

**INFORMATION LITERACY
CORE GRADUATION COMPETENCIES PILOT PROJECT**

University of San Francisco

Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support

The Process

Information literacy was assessed using the cohort test of [Project SAILS](#). Developed by a team of librarians at Kent State University, the cohort test of Project SAILS is a 45-question test that investigates how students perform on the following four Association of College and Research Library (ACRL) standards:

1. Determines the nature and extent of the information needed
2. Accesses needed information effectively and efficiently
3. Evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into knowledge base and value system
4. Understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally

In addition to the ACRL standards, SAILS assesses eight skill sets derived from those standards. These skill sets are:

1. Developing a research strategy
2. Selecting finding tools
3. Searching
4. Using finding tool features
5. Retrieving sources
6. Evaluating sources
7. Documenting sources
8. Understanding economic, legal, and social issues

Sample Size and Benchmarking

A random sample of 604 University of San Francisco (USF) graduating seniors, stratified by college/school and program, were invited to participate. Of this number, 61 students participated.¹ Students were incentivized to participate with a \$25 gift card.

In Spring 2017, 57 other institutions in the United States administered SAILS to a total of 58,777 students. Eight of the participating institutions were doctoral institutions, with a total of 12,112 students. As a result of this broad administration, USF was able to benchmark how it scores against other institutions that administered SAILS. Scores range from 0 to 1,000.

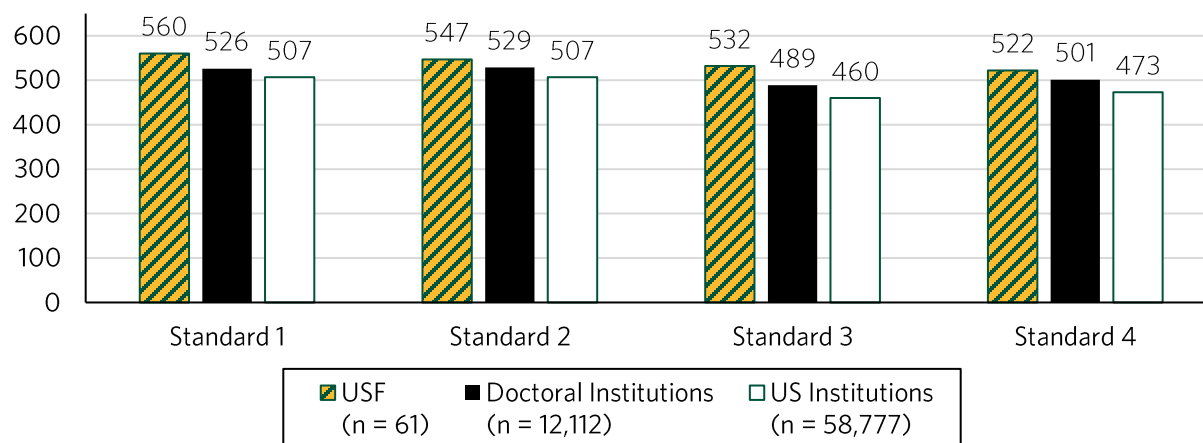
¹ Due to the low response rate, the sample should be treated as a convenience sample.

ACRL STANDARDS

How Did Students Perform?

The figure below depicts the average score for USF on the four ACRL standards compared to other doctorate-granting and US institutions.

