



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
AIKEN

Understanding What They Have Learned

A Follow-Up Discussion of Direct Measurement Outcomes in First-Year Seminar Assessment

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Presentation Overview

- I. Institutional and Course Background
- II. First-Year Seminar Assessment Efforts
- III. Assessment and Evaluation Findings
- IV. Areas for Potential Improvement
- V. Q&A

USC Aiken Profile

- Baccalaureate diverse fields, public
- 670 residential students
- NCAA Division II
- Mean SAT: 990s
- Mean HS class rank: 70-75th percentile
- 31% minority students, mostly African American or Black



USC Aiken Profile (continued)

- Approximately 3,200 undergraduates, and 670 are new freshmen
- Factors indicated by freshmen on 2006 CIRP Survey as “very important” in choosing USC Aiken:
 - Academic reputation
 - Cost
 - Size
 - Graduates get good jobs



AFYS 101 First-Year Seminar

- The First-Year Seminar is offered primarily in the fall with a few sections in spring
- 1-credit hour, letter graded
- Taught by faculty (1/3 sections) and staff
- Several sections for majors in Business, Education, and Nursing; remaining sections have no discipline or affinity base

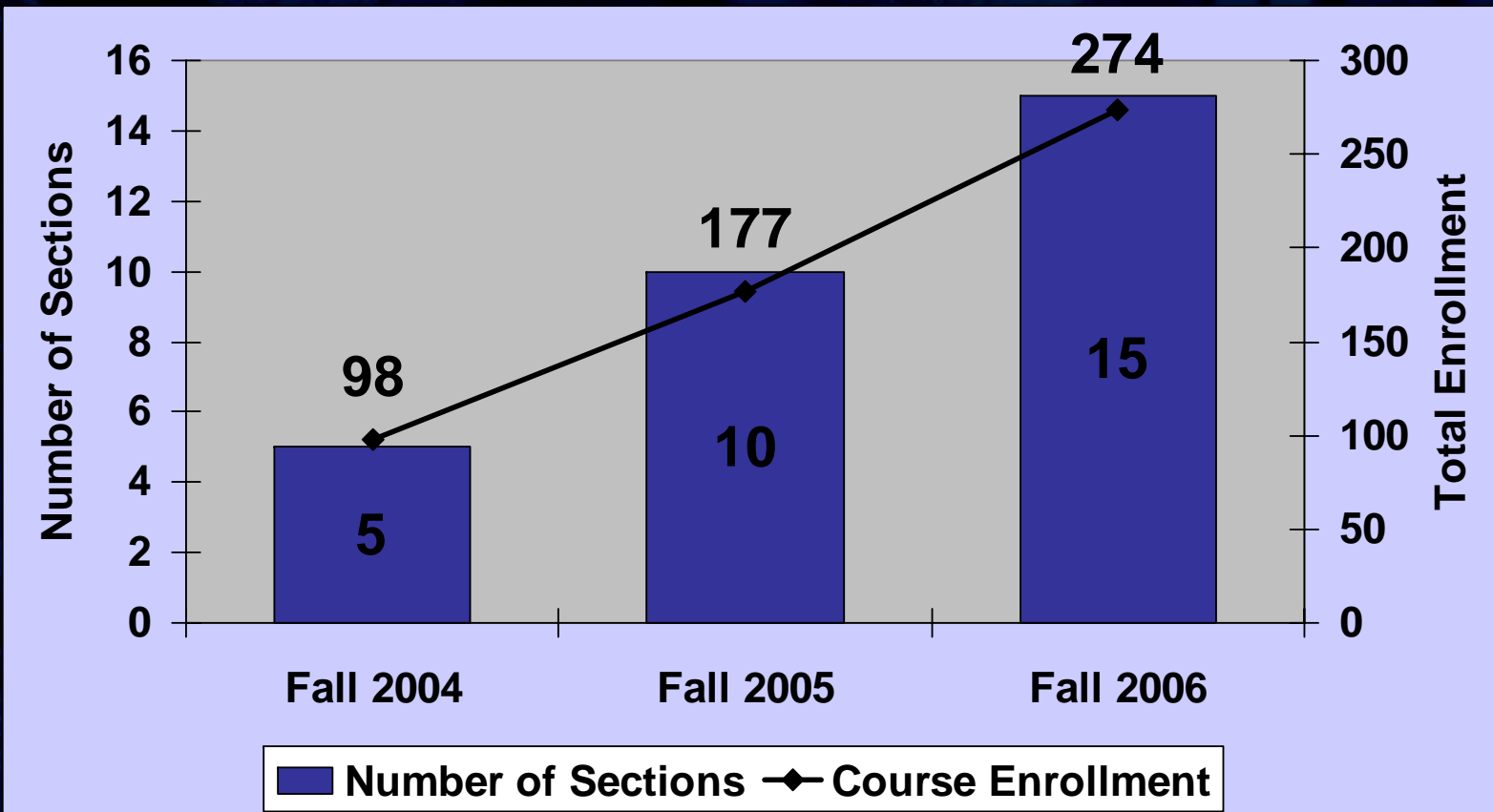
AFYS 101 Content

Course content includes:

- Time management
- Learning styles
- Note-taking
- Study skills
- Critical thinking and academic integrity
- Diversity
- Reading and memory skills
- Career and major planning
- Test-taking
- Library tour and scavenger hunt



AFYS 101 Offerings & Enrollment



Rubrics and Evaluation

