

A Qualitative Assessment of First-Year Students' Understanding of Liberal Arts Education and Civic Responsibility

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AAC&U General Education and Assessment Conference
Baltimore, MD
February 26, 2009

FYE Assessment Team

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Profile of Millersville University

- One of 14 PASSHE universities
- Undergrad enrollment - 7259
 - 91% fulltime
 - 14% minority
 - 96% instate (Pennsylvania)
- Entering fall 2008 class of 1323 students (new freshmen) –
 - Mean SATs = 1082^a;
 - Mean Percentile Rank = 72%
- 16th Ranked Public in US News & World Report's Master's Universities in the North
- Top Majors:
 - Undecided (881)
 - Business Administration (858)
 - Elementary Education (806)
 - Biology (542)
 - Industry & Technology (458)
 - Psychology (438)
 - Communications (416)



Evolution of FYE Program Models

Fall 2001 to Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008
UNIV 101 → (one credit)	UNIV 179 → (three credits)	UNIV 179 → (three credits)	UNIV 179 → (three credits)	UNIV 103 → (three credits)
Extended Orientation Type Seminar	Pilot-Test of "Passion" Course Seminars			Incorporation of First-Year Inquiry Seminars into Gen Ed

Components of the First-Year Inquiry Seminar

- Paired with first-year fundamental course (Composition or Speech)
- Living-learning connection (Students live together in Freshman residence halls)
- Service Learning (15 hours recommended)
- Attentive advising by seminar instructors with support from Resident Life and Exploratory programs
- Peer mentors (live in residence halls; one assigned to each seminar)

Common Learning Objectives of the First-Year Inquiry Seminar

1. Communicating orally and in writing
2. Obtaining and evaluating information (information literacy)
3. Engaging in critical inquiry
4. **Appreciating the importance of civic engagement**
5. **Understanding the importance of a liberal arts education**
6. Making a successful transition into university life, both academically and socially

Selected First-Year Inquiry Seminar Topics

- Why We Hate
- Facing Fear
- Homes and Homelessness
- The Amish and the Media
- Scientific Revolutions: An Exploration of Method
- Culture, Science and Mathematics in the Pre-Columbian Americas
- Liberty and Justice for All: The Promise of American Education
- The Deindustrialization of America: Jobs Today, Gone Tomorrow
- Biodiversity and the Sixth Great Extinction
- iPod, YouTube - Our Technological Choices
- The Perfect Beat: A Social History of Rock and Roll
- Public Health: Science and Art in Action
- What Turns You On? Minds, Motivation, and Learning
- The Great IQ Debate

Assessment Components (Fall 2006 -2009)

Pretest-Posttest Open-Ended Responses

Civic Responsibility

What is civic responsibility? (Pre)

What is civic responsibility? How has your understanding of civic responsibility changed? (Post)

Liberal Arts

What is a liberal arts education? (Pre)

What is liberal arts education? How has your understanding of a liberal arts education changed? (Post)

Coding Strategies

- Group coding for reliability
- Group debriefing/discussion
- Refinement of rubric, based on group analysis
- Group coding for reliability

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Responses to Liberal Arts Writing Prompt (Pretest - Fall 2007)

	<u>Off Target (1)</u>	<u>Partial/Developing(2)</u>	<u>On Target (3)</u>
Description	The response indicates a misconception, lack of understanding, or may be incorrect regarding liberal arts education.	The response indicates a more limited understanding of a liberal arts education. Responses may focus on skills or dispositions but may be limited to one's professional study, rather than across different disciplines.	The response indicates a well developed conceptualization and understanding of liberal arts education. Responses focus on the purpose of liberal arts to foster skills and dispositions about ways of knowing across different disciplines (e.g., problem solving, critical reflection, communication, computation). Responses are stated with context of multiple disciplines.
Examples of responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required for graduation • Related to arts, music, performance • Related to politics or political ideology • Major course/vocation courses • I don't know • Incorrect answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of different cultures • Exposure to different perspectives (e.g., not formal disciplines or subjects). • General education (basic education) • Reading, writing, thinking, science, math. • Individual attributes (e.g., being smart, studious, etc.) • Well rounded person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to different disciplines, courses, or subject areas • Ways of knowing about things from many different perspectives. • Designed to develop understanding, knowledge, and appreciation outside of one's area of expertise. • Well rounded education
Percentages (N)	49.0% (74)	41.7% (63)	9.3% (14)

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Responses to Civic Responsibility Writing Prompt (Pretest-Fall 2007)