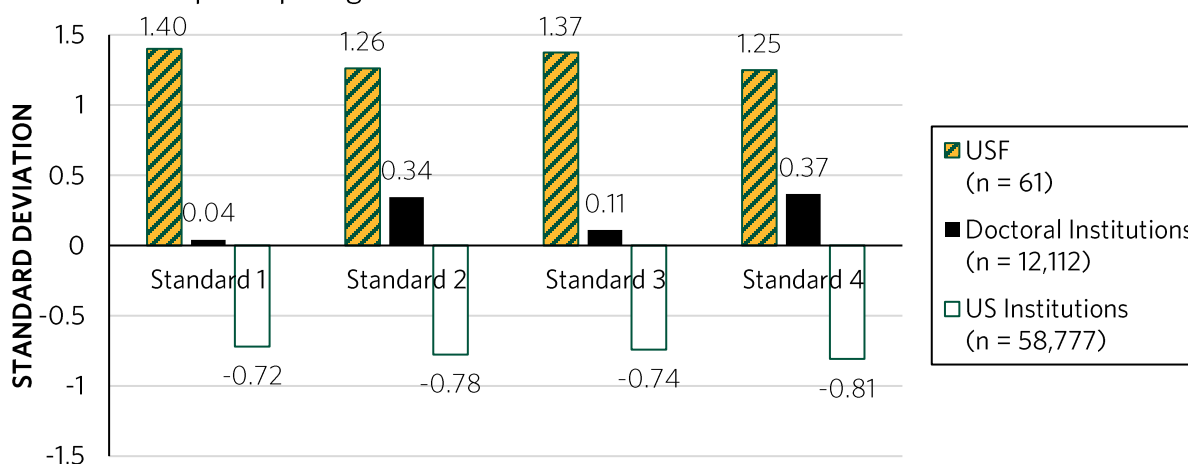
- Overall, USF scored higher than other doctorate-granting institutions and US institutions on all four standards.



How Much Better Did Students Perform?

The figure below depicts the z-scores for each of the four ACRL standards. Zero, the midpoint of the vertical axis, represents the average for all participating institutions. This figure shows how much better USF performed compared to the other participating institutions.

- Overall, USF scored one standard deviation higher on all four standards than the other participating institutions.