- Rubrics were first constructed to evaluate learning in the areas of time management, note-taking, and learning styles following participation in the First-Year Assessment Institute in Summer 2005
- The rubrics were developed a few days before the beginning of the Fall 2005 semester and used in three of 10 sections of the course

Rubrics and Evaluation (cont')

- In Spring 2006, AFYS 101 Instructors worked in groups to revise each of the three rubrics and corresponding assignments
- The groups submitted the revised rubrics which were then distributed, in early summer, to all instructors
- The rubrics and assignments were finalized and used in 14 of 15 sections of AFYS 101 course in Fall 2006

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will develop and use effective time management, note taking, and study strategies.
2. Students will identify their learning styles, create a learning plan, and apply it.



From Learning Outcomes to Rubrics

Outcome: Students will develop and use effective time management and note taking.

- Time management rubric
- Note taking rubric

Outcome: Students will identify their learning styles, create a learning plan, and apply it.

- Learning styles rubric

Rubric (Partial Example)

Learning Outcome: Students will develop and use effective time management, and note taking.

Note Taking Rubric

Outcomes and Characteristics	Excellent (5)	Satisfactory (3)	Needs Improvement (2-1)	Incomplete or not Achieved (0)
Identify Relevant Information				
Notes capture all main points				
Notes summarize/ synthesize, not retell				

Peer Evaluation Rubric (Partial Example)

Learning Outcome: Students will develop and use effective time management, and note taking.

