

# **CCSU General Education Assessment Retreat**

**January 2022**

**✧ Written Communication Learning Outcome Results ✧**

**Artifacts from Fall 2021**

**Office of Institutional Research and Assessment  
Central Connecticut State University**

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## **Introduction**

As part of our Davis Educational Foundation (DEF) grant, Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) faculty participated in assignment alignment workshops for the Written Communication general education learning outcome (General Education Objective 5). This rubric, created by Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), was adopted for use by CCSU faculty in 2014. (Rubric attached.)

The rubric features five dimensions on a rating scale of 1 to 4, where 1 represents the lowest assessable performance and 4 represents the highest performance. A score of zero is awarded in cases where a student failed to address the dimension. The rubric is grounded in the following definition:

*Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.*

The five dimensions of the rubric include:

- Context of and Purpose for Writing
- Content Development
- Genre and Disciplinary Conventions
- Sources and Evidence
- Control of Syntax and Mechanics

In both Spring 2021 and Fall 2021, a number of faculty participated in DEF workshops to align existing assignments to this rubric. Working in teams, faculty helped each other align their respective assignments to ensure that each dimension of the rubric was evident in the assignment. Those assignments were then given to students; upon completion, the assignments were submitted to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment for scoring by faculty at the annual winter assessment retreat.

In January 2022, a team of six CCSU faculty scored 150 student artifacts using the Written Communication (WC) rubric. The artifacts were contributed from the faculty participating in the DEF workshops and represented student work throughout the Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 semesters. For scoring purposes, only first-year and seniors student artifacts were assessed. This model provides important information, allowing for the comparison on where first-year students start and where seniors are prior to graduation.

The WC artifacts scored at this retreat represented 34 first-year students and 116 senior-level students from 13 courses representing all for colleges/schools on campus: College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, College of Business, School of Education and Professional Studies, and School of Engineering, Science, and Technology. Each artifact was scored by two different faculty and the scores were averaged.

It is important to note that our general education learning outcome assessment model measures student learning on skills and knowledge that are gained across their courses and academic career. As such, this assessment is not reflective of a single instructor nor a single course, but rather a reflection of where students are in their academic journey.

The results presented on the following pages are from our January 2022 assessment retreat, with comparisons between academic groups and demographic data.

## Overall Results

As seen in Figure 1, the overall score for first-year students evaluated on their Written Communication artifacts was 2.9 and represents strong mid-level performance. The score for each individual dimension fluctuated between 2.7 and 3.1, with the dimension *Context of and Purpose for Writing* having the highest average score; the dimension *Control of Syntax and Mechanics* had the lowest average score of 2.7.

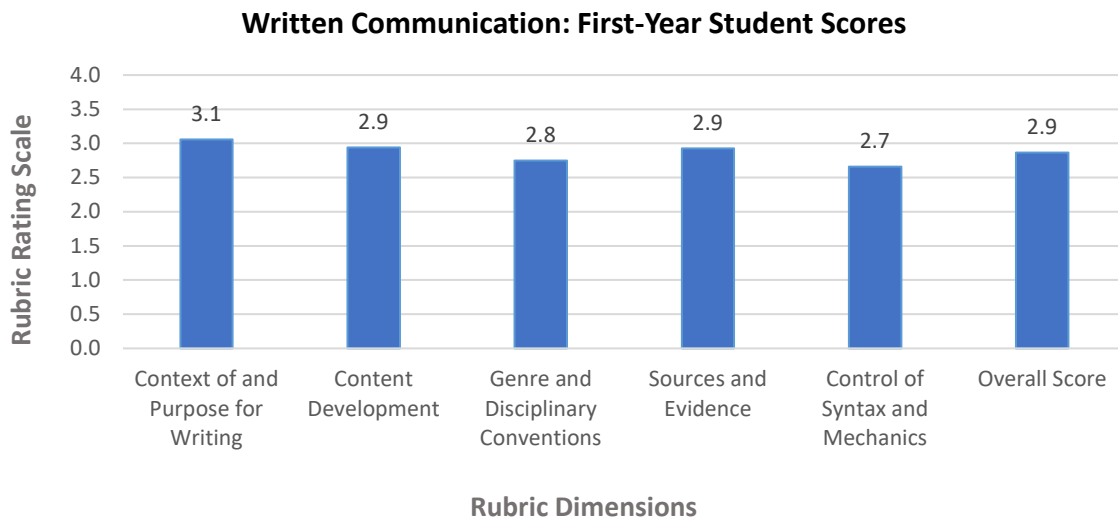


Figure 1. Overall scores of first-year students for Written Communication Rubric, n=34

