

## Effective Communication

### Introduction

*Students will be able to make a written, oral or visual presentation that demonstrates comprehension of any source of information and that addresses the assigned topic, expresses a thesis, develops a sustained focus on the central idea, organizes ideas around the thesis and uses correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar and mechanics.*

Effective Communication is constituted of 10 criteria:

1. Summary: Restates in student's own words main details of a text without opinions.
2. Paraphrase: The restatement of a text passage in students' own words without opinions.
3. Annotation: Detailed notes on a text
4. Outline: Restates in students' own words the main and supporting details of text
5. Task: Addresses the assigned topic
6. Central Idea: Expresses a central idea or thesis
7. Focus: Develops a sustained focus on the central idea
8. Organization: Logically organizes supportive ideas around the thesis
9. Correctness: Uses correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar and mechanics
10. Citation: Documents sources of information using the accepted form

An assessment rubric was developed by the Effective Communication sub-committee of the Gen Ed work group in 2009-10 (Appendix A).

The rubric is scaled with the following levels:

- Accomplished (Score of 4)
- Competent (Score of 3)
- Developing Score of 2)
- Beginning (Score of 1)

Blank responses were not included.

### Methods

In the last assessment of Effective Communication, it was noted that, "finding appropriate courses for [this assessment] is a challenge." As part of the Fall 2016 *Canvas Outcomes* pilot, a broad collection of faculty from all divisions and subject areas were asked to contribute to General Education competencies; specifying *Effective Communication* as the focus of CCP's assessment plan for 2016-17. The goal was to utilize this faculty input to design an effective alignment of the competency to courses.

A chart of average rubric scores was composed for comparison to the last (2014) assessment. However, the populations differ. In 2010, students early in their career were targeted through the assessment of sections of ENGL098, 099, 101 and 102. In 2014, students later in their career were targeted through the assessment of upper-level students in courses which fulfill Writing Intensive requirements.

Following the methodology of the more recent general education competency reports, assessed students were grouped into 15 or fewer credits (Group One) and those with 45 or more credits (Group

Two), representing students at the beginning and ending of their CCP careers. One hundred thirty-three (133) students were assessed for Effective Communication.

