

# FALL 2024 CORE COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT



## OVERVIEW

At MiraCosta College, the concept of Core Competencies refers to overarching learning outcomes students are expected to acquire while completing coursework required for a degree, certificate, or transfer. Each semester the college conducts a classroom assessment of student skill acquisition from the faculty perspective, allowing faculty to examine whether students are achieving course learning outcomes tied to specific areas of competence. In Fall 2024, faculty assessed **Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking**, the ability to effectively locate and use necessary information, and **Integration of Knowledge**, both for the second time. This report divides the analysis of each competence into separate sections and contains charts and tables that disaggregate core competency assessments by important student characteristics.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Prior to the semester's start, faculty review and confirm an initial coding process that has mapped a particular core competency to one or more of their course learning outcomes. During the semester, faculty volunteers evaluated students' level of competence in a specific area, using specified criteria, and locally developed rubric. This competency measurement is subsequently merged with student records and analyzed by the Office of Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness (RPIE).

## INQUIRY, ANALYSIS, & INDEPENDENT THINKING

**Table 1:** Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking

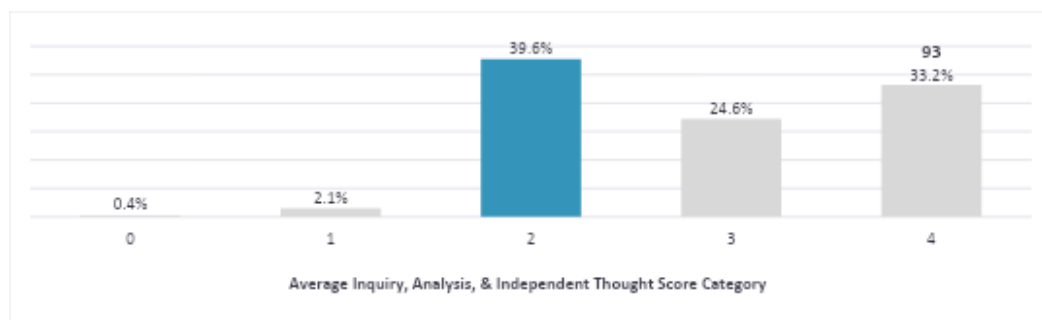
Number of Course Sections	12
Number of Associate Faculty	1
Number of Full-Time Faculty	6
Students Rated (Duplicated)	280
Average Rating	2.82

Faculty assessed **Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking** from 0 to 4 on the following dimensions:

- **Topic selection** | Identifying a creating, focused, manageable topic that addresses potentially significant and unexplored aspects of an assignment
- **Existing knowledge, research and/or views** | Synthesizing in depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view
- **Design process** | Using appropriate methodology or theoretical frameworks synthesized from across disciplines or relevant sub disciplines
- **Analysis** | Organizing and synthesizing evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus
- **Conclusions** | Stating a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings to a broader context
- **Limitations and implications** | Insightfully discussing relevant and supported limitations and implications

- Students who received a course grade of “W” or “EW” were excluded from the analysis.
- A total of 280 duplicated (275 unduplicated<sup>1</sup>) students were included in the evaluation of Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking in Fall 2024
- Assessment took place in 12 course sections with 6 Full-time faculty and 1 Associate faculty instructors
- Students were rated from 0-4 on each Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking dimension according to the developed rubric, with 0 signifying the lowest level of competence or no attempt
- The college has designated a score of 2 as meeting or minimum expected achievement level
- As shown in Figure 1, a majority of students received an average rating of “2”
- Over 95 percent of the students achieved or exceeded the minimum achievement level

Figure 1: Number of Students by Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Average Score

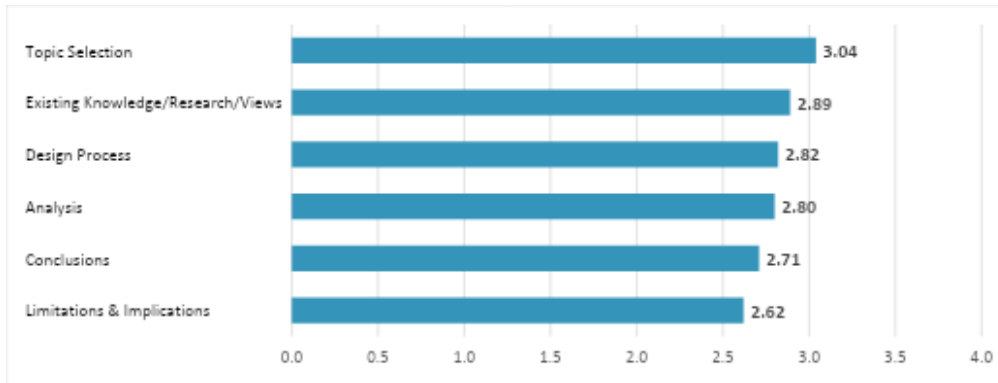


#### INQUIRY, ANALYSIS, & INDEPENDENT THINKING BY CRITERION (FIGURE 2)

- Average scores on Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking dimensions ranged from 2.62 to 3.04
- **Topic Selection** generated the highest average scores, while **Limitations & Implications** generated the lowest average scores.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Duplicated students’ refers to the number of overall assessments given and may include a uniquely identifiable student more than once. ‘Unduplicated students’ refers to the number of uniquely identifiable students included in the assessment.