Note Taking Rubric

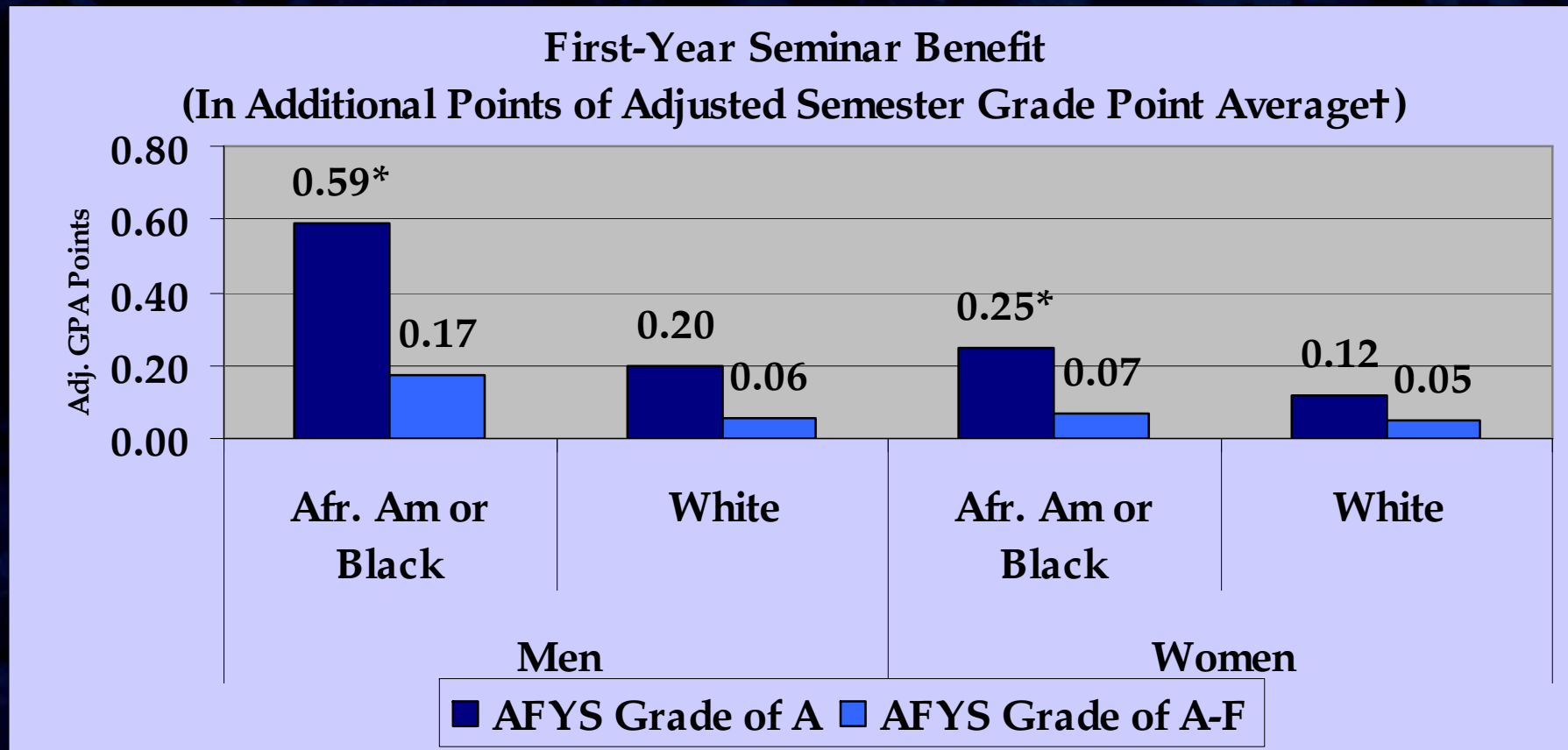
Outcomes and Characteristics	Excellent (5)	Satisfactory (3)	Needs Improvement (2-1)	Incomplete or not Achieved (0)
Identify Relevant Information				
Notes are labeled and dated (show topic headings)				
Notes are organized and easy to follow				



Course Impact on Academic Success

Gender	Race/Ethnicity	AFYS Status	N	Adj Sem GPA	Expected GPA	Diff.	AFYS Benefit	Sig.
Men	Afr. Am / Black	Grade of A	8	2.96	2.62	0.34	0.59	*
		Grade of A-F	11	2.44	2.52	-0.08	0.17	
		Did Not Take/Complete	20	2.25	2.50	-0.25		
	White	Grade of A	31	2.68	2.71	-0.03	0.20	
		Grade of A-F	49	2.51	2.68	-0.17	0.06	
		Did Not Take/Complete	110	2.51	2.74	-0.23		
Women	Afr. Am / Black	Grade of A	53	2.48	2.72	-0.24	0.25	*
		Grade of A-F	74	2.24	2.66	-0.42	0.07	
		Did Not Take/Complete	68	2.31	2.80	-0.49		
	White	Grade of A	71	2.83	2.85	-0.02	0.12	
		Grade of A-F	87	2.70	2.79	-0.09	0.05	
		Did Not Take/Complete	142	2.73	2.87	-0.14		

