



Office of Institutional Research

To: Scholarship Action Group
CC: Stephen Siciliano
From: Darby Hiller
Date: June 30, 2006
Subject: Student Perceptions of Learning – Spring 2006
Results

Introduction

The Student Perceptions of Learning Survey asks current students to evaluate how their NMC coursework over the semester has helped them to communicate effectively and to think critically. The survey is one of three methods in which NMC measures progress on the general education outcomes of Communication and Critical Thinking.

In April 2006, a web survey was administered to 800 current NMC students registered for three or more credits (see instrument at end of the report). Of the 800, about 134 people (or 17%) responded to the survey. This very low response rate does not allow us to make general inferences on the perceptions of learning about all of our current students; however the results can be used for descriptive and exploratory analyses. The results of this survey, along with the results about perceptions from our transfer students and graduates, will be synthesized with the results of the artifact scoring from spring 2006 in the summary document, What We Have Learned in fall 2006.

In addition to the 10 areas for which students were asked to respond regarding improvement in communicating effectively and thinking critically, students were asked if they would like to make any additional comments about learning at NMC. Those open ended responses are provided at the end of this document.

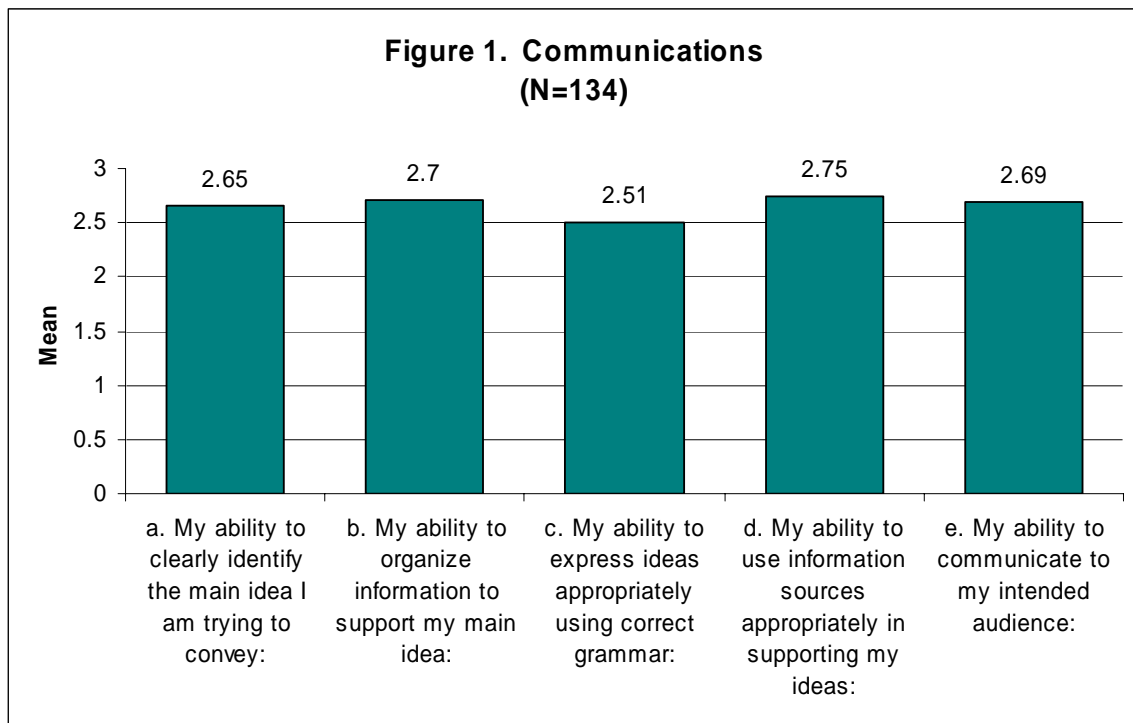
Findings

Communications. Figure 1 gives the mean score for each statement pertaining to communicating effectively. The range for the responses was 1=not improved, 2=slightly improved, 3=moderately improved, and 4=greatly improved. All of the means were above 2.5 (between slightly and moderately improved), indicating that NMC coursework made some contribution to helping the students in each area.