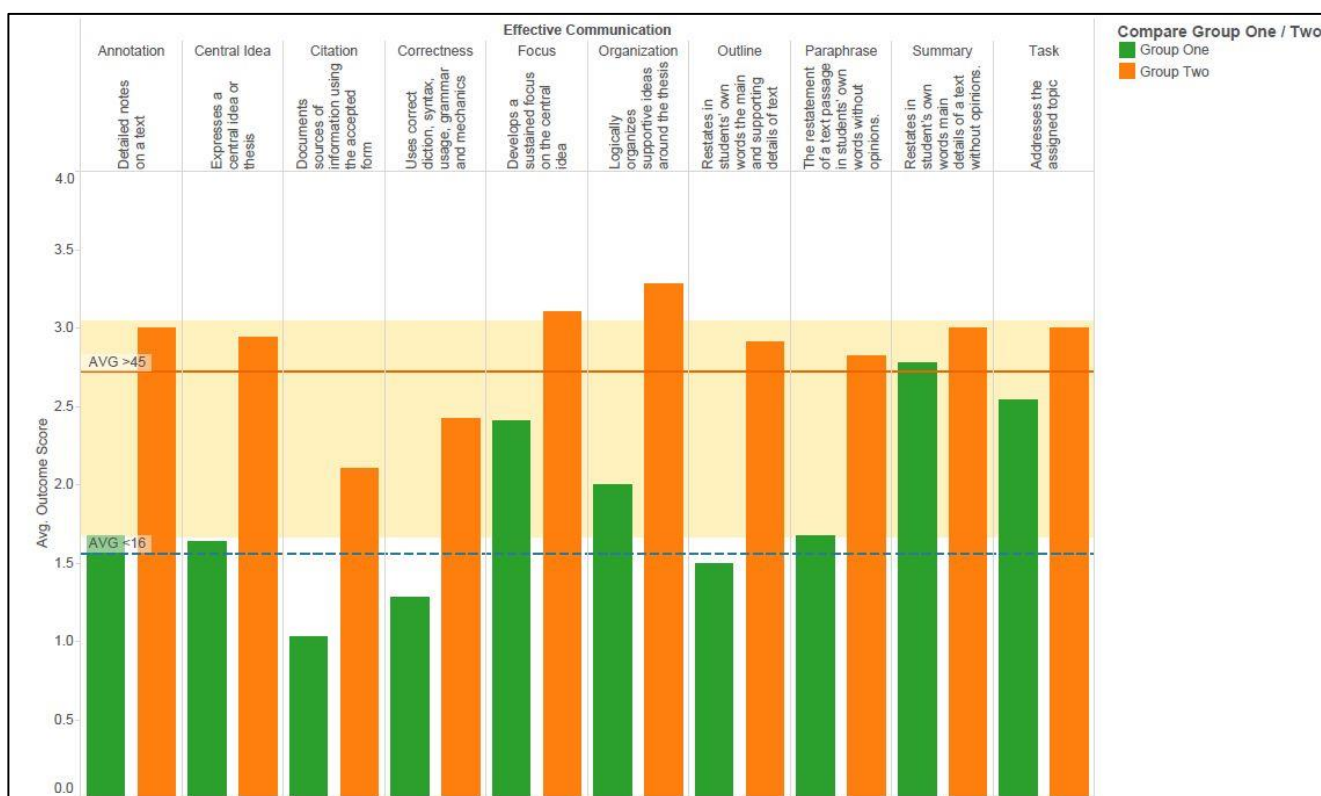
Finally, students were asked in a survey about their attitudes about writing, and to conduct a self-assessment of their writing skills in the spring 2017<sup>1</sup>. Five hundred thirty-one (531) students responded to the survey. Results from this indirect assessment were compared with direct assessment by faculty of the same skills. Students were asked to rate their application of certain writing skills as:

- never or almost never true (Score of 1)
- usually not true (Score of 2)
- somewhat true (Score of 3)
- usually true (Score of 4)
- always or almost always true (Score of 5)

## Results

Average outcome scores for each of the criteria of Effective Communication was higher for Group Two (>45 credits) than for Group One (<=15 credits).

