



UNIVERSITY OF
SAN FRANCISCO

Office of Assessment
and Accreditation Support

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) & the WSCUC Core Graduation Competencies 2014 – 2021

November 2021

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About NSSE

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a survey of first year and senior students about the characteristics and quality of their undergraduate education. While NSSE does not directly assess student learning, the survey does reflect self-reported behaviors associated with desired outcomes of an undergraduate education.

About this Report

In this report, NSSE is used to investigate how USF students evaluate their own mastery of the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) core graduation competencies. Outlined in WSCUC's (2013) [Handbook of Accreditation](#), the competencies are critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, and information literacy. WSCUC requires colleges and universities to demonstrate student achievement in these domains.

Two sets of NSSE items were used to examine students' evaluation of their own mastery: perceived gains and confidence in ability. Perceived gains are defined as the extent to which students perceive that USF has contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development. These items were administered to USF first year and senior students and allowed us to assess four competencies: critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, and quantitative reasoning. NSSE does not include questions related to information literacy. However, in 2014, USF participated in the Information Literacy topical module, which allowed us to assess the information literacy competency area.

Confidence in ability is defined as the extent to which students feel good about their ability to demonstrate the competencies. These items were administered to USF seniors only as a part of the First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions topical module administered in 2015 and 2016, but allowed us to assess all five of the competencies. The items presented in this report are a snapshot of the available NSSE data.

This report presents data from 2014 – 2021; however, USF did not participate in NSSE in 2019, therefore no data for 2019 is included. Included in this report are year to year data for USF first year and senior students, comparisons between USF first year and senior students, and comparisons to other institutions (Jesuit, Carnegie institutions with doctoral programs and moderate research activity, Far West private institutions in 2015, and in 2017 – 2021, peer institutions of our choosing).

SUMMARY

From 2014 to 2021 the percentage of first year NSSE respondents ranged between 18% to 36% and senior respondents ranged between 13% to 26%. The highest percentage of first year respondents (36%) occurred in 2021, this was 4% higher than 2020 and 18% higher than 2018. The highest percentage of senior respondents (26%) occurred in 2020, this was 13% higher than 2018.

PERCEIVED GAINS

- Overall, first year students and seniors favorably evaluated the gains made by their USF education in the four core graduation competencies examined by NSSE (critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, and quantitative reasoning). For first year students, means range from 2.43 to 3.22 and for seniors, means range from 2.68 to 3.43 on a 4-pt. scale.
- Seniors generally report more perceived gains across the core competencies than do first year students.
- Both first year students and seniors are largely comparable to Jesuit schools and similar Carnegie and peer institutions in the area of the four competencies.

CONFIDENCE IN SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Overall, seniors favorably evaluated their confidence in skills and abilities in the five core graduation competencies. For 2015, means range from 3.02 to 3.52 and for 2016, means range from 2.99 to 3.50 on a 4-pt. scale.
- The longitudinal trends in confidence in skills and ability are consistent for seniors across the five competencies examined (critical thinking, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, written communication, and information literacy) for the two years in which these questions were administered to participants.

PERCEIVED GAINS

First year and senior students responded to “How much has the University of San Francisco contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?” using a 4 pt. scale (1 = *Very little*, 4 = *Very much*). Four items from this series were used to measure four of the five core graduation competencies. The competency appears in bold with the corresponding questionnaire item below:

1. **Critical thinking:** Thinking critically and analytically
2. **Written communication:** Writing clearly and effectively
3. **Oral communication:** Speaking clearly and effectively
4. **Quantitative reasoning:** Analyzing numerical and statistical information

