

## **Understanding Society GE assessment Spring-Fall 2023**

In the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years, Westmont College assessed student learning in relation to the Understanding Society GE SLO that reads, *Students will apply foundational theories to analyze social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena.*

### **Direct Assessment**

Drs. Carmel Saad, Andrey Gurney, and David Hunter (GE Coordinators for Understanding Society) spearheaded this assessment and collaborated with faculty teaching Understanding Society GE courses.

Design and Implementation: In November of 2022, eight faculty teaching Understanding Courses, as well as GE Understanding Society Coordinator Drs. Saad and Nazarenko met to discuss Understanding Society assessment tools, namely the rubric and the prompt, which were created for the 2015 round of the Understanding Society assessment (Appendix A). The group introduced minor changes to the rubric and prompt. Soon after this meeting, Dr. Saad requested to be removed from the GE Committee and stopped communicating with the Understanding Society group. Her replacement Dr. Andrew Gurney was assigned to the GE Committee in February 2023 and attended only one GE Committee meeting. Her coordination of the Understanding Society assessment was limited to sending a message about data collection to the faculty teaching Understanding Society courses in Spring 2023. The Understanding Society assessment data was collected in the following courses, COM-006: Messages, Meaning and Culture (Dunn), EB-10: Principles of Microeconomics (Noell), ETN-10: Introduction to Ethnic Studies (Knecht and Whitnah), IS-020H: Pilgrim Citizens (Covington and Taylor), IS-020HL-2: Pilgrim Citizens (Rhee and Nelson), SOC-001: Introduction to Sociology (Song), and SOC-177: Interpersonal Violence (Jirek). In May 2023, student assessment results were sent to Dr. Nazarenko for analysis.

Analysis involved disaggregating by gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation status, major, lower/upper division courses, class standing, and transfer status (Appendix B). Overall, 121 student works were collected and assessed, which represents 42.1% (n=294) of students enrolled in the courses fulfilling the Understanding Society in Spring 2023 or 22.5 (n=537) of all students who completed this requirement in the 2023-2203 academic year (Fall 2022, n=231, Spring 2023, n=294, Mayterm 2023, n=12).

In October 2023, seven faculty teaching US GE courses and GE US Assessment Coordinator Dr. David Hunter met to discuss the Understanding Society data results. Only two faculty members, Drs. Blake Kent and Alastair Su, participated in both Understanding Society meetings; however, their courses did not participate in the Spring 2023 assessment.

### **Indirect Assessment**

In the fall 2022, the GE Committee conducted an audit of the following US course syllabi: ANT-001, COM-006, EB-010, EB-011, POL-010, SOC-001-1, SOC-001-2, SOC-110; and SOC-180. The audit found that most courses comply with the GE requirements and four courses need minor updates. Dr. Steve Hodson, the GE Committee Chair, reached out to respective faculty and department chairs regarding necessary revisions.

Noteworthy results and discussion. We need to admit that the Understanding Society was not as effective and smooth as the Working Artistically assessment conducted the same academic year because three different coordinators were in charge of this assessment and it looks that some assessment details were missed because of this turnover. For example, all faculty used the same rubric but not all of them used the same prompt; the COM-006 data was added at the very last moment, right before the October meeting, etc.

One of the major concerns expressed at the October meeting was the absence of check on inter-rater reliability. The GE Committee needs to develop an effective calibration mechanism for the GE assessment. In future assessment, it would be helpful to go over the rubric and discuss in detail all performance levels prior to data collection.

The results of the assessment activities were as follows:

	n	Average Knowledge Score	Average Application Score	Average Reflection Score
COM-006	27	2.518	2.704	2.407
EB-10	18	3.278	3.222	3.000
ETN-10	5	3.600	3.400	3.200
IS-020H-02	15	3.800	3.667	3.733
IS-020H-01	14	2.857	2.429	2.786
SOC-001	53	3.283	3.528	3.019
SOC-177	16	3.125	3.000	2.750
<b>Total/Average</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>3.289</b>	<b>3.298</b>	<b>3.050</b>

As compared to the 2015 Understanding Society assessment, there are improvements in three categories of the rubric, especially in the Reflection category, which, nevertheless, displays the lowest level of student performance.

	n	Average Knowledge Score	Average Application Score	Average Reflection Score
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>3.190</b>	<b>3.000</b>	<b>2.570</b>

Other findings of the 2023 assessment include:

- No significant differences were observed across most categories, including gender, race/ethnicity and first gender status.

- Transfer students seem to perform at a lower level than regular students.