Course Impact on Academic Success

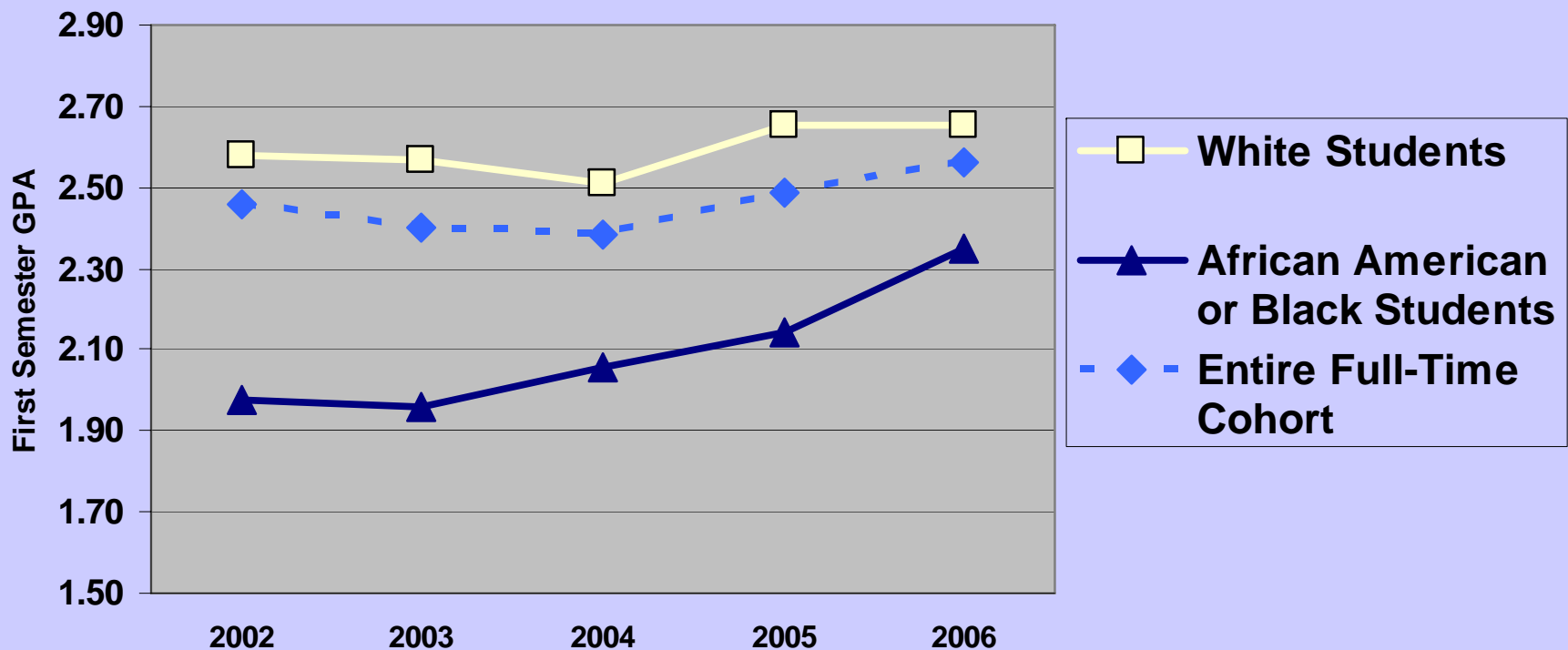


*Significant at $p < 0.05$ (One-Tailed)

