

# History General Education Performance Task Report

## **Background**

During the fall 2017 assessment day 50 students with 90 or more credit hours were randomly chosen and participated in the history general education performance task. Ninety minutes was allotted for completion of the task. Professors in the history department agreed upon a performance task and scoring rubric to assess student learning of the history general education outcome and performance indicators.

## **History General Education Outcome and Performance Indicators**

Student Learning Outcome: Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of the historical method.

Performance Indicators – Students should be able to:

1. Compose a historical question.
2. Apply that question to historical evidence to interpret the past.

## **Performance Task Overview**

Students were given a historical mystery, a historical event that has never been fully explained (in this case the ghost ship *Mary Celeste*). Students were asked to write a historical question about that mystery. Students were given articles and evidence regarding the mystery, along with claims made by others in an attempt to explain the mystery. Students were to evaluate the validity of claims based on the evidence given to them and select which claim they believed was best, based on that evidence. Students rated the confidence in their claim and were asked to describe how they made their claim choice.

Student performance task packets included:

- An introduction to the task
- Evidence and claims about the mystery
- Thinking like a historian guiding questions sheet
- Scoring rubric
- Historical question, interpretation, and describe your reasoning answer forms.

Students were scored on a rubric from 0-3 points:

- 0 points=Not present
- 1 point=beginner
- 2 points=Proficient
- 3 points=Mastered

And scored in three areas:

1. Composing a historical question.
2. Selecting supporting evidence/claims.
3. Ranking sources

## Scoring Team Composition

The scoring team was comprised of two professors in the history department and one professor outside the department. The professor outside the department, advises Historic Automotive Technology students and possesses experience in the research, teaching, and writing of history. Scoring team members and one other professor proctored the task.

## Scoring Team Observations

- By and large students did very well.
- I thought it was remarkable the degree of seriousness that students brought to the process. I didn't feel like I saw a single example that the student had "blown off" the task in order to get out of the room.
- The majority of students were *able to create a historical question. Fewer students were able to differentiate between spurious and legitimate sources.* The students who were the *most successful explained their work clearly in the reasoning question.*
- In scoring the work, I thought most students were competent at the tasks on the rubric, though often their writing skills tended to impede their answers. I do have questions about how many students took general education history courses at the College and at other places; I felt like there were a few examples in which it was clear they were unprepared to answer at all.
- I felt like students did a *good job of thoroughly reading the rubric and tying their historical questions to specifics present in the case.* More often than not, they seemed to clearly understand the process and the criteria expected of them.
- I was *disappointed generally by the quality of argument* that the students put forth - while they often came to the correct conclusion, their writing often did not make clear how they came to that conclusion, or what the source material did to lead them there.
- The only *pattern of difficulty I saw was information literacy, the ability to judge the quality of sources.*
- Overall, I thought the process was both an unusual and fun way to assess student learning.
- *Most students were at least proficient in the majority of the tasks.* This probably reflects the fact that the "Thinking Like a Historian" curriculum has been part of G-HI 110, G-HI 120, G-HI 130, G-HI 140, G-HI 150, G-HI 236, and G-HI 237 since fall semester 2013.
- A number of students *did not recognize that one of the primary documents was spurious.* This likely reflects common practice when teaching primary documents over the course of their education. It is possible that students have incorrectly concluded that primary documents are always accurate as an unintended consequence of instructors selecting high quality sources for class assignments.
- In the next version of the assessment we'll want to revise the section on sorting evidence.