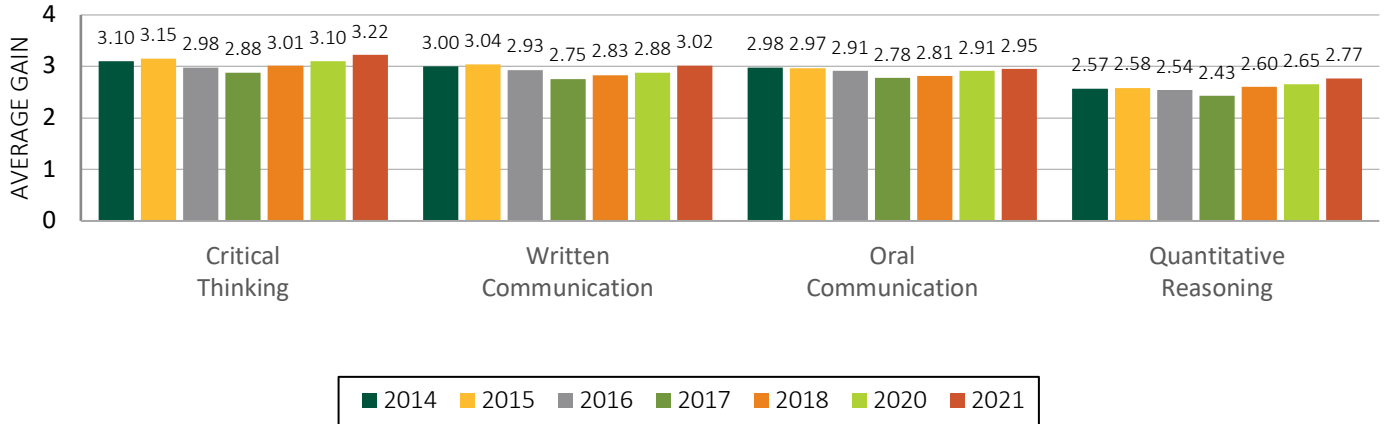
In 2014, first year and senior students who participated in the Information Literacy topical module responded to “How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively?” using a 4 pt. scale (1 = *Very little*, 4 = *Very much*). The competency appears in bold with the corresponding questionnaire item below:

1. **Information literacy:** Using information effectively

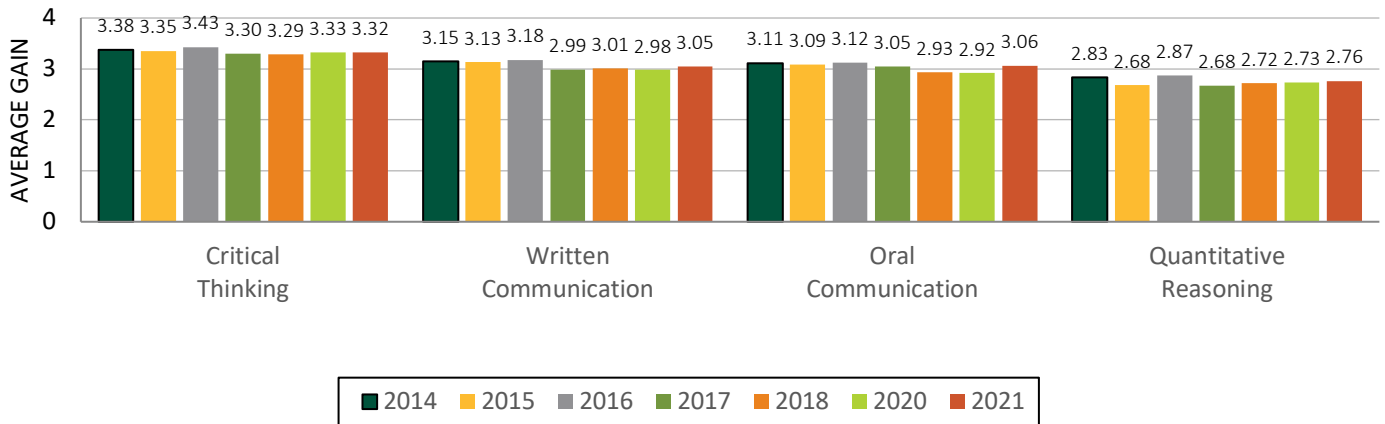
YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISON

The figures below depict how much students, on average, perceive that USF has contributed to their knowledge, skills, and abilities for 2014 to 2021.

FIRST YEAR (2014 - 2021)