**Figure 2:** Average Score for each dimension of the Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Rubric



#### INQUIRY, ANALYSIS, & INDEPENDENT THINKING SCORE BY COURSE GRADE (TABLE 2, TABLE 3)

- Rubric scores were compared to students' grades in the course where assessment occurred in order to examine a potential relationship between variables
- The table suggests that Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores may have been related to grades.
- Small samples of "D" and "F" grades impede the ability to statistically evaluate the strength of any potential relationship between these variables

**Table 2:** Average Information Literacy score by Grade Received in Course

Grade Received	n	Average Score
A	204	2.93
B	47	2.53
C/P	22	2.23
D	3	3.72
F/NP	4	2.08

- The data shows that as the grade decreases (from A to F/NP), the Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores also tend to decrease, with a slight increase in score observed in the "D" category.
- This implies that students who perform better in these assessments tend to receive higher grades.
- More observations in lower grade categories would be helpful in determining whether these scores are representative of this population overall.

Table 3: Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking score by Grade- Heat Map

Grade Received	Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Score Category				
	0	1	2	3	4
A	0.0%	0.5%	37.7%	24.5%	37.3%
B	0.0%	4.3%	46.8%	25.5%	23.4%
C/P	0.0%	13.6%	50.0%	22.7%	13.6%
D	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
F/NP	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%

- In examining the distributions of grades across average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking score categories in the heat map above, there appears to be somewhat of a positive relationship between grades and competency scores, in that scores “2”, “3”, and “4” are concentrated in grades A, B, and C
- Of the students who earned the grade of “A,” over 60% earn an average score of “3” or “4”
- 50% of students who received a grade of “F” received a score of “0”, “1” or “2”
- While there do seem to be some higher scores in the “D” category this is a small sample and therefore may be highly irregular
- Small numbers of observations in lower grade categories impede our ability to evaluate the strength of this relationship with inferential statistics

INQUIRY, ANALYSIS, & INDEPENDENT THINKING DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES & GRAPHS

UNITS ATTAINED AT MIRACOSTA COLLEGE (TABLE 4, FIGURE 3)

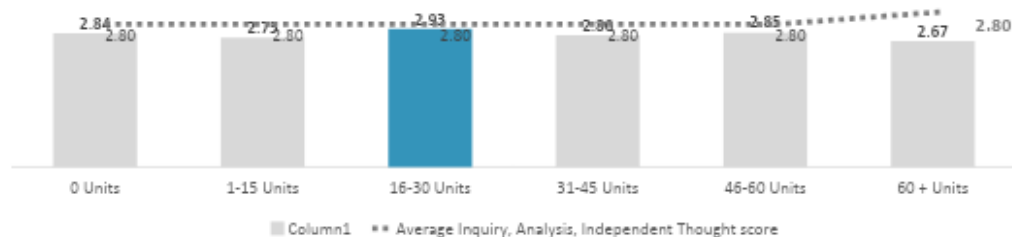
- Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores were highest among students who attained 16-30 units to Fall 2024 and lowest among those who accumulated 60+ units prior to assessment
- This observed trend may speak to an incremental development of this competency across a student’s educational journey but may also reflect random, sample variation as this trend doesn’t occur in a linear fashion across unit groupings
- This irregularity in scoring across the unit groupings suggests that skill development may not be directly linked to the number of units completed, and other factors, such as course difficulty and student engagement, may be influencing this pattern of results

Table 4: Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Score by Number of Units Completed Prior to Fall 2024

	n	Average Score
0 Units	73	2.84
1-15 Units	56	2.75

16-30 Units	39	2.93
31-45 Units	50	2.80
46-60 Units	27	2.85
60 + Units	35	2.67

Figure 3: Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking score by Units Completed Prior to Fall 2024



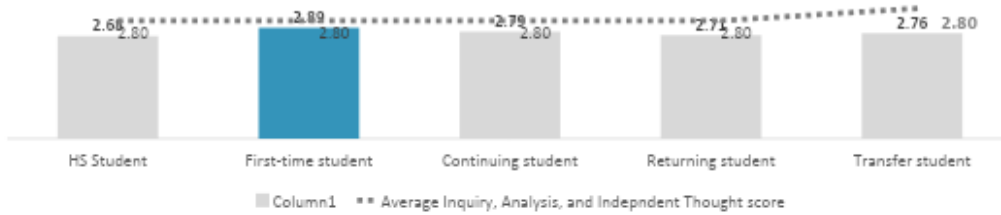
#### ADMISSION STATUS (TABLE 5, FIGURE 4)