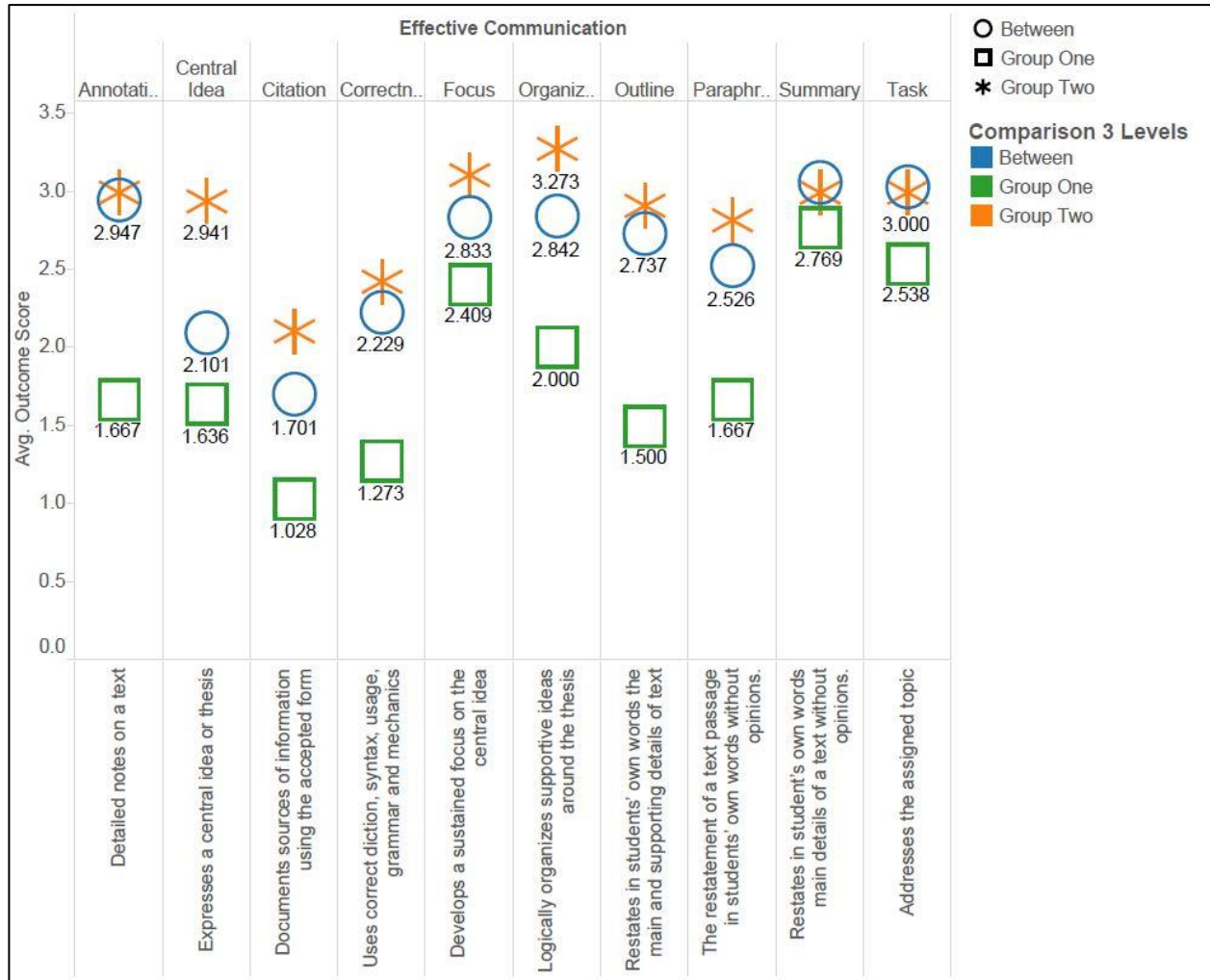
**Chart 1. Faculty Evaluation:** Comparison of Average Criteria Scores of Group One and Group Two



Further evidence for skill development can be seen in Chart 2, which in addition to the average criteria scores for students 15 or fewer credits (Group One) and those with 45 or more credits (Group Two), includes the average rubric scores for those falling between those two points.