**Recommendations for acting upon the data (closing the loop activities) in individual courses and the entire area:**

- Overall, the assessment results turned out to be satisfactory in all assessed courses; most students demonstrated “developed” or “highly developed” levels of performance. There is noticeable improvement in student performance relevant to all categories of the rubric compared to the previous round of the Understanding Society assessment. For this reason, the GE Committee recognized the results of this assessment as admissible.
- It was recommended to further refine the rubric for future assessments. Knowledge, Application, Reflection seem like good categories, but the levels of performance could be defined better. It may be helpful to clarify whether the scores should be relative to all students, mature students, or students in introductory courses. This clarification can be made during the calibration session prior to data collection and analysis.
- In the future, it would be helpful if all faculty could use the prompt. Perhaps the prompt needs to be refined as well.
- It might be good to consider upper-division courses separately from lower-division courses, especially if we can form a sample with sufficient number of both upper- and lower-division courses, which was not the case in the current assessment.
- It was observed that language of the SLO does not address application of a biblical perspective as mentioned in Certification Criterion #3. It was also mentioned that in Understanding Society courses instructional time is predominantly dedicated to teaching fundamental theories or concepts and their applications. Realistically speaking, little time is allocated for student personal and social applications of various theories informed by a biblical perspective. Student scores in the Reflection category attest to this practice. It may be prudent to treat Certification Criteria # 3 as an aspirational goal without measuring student performance against it. The issue needs to be addressed during the next round of the Understanding Society assessment.
- The language of the Understanding Society area in the GE language is generally acceptable, even though one of the departments would like it to include “human symbolic activity” or “communication” in the interpretive statement or SLO.
- The conversation about inter-rater reliability in GE assessments needs to be the focus of the GE committee’s attention in the future. It may be helpful for assessors to discuss the implementation and expectations for the assessment prior to data collection.

**Collaboration and Communication**

In 2022-2023 academic year, communication between GE US Coordinators and the faculty teaching courses in this GE area was neither clear nor timely, which negatively impacted the quality of assessment. It was also detrimental that predominantly different groups of faculty attended Understanding Society meetings in the fall 2022 and fall 2023. In order to rectify the situation, in the fall of 2023 the GE Committee discussed the results of the Understanding Society assessment and their interpretation by the faculty, and contributed to the development of the area recommendations.

**VI. Appendices**

- A. Understanding Society rubric and prompt.
- B. Understanding Society statistics.



**Understanding Society Rubric  
Fall 2022**

Categories	Highly Developed A	Developed B	Emerging C	Initial D
<b>Knowledge of concepts or theories</b>	Demonstrates highly developed knowledge of two different concepts or theories to offer explanations of social, political, historical, economic, or cultural phenomena.	Demonstrates developed knowledge of two different concepts or theories to explain social, political, historical, economic, or cultural phenomena.	Demonstrates basic understanding of two different concepts or theories.	Limited or incorrect understanding of concepts or theories.
<b>Application of concepts or theories</b>	Provides strong arguments and evidence for applying two concepts or theories to analyze historical or contemporary problems.	Provides arguments and evidence for applying two concepts or theories to analyze historical or contemporary problems.	Demonstrates the ability to form arguments and apply concepts or theories.	None or marginal ability to apply concepts or theories.
<b>Reflections on engagement with concepts or theories from a Christian framework</b>	Makes compelling and insightful engagement with concepts and theories as it relates to a Christian framework.	Makes adequate engagement with concepts and theories as it relates to a Christian framework.	Demonstrates the ability to make engagement with concepts and theories as it relates to a Christian framework.	Limited ability to make engagement with concepts and theories as it relates to a Christian framework.

**Prompt:**

1. After reading this article/material, explain what you think are the key issues. In your answer, describe the social or historical phenomena that are reflected in the story.
2. Identify TWO concepts or theories you would use to analyze the problems presented in the article/material according to them. Provide your rationale for using these concepts or theories and then thoroughly apply one concept/theory before you apply the second concept/theory.
3. Explain the issue raised in the readings as it relates to a Christian framework.

## DATA

Three students in the study were enrolled in two courses in the study. As a result, each of these students had two scores for Knowledge, Application, and Reflection strands. The higher of their scores was used for each student; the second score was eliminated from the data set.

An individual t-test was conducted for each “strand(knowledge, application, and reflection)” for gender, first generation, HABH/AWU, and transfer. The p-values are provided for the reader with significant differences noted when the p-value was lower than 0.05

In total, one-hundred and forty-nine students had scores for the Knowledge, Application, and Reflection strands. The courses that provided data included: COM-006, EB-10, ETN-10, IS-020H, IS-020HL, SOC-001, and SOC-177. The following table displays summary statistics for the group as a whole that is also disaggregated by course.

	n	Average Knowledge Score	Average Application Score	Average Reflection Score
COM-006	27	2.518	2.704	2.407
EB-10	18	3.278	3.222	3.000
ETN-10	5	3.600	3.400	3.200
IS-020H	15	3.800	3.667	3.733
IS-020HL	14	2.857	2.429	2.786
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SOC-177	16	3.125	3.000	2.750
Total	121	3.289	3.298	3.050

## GENDER

The table below provides the average scores by gender (female/male) for the Knowledge, Application, and Reflection category and sample sizes (n).