- **First-Time students** tended to generate the highest Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores relative to other groups while **High school** students generated lower scores on average
- This observed trend could speak to a highly driven set of first-time students but may also relate to the kind of assignment received by this group to score this competency.
- Assessments for first time students tended to emanate from dance, psychology, and philosophy courses where assessments for high school students were evenly spread among Biology, Psychology, Economics, and Dance courses
- It may be worth examining assessments from different programs of study to ensure relative equality across these areas

Table 5: Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Score by Admission Status

	n	Average Score
High School Student	10	2.68
First Time Student	71	2.89
Continuing Student	147	2.79
Returning Student	20	2.71
Transfer Student	32	2.76

Figure 4: Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Score by Admission Status



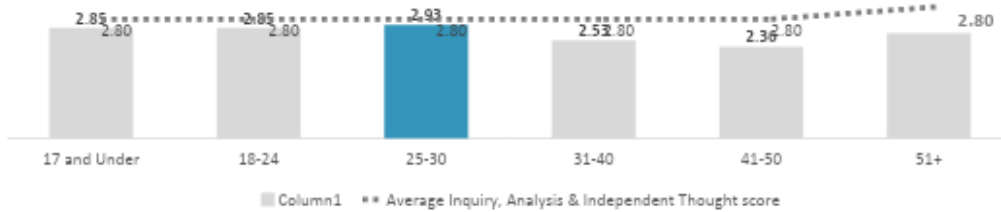
AGE (TABLE 6, FIGURE 5)

- Students, **ages 25-30**, generated the highest average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores
- Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores were *lowest* among students **ages 41-50**
- Younger students (i.e. 17 and under through 25-30) may have generated higher Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores from having more recent experience with education emphasizing these skills
- However, small samples of students **ages 41-50** may not accurately represent the broader population from which they are drawn and have limited generalizability
- While the data provide insight into the relationship between age and core competency scores, it's essential to interpret these findings cautiously as there may be alternative explanations or these patterns and the sample sizes of the represented groups vary widely

Table 6: Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Score by Age

	n	Average Score
17 and under	13	2.85
18-24	172	2.85
25-30	48	2.93
31-40	27	2.53
41-50	14	2.36
51+	6	2.72

Figure 5: Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Score by Age



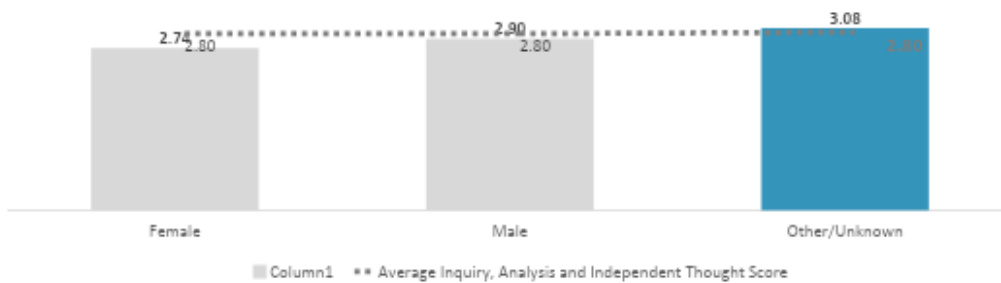
GENDER (TABLE 7, FIGURE 6)

- Students of **Other/Unknown** gender generated higher Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores on average than **Male** and **Female** students in this assessment
- **Male** students also tended to generate higher Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores than **Female** students
- While this is preliminary evidence of gender differences in Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking, it's essential to interpret these findings cautiously and consider potential confounding factors that may influence the observed pattern between gender and core competency scores
- For instance, the development of this skill may be highly impacted by students' fields of study -- with males gravitating toward fields where Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking skills are developed to a greater extent

Table 7: Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Score by Gender

	n	Average Score
Female	178	2.74
Male	92	2.90
Other/Unknown	10	3.08

Figure 6: Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking Score by Gender



ETHNICITY (TABLE 8, FIGURE 7)

- A small group of **Middle Eastern/North African** and **Asian** students generated the highest average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores, while **Black/African American** students generated the lowest Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores
- **Hispanic/Latino** students were well represented in the sample but tended to generate lower Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores relative to other well-represented ethnic groups like **White** and **Asian** students
- In prior evaluation of this competency, **Black/African American** (M= 2.42) and **Native American** students (M= 2.00) students generated the lowest Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores
- It is important to keep in mind that samples of Black/African American students have been minimal and that collecting more data is integral to determining whether a relationship between ethnicity and Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores exists.
- Furthermore, fields that emphasize analytical thinking (e.g., STEM) may attract or be more (or less) accessible to specific student groups, influencing scores on these assessments