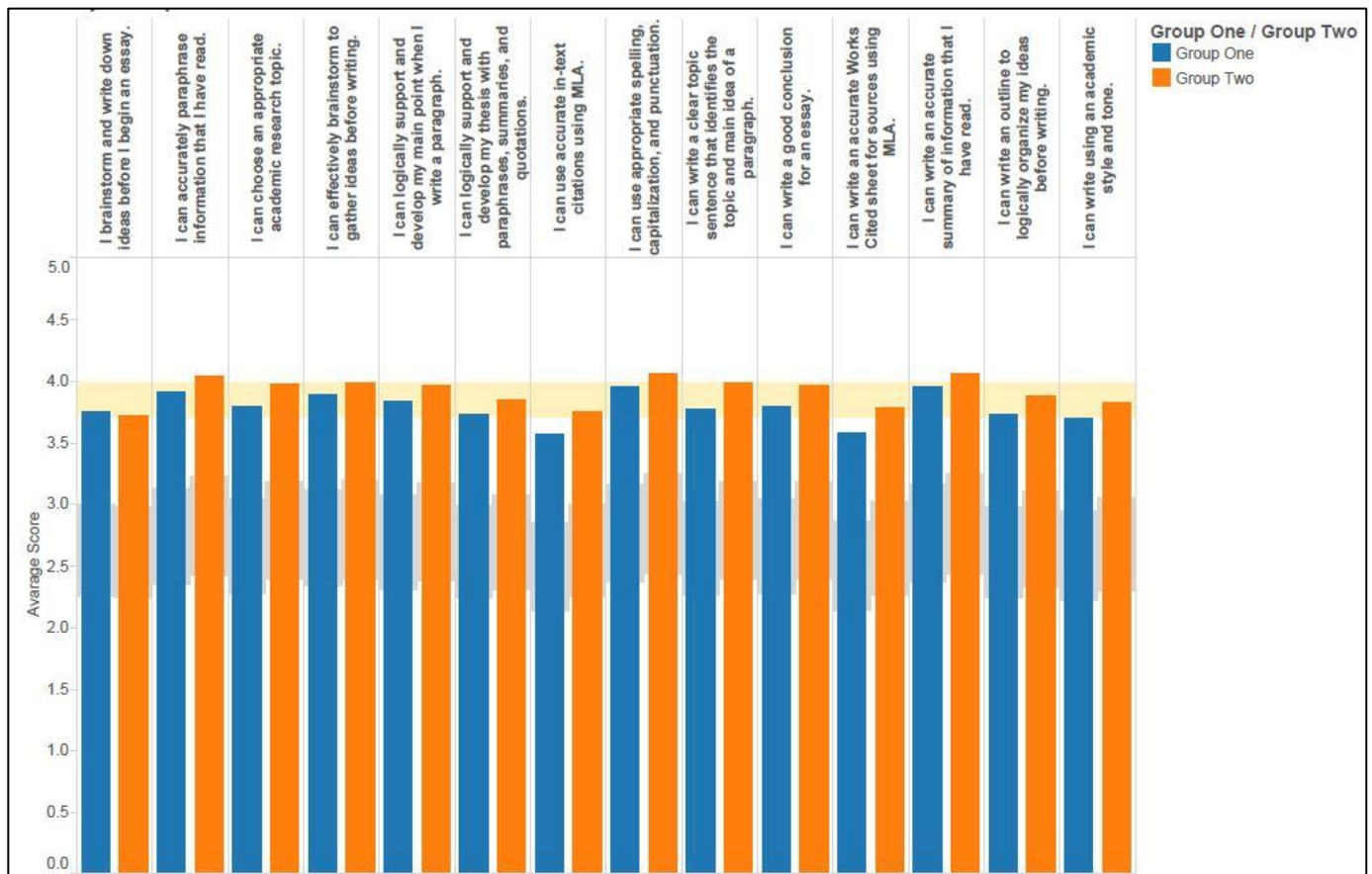
<sup>1</sup> Survey questions adapted from Elbow, Peter & Pat Belanoff. A Community of Writers. 3rd Edition. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000  
Marquette University- ESLP 82 Questionnaire: Self-Assessment of English Writing Skills and Use of Writing

**Chart 2. Faculty Evaluation:** Compare Average Criteria Score Groups One, Two and Between



Student self-evaluation survey results mirror the direct assessment by faculty, in that students who have completed more than 45 credits show a higher average rating of their application of writing skills than those with 15 or fewer credits (See Chart 3.)