	<u>Off Target (1)</u>	<u>Partial/Developing(2)</u>	<u>On Target (3)</u>
Description	The response indicates a misconception, lack of understanding, or may be incorrect regarding civic responsibility.	The response indicates a developing conceptualization or understanding of civic engagement yet is limited in scope. Responses focus on individual characteristics or interpersonal traits/skills, but don't extend to how collective members of society are affected or how the community in which one resides is impacted. Responses are not stated in the context of community.	The response indicates a well developed conceptualization and understanding of civic engagement. Responses focus on the notion of civic engagement in a broad sense, by identifying how collective members of society are affected or how the community in which one resides is impacted. Responses are stated within the context of a community.
Examples of responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing well in school • I don't know • Incorrect answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive traits that are not within a community context (good, respectful, kind, nice, etc). • Personal/individual /family responsibilities • A personal "duty" • Being a good person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a good citizen • Giving back to the community • Helping others/neighbors in need • Adhering to laws or standards of the community • Promoting common good • Actively engaged in political process
Percentages (N)	41.7% (63)	24.5% (37)	33.8% (51)

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Levels of Elaboration in Writing Prompts (Pretest -- Fall 2007)

Level of Elaboration – Liberal Arts (Pretest)			
	<u>Shallow (1)</u>	<u>Partial/Developing (2)</u>	<u>Deep (3)</u>
Description	Response includes shallow ideas with limited and unelaborated details. Response does not include evidence of critical reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.	Response includes minimal ideas that are supported with vague or simplistic details. Response is limited in critical reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.	Response includes deep and complex ideas that are supported by rich details. Response includes evidence of reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.
Percentages (N)	28.5% (43)	55.6% (84)	15.9% (24)
Level of Elaboration – Civic Responsibility (Pretest)			
	<u>Shallow (1)</u>	<u>Partial/Developing (2)</u>	<u>Deep (3)</u>
Description	Response includes shallow ideas with limited and unelaborated details. Response does not include evidence of critical reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.	Response includes minimal ideas that are supported with vague or simplistic details. Response is limited in critical reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.	Response includes deep and complex ideas that are supported by rich details. Response includes evidence of reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.
Percentages (N)	23.2% (35)	49.0% (74)	27.8% (42)

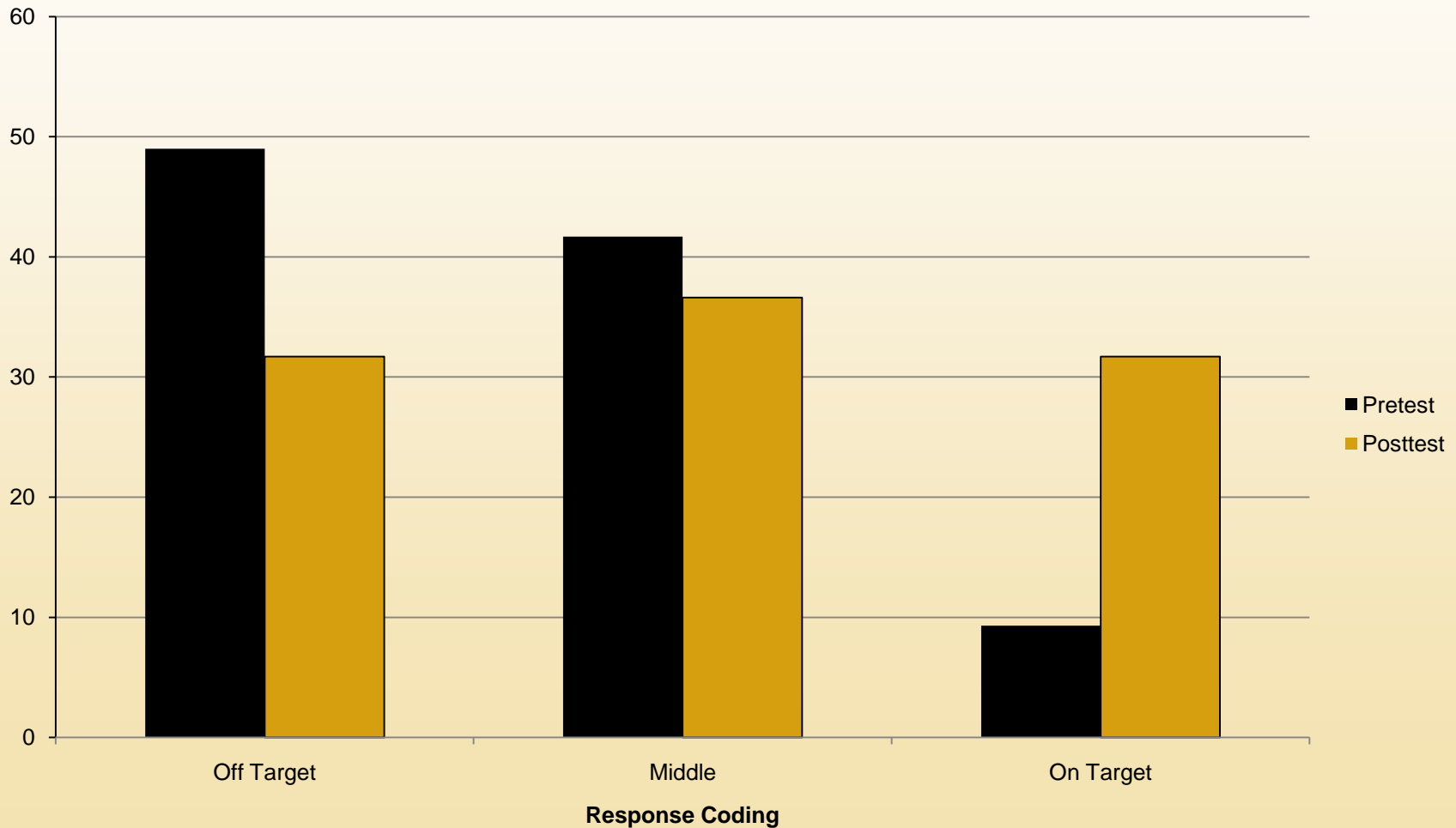
Comparison of Pre-Test/Post-Test Means (Fall 2007)