† Adjusted Sem. GPA excludes AFYS Grade; analysis controls for academic inputs

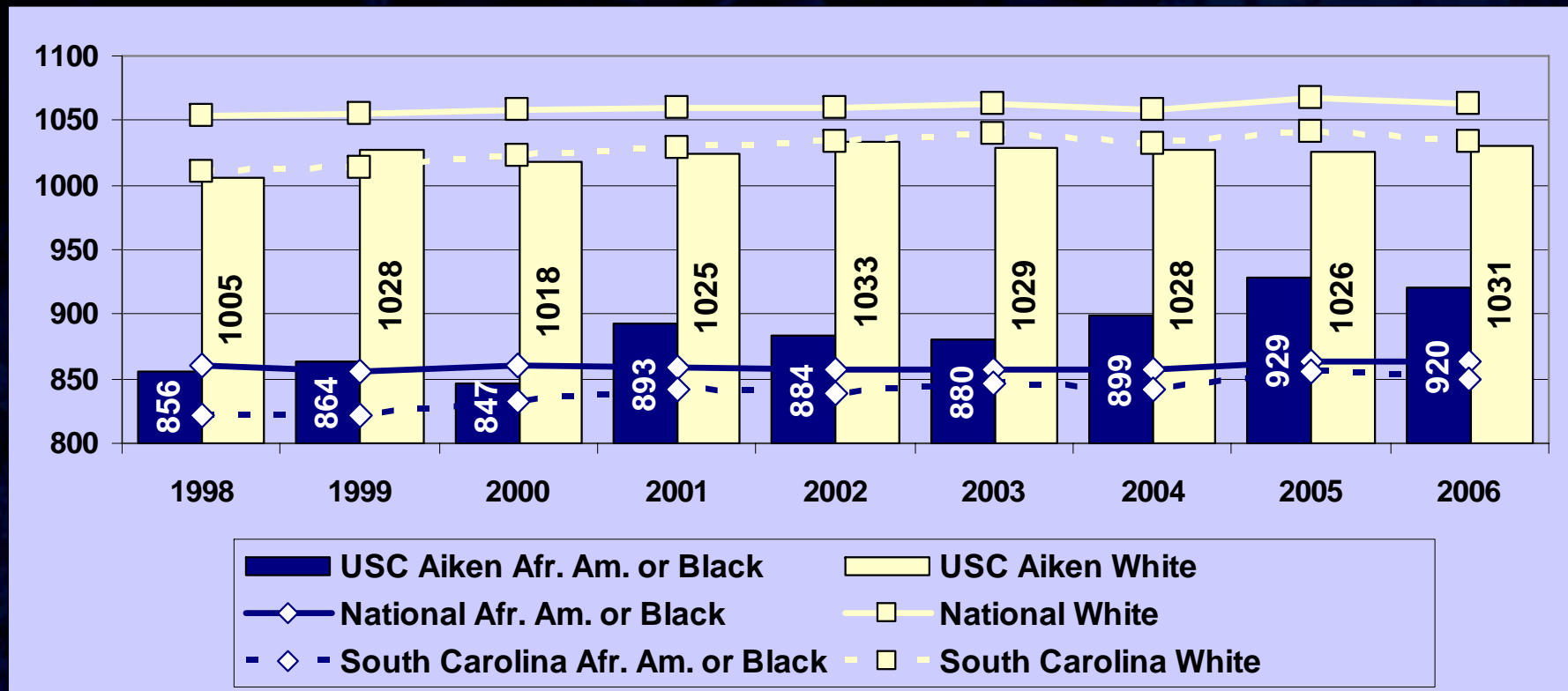
Academic Performance by Race

Freshman first-semester GPA has increased, but gains are primarily attributable to African American or Black students.



Academic Performance by Race (cont')

Gains in African American or Black student performance may be attributable to inputs as much as environment.



Measurement & Analysis

- Data collected by AFYS Director and Analyzed by IE Office
- Analysis of standard deviations by section indicated that almost 50% of measurements were invalid because of inconsistent application of rubric

