

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The combination of indirect and direct measures provide insight into students' and alumni perceptions of skills, some comparisons to student ratings at peer institutions, and some direct reviews of student work. General findings indicate that students perceive growth in multiple areas, but identify consistent themes in areas of challenge (See Table 1, Figure 1).
- A 2011-2014 longitudinal panel study indicates that students report significant growth in 13 of 18 skills related to the Drake Curriculum (See Table 2).
- Students participating in focus groups highlighted the breadth offered through the Drake Curriculum, noted the lack of integration, and identified several areas of learning (e.g., teamwork, understand perspectives, challenge own views, relate out-of-class experiences to learning, demonstrate expertise outside major).
- Multiple instruments indicate challenges in Drake students' ability to understand other perspectives, identify assumptions, make arguments, and integrate skills and knowledge (DCAC direct assessment, Collegiate Learning Assessment, 2013 National Survey of Student Engagement).

Individual AOI Assessment Overview (Table 1)

Area of Inquiry	Current Measures		General Findings
	Indirect	Direct	
Artistic Experience	X		Lower ratings compared to other AOI's
Critical Thinking	X	X	High self-ratings; direct assessment notes challenges in understanding other perspectives, identifying assumptions, and making arguments
Engaged Citizen	X		Similar ratings to students at peer institutions, lower ratings for alumni compared to other outcomes
Historical Foundations	X		Lower ratings compared to other AOI's
Information Literacy	X	X	Similar self-reported ability when compared to peers, direct assessment notes lowest ratings for integrating resources and reflection (similar to Critical Thinking assessment)
Global and Cultural Understanding	X		High ratings for initial stages (recognition, appreciation), with lower ratings for later stages (application, depth); low alumni ratings compared to other outcomes
Scientific Literacy	X		High gains in self-reported data, lowest area of alumni ratings
Quantitative Literacy	X		Comparable to peers overall, average self-ratings compared to other items, notable differences by college/school
Values and Ethics	X		Self-reported growth for current students and alumni
Written Communication	X	X	Self-reported growth, scores comparable to peers, direct assessment reveals varied ratings and inconsistency in student work across criteria

Longitudinal Panel Study of Student Outcome

Table 2. Change in Student Self-Rating of Skills Over Time (2011-13 Foundations of Learning Assessment/2014 Drake Student Survey)

	Pretest Mean (FLA)	Posttest Mean (DSS)	Repeated Measures Mean Comparison (Time)	
			Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect Size
Read and understand scientific writings written for an informed lay audience	3.34	3.71	.000	0.34
Employ evidence effectively in writing	3.82	4.08	.000	0.33
Evaluate the quality or reliability of information	3.81	4.09	.000	0.32
Understand the ethical issues related to use and misuse of information	3.96	4.22	.000	0.26
Evaluate reasoned arguments	3.91	4.12	.000	0.25
Apply understanding of ethical issues when developing solutions	3.90	4.12	.000	0.25
Ability to use educational experiences to analyze civic and global issues.	3.62	3.83	.000	0.23
Construct reasoned arguments	3.95	4.11	.000	0.20
Ability to integrate skills and knowledge from different sources and experiences	4.05	4.20	.000	0.19
Communicate effectively with people from other cultures and backgrounds.	3.89	4.00	.005	0.12
Knowledge of how to participate effectively in the democratic process.	3.52	3.62	.008	0.11
Articulate a vision of my own values, ethics, or core beliefs	4.14	4.22	.039	0.09
Execute appropriate mathematical operations for a given question	3.80	3.81	.821	0.01
Understand the perspectives and experiences of people who are different than you	4.22	4.21	.854	0.01
Create or interpret art (ex. Sculpture, painting, music, theatre)	3.06	3.04	.687	0.02
Ability to read carefully	4.20	4.18	.604	0.02
Analyze differences between industrialized and developing areas of the world	3.71	3.67	.320	0.04
Understand the historical, political, and social connections of past events	3.68	3.61	.091	0.07

Qualitative Assessment of Learning related to the Drake Curriculum

A series of focus groups conducted with Drake Seniors in 2013-14 noted the following themes.

Areas of Effectiveness:

- Taking AOI's allowed students to sample different majors or focus on areas of interest outside of their major.
- Students described the Area of Inquiry system as unique and attractive, because it allowed students to take courses in their major right away.

Areas of Challenge:

- AOI curriculum did not add up to one, integrated experience.
- Unclear purpose for some of the AOI areas.
- Mixed expectations from faculty and different levels of motivation or engagement from students in courses offered for both majors and non-majors.
- In some cases, capstone experiences were not found to be very meaningful.

Identified Student Learning Outcomes:

- Students will develop effective teamwork skills.
- Students will be able to understand and evaluate others' perspectives.
- Students will be able to relate their hands-on, outside of the classroom experiences to their in-class learning and career goals.
- Students will be able to demonstrate expertise in an area outside of their major.
- Students will be able to examine and challenge their own views.

Similarly, a September 2013 focus group conducted by Wabash College Center of Inquiry staff found that, "Students described how the AOI courses gave them a needed break and a different perspective from the courses in their majors and colleges. They talked about tools they picked up in these courses, such as using new software, and activities, such as community service, in which they were now engaging as a result of taking an AOI course. They also talked about the way that the courses "broadened them" and seemed to provide them with skills that they would use when they graduated. Their comments did not line up with many of the AOI learning goals, but they were important things nonetheless, and worthy, in our view, of a good general education program. Indeed, their comments sounded like what many liberal arts colleges hope that their students achieve in a general education program."

2015 Alumni Attitude Study

Figure 1. To what extent does each of the following contribute to how well Drake University prepared you?