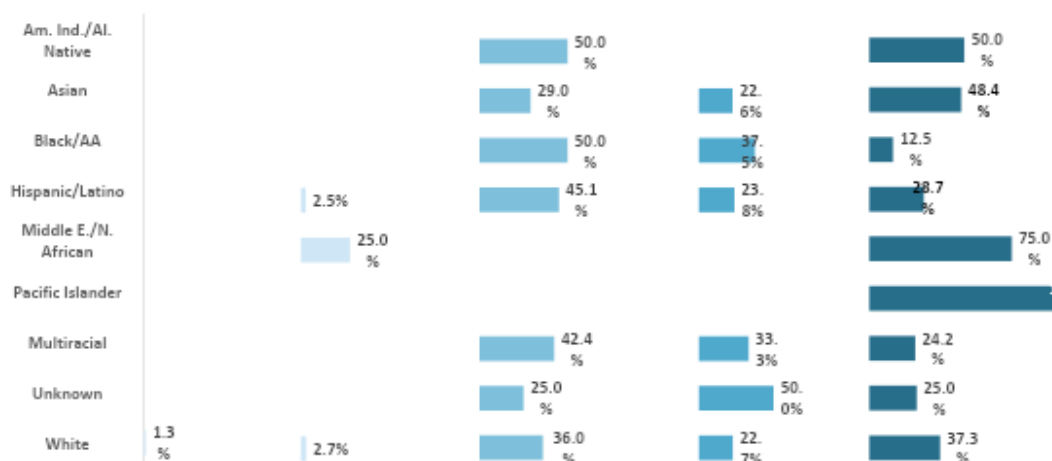
**Table 8:** Average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking score by Ethnicity

	n	Average Score
American-Indian/Alaska Native	2	2.83
Asian	31	3.06
Black/African American	8	2.46
Hispanic/Latino	122	2.72
Middle Eastern/North African	4	3.25
Pacific Islander	1	4.00
Multiracial	33	2.72
Unknown	4	3.17
White	75	2.85

**Figure 7:** Proportion of average Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking score by Ethnicity







The sample of **Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking** core competency assessments collected in this term were relatively large (N > 250), however disaggregation of the data resulted in minimal observations for some subgroups of interest (i.e., American-Indian/Alaska Native students, Black, Middle-Eastern, Pacific Islander, High School students). The result of this is a reduced ability to make broad-based inferences about the student body for less represented groups. The strength of the inferences will increase as the college collects more data for these competencies in future terms and the captured data is compiled and analyzed together.

The sample of **Integration of Knowledge** assessments was comparatively much larger than the sample of **Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking** assessments in Fall 2024, rendering the analysis of this competency and the disaggregated trends more robust and reliable. The statistics generated by this sample may more closely approximate the overall population of MiraCosta College students, increasing the generalizability of the analysis.

## INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE

**Table 9:** Integration of Knowledge

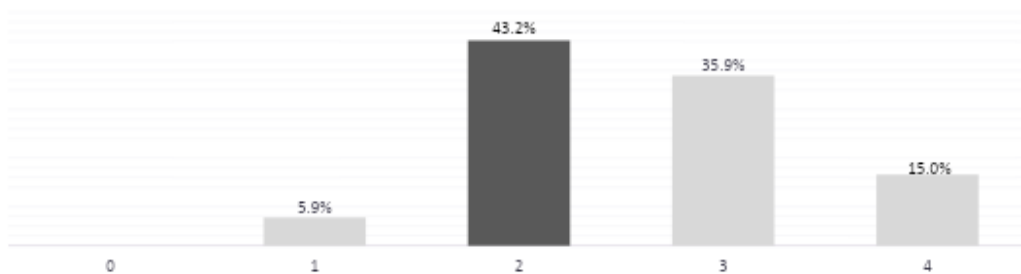
Number of Course Sections	24
Number of Associate Faculty	9
Number of Full-Time Faculty	9
Students Rated (Duplicated)	488
Average Rating	2.48

Faculty assessed students' **Integration of Knowledge** skills from 0 to 4 along the following dimensions:

- **Connections to Experience** | Organizational pattern is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful and makes the content of the presentation cohesive

- **Connections to Discipline** | Language choices are imaginative, memorable and compelling and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation; language in presentation is appropriate to audience
  - **Transfer** | Delivery techniques make the presentation compelling, and the speaker appears polished and confident
  - **Integrated Communication** | A variety of types supporting materials make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on topic
- 9 full-time faculty and 9 associate faculty in 24 course sections participated in the assessment of this core competency
  - Students receiving a grade of "W" or "EW" or who dropped the course prior to census were excluded from the analysis.
  - Students were rated from 0-4 on each Integration of Knowledge dimension according to the developed rubric, with 0 signifying the lowest level of competence or no attempt
  - The college has designated a score of 2 as meeting or minimum expected achievement level
  - A total of 488 duplicated<sup>2</sup> (485 unduplicated) students were included in the evaluation process
  - The most commonly awarded score was "2"

