HOWARD UNIVERSITY
1867

Graduating Student Exit Survey Report on General Education Knowledge

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Created by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

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Summary

Howard University offers several undergraduate programs to its student body. These programs have courses that provide the University with opportunities for undergraduate students to learn and develop, reinforce, and master the following skills: oral communication skills, written communication skills, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency and information literacy. These skills are part of the Howard University General Education's (HUGE) 21 learning outcomes.

Context

HUGE 21 is a set of 21 general education learning outcomes decided by faculty in 2017. The outcomes are met through curricular and co-curricular student experiences including classes and coursework, high-impact learning opportunities, student activities, employment, and alternative experiences. Each semester, Howard University looks at student work or data related to students' experiences and determines the degree to which students have met one or more of these outcomes.

Outcomes are measured on a rotating basis across all undergraduate schools and colleges. Of the 21 outcomes, 5 (Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Written Communication, Oral Communication, Quantitative Literacy, Information Literacy, and African Diaspora Awareness) are measured every other year, and the other 15 (Creative Thinking, Ethical Reasoning, Inquiry and Analysis, Qualitative Literacy, Technology, Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Historical Awareness, Intercultural Knowledge and Foreign Language Competency, Science and Environmental Consciousness, Physical and Mental health, Teamwork, Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy, Civic Knowledge and Engagement, Foundation and Skills for Life-Long Learning, and Integrative and Applied Learning) are assessed at least once each 7-year cycle.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment administered the Graduate Student Exit Survey (GSES) to Howard graduating students in fall 2020 and spring 2021 to determine the students' satisfaction in the general education program, among other areas.

Methodology

The survey consisted of 21 questions of which one matrix-style question asked students' opinion of their level of ability/competency in six of the HUGE 21 learning outcomes for undergraduate programs (Q24). These outcomes were selected as they represent the outcomes required by Middle States Commission on Higher Education. In particular, indirect measures of student competence in oral communication skills, written communication skills, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy were gathered. In total, 1571 students completed the Qualtrics survey giving a response rate of 62.81%. Looking at only undergraduate students, 1118 students provided data. The data was analyzed in the Qualtrics platform.

Results

The results of undergraduate responses to the survey questions specifically on general education can be seen in the table below:

Q24. Think about your entire experience at Howard University. Compared to when you first started at Howard, how would you rate your level of ability/competency in the following areas? (now vs. then)

Students were asked to rate their level of ability/competency in six general education areas by comparing the time first they started at Howard to the present time. The results were as follows:

Field	Much Lower	Lower	About the Same	Higher	Much Higher
Oral Communication skills	0.37%	0.55%	10.08%	47.66%	41.34%
Written Communication Skills	0.28%	0.55%	14.05%	47.75%	37.37%
Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning	0.37%	1.01%	22.09%	42.90%	33.64%
Critical Analysis and Reasoning	0.18%	0.28%	8.18%	50.83%	40.53%
Technological Competency	0.18%	0.55%	27.41%	41.61%	30.25%
Information Literacy	0.18%	0.28%	15.01%	50.92%	33.61%

The results show that over half (70%) of the students think that their level of ability/competency among the six general education knowledge areas are either higher or much higher.

Field	Higher or Much Higher
Oral Communication skills	89.00%
Written Communication Skills	85.12%
Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning	76.54%
Critical Analysis and Reasoning	91.36%
Technological Competency	71.86%
Information Literacy	84.53%

Most students (over 90%) rated their ability/competence in the area of critical analysis and reasoning skills as higher or much higher after their matriculation through Howard University, while technological competency received the lowest percentage of students rating their ability/competency as higher or much higher in comparison to the five other skills surveyed.

Implications

The General education learning outcomes are critical in the 21st century. Howard graduates need to demonstrate these skills in industry and society at large. Oral communication skills, written communication skills, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency and information literacy are essential in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. While this data suggest that most students have confidence that Howard is improving their competence in these six learning outcomes, there is need to continue prioritizing them.

Suggested Improvement

For the general education skills, the two areas of scientific and quantitative reasoning and technological competency had a lower number of responses rating either higher or much higher compared to the other four skills of oral communication skills, written communication skills, critical analysis and reasoning and information literacy. As many Howard undergraduates were raised as technological natives, it is the role of the institution to better define this outcome and showcase the ways that students may be consciously and unconsciously learning it. Additionally, these results should press the university to imagine new ways to build confidence in student acquisition of this competency. There is an additional need for continuous monitoring and intervention in the area of quantitative reasoning for continuous improvement.