The area in which the students reported the greatest gains was in their ability to use information sources appropriately in supporting their ideas. The students reported the least amount of improvement in their ability to express ideas appropriately using correct grammar. The finding is

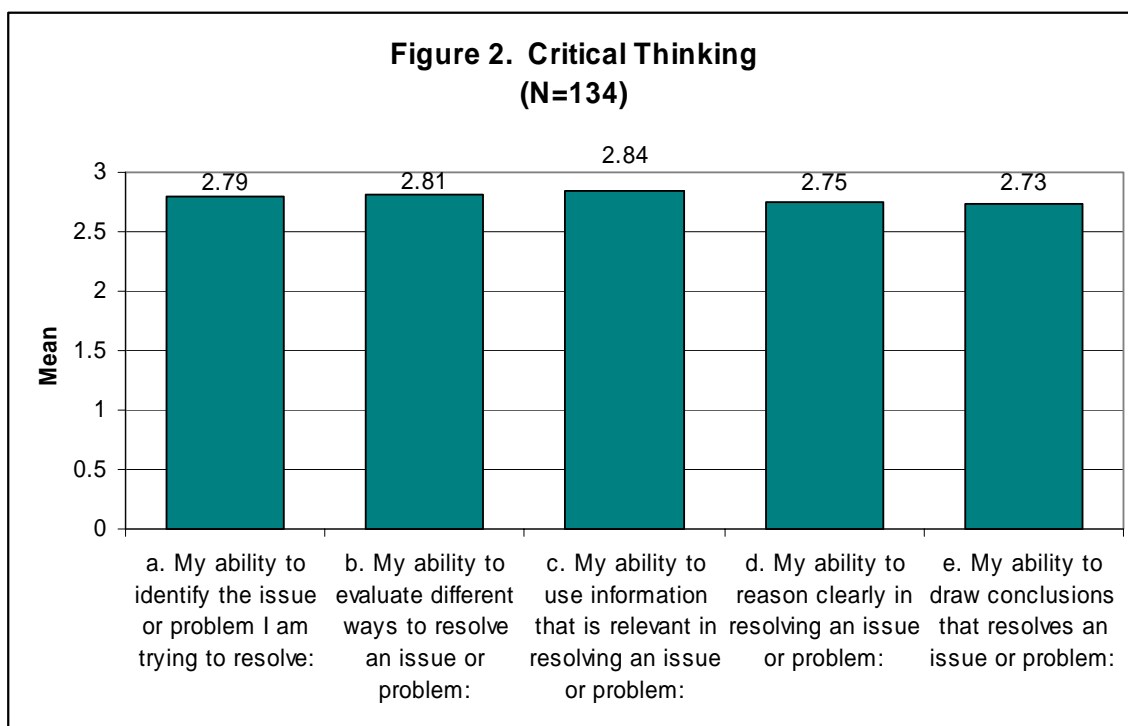
consistent with the results from past Perceptions surveys. Students believe that learning to use correct grammar is only applicable to composition courses. Therefore, they perceive lower gains in that area unless they have been taking a composition course. I recommend that the faculty members in courses that directly support the Communications outcome emphasize to their students the intended learning outcomes, whether specific to the course or general in nature, such as the general education outcomes.

The scale on which the students were asked to evaluate their skills was altered this year, making direct comparisons with previous years problematic. However, overall, students reported similar gains in each area as in previous years.



Critical Thinking. Figure 2 shows the means for each statement pertaining to thinking critically. The range for the responses was the same as for the communications skills. The means for each statement range from 2.73 to 2.84, indicating that students perceived that on average their NMC coursework had moderately improved their skills in these areas. There was no skill area that stood out as needing improvement more than any other.

In three of the five semesters that this survey has been administered, students reported that they improved their skills the most in their ability to draw conclusions. However, for the past two years, students perceived the greatest gain in their ability to use information that is relevant in resolving an issue or problem.



Impact and Implications

It is interesting to note that students perceived the most significant improvements in the linked abilities to use information that is appropriate (Communications) and/or relevant (Critical Thinking) to the task at hand. Although the response rate for this administration of the survey was lower than desired, the results are fairly consistent with previous year's results. In the comments (Table 1), several students mention availability and accessibility of on-line classes, indicating that more of the students responding to the web survey were probably comfortable and familiar with that method of delivery. Unfortunately, the low response rate overall indicates that NMC students are not likely to use their NMC email addresses in the numbers we need to get a representative sample of responses. Until we determine a way to boost the response rate of web based surveys to students (i.e., larger incentives, requiring a certain mode of communication, etc.), I recommend the Student Perceptions of Learning Survey be administered on paper in the classroom environment, as long as the results are found to be useful.

For any additional comments or analyses, please contact the Office of Institutional Research.

