a course versus what the faculty felt they taught.

#### Summary of Findings:

In general, the perceptions of students and faculty do not exist on par with one another, though there are a few places where the data shows consistency. The broad topics covered by College 60 courses could be partially responsible for the inconsistencies between perceptions of faculty and students. When examining the data, keep in mind that all College 60 classes were analyzed together.

According to the data, students felt that 20% of the General Education Learning goals were being met by the College 60 courses they were in. While some of the learning goals, like improving quantitative ability, do not apply to all College 60 courses, there are some areas where there can be development. For example, 35 % of students felt that they improved in clarity in writing. Not all classes include written assignments, but through reading and analysis of cross-discipline material a student should be able to gain some insight into professional, academic writing. In addition, there appears to be some disconnect between the students’ perceptions of their coursework and the faculty members’ perceptions in terms of General Education Goals. All but one of the General Education learning goals had a difference between the faculty mean and student mean that was greater than 0.40 grade points. For example, the students had a mean of 3.76 for improvement on thinking across disciplines, whereas the faculty members had a mean of 5.00, a difference of 1.24 grade points. This difference implies that the faculty members feel they are highly stressing thinking across disciplines in their College 60 classes, but the students do not feel they are learning that skill. In general, low averages and large differences between student and faculty members’ means should be acknowledged and if possible addressed, especially when the students are feel that 80% of the General Education goals are not being well attended to in their courses.

The college is shifting its focus toward more student centered learning, and the College 60 courses appear to be addressing these goals well. 62.07% of the students felt they improved in discussion, which is excellent. However, while this percentage is high, the difference between the means of the students and the faculty is large (1.42), which is almost a 29% difference of opinion. The faculty feels they are placing great focus on discussion in their classes, but the students do not agree. Beyond discussion, barely more than half of the students surveyed felt they improved in oral presentation and working with others. The students and faculty did not agree about how much oral presentations are emphasized in the classroom, with the faculty feeling they addressed this learning goal well, while the students ranked their improvement slightly above average (a difference of 0.85.) The faculty and students were more in sync on the goal of working in collaboration with others, and the difference between the faculty and student means was only 0.31. However, both means are only a bit above the average range of the scale, so more stress could be placed on these goals going forward.

Students felt that over half of the college mission goals were well addressed in their classes. The areas where the most improvement is needed are in addressing the goal of improving leadership ability and accepting the challenges of creative visions. In general, students felt the college mission goals were accomplished in their classes, and the differences between the means of the students and faculty were minimal in about half of the cases, meaning they agreed as to how heavily the mission goals featured in College 60 classes.

Overall, more than half of the students surveyed felt they had achieved a greater than average improvement in five of the seven College 60 specific learning goals. While there is some room for improvement in this data (3 of the 5 were in the 50% range), the fact that most College 60 courses are content specific and do not address every College 60 department learning goal could result in a reduced number of students feeling like they improved in areas not directly addressed by their course. “Best Expectations” is another area which shows great results. In all four categories relating to course expectations, students felt they knew what to anticipate before taking the course. The areas where the difference between the student and faculty means was very high were in communication of grading standards and the interdisciplinary nature of the course. Since the interdisciplinary nature of the course is a College 60 specific expectation, the differences between the student and faculty means should be examined in the context of the committee’s goals.

In order to compare all of the College 60 data to the data for each College 60 class, charts for each College 60 class are included and labeled by instructor.

Further analysis of the data presented on the following sheets is the providence of the General Education Committee at Mills. Since this is our pilot study, and we plan to do an analysis for all departments in the future, we likely cannot do such complete reports in the future. Therefore, we would like to request feedback on what data and information you found valuable. What was useful and how? What do you wish we had included in the report? Do you like the structure? Please, e-mail [aknudsen@mills.edu](mailto:aknudsen@mills.edu) with feedback on this report. Thank you.