	Knowledge Score	StdDev Knowledge	Application Score	StdDev Application	Reflection Score	StdDev Reflection	n
Female	3.101	0.920	3.182	0.952	2.939	0.935	99
Male	3.245	0.902	3.204	0.816	2.918	0.886	49

The average knowledge score for males and females did not differ significantly ( $p = 0.3686$ ).

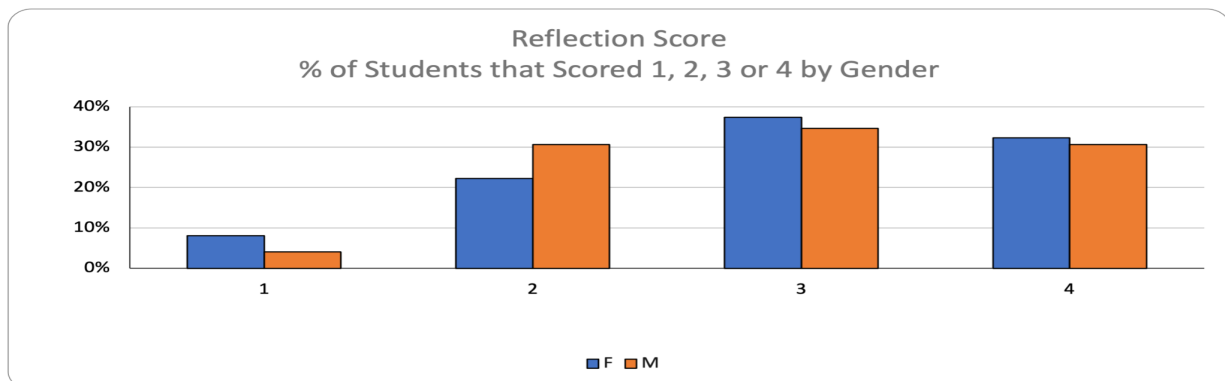
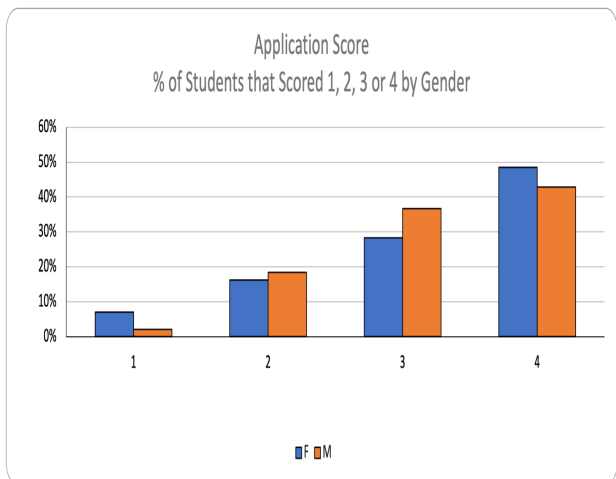
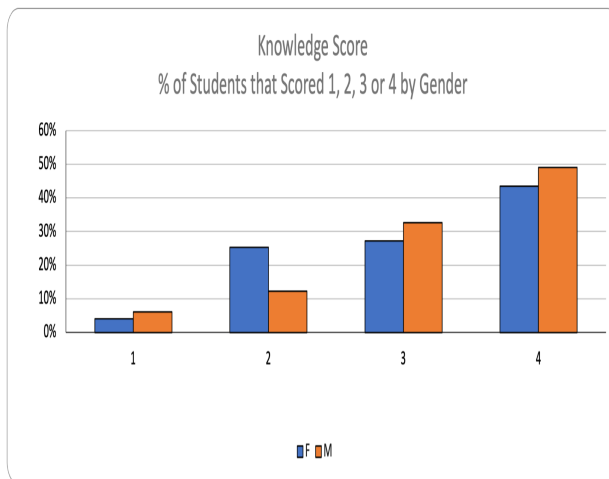
The difference between the average knowledge score was 0.144.

The average application score for males and females did not differ significantly ( $p = 0.8901$ ).

The difference between the average application score was 0.022.

The average reflection score for males and females did not differ significantly ( $p = 0.8961$ ). The difference between the average reflection score was 0.021.

The graphs below display the percent of students who earned a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each category by gender.



## FIRST GENERATION

The table below provides the average scores by if the student was first generation or not for the Knowledge, Application, and Reflection category and sample sizes (n).