Results of our senior-level students are shown in Figure 2. Senior students had an overall score of 3.1, which is 0.2 points higher than first-year students. Student performance across all five dimensions showed slightly higher scores than first-year students, with a range of 2.9 to 3.3. As did first-year students, seniors achieved one of their highest scores on *Context of and Purpose for Writing* and their lowest average score on *Control of Syntax and Mechanics*. Seniors also had a high score of 3.3 on *Sources and Evidence*.

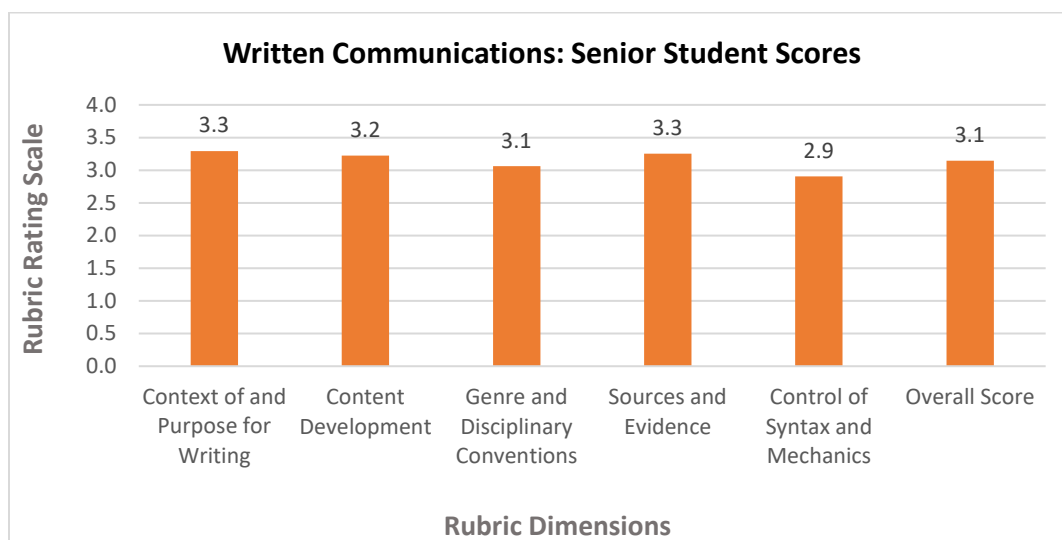


Figure 2. Overall scores of senior-level students for Written Communication Rubric, n=116

## Data Disaggregated by Gender

When looking at the results of first-year students by gender, male students had higher scores overall and for each dimension (Figure 3). In fact, male students scored 0.3 points higher on two of the five dimensions.