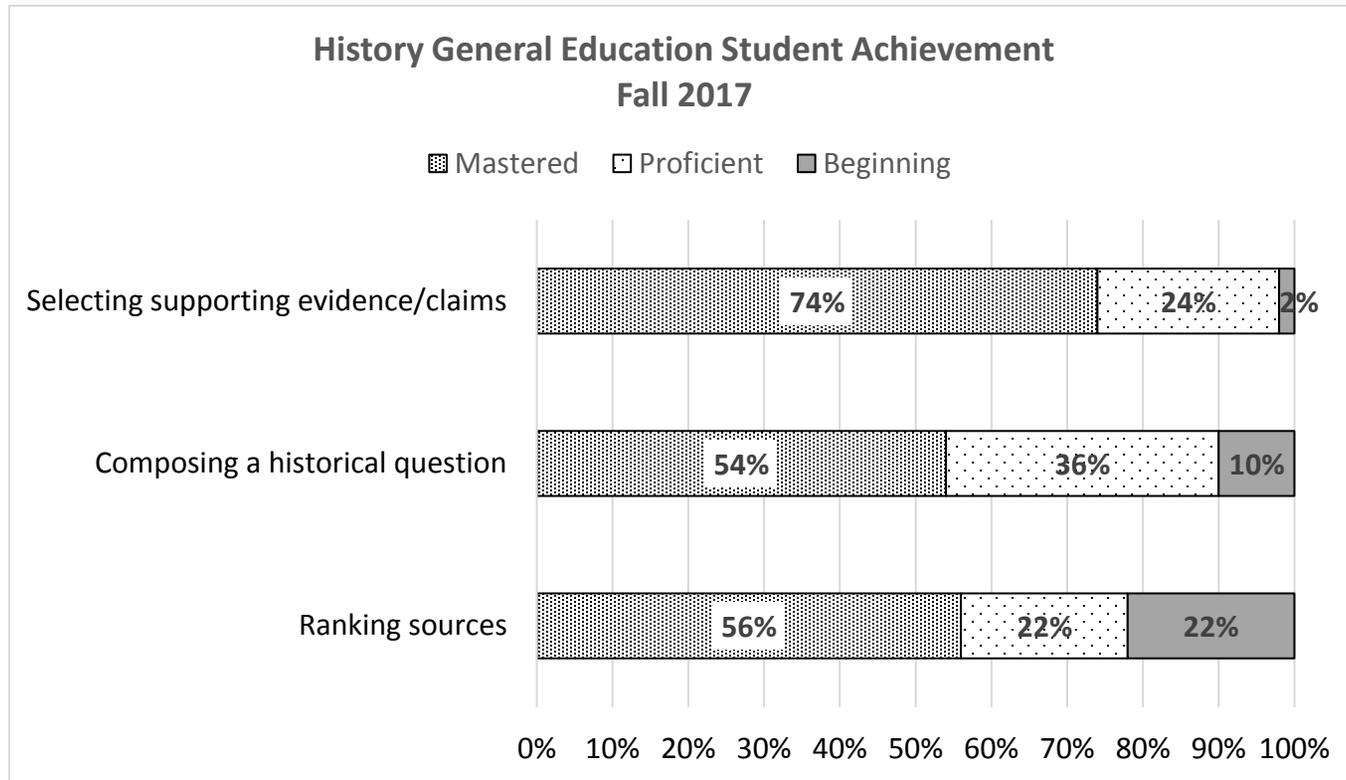
## Process Changes and Suggestions

- Realized the rubric and task weren't as closely aligned as would have liked, suggest piloting the entire task with a couple of students and asking scoring team members to score and discuss the results and make changes before administering the task to the larger group of students. Could have aligned rubric better with ranking sources task component.
- Bring one copy of the entire task for each scoring team member to calibration sessions. Having one copy of each students' work and multiple copies of the rubric for each proctor during calibration sessions was helpful.
- Worked well to calibrate a few pieces of student work and then score additional student work. Calibrate again then score student work a second with a different proctor. Any scores more than 1 point away should be scored a third time.

- Administration went smoothly-had student rosters, task copies, and a few extra pens/pencils from assessment office. Calibration session went well, be sure to bring copies of whole task to each calibration session and extra student ID pages if needed for proctors' second round of scoring. Might prefer to calibrate then just stay and do the first round of scoring right afterward-send proctors with 2<sup>nd</sup> round of scoring and a due date.
- Assessment office needs at least 30 minutes after last student work turned in to prepare for the calibration session. Student work copies need to be made, student ID numbers checked, any student names marked out, and ensure all materials, i.e. calibration training packets, scoring rubric copies, student ID page copies, etc. are ready for the session.