**Chart 3. Student Self-Assessment:** Comparison of Average Scores of Group One and Group Two

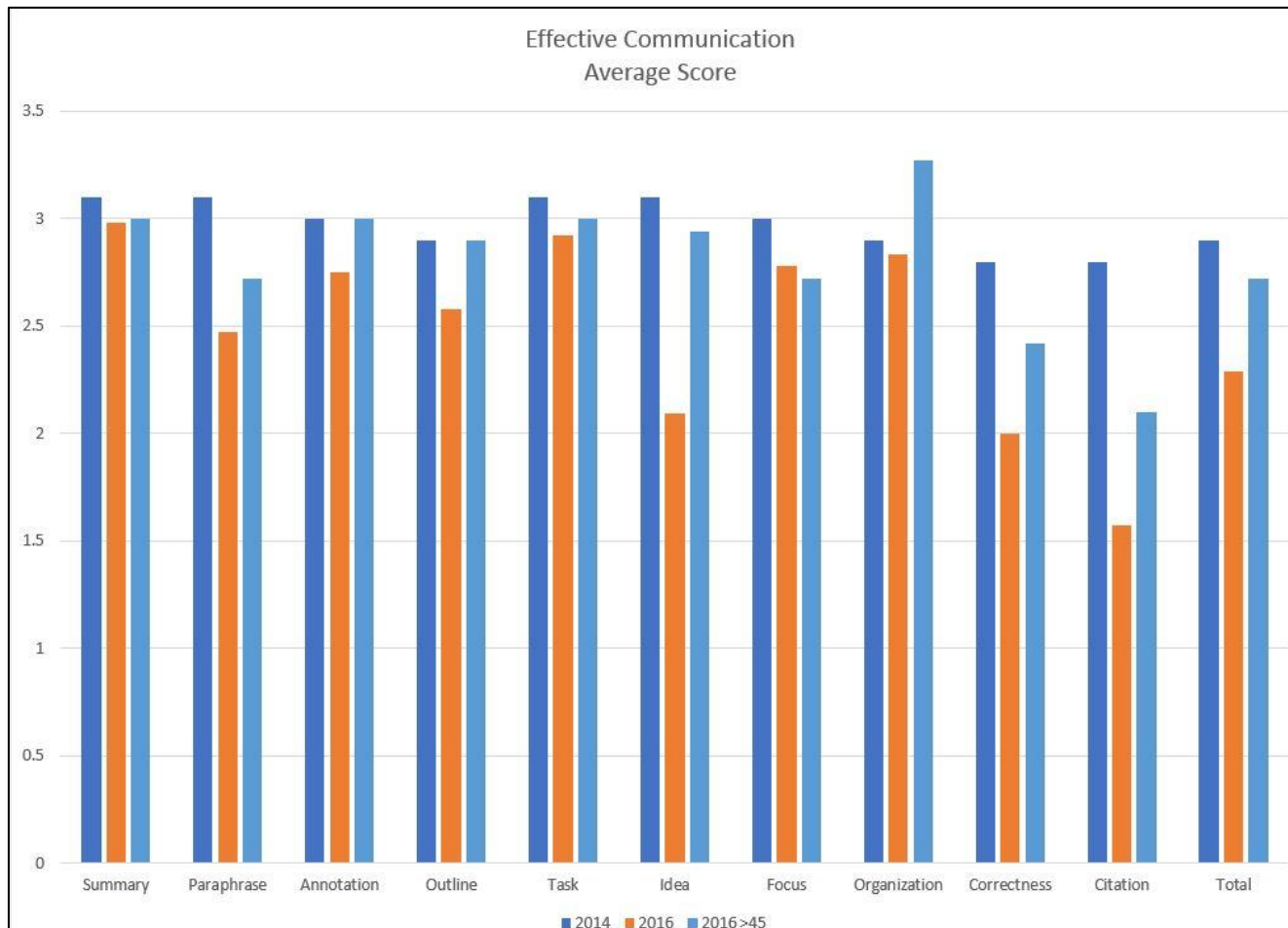


### Trends

As noted, it is difficult to make an exact comparison to the 2014 report, given the slight differences in population. However, there are some trends worth noting. *Correctness* and *Citation*, which were cited in the 2010 and 2014 reports as among the lowest scores, were again the lowest of the average rubric scores. Similarly, *Summary* and *Organization* skills were noted as among the higher rated skills in both the 2014 and 2017 Competency Reports (Chart 4.)