Figure 8: Number of Students by Average Integration of Knowledge score

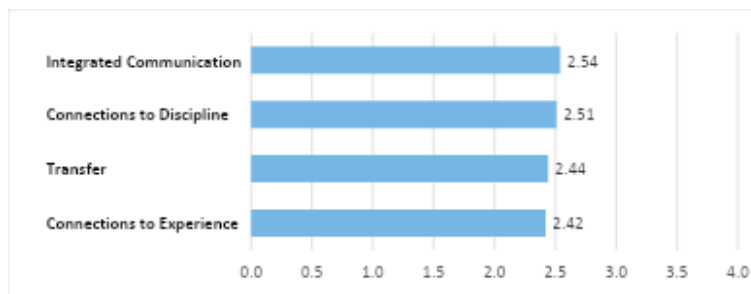


INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE BY CRITERION (FIGURE 9)

Figure 9: Average Score across Oral Communication criteria

<sup>2</sup> 'Duplicated students' refers to the number of overall assessments given and may include a uniquely identifiable student more than once. 'Unduplicated students' refers to the number of uniquely identifiable students included in the assessment. In this figure each student counts only once.

- Average scores on Integration of Knowledge dimensions ranged from 2.42 to 2.54
- Students generated the highest scores on **Integrated Communication** and the lowest scores on **Connections to Experience**.



#### INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE SCORE BY COURSE GRADE (TABLE 10, TABLE 11)

**Table 10:** Average Integration of Knowledge Score by Grade Received

Grade Received	Number of Students	Average Score
A	243	2.73
B	139	2.47
C/P	77	2.02
D	8	2.00
F/NP	21	1.52

- Rubric scores were compared with earned course grade to examine a potential relationship between the variables
- The table suggests that as course grades increased, so too did average Integration of Knowledge competency ratings
- It is unknown to what extent this finding is representative of the student population at large, or generalizable, as lower grade categories have a minimal number of observations and the potential to produce spurious findings.

**Table 11:** Average Integration of Knowledge score by Grade- Heat Map

Grade Received	Average Integration of Knowledge Score Category				
	0	1	2	3	4
A	0.0%	2.5%	34.2%	40.7%	22.6%
B	0.0%	2.9%	43.2%	42.4%	11.5%
C/P	0.0%	13.0%	64.9%	20.8%	1.3%

<b>D</b>	0.0%	25.0%	62.5%	0.0%	12.5%
<b>F/NP</b>	0.0%	33.3%	61.9%	4.8%	0.0%

- In examining the distributions of grades across average Integration of Knowledge score categories in the heat map above, there appears to be a positive relationship between grades and Integration of Knowledge scores, in that higher scores of “3” and “4” are concentrated in grades “A” and “B”
- Of the students who earned the grade of “A,” nearly 65% earn an average score of “3” or “4”
- Over ninety percent of students who earned a grade of “F” received a score of “1” or “2”.
- Small numbers of observations in lower grade categories impede our ability to evaluate the strength of this relationship with inferential statistics

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#### INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES & GRAPHS

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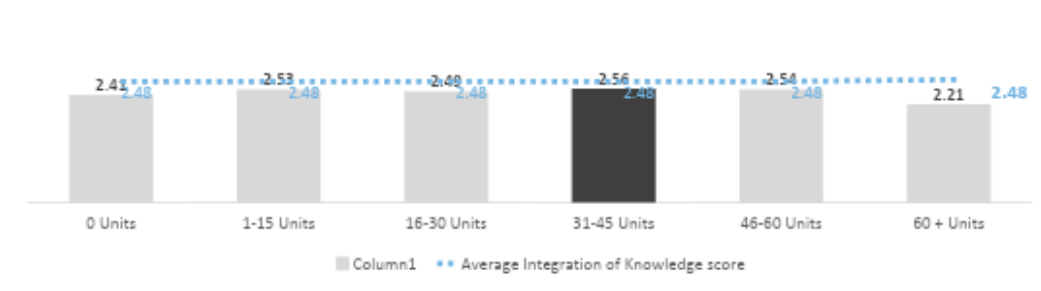
#### UNITS ATTAINED AT MIRACOSTA COLLEGE (TABLE 12, FIGURE 10)

- The highest Integration of Knowledge scores were generated by students with **31-45 completed units** prior to Fall 2024, while the lowest Integration of Knowledge scores were found among students with **more than 60 units**
- Students generated increasingly higher scores on Integration of Knowledge assessments as they reported attaining more units at the college, but this was not a strictly linear pattern across unit groupings
- This pattern may result from students’ development in this area as students make their way on an educational path.
- The decline in Integration of Knowledge scores in 60 + units group may warrant further exploration, particularly as this sample is relatively large.
- While the 60+ units group did not vary systematically from other unit groups in terms of any of the variables examined here, underlying variables, like student burnout or fatigue, or less recent exposure to course material, could explain this pattern of results