## **Student Achievement**

Overall Student Achievement (N=50)

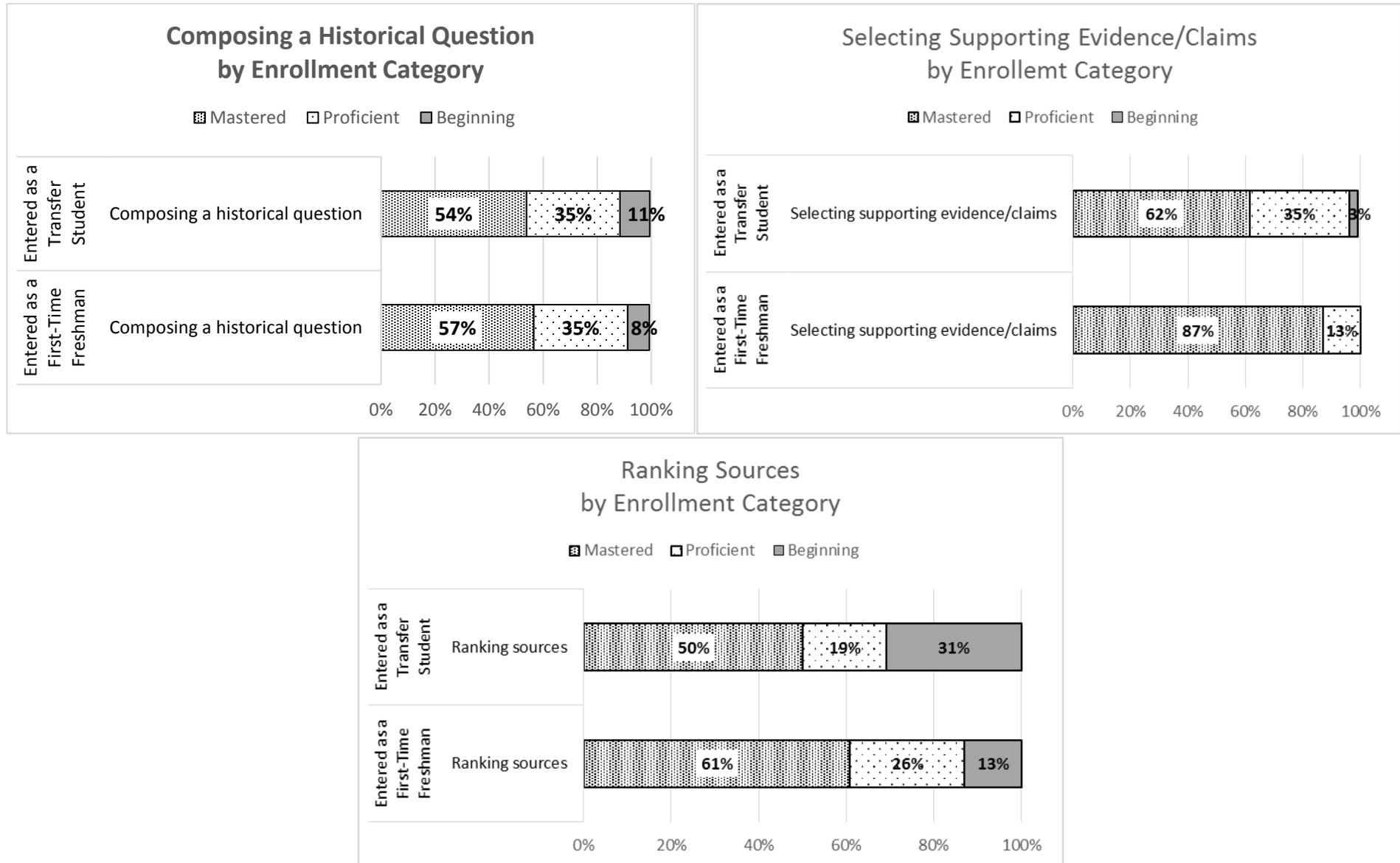


### **Observations:**

1. 98% of students achieved mastery or proficiency in selecting a claim that was supported by the evidence provided for the task
2. 90% of students achieved mastery or proficiency in composing a historical question that conformed to the model in “Thinking Like a Historian” guide.
3. 78% of students achieved mastery or proficiency in correctly identifying which evidence was critical and which was spurious or hearsay.
4. Almost a quarter of students achieved the beginning stage when ranking sources-identifying critical evidence from spurious evidence.
5. Scoring team members’ observations concur students’ biggest challenge was in being able to identify critical evidence.