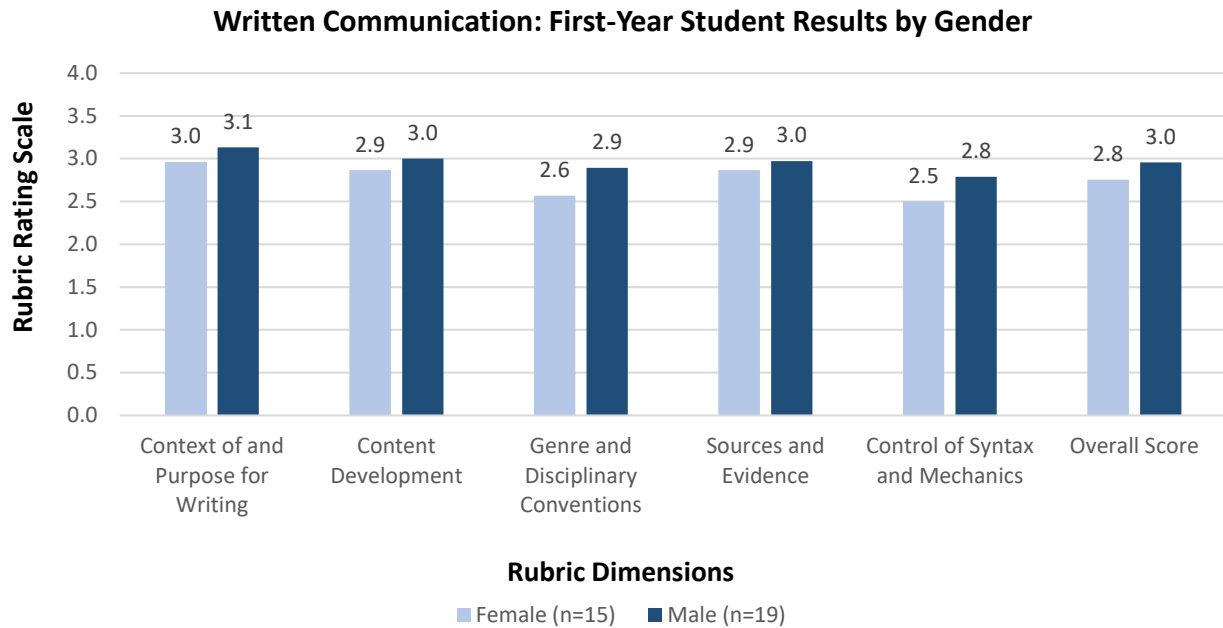


Figure 3. Scores of first-year students by gender

For senior-level students, while their scores were similar, female students scored slightly higher than male students on all five dimensions (Figure 4).

Comparing first-year and seniors by gender, senior male students scored the same or slightly higher than first-year male students, overall and on all five dimensions. This was not the case for females; senior females scored higher overall and on all five dimensions than first-year females by a range of 0.3 to 0.5 points.

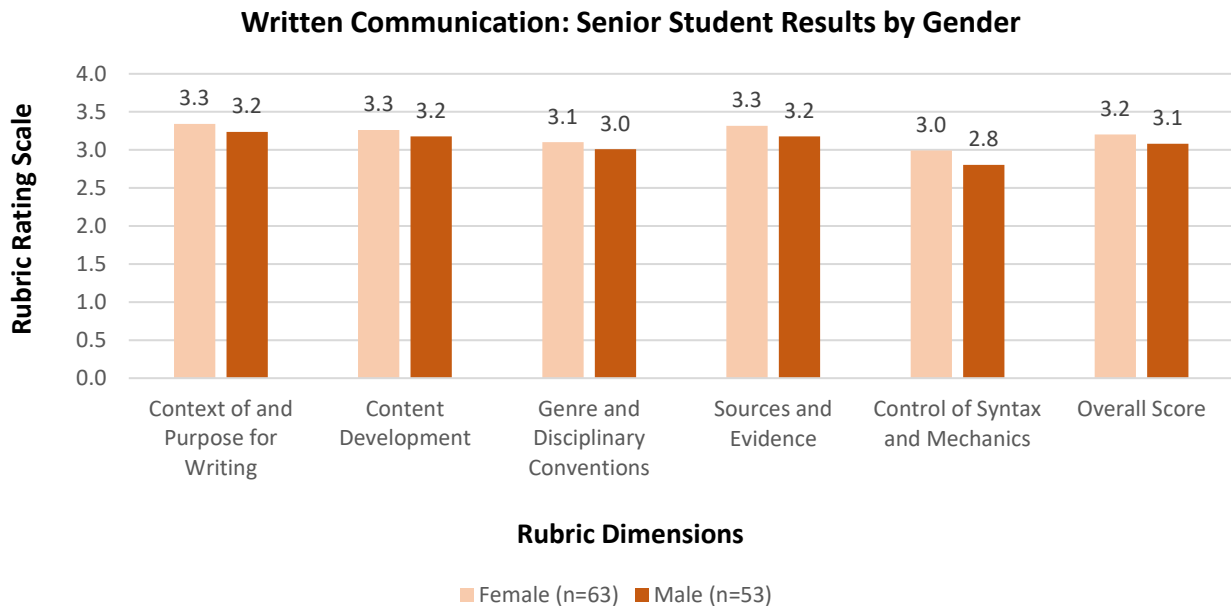


Figure 4. Scores of senior-level students by gender

## Data Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity

Results based on race/ethnicity for first-year students showed consistent performance between groups with an overall score differential of 0.1 points (see Table 1). Comparing the groups by dimensions, Hispanic students performed best on *Sources and Evidence* and White students performed best on *Context of and Purpose for Writing*. Within each group, dimensional scores for both Hispanic and White first-year students differed by 0.4 points; more specifically, 2.5 to 2.9 for Hispanic and 2.8 to 3.1 for White students.