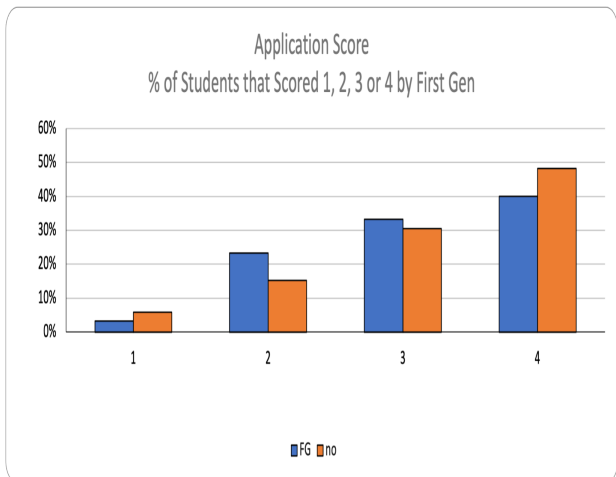
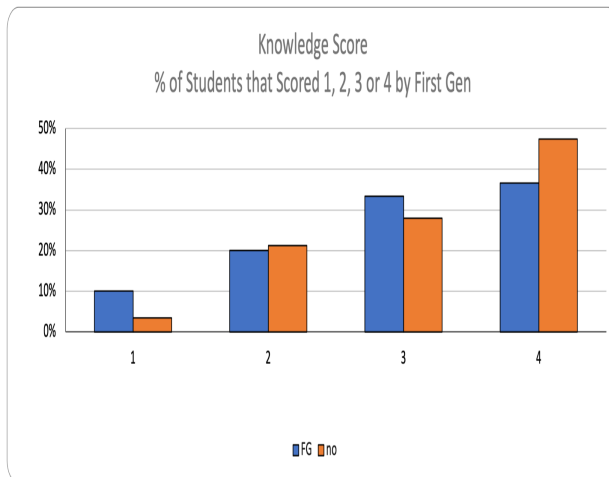
	Knowledge Score	StdDev Knowledge	Application Score	StdDev Application	Reflection Score	StdDev Reflection	n
First Gen	2.967	0.999	3.100	0.885	2.600	0.932	30
Not	3.195	0.889	3.212	0.914	3.017	0.896	118

The average knowledge score for first generation students did not differ significantly ( $p = 0.2234$ ) from their non-first generation peers. The difference between the average knowledge score was 0.228.

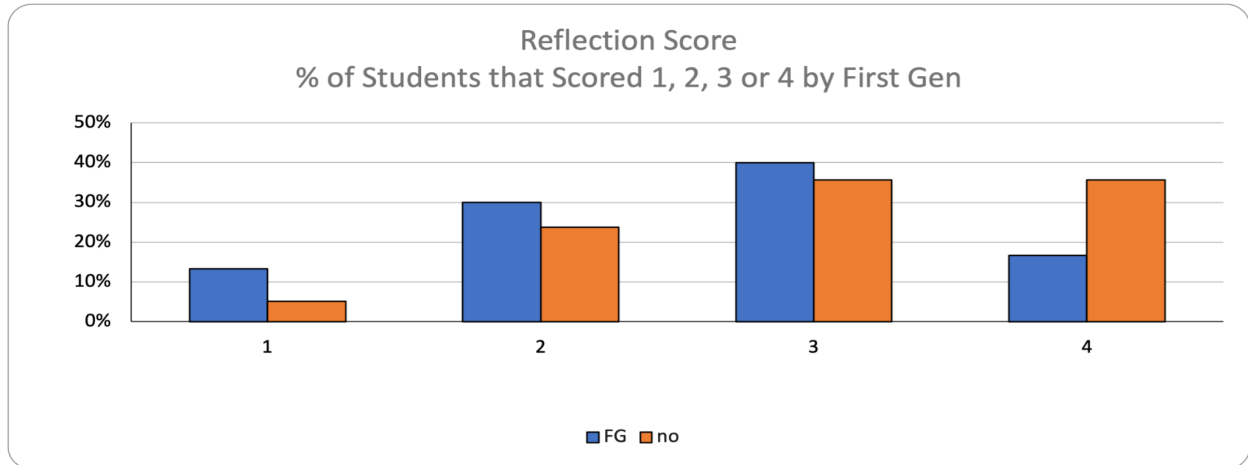
The average application score for first generation students did not differ significantly ( $p = 0.5474$ ) from their non-first generation peers. The difference between the average application score was 0.112.

The average reflection score for first generation students differed significantly ( $p = 0.0254$ ) from their non-first generation peers. The difference between the average reflection score was 0.417.

The graphs below display the percent of students who earned a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each category by if the student was first generation or not.