These trends are mirrored by the student self-evaluation (Chart 5). Students’ lowest average skill ratings were: “I can use accurate in-text citations,” and, “I can write an accurate Works Cited sheet for sources using MLA,” and the highest was: “I can write an accurate summary of information that I have read.”

**Chart 4. Faculty Evaluation: Average Outcome Scores 2014, 2016, 2016 >45<sup>2</sup>**



### Indirect Evidence

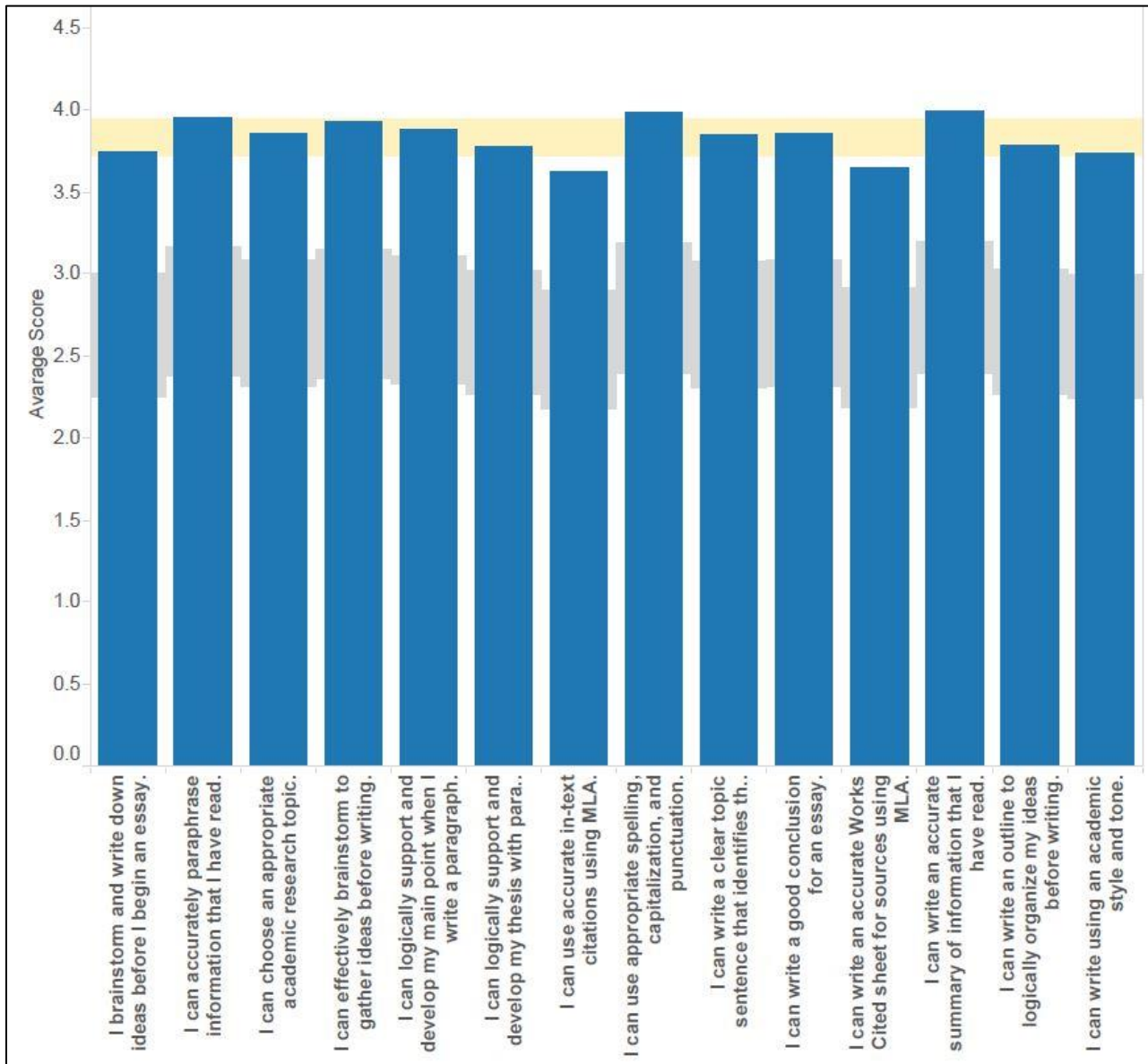
- CCP students were more likely to agree that the College, “helped to develop their ability to write clearly and effectively,” than their peers at other institutions (IR#238D).<sup>3</sup>
- This rating also increased slightly from the 2009 Survey (2.81) to 2013 (3.03).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Average scores from Group Two (>45 Credits) were included as a better match to the population assessed in the 2014 Competency Report.