**Table 12:** Average Integration of Knowledge score by Units Completed

	<b>n</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
<b>0 Units</b>	92	2.41
<b>1-15 Units</b>	112	2.53
<b>16-30 Units</b>	108	2.49
<b>31-45 Units</b>	92	2.56
<b>46-60 Units</b>	45	2.54
<b>More than 60 Units</b>	39	2.21

Figure 10: Average Integration of Knowledge score by Units Completed



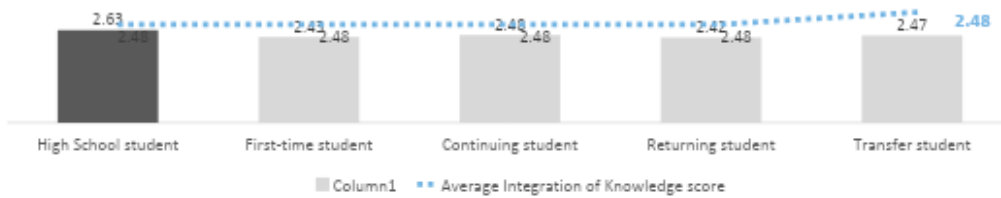
ADMISSION STATUS (TABLE 13, FIGURE 11)

- **High School students** exhibited the highest Integration of Knowledge scores
- Integration of Knowledge scores were lowest on average among **Returning students** and **First-time students**
- While sample sizes vary widely among these groups, the data suggests that high school students could have benefitted from recent academic preparation or may have related course taking patterns
- Additional analysis of course taking patterns for this group demonstrates that most assessments for High School students came from a single course.
- This effect of course on assessment scoring may be responsible for this pattern of results

Table 13: Average Integration of Knowledge score by Admission Status

	n	Average Score
High School Student	43	2.63
First Time Student	61	2.43
Continuing Student	279	2.48
Returning Student	52	2.42
Transfer Student	53	2.47

Figure 11: Average Integration of Knowledge score by Admission Status



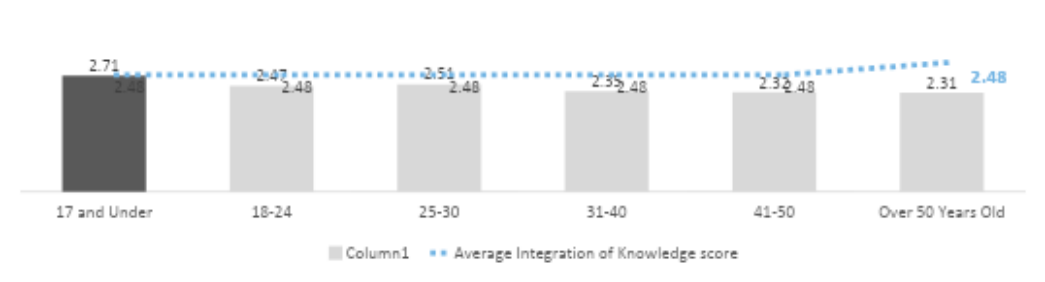
AGE (TABLE 14, FIGURE 12)

- Students **ages 17 and younger** generated the highest Integration of Knowledge scores, while students **ages 51+** generated the lowest average Integration of Knowledge scores
- Integration of Knowledge scores are highest among the younger students in the sample (under age, 30) and seem to decline for students in older age groups (ages 31+)
- This skill may be more developed in younger students due to recent academic exposure, it could also be the result of differential course taking patterns among our oldest and youngest student groups.
- Assessments for this competency tended to come from a single class for students aged **17 and under**
- The entanglement of age, admit type, and course make it difficult to understand which variable or combination of variables is exerting influence over this pattern of results
- As the college continues to collect Integration of Knowledge competency ratings from a wider swath of courses across the campus, it will become clearer whether this is a stable trend or is reflective of an assessment artifact in one assessment cycle

Table 14: Average Integration of Knowledge score by Age Group

	n	Average Score
17 and under	42	2.71
18-24	302	2.47
25-30	73	2.51
31-40	41	2.35
41-50	18	2.32
51+ Years Old	12	2.31

Figure 12: Average Integration of Knowledge score by Age Group



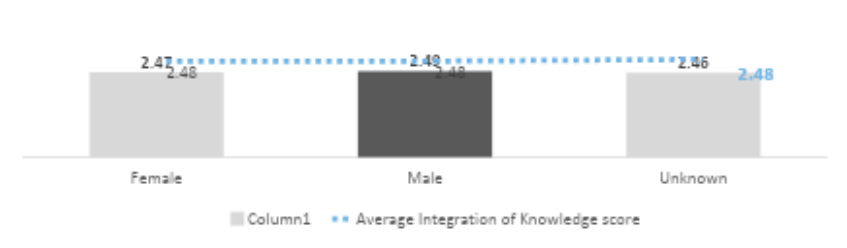
GENDER (TABLE 15, FIGURE 13)