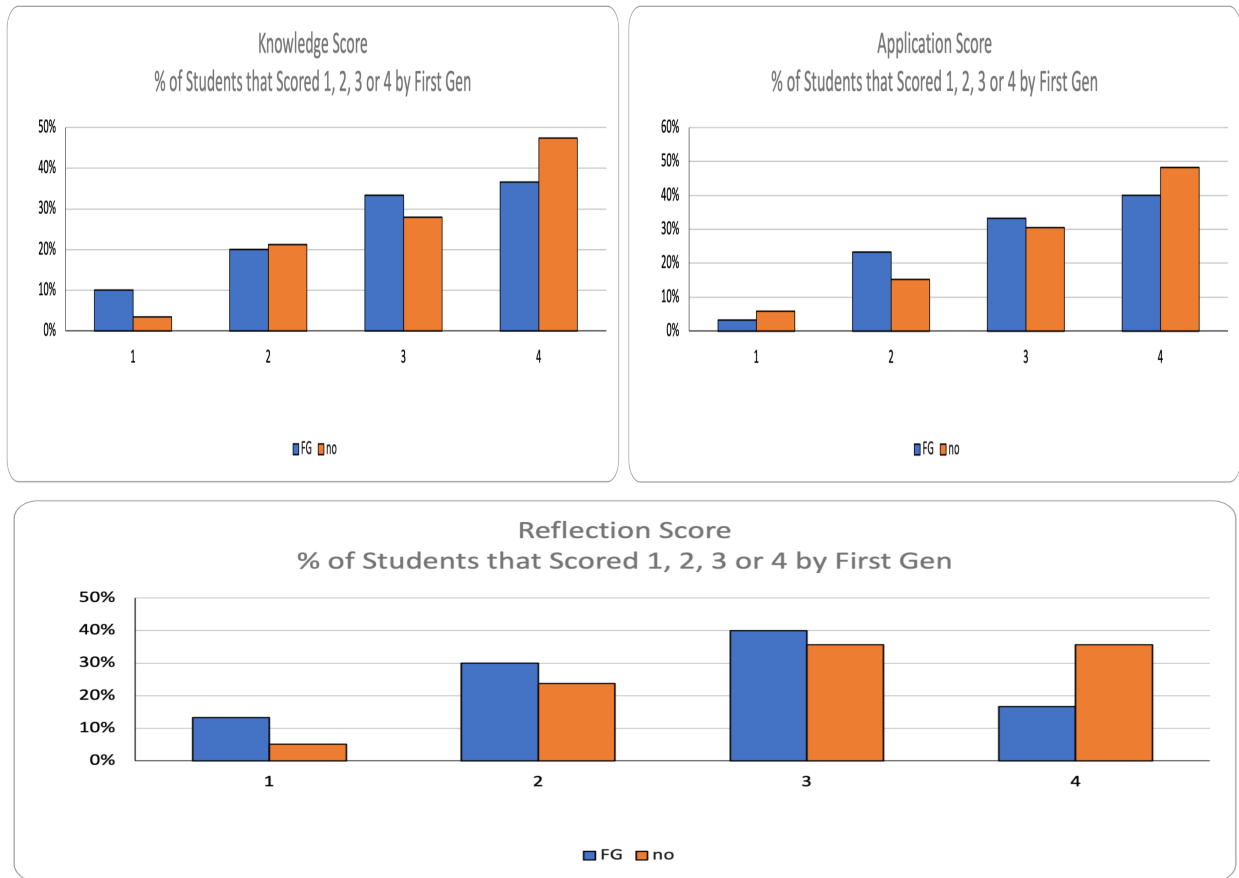
### RACE/ETHNICITY (HABH, AWU, OTHER)

Because there were a small number of students represented in the data, some of the race/ethnicity categories had only one or two scores. This led to summary statistics that were unhelpful in displaying the overall trends. As a result, the data were grouped into the HABH, AWU, and Other categories that Westmont College has used in the past when analyzing race/ethnicity data. The table below provides the average scores by HABH, AWU, and for the Knowledge, Application, and Reflection category. Note: HABH includes students who self-report as Hispanic, Alaska/American Indigenous, Black or African American, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; AWU includes students who self-report as Asian, White, or Unknown; and Other includes students who self-report as Two or More Races and Non-resident Alien.

	Knowledge Score	StdDev Knowledge	Application Score	StdDev Application	Reflection Score	StdDev Reflection	n
AWU	3.202	0.907	3.202	0.967	3.022	0.904	89
HABH	2.978	0.954	3.152	0.816	2.696	0.891	46
OTHER	3.385	0.768	3.231	0.832	3.154	0.987	13

The average knowledge score of HABH students was not significantly lower than that of AWU students ( $p = 0.1838$ ). The difference between the average knowledge score was 0.224. The average application score of HABH students was not significantly lower than that of AWU students ( $p = 0.7649$ ). The difference between the average application score was 0.079. The average reflection score of HABH students was significantly lower than that of AWU students ( $p = 0.0480$ ). The difference between the average reflection score was 0.326.