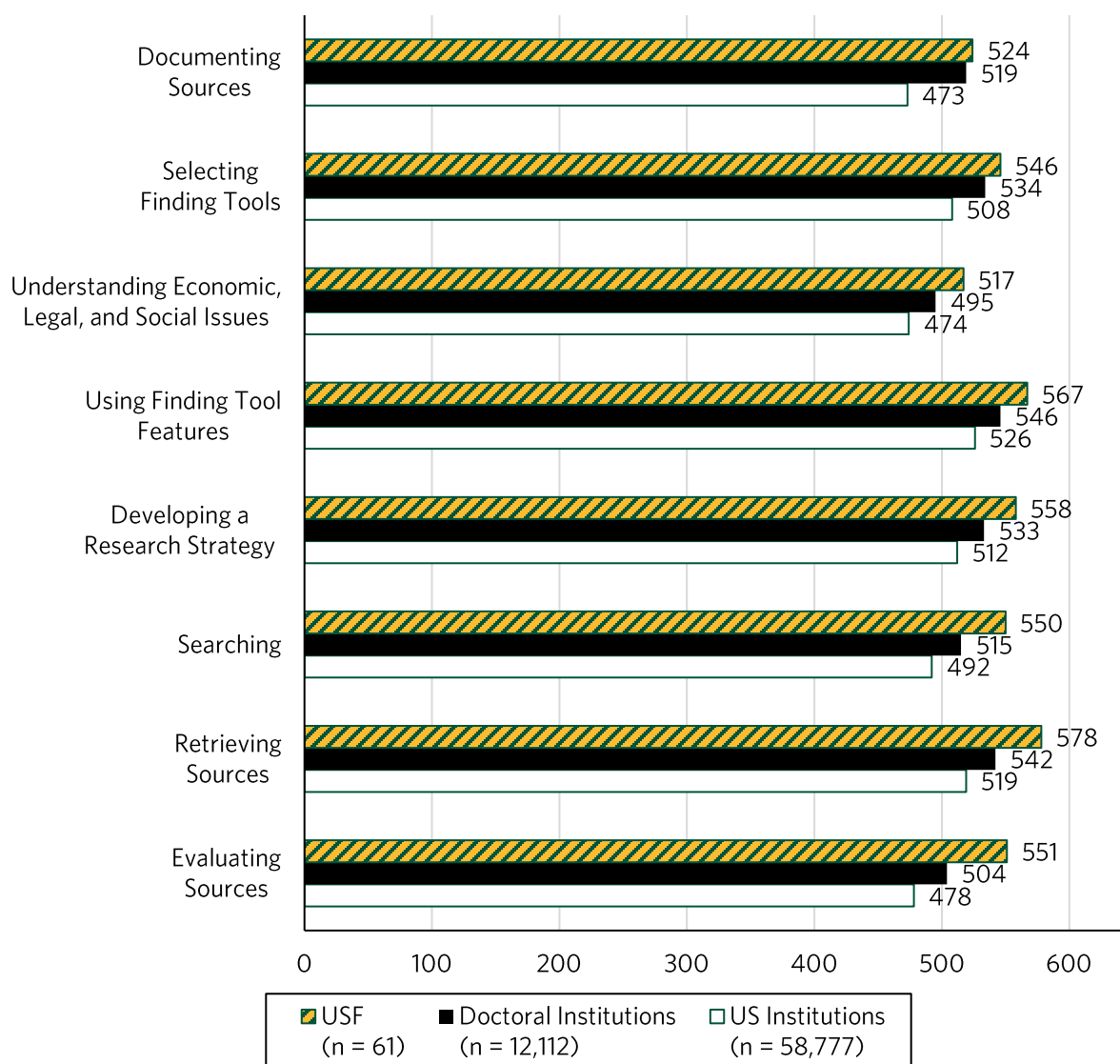


SKILL SETS

How Did Students Perform?

The figure below depicts the average score for USF on the eight skill sets compared to other doctorate-granting and US institutions.

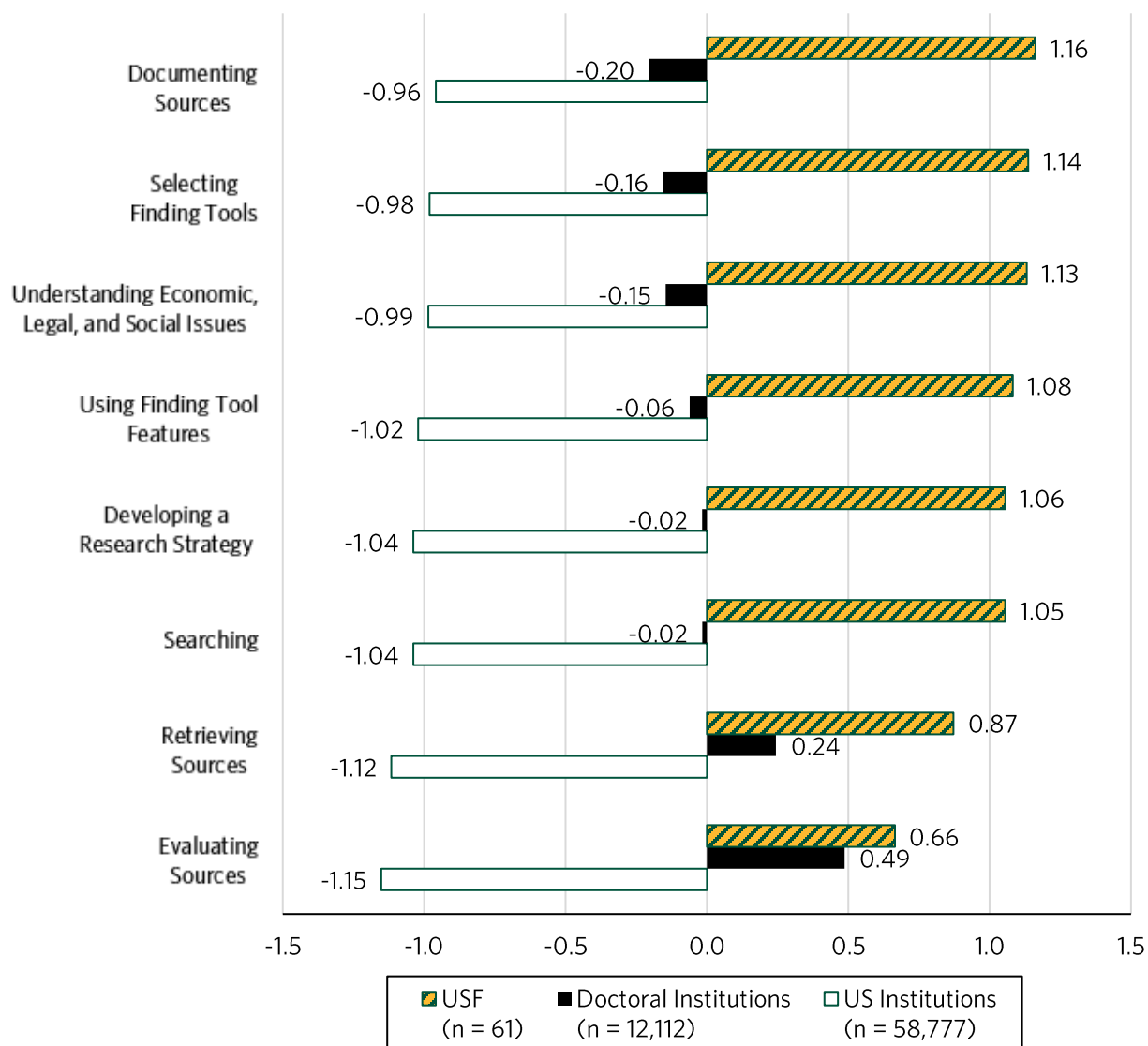
- Overall, USF scored higher on six of the eight skill sets than other doctorate-granting and US institutions, and as well as those institutions on the remaining two skill sets.