# Student Achievement by Enrollment Category

Enrolled as a first-time freshman N=23, Enrolled as a transfer Student N=26



## Observations:

- 92% of students enrolled as first-time freshmen when entering M.C. scored at the mastered or proficient levels in composing a historical question. 89% of transfer students scored at the mastered or proficient levels.
- 100% of students enrolled as first-time freshmen when entering M.C. scored at the mastered or proficient levels in selecting supporting evidence/claims, 97% of transfer students scored at the mastered or proficient levels.
- 87% of students enrolled as first-time freshmen when entering M.C. scored at the mastered or proficient levels in ranking sources, 69% of transfer students scored at the mastered or proficient levels.

## National Survey of Student Engagement

Freshman and senior students take the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey every third year as part of spring assessment day activities.

Spring 2017: Freshman n=180, Senior n=112

### Higher-Order Learning

Higher-Order Learning is one of four engagement indicators within the theme of academic challenge on the NSSE. Higher-Order Learning questions include questions related to students' information literacy skills such as applying analyzing, and evaluating theories, facts, ideas, and points of view and forming new ideas from various pieces of information.

The following tables display how McPherson College freshmen and seniors responded to each Higher-Order Learning item, and the difference, in percentage points, between M.C. students and those of the comparison groups. Positive numbers indicate how much higher M.C.'s percentage is from that of the comparison groups. Negative numbers indicate how much lower M.C.'s percentage is from that of the comparison groups.

### Freshmen Spring 2013

<u>Higher-Order Learning</u>	<u>MC</u>	<u>KICA</u>	<u>Carnegie</u>	<u>NSSE 2013</u>
<i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much coursework emphasized...</i>	%			
4b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations.	61	-14	-10	-13
4c. Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts.	65	-7	-6	-8
4d. Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source.	65	-6	-6	-5
4e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information.	66	-4	-2	-3

### Freshmen Spring 2017

<u>Higher-Order Learning</u>	<u>MC</u>	<u>KICA</u>	<u>Carnegie</u>	<u>NSSE 2013</u>
<i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much coursework emphasized...</i>	%			
4b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations.	64	-1	-2	-7
4c. Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts.	64	-1	-3	-6
4d. Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source.	69	+4	-1	+0
4e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information.	64	-1	-5	-4

## Seniors Spring 2013

<u>Higher-Order Learning</u>	<u>MC</u>	<u>KICA</u>	<u>Carnegie</u>	<u>NSSE 2013</u>
<i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much coursework emphasized...</i>	%			
4b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations.	75	-12	-5	-5
4c. Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts.	68	-14	-9	-10
4d. Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source.	65	-14	-9	-7
4e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information.	64	-13	-9	-9

## Seniors Spring 2017

<u>Higher-Order Learning</u>	<u>MC</u>	<u>KICA</u>	<u>Carnegie</u>	<u>NSSE 2013</u>
<i>Percentage responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit" about how much coursework emphasized...</i>	%			
4b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations.	73	-5	-5	-5
4c. Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts.	72	-5	-5	-4
4d. Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source.	68	-4	-8	-2
4e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information.	69	-3	-7	-3

### Observations:

- Overall, some progress has been made from 2013 to 2017 regarding freshman and senior students' perceptions of Higher-Order Learning skills being emphasized in coursework.
- Progress has also been made when comparing McPherson College freshman and senior students' responses versus comparison groups' responses.
- McPherson College freshman and senior students' perceptions of Higher-Order Learning skills being emphasized in coursework typically still lags behind the comparison groups' perceptions.

## Development of Transferrable Skills Module-NSSE, spring 2017

Transferable skills module not administered before 2017

### Key:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ▲ <b>Your students' average</b> was significantly higher ( $p < .05$ ) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.  | ▼ <b>Your students' average</b> was significantly lower ( $p < .05$ ) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude. |
| △ <b>Your students' average</b> was significantly higher ( $p < .05$ ) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude. | ▽ <b>Your students' average</b> was significantly lower ( $p < .05$ ) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.  |
| — No significant difference.  |  |

The tables below compare average scores for M.C. freshmen and seniors with those in the comparison group; Private, Not-for-profit institutions with less than 1,000 students (Priv-NFP<1,000 stdnts).