The graphs below display the percent of students who earned a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each category by HABH, AWU, and Other.



## TRANSFER

The table below provides the average scores by if the student is a transfer or not for the Knowledge, Application, and Reflection category and sample sizes (n).

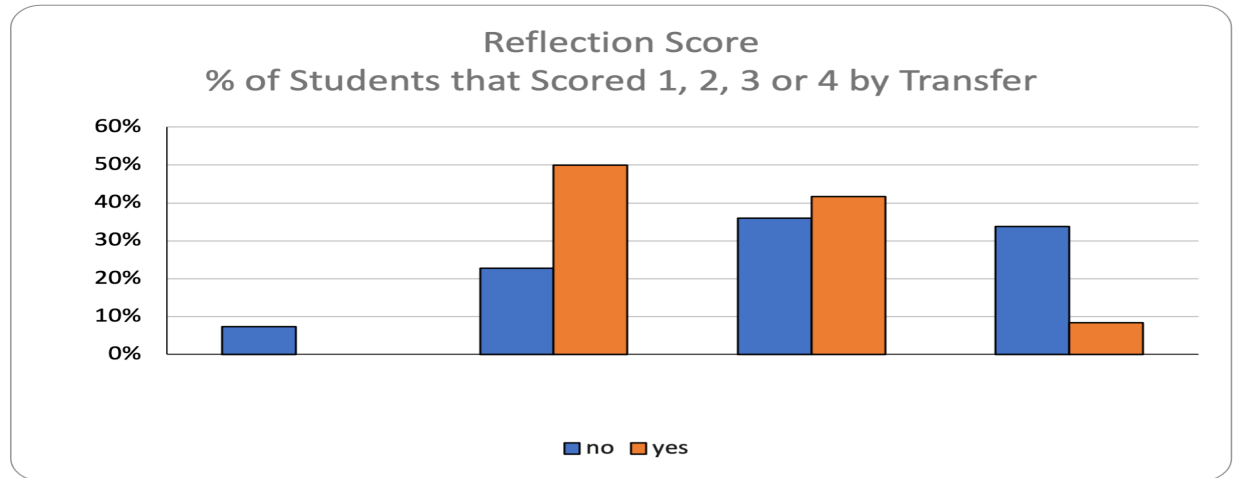
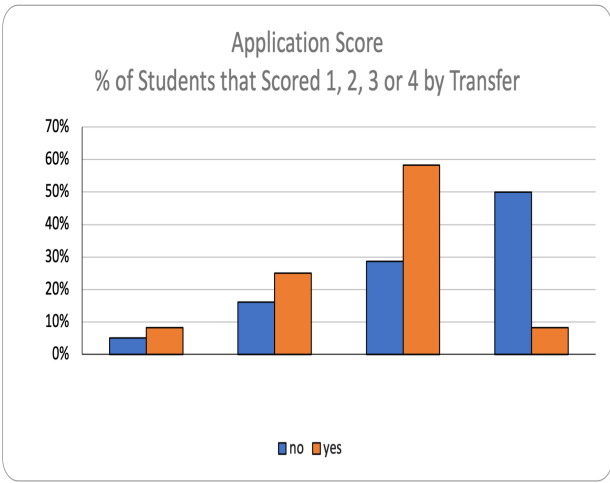
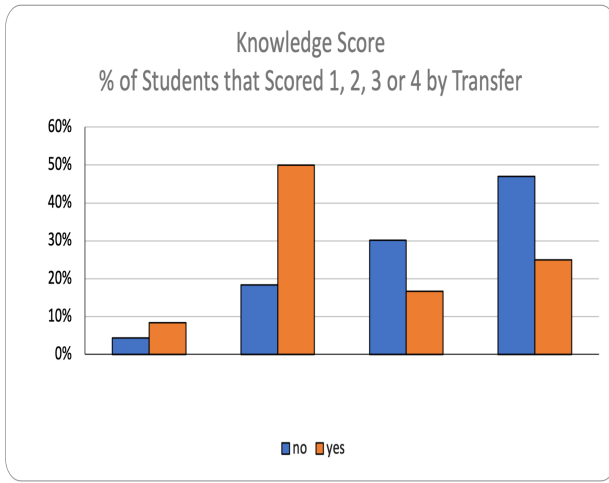
	Knowledge Score	StdDev Knowledge	Application Score	StdDev Application	Reflection Score	StdDev Reflection	n
Not	3.199	0.893	3.235	0.905	2.963	0.930	136
Transfer	2.583	0.996	2.667	0.778	2.583	0.669	12

The average knowledge score for transfer students did differ significantly ( $p = 0.0247$ ) from their non-transfer peers. The difference between the average knowledge score was 0.129.