<sup>3</sup> Figure 1. [http://path.ccp.edu/vpfin-pl/ir/ir\\_reports/ir\\_report\\_238d.pdf](http://path.ccp.edu/vpfin-pl/ir/ir_reports/ir_report_238d.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Figure 3. [http://path.ccp.edu/vpfin-pl/ir/ir\\_reports/ir\\_report\\_238d.pdf](http://path.ccp.edu/vpfin-pl/ir/ir_reports/ir_report_238d.pdf)

**Chart 5. Student Self-Assessment: Average Score**



## Conclusions and Proposals

### Findings

This report shows evidence, both direct and indirect, supporting the College’s development of *Effective Communication* competency in students.

Average rating for students in Group Two (>45 credits) is not Competent (3) in all criteria.

Faculty evaluation of students’ citation skill, as well as the students’ self-evaluation of citation skills, remains consistently the lowest average score.

## **Assessment Practice**

There are a variety of frameworks for assessing communication and/or written communication skills. Common dimensions include the evaluation of students' knowledge and use of conventions, organization and development, writing process skills, and the ability to compose in various genre/style/context or formats.<sup>5</sup> CCP's current rubric includes criteria to assess students ability to develop a piece of writing, and students' knowledge of conventions. The current rubric does not include an evaluation of process skills (idea or invention, drafting, revising or editing.)

Some frameworks include writing or composing for multiple audiences and/or contexts. Including "composing for multiple formats," would allow CCP to include the evaluation of oral and visual communication more explicitly. This would also align better with communication competency models from the US Department of Labor<sup>6</sup> and National Institutes of Health.<sup>7</sup>

## **Outcomes Improvement: Focus on Citation Skill**

Institutions employ a variety of strategies when seeking to make institution-wide improvements in student skills. George Mason University employed **cross-disciplinary training workshops** in employing an evaluation of a "literature review." Although nominally the cross-training was intended to develop a common prompt and to train faculty in rubric scoring, they found, "participants always leave with an awareness of how much their expectations may differ from those in other disciplines and even from members of their own disciplines; they also acquire a greater understanding of the challenges student writers face in meeting the expectations of teachers across disciplines."<sup>8</sup> Inconsistent criteria may also be a factor in poor student performance.<sup>9</sup>

## **Re-Assess**

Effective Communication should be evaluated again in four years.

Goal: Improve student competency in citation skill.

Benchmark: 70% of students competent or above in Group Two (>45 credits.)

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<sup>5</sup> Sparks, J. R., Song, Y., Brantley, W. and Liu, O. L. (2014), Assessing Written Communication in Higher Education: Review and Recommendations for Next-Generation Assessment. ETS Research Report Series, 2014: 1–52. doi:10.1002/ets2.12035

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.careeronestop.org/competencymodel/blockModel.aspx?tier\\_id=2&block\\_id=8](https://www.careeronestop.org/competencymodel/blockModel.aspx?tier_id=2&block_id=8)

<sup>7</sup> <https://hr.od.nih.gov/workingatnih/competencies/core/communication.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://wpacouncil.org/GeorgeMason>

<sup>9</sup> Bill Cerbin and Terry Beck. Why Learning to Write Well in College is Difficult. <http://writing.wisc.edu/wac/node/108>