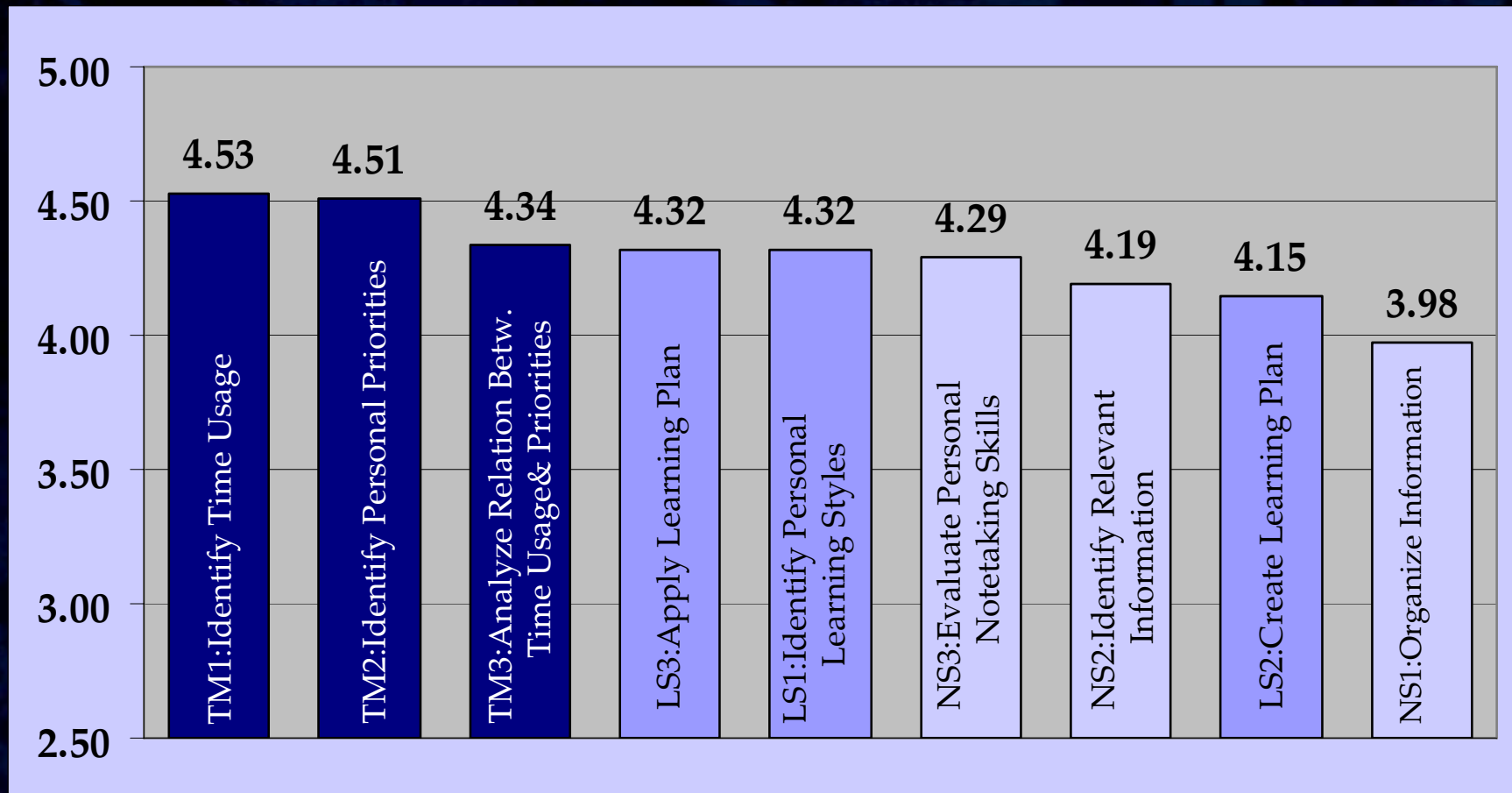


Self Report vs. Direct Measurement

	Self Report (%Agree + %Strongly Agree)		Direct Assessment (Mean)*	
	2005	2006	2005	2006
Time Management	94.4%	94.1%	4.09	4.46
Learning Styles	92.8%	95.9%	3.84	4.26
Note Taking	91.2%	88.4%	4.16	4.15

* 1-2=Needs Improvement, 3-4=Satisfactory, 5=Excellent
(0=Missing, but not included in mean calculation)

Objectives Ranked by Mean



1-2=Needs Improvement, 3-4=Satisfactory, 5=Excellent
(0=Missing, but not included in mean calculation)

Other Significant Findings

Relationships between rubric ratings and academic performance in other areas were limited:

		Adj.Sem GPA	Sociology 101	English 101	Chemistry 101
TM 3: Analyze Relationship Between Time Usage and Priorities	R ²	--	0.115**	0.051**	--
TM 3.1: Reflection specifically addresses the relationship between personal priorities and time usage	R ²	0.105***	0.106**	0.047**	--
NS 1 Organize Information	R ²	--	--	--	0.399*

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Reaction from Instructors

- Instructors provided feedback on rubrics during the revision process
- Formal feedback was collected through an anonymous online instructor survey
- Instructors also had an opportunity to reflect on the rubrics and commons assignments during a meeting at the end of the fall semester



Reactions from Instructors (cont')

- “The rubrics were not useful to me in any way. If anything, they hindered the way I would have graded assignments.”
- “Rubrics were not inclusive of all things that needed to be graded for the journal assignments.”
- “The rubrics were grossly inadequate to grade written work if we are supposed to grade for quality of writing, rather than just completing an assignment.”



Lessons Learned

- Data from the rubrics administered in Fall 2005 were used to revise the rubrics and corresponding assignments for the following year
- The process used to revise the rubrics worked, but the reactions from instructors suggested more work needed to be done to educate them on the benefit of using rubrics and how to use of rubrics

Future Plans

- Re-examine the course content and delivery
- Revisit the learning outcomes, rubrics, and commons assignments
- Identify ways to enhance AFYS 101 Instructor training, involving much more and different types of discussion about rubrics

Tips to Take Home

- Identify a few measurable learning outcomes and focus on those
- Find measures and data collection methods that meet the needs of your program
- Involve stakeholders in the process of creating and revising measures
- Incorporate measures in instruction
- Revise, revise, revise (but don't give up)
- Use the data
- Keep it simple



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