The average application score for transfer students did differ significantly ( $p = 0.0370$ ) from their non-transfer peers. The difference between the average application score was 0.489.

The average reflection score for transfer students did not differ significantly ( $p = 0.1679$ ) from their non-transfer peers. The difference between the average reflection score was 0.228.

The graphs below display the percent of students who earned a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each category by if the student transferred to Westmont or joined as a first-year, first-time student.

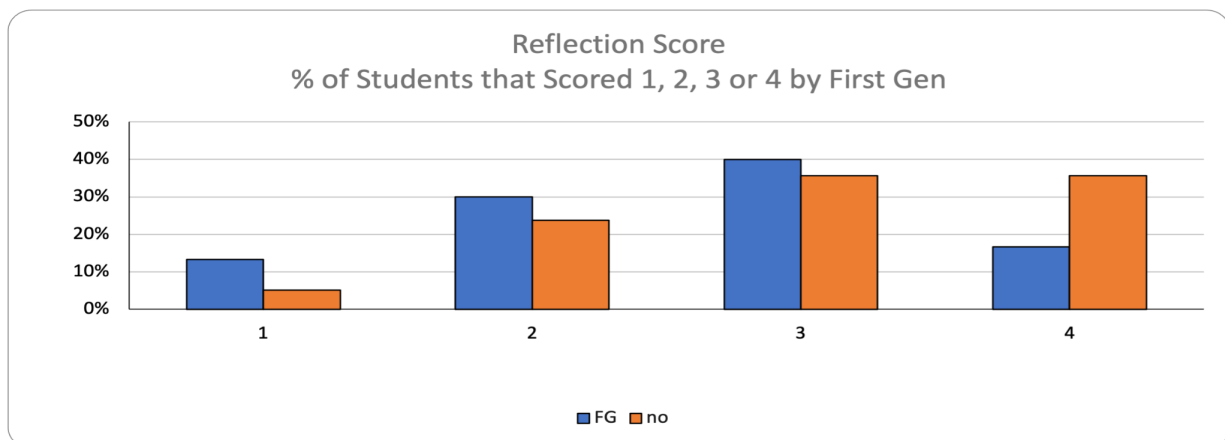
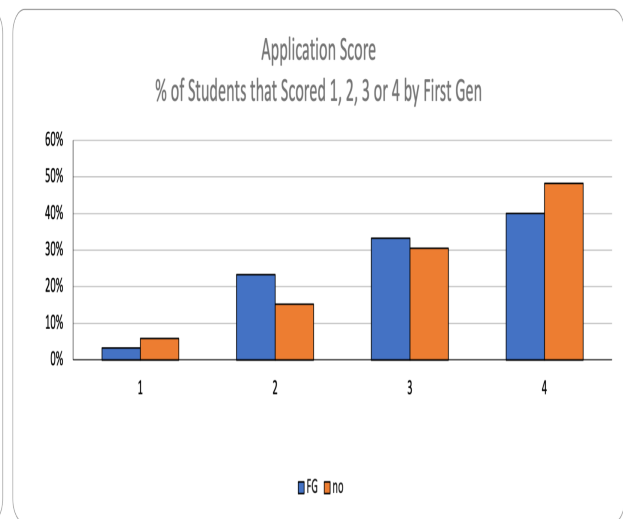
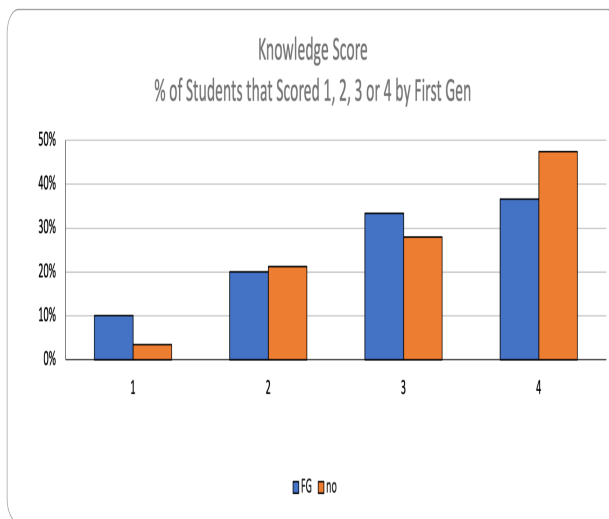


## DIVISION

The table below provides the average scores by division for the Knowledge, Application, and Reflection category and sample sizes (n). Note: H stands for Humanities, NBS stands for Natural and Behavioral Sciences, SS stands for Social Sciences, and UM stands for Undeclared Major.