Table 1. Perceptions of Learning Survey – Open Ended Comments
Although my personal life interfered with my studies this past semester, I found the instructors as well as other support staff to be extremely helpful.
An option for "didn't need improved" would be nice in this quiz.
By checking "slightly improved" I'm not saying my instructor wasn't good, he was, I've just been drilled in high school with English and writing, so there isn't much English 111 and 112 offered differently after taking Writing Center and AP Lit in high school.
I am able to learn at my own pace.
I am taking a math class this semester. The questions don't pertain to algebra.
I appreciate the flexibility and availability of the online classes.
I enjoy attending classes at NMC. The entire staff does a great job.
I have classes at NMC and I have enjoyed the flexibility that is given in the online courses of the FLO program as well!
I love NMC, but over the last few semesters, I've taken courses with little to no feedback on assignments. One of these courses was a math course where feedback is hugely beneficial. I have been disappointed by these classes. My writing classes have been above average: A+++ for excellent feedback and dedication!
I love that there are enough computers at the Osterlin Library to do my work between classes. The computers are very efficient.
I spent this past year studying math and science, so I didn't really learn about English stuff!
i think that it is crazy that when an entire class gives a bad review of a teacher he doesn't even get docked time or classes he is teaching but i think he is even teaching more classes than last semester why are we doing the reviews if nothing is coming from them??? i think it is a waste of time to fill them out if nothing is going to happen when they get bad reviews.
I think that this survey should not have been 4 choice answer. Is someone more able to think critically than someone else, and how do you measure how more able that person is? What exactly are you basing your abilities to, and how do you know that you won 't be more able in the future? Will that make you any less able now? This survey should've been yes/no.
I think very highly of the educational opportunities and the general quality of instruction at NMC. My survey answers may not reflect this attitude. My communication skills and critical thinking skills have already been developed. I am a non-traditional student.
I took A&P II this semester. I don't think any of these questions apply to me. sorry
Most of these issues have been more improved in my prior semesters at NMC rather than with the courses I have this particular semester.
NMC has been a great place for me to learn more, but this semester was a bit challenging for me. The way one class was taught was different then I have ever had and was a struggle for me to be able to grasp and really learn the subject. In the end I felt that I needed to drop the class so I could retake the course and be able to get everything out of that I could. Other than that I really enjoy attending NMC and each class has definitely been able to teach me so much.
Please make Bio 240 available online.
Sometimes the computer lab is crowded in the Becket Building. Do we really need to keep all of the terminals for the Iseries/RPG classes in the lab? (I never even used the terminals just the bugs emulation.)That space could be used for more computers. I would like to know why there are no classes for mac computers. If, we are to learn all there is to know for "Windows" products. Shouldn't there be a balance by at least having some classes that cover the macintosh computers.

<p>The learning center's test taking room is pathetic. How can people be expected to perform well in a cramped room, with no windows?</p>
<p>The online Eng.112 class I took was more like an advanced University Lit. class. To much work too little time and a little too overboard for a 112....</p>
<p>The only reason that I answered "not improved" is that none of my classes at this level of my education teach nor focus on effective communication. However I do have issues with other aspects of my education not covered in this evaluation.</p>
<p>This semester I have had no classes that challenge my communication skills, though in previous semesters when I have had classes that did so they were effective in improving my skills a little. This is saying a lot, so I'd say in my experience classes that do challenge communication skills are effective and improving them.</p>
<p>Well, I have to say that things would be a whole lot better for me if Michigan Tech hadn't pulled the engineering program from under my feet. My classes have been great, but I've been running into walls every time I try to contact someone in an administrative position regarding my circumstances. I feel this needs to be addressed.</p>

Student Perceptions of Learning

The results of this survey help NMC improve teaching and learning of the General Education outcomes of Communications and Critical Thinking.

1. How has your NMC coursework this semester helped you to communicate effectively?

	<i>Greatly Improved</i>	<i>Moderately Improved</i>	<i>Slightly Improved</i>	<i>Not Improved</i>
a. My ability to clearly <u>identify the main idea</u> I am trying to convey:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. My ability to <u>organize information</u> to support my main idea:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. My ability to <u>express ideas</u> appropriately using <u>correct grammar</u> :	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. My ability to <u>use information sources</u> appropriately in supporting my ideas:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. My ability to communicate to my <u>intended audience</u> :	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How has your NMC coursework this semester helped you to think critically?

	<i>Greatly Improved</i>	<i>Moderately Improved</i>	<i>Slightly Improved</i>	<i>Not Improved</i>
a. My ability to <u>identify</u> the issue or problem I am trying to resolve:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. My ability to <u>evaluate different ways</u> to resolve an issue or problem:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. My ability to <u>use information</u> that is relevant in resolving an issue or problem:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. My ability to <u>reason clearly</u> in resolving an issue or problem:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. My ability to <u>draw conclusions</u> that resolves an issue or problem:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are there any other comments you would like to make about learning at NMC?

Please enter your NMC login ID.