### Freshmen 2017

During the current school year, whether course-related or not, about how often have you written something (paper, report, article, blog, etc.) that used information from a variety of sources (books, journals, Internet, databases, etc.)?

Response Options	MC %	Priv-NFP<1,000 stdnts %	MC Mean	Priv-NFP<1,000 stdnts Mean	M.C. students' average with effect size vs. Priv.-NFP<1,000 stdnts
Never	3	2			▼
Sometimes	31	28			
Often	44	38			
Very Often	22	32			
<b>Total</b>	100	100	2.9	3.0*	

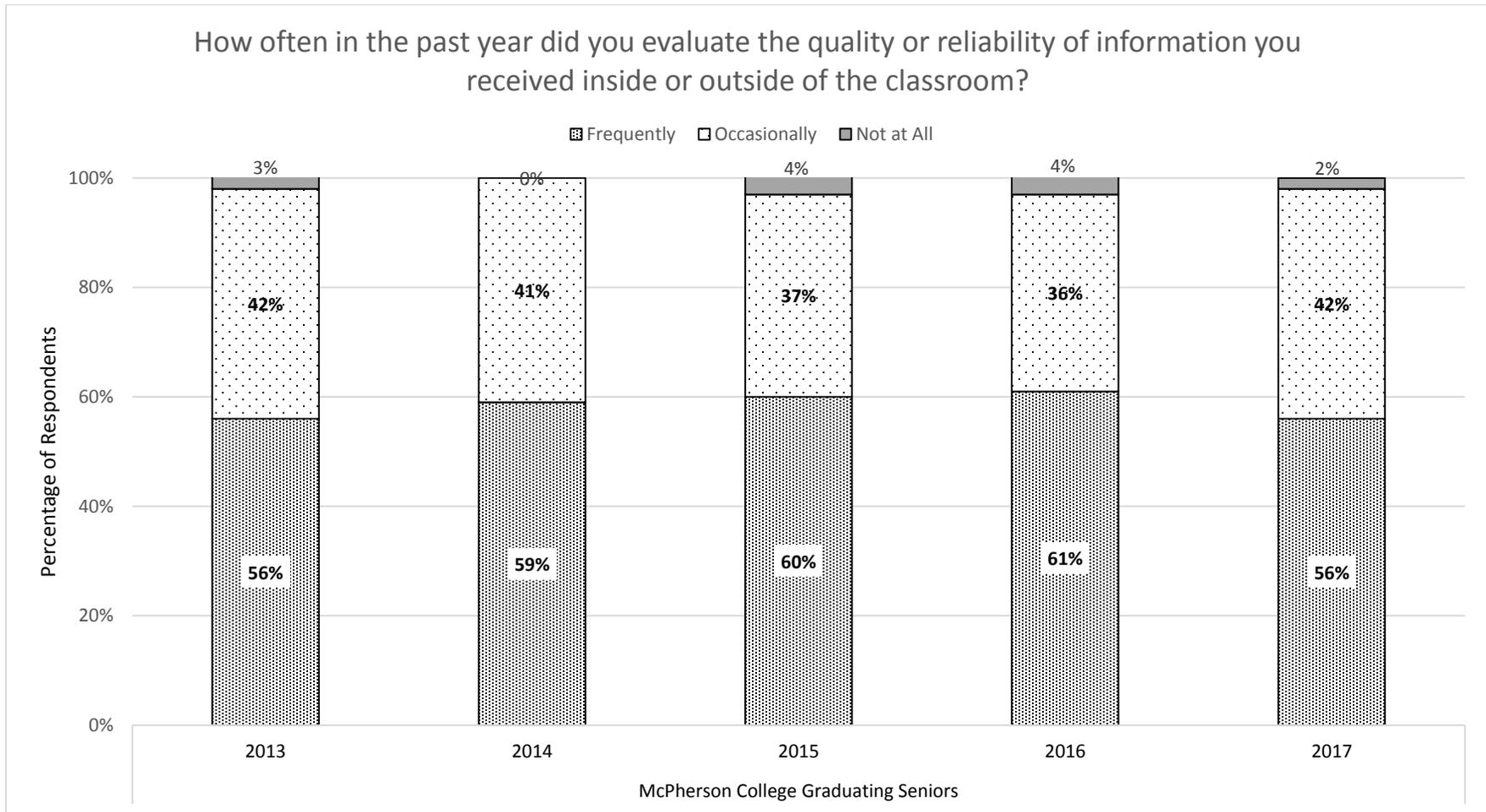
### Seniors 2017

During the current school year, whether course-related or not, about how often have you written something (paper, report, article, blog, etc.) that used information from a variety of sources (books, journals, Internet, databases, etc.)?