- Integration of Knowledge scores were nearly equivalent among the gender groups, showing no evidence of gender differences

Table 15: Average Integration of Knowledge score by Gender

	n	Average Score
Female	281	2.47
Male	193	2.49
Other/Unknown	14	2.46

Figure 13: Average Integration of Knowledge score by Gender



ETHNICITY (TABLE 16, FIGURE 14)

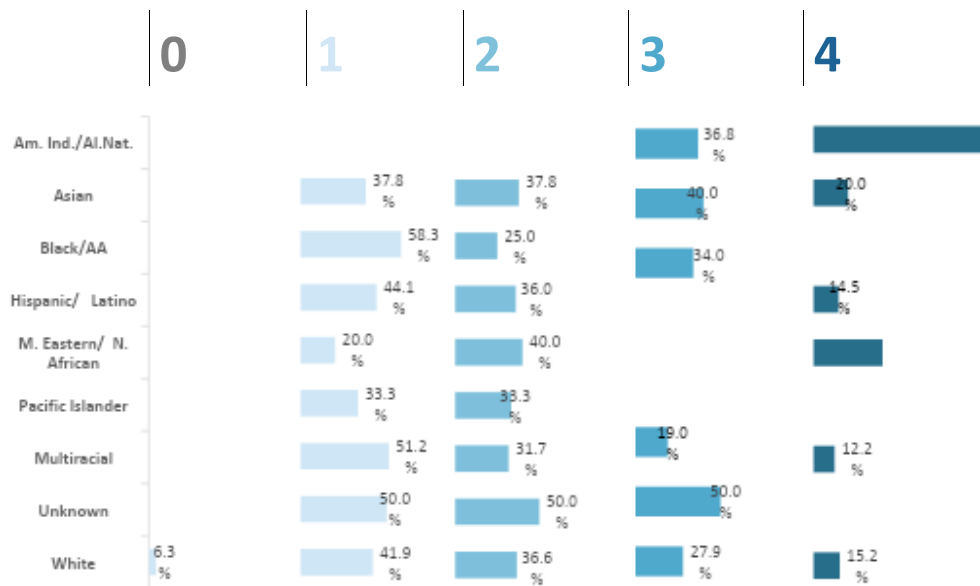
- Integration of Knowledge scores were lowest among **Black-African American** students measured in this competency assessment
- **Middle Eastern/N. African** and **Asian** students generated the highest Integration of Knowledge scores but had relatively small samples

- In the prior assessment of Integration of Knowledge, **Multiracial** and **Hispanic/Latino** students generated the lowest assessments scores
- However, small sample sizes for many ethnic groups make drawing definitive conclusions problematic as findings gathered from small samples have limited generalizability

**Table 16:** Average Integration of Knowledge score by Ethnicity

	n	Average Score
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	3.75
Asian	45	2.54
Black/African American	12	2.10
Hispanic/Latino	186	2.48
Middle Eastern/N. African	5	3.10
Pacific Islander	3	2.17
Multiracial	41	2.42
Unknown	4	2.50
White	191	2.48

**Figure 14:** Average Integration of Knowledge score by Ethnicity





## SUMMARY

The original VALUE rubrics that served as the basis for Core Competency rubrics developed at MiraCosta College were primarily designed for use at four-year institutions. As a result of our internal rubrics being based on rubrics designed for four-year university students, the Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC) at MiraCosta College set a standard score of '2' out of 4 to signify the expected and appropriate level of core competency achievement for two-year college students pursuing transfer or an associate degree. In Fall 2024, students sampled for core competency evaluation generated **Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking** scores (Mode score = 2) and **Integration of Knowledge** scores (Mode score = 2) at the level anticipated by the college.

Both competency assessments exhibited a relatively linear correlation between course grades and assessment scores. For Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking, as well as Integration of Knowledge, the average assessment ratings increased incrementally as students earned higher grades (ranging from F to A). However, the limited number of D and F grade observations makes it challenging to determine the accuracy of these findings. With such a small sample, it is unclear whether the results truly represent the broader population or are influenced by random variance. As the college continues to collect data on these core competencies across additional terms, a clearer understanding of the relationship between grade attainment and these competencies, particularly for students in the lower grade categories (D, F), will emerge.

**First-Time** students, and those with **16-30 units** accumulated prior to assessment, generated the highest Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking scores in this sample while **High School** students, and those with **31-45 units** accumulated, generated the highest Integration of Knowledge scores in this sample. Students with the greatest levels of unit attainment prior to assessment (**60+ units**) generated the lowest average scores for both competencies. While these findings seem incongruent, as we typically assume our First Time students to have 0 units completed, this was not the case for our **Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking** sample of students. Roughly 1/3 of this sample had completed units, meaning they may be a first-time student to MiraCosta College, but more experienced than true "First-Time" to college students. However, even First-Time students with no accumulated units in this sample scored relatively high on the **Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking** assessment ( $M = 2.86$ ). Thus, some combination of high school preparation combined with having a more experienced "First-Time" student group may explain this pattern of results.