Table 1. *First Year Results by Race/Ethnicity\**

	Hispanic (n=9)	White (n=20)
Context of and Purpose for Writing	2.9	3.1
Content Development	2.9	2.9
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	2.7	2.7
Sources and Evidence	3.0	2.8
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	2.5	2.8
Overall Average Score	2.8	2.9

\*The sample sizes for Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Non-Resident Alien, Two or More Races, and Unknown were too small, and their data were not included in the table for privacy concerns.

When looking at the data for seniors based on race/ethnicity, results were similar to first-year students (Table 2). The overall scores and scores for each dimension were within 0.2 points of one another. Seniors had their lowest scores in *Control of Syntax and Mechanics*, as did first-year Hispanic students. When comparing dimension performance within a group, each one achieved their highest scores on 2 or more dimensions, demonstrating consistent performance.

Table 1. *Senior Results by Race/Ethnicity\**

	Black or African American (n=14)	Hispanic (n=27)	White (n=63)
Context of and Purpose for Writing	3.0	3.2	3.3
Content Development	3.1	3.1	3.3
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	2.9	3.0	3.1
Sources and Evidence	3.1	3.2	3.3
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	2.8	2.9	2.9
Overall Average Score	3.0	3.1	3.2

\*The sample sizes for Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Non-Resident Alien, Two or More Races, and Unknown were too small, and their data were not included in the table for privacy concerns.

**Data by Distribution of Scores**

Looking at the distribution of student scores within each rubric dimension, more than 50% of first-year students had a score of 3.00 to 3.99 in each of the five dimensions (Figure 5). The next most frequent score was 2.00 to 2.99. It is interesting to note that, for each dimension, at least one first-year student scored 4.0 and in the case of *Context of and Purpose for Writing*, more students scored a 4 than scored below 2.