How Much Better Did Students Perform?

The figure below depicts the z-scores for the eight skill sets. Zero, the midpoint of the horizontal axis, represents the average for all participating institutions. This figure shows how much better USF performed compared to the other participating institutions.

- USF scored one standard deviation higher than the other participating institutions on the following skill sets: documenting sources, selecting finding tools, understanding economic, legal, and social issues, using finding tool features, developing a research strategy, and searching.
- USF approached scoring one standard deviation higher on retrieving sources and evaluating sources than the other participating institutions.



SUMMARY

- USF appears to prepare its students for information literacy competence under the standards established by the ACRL. USF students performed better on the four ACRL standards and on six of the eight skill sets than students from other participating institutions. USF students performed as well as students from other participating institutions on the remaining two skill sets.
- USF students scored one standard deviation higher than students from other participating institutions on the ACRL standards and six of the eight skill sets.
- The small sample size limits the ability to make clear and general conclusions.

REFLECTION

Strengths

- The graduating seniors that participated in SAILS demonstrated competence in information literacy.
- Administering the cohort test provided a benchmark for how USF compares to other institutions on information literacy competence.

Limitations

- The small sample size is a notable limitation. Although a large, stratified random sample of graduating seniors was invited to participate, and a sizeable incentive was offered, the sample we obtained was small. The sample size does not permit clear conclusions and generalizable statements about how USF performs on information literacy as an institution. The sample size may be due to the large number of requests made on graduating seniors at the time in which SAILS was administered, including the Quantitative Reasoning Quiz and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).
- We did not set standards for information literacy competence because prior to administration, we did not know enough about how SAILS was scored to set standards that would be appropriate for USF students.

Moving Forward

- USF is committed to administering SAILS for the next two academic years. All graduating seniors will be invited to participate instead of a stratified random sample. In addition, we plan to extend participation to first year students. This plan will likely lead to larger samples so that clear conclusions can be made, comparisons between different schools/colleges that grant undergraduate degrees can be examined, and gain in information literacy competence between first year and senior students can be investigated.
- We plan to work with the Office of Marketing Communications to promote the next administration of SAILS, which will also likely lead to larger samples.