	Knowledge Score	Application Score	Reflection Score	n
H	2.727	3.273	3.000	11
NBS	3.538	3.500	3.192	26
SS	3.150	3.000	2.750	20
UM	3.088	3.132	2.890	69

The graphs below display the percent of students who earned a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each category by division

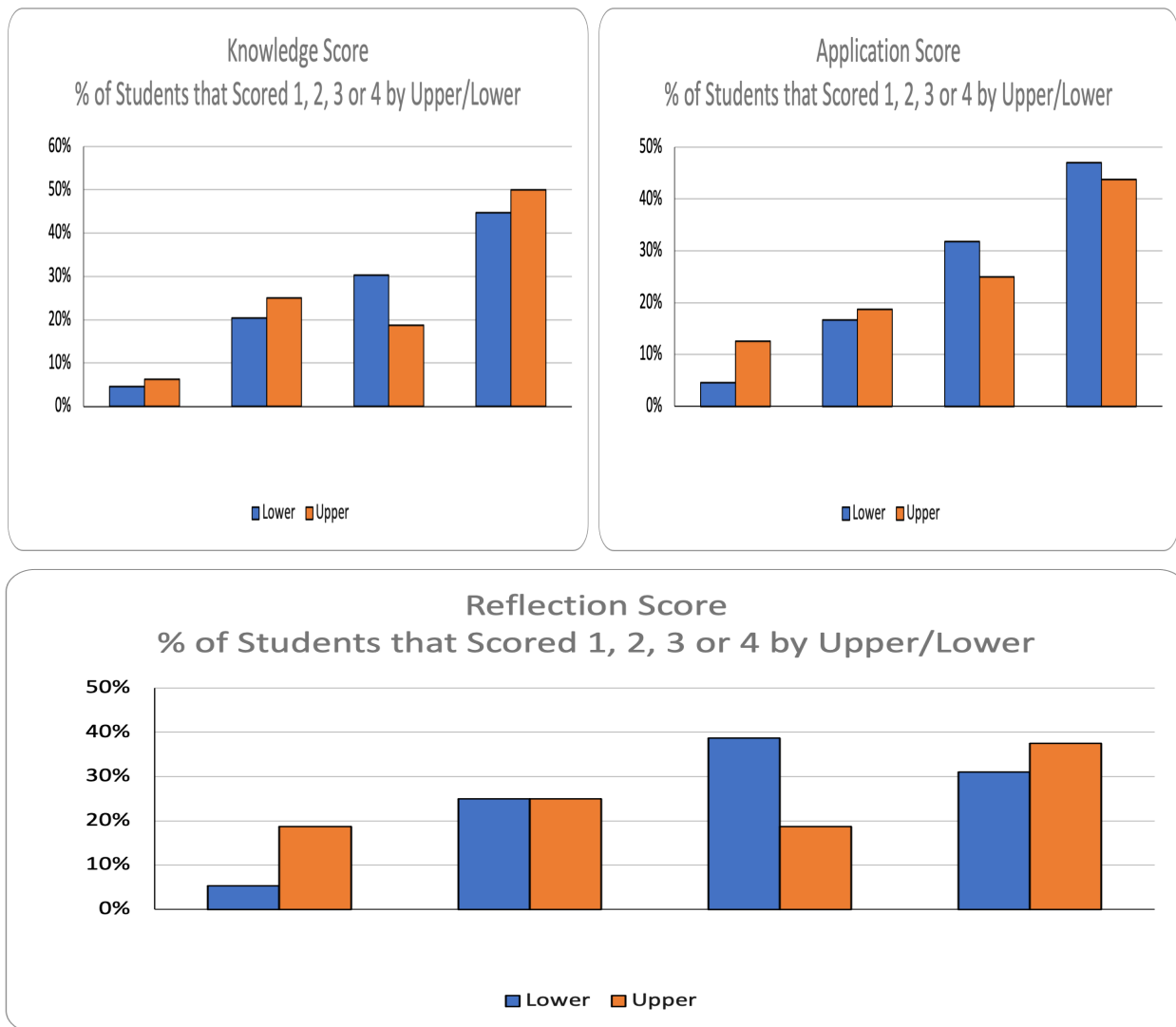


## UPPER/LOWER

The table below provides the average scores by upper and lower division class level for the Knowledge, Application, and Reflection category and sample sizes (n).

	Knowledge Score	Application Score	Reflection Score	n
Upper Div	3.125	3.000	2.750	16
Lower Div	3.152	3.212	2.955	132

The graphs below display the percent of students who earned a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each category by upper and lower division class level.



## CLASS STANDING

The table below provides the average scores by class standing for the Knowledge, Application, and Reflection category and sample sizes (n).

	Knowledge Score	Application Score	Reflection Score	n
Freshman	3.189	3.297	2.811	37
Sophomore	3.000	3.014	2.855	69
Junior	3.611	3.444	3.167	18
Senior	3.167	3.333	3.167	24

The graphs below display the percent of students who earned a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each category by class standing.