Similar evidence of a more experienced **High School** student group as found in the **Integration of Knowledge** assessment. We typically conceive of our High School group as having little to no college experience, and thus no accumulated units, but in this particular sample more than half of the high school students had accumulated units at the college. Moreover, there were similar course taking patterns among several high scoring groups in this competency, including our High School student group. Seventy-five percent of the Integration of Knowledge assessments for high school students were drawn from a single course. This suggests that some of the observed score variability may be influenced by the assessment itself, potentially exerting a disproportionate impact on scores for this group-- which were generally high. Since assessment data is nested within individual classrooms, scores are likely to be more consistent within a single course than across multiple courses. To accurately assess Integration of Knowledge attainment among students, it is essential to ensure that competency assessments are relatively equivalent across disciplines and that student sampling is more evenly distributed across courses. This will help distinguish the effects of educational attainment from enrollment patterns, or specific assessments, on the development of this competency.

The observed decline in assessment scores among students with the highest unit attainment (**60+ units**) warrants closer examination. Several potential explanations could account for this trend. For example, these students could be completing their coursework over an extended period, which may result in gaps in their academic engagement. If they have not recently taken courses that reinforce key competencies, they may struggle to recall or apply relevant knowledge, leading to lower assessment scores. Another consideration is that students in this category may face greater external responsibilities, such as full-time work, family obligations, or other commitments that limit the time and focus they can dedicate to their coursework. These competing demands could impact their ability to engage deeply with course material and perform well on competency assessments. Regardless of the underlying causes, the fact that this pattern emerges consistently across both competency assessments suggests it may not be an anomaly. Further investigation is needed to better understand the challenges faced by these students and to explore potential support mechanisms that could help mitigate the factors contributing to their lower scores.

**Commented [1]:** I appreciate conjecture, which I did include in one of my previous comments. These thoughts are all appreciated. But they lead to a lot of questions that cannot be answered using the current methods & processes of CC assessment. Therefore, I suggest that we need to begin to require departments to CC assess through their core courses which are assessed for the PSLO. A discussion of how to implement scoring rubrics would need to be undertaken.

Students **ages 25-30** generated the highest Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking competency scores while students in the **41-50** age group tended to generate the lowest scores. For Integration of Knowledge, the highest scores were found among students **ages 17 and under**, while students **ages 51+** generated the lowest scores for this competency. The findings regarding Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking are perhaps not surprising in that slightly older students (ages 25-30), may have more developed critical thinking skills, shaped by both academic and life experiences. Their exposure to diverse perspectives in the workplace or higher education may enhance their ability to question, analyze, and think independently. Integration of Knowledge scores like those observed in this competency assessment may speak to the fact that younger students may receive some kind of academic preparation that older students have not. This finding may also possibly be an artifact of the assessments for the 17 and under group, emanating from a single course. As the college continues to gather data on Integration of Knowledge, a clearer distinction will emerge between consistent trends and random variations occurring across assessment cycles.

**White** and **Asian** students performed better than **Hispanic/Latino** students on the Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking assessments in this term. Black students, while minimally sampled, have scored the lowest out of all ethnic groups on the Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking assessments performed in this term and in the assessment performed in Spring 2021. While the sample of Black students has been small in both terms, this may be a pattern worth examining. **Asian** students performed better than **White** and **Hispanic/Latino** students in the Integration of Knowledge assessment in Fall 2024. **Black** students again while minimally sampled for this competency, demonstrated the lowest competency scores in this area. There are likely multiple factors contributing to these patterns of results, including differences in educational background, access to resources, or other contextual influences. Given this, it is important to ensure that core competency assessments are equitable and effectively measure competency across all student groups. Additionally, efforts should be made to support all students in demonstrating their knowledge and skills in ways that align with diverse learning and cultural backgrounds.

Finally, there were no observed gender differences in Integration of Knowledge competency assessments, but **male** students ( $M = 2.90$ ) tended to score higher than **female** students on Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking competency assessments ( $M = 2.74$ ;  $M_{\text{Diff}} = 0.16$ ). These observed gender differences may partially be explained by differential patterns of course taking, or field of study. For instance, female students were more likely to be assessed for Inquiry, Analysis, & Independent Thinking in PSYC, DNCE, and CHLD courses, while male students were more likely to be assessed in PHIL, BIO, and ECON courses. As additional sampling is conducted, and assessments are gathered across different courses, the hope is that differences in course taking patterns between these groups diminish, rendering the comparison of these groups more equitable.