Response Options	MC %	Priv-NFP<1,000 stdnts %	MC Mean	Priv-NFP<1,000 stdnts Mean	M.C. students' average with effect size vs. Priv.-NFP<1,000 stdnts
Never	5	2			▼
Sometimes	34	16			
Often	29	36			
Very Often	32	47			
<b>Total</b>	100	100	2.9	3.3***	

## College Senior Survey 2013-2017

The college senior survey (CSS) is administered each spring to graduating seniors. The college's survey return rate is typically 80-90 percent. The chart below shows the percentage of senior respondents answering frequently, occasionally, or not at all to the posed question.



\*Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number, percentages may not equal 100.

## Group Discussion Notes

- Notable is the difference between transfers and non-transfers in this gap.
- These same differences between transfers and non-transfers has been observed from natural sciences - - is the “Associates degree” exception an issue.
- A lot depends on where students come from regionally – big difference in high school experience/education.
- Critical thinking and information literacy are alarmingly low.
- Why would you want students coming up with the question before seeing the materials?
- How does the size of the activity/assignment transfer to frequency?
  - Capstone courses across our campus focus on research (reading?) and writing, why assess seniors-(non-distinguishable faculty notes here)?
  - This major time commitment – is it because it is only a 2 hour class or just 1 assignment?
- Spend classroom time initiating discussion about each source presented in class.
- It would seem based on syllabi that we could calculate how many “formal” writing assignments are offered through MC’s curriculum and we could compare this to the statistics.
- Could the difference between transfers and 1<sup>st</sup> year freshmen may be the fact our history teaches history from the “Thinking like a Historian” approach. How many of our transfer students took a history course here?
- Students need to work on information literacy – this is something we can all work on.
- Regional/National Comparisons higher orders.
- It is interesting how consistent the data are, given it is self-reported.
- Rubric should align w/SLOs – shouldn’t change the rubric to match the task.
- Do Auto Restoration students affect paper writing data in the senior year?
- How will this process look in other cross-discipline gen. ed. Areas?
- How much writing, especially formal writing is happening on campus?
- Do we need custom question in surveys or to define what constitutes writing on the surveys?
- Discerning quality of source – how to apply sources to the task.
- Ambient literature – for example – is what we teach (i.e. the research paper) becoming less as an assessed “formal writing” document?
- I find in teaching Info Lit that the term “fake news” is “shot-down” term. It means something different to every student, and therefore it is not valuable as a teaching term. Research and application leads to gray areas not black and white thinking. How to think NOT what to think.
- We need to do a better job with information literacy in major classes.

### Discussion about KICA & other data

-We’re improving

-Are we though?

-We got better

-Well, we got closer to the other college’s numbers

-This is them saying what they think compared to us saying what we think.

-Do they take freshmen and seniors?

-No. It’s every third year.

-There needs to be a benchmark.

### **Recommendations for Education Policies Committee**

Good direct and indirect assessment use to show a bigger picture of students' skills and attitudes.

Gather more information about incoming and exiting students' information literacy skills.

Pre and post-test for information literacy skills done in English Composition

Schedule information literacy general education assessment

Use this information combined with history assessment information to decide if this is isolated or more wide-spread. Decide upon interventions/curriculum changes if indicated by the data.

### **Actions**

Schedule information literacy general education assessment earlier, spring 2019.

Pre-test information literacy skills of freshmen in College Composition I courses, fall 2018

Post-test information literacy skills of freshmen in College Composition II courses, spring 2019

Analyze data from skills tests and general education assessments in fall 2019 to determine student learning strengths and weaknesses