Scale	Pre-Test	Post-Test	<i>p</i> value
Liberal Arts Content	1.64 (.66)	1.99 (.80)	<.001
Liberal Arts Level of Elaboration	1.90 (.62)	1.82 (.58)	ns
Civic Responsibility Content	1.78 (.83)	2.32 (.71)	<.001
Civic Responsibility Level of Elaboration	2.01 (.70)	1.98 (.61)	ns

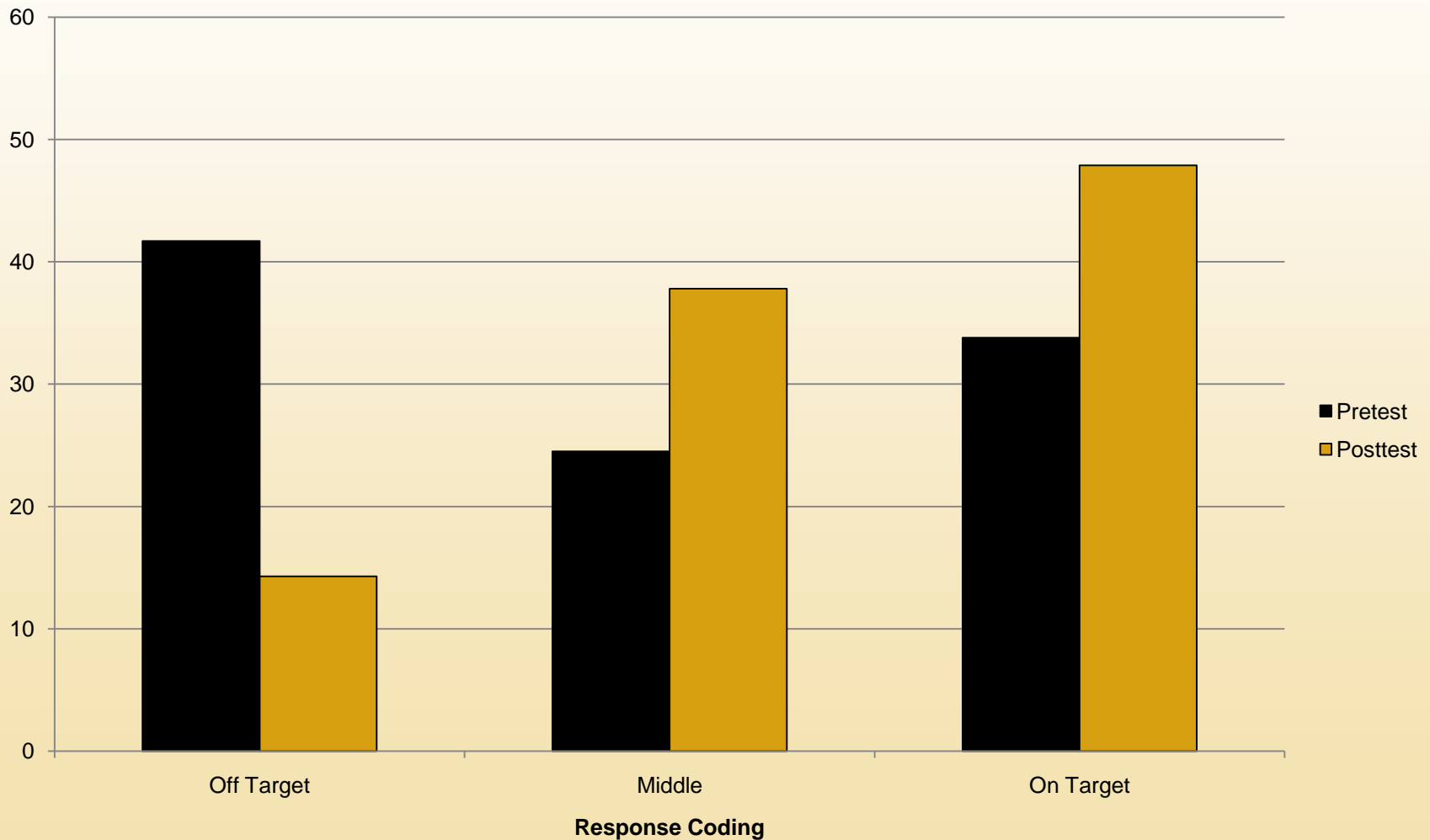
Note: *N* = 122 for Liberal Arts coding; *N* = 114 for Civic Responsibility coding; standard deviations in parentheses.