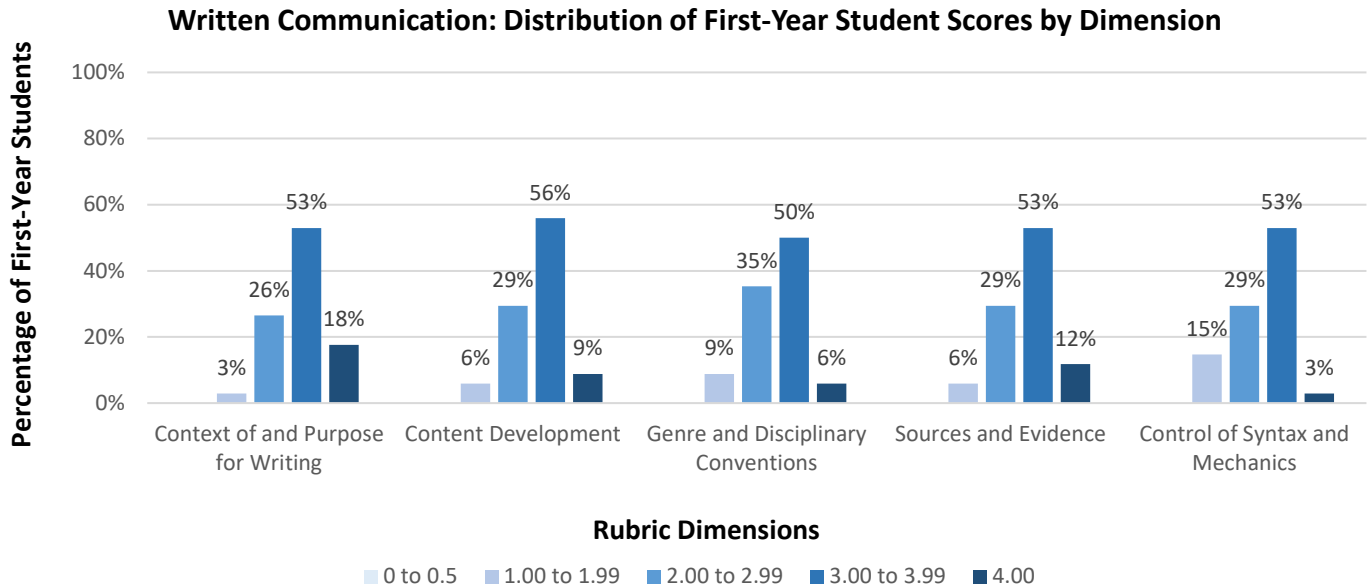


Figure 5. Percentage of first-year students based on rating scale

Similar to first-year students, Figure 6 shows that the largest percentage of senior-level students had a score of 3.00 to 3.99 for all five dimensions. However, the percentage of seniors scoring 4.0 was higher than first-year students on all five dimensions and there were far fewer seniors scoring between 1.00 to 1.99 as compared to first-year students.

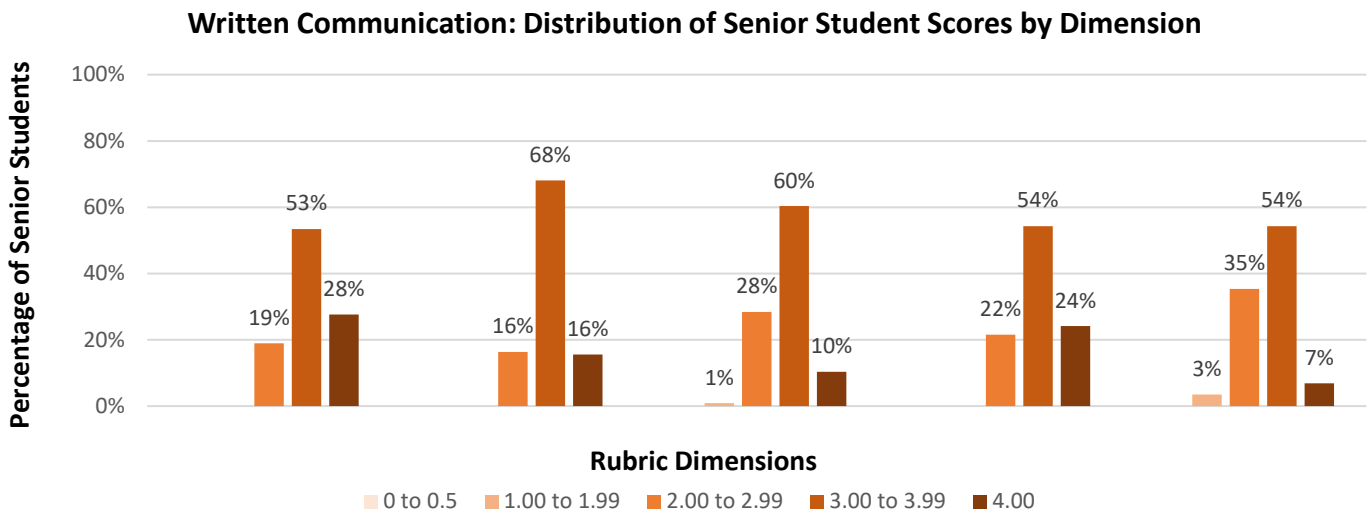


Figure 6. Percentage of senior-level students based on rating scale

## **Conclusion**

It is our hope that you find these results both informative and valuable. As with any assessment, the results can be used to validate current practices, applaud successful outcomes, and/or identify areas for further attention.

Some faculty have found the following questions helpful as they review these data:

- Where did our students demonstrate success in Written Communication?
- Which Written Communication dimensions are clear areas for continued growth?
- How might these data be used to inform teaching and further students' Written Communication learning?

To conclude, it is important to note that these scores reflect multiple factors at work and should be viewed within that context. As we continue to seek improvements on the various factors that go into scoring, our ultimate goal is to have CCSU undergraduate students demonstrate enhanced performance for our Written Communication Learning Outcome, providing them with a solid foundation for future intellectual and personal pursuits.

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