Range: All scales based on 1 = off target/shallow to 3 = on target/deep

Pretest and Posttest Responses Conceptions of the Liberal Arts – Fall 2007



Pretest and Posttest Responses – Conceptions of Civic Responsibility – Fall 2007



Refining the rubric

- Embed assessment into courses & programs
- Collect data in seminar/other courses to enhance participation rates
- Ongoing refinement of rubrics to enhance reliability & validity
- Iterative process: cycle of ongoing instrument development and data collection

Revised Rubric (2009) for Civic Responsibility Writing Prompt Evaluation Criteria

	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing/Partial (2)	Inadequate (1)
Description	<p>To be categorized as “exemplary”, the response is characterized by a well developed conceptualization and understanding</p> <p>Responses include concrete examples of civic responsibility and identify ways in which the community is impacted or how collective members of society are affected.</p>	<p>This category bridges responses that are greater than “Developing/Partial”, but not quite “Exemplary”.</p> <p>Responses include concrete examples of civic responsibility and mention the context of community. However, the response fails to identify how the community is impacted. This impact may be inferred, but is not explicitly stated.</p>	<p>To be categorized as “Partial/Developing”, the response is characterized by a developing or partial understanding, but is limited in scope.</p> <p>Responses include descriptive traits, obligations, or responsibilities. However, the emphasis is on an individual level, not a community level.</p>	<p>To be categorized as “inadequate”, the response is a vague description about civic responsibility.</p> <p>Responses may also include a misconception, lack of understanding, or factually inaccurate information.</p>

Revised Rubric for Civic Responsibility Writing Prompt Sample Responses

	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing/Partial (2)	Inadequate (1)
Sample responses	<p>“It is our civic responsibility to vote. Voting models the principles of democracy that our nation subscribes to and allows the people to engage in shared governance in our nation.”</p> <p>“Civic responsibility is the duty that one has to their community. I believe that all US citizens have a civic responsibility to obey the government and abide by the law. We are responsible for taking care of one another. Churches and organizations do their best to provide sustenance to the homeless. If we don't take care of each other and unite, then we will fail as a nation.”</p>	<p>“Civic responsibility is your responsibility to your community. Like helping out by cleaning up a messy park or picking up litter. Voting as well is a civic responsibility. Things that help out your community are civic responsibility.”</p> <p>“Civic responsibility is the responsibilities a person has to give back to their community. It's a citizen's duty to be involved in their community by doing things like becoming a school board member or doing types of community service. CR is something that everyone does to their town and community.”</p>	<p>“I think that civic responsibility is responsibilities that we have as citizens. An example of this is voting. It is our responsibility as a citizen to go to the polls on election day. It is also our responsibility to keep up with current events.”</p> <p>“Performing community service is something good to do. It makes us better people.”</p>	<p>“Civic responsibility is knowing about your culture and your world. It is being proud of it and not hiding it. It is important to know your history and the world around you.”</p>

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Thanks for attending our presentation. We hope our poster was helpful to you in your attempts assess the impact of your programs.

Further information is available from our websites:

<http://www.millersville.edu/gened>

<http://www.millersville.edu/fye>

Contact information follows on the next slide.



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Go to <http://www.millersville.edu/gened> for information about our
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