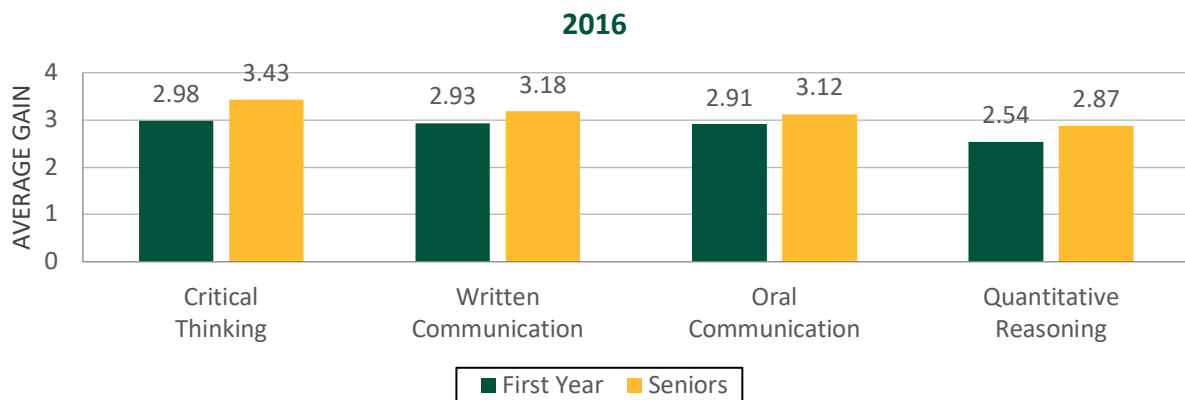
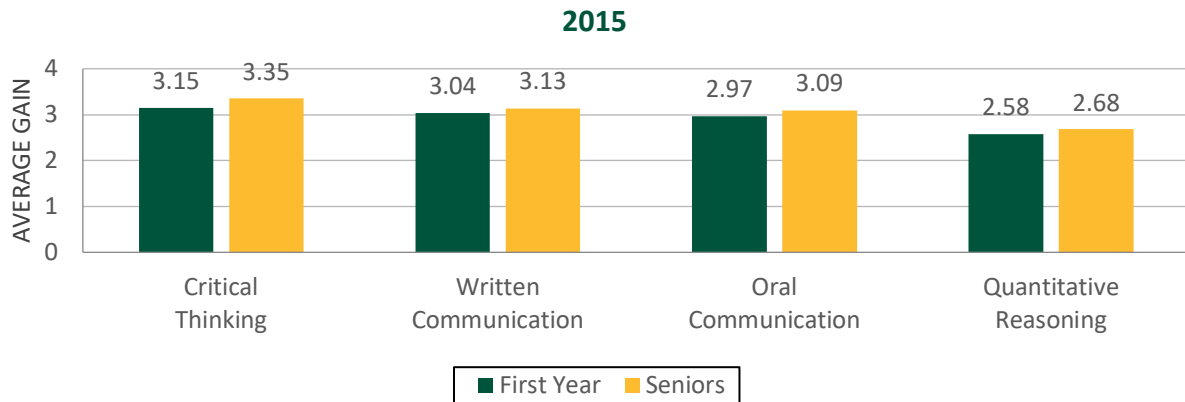
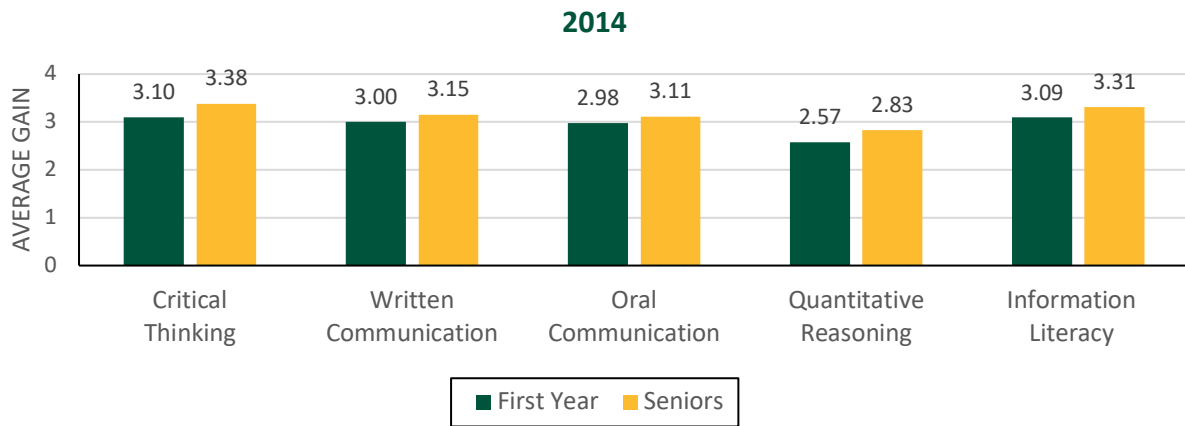


SENIORS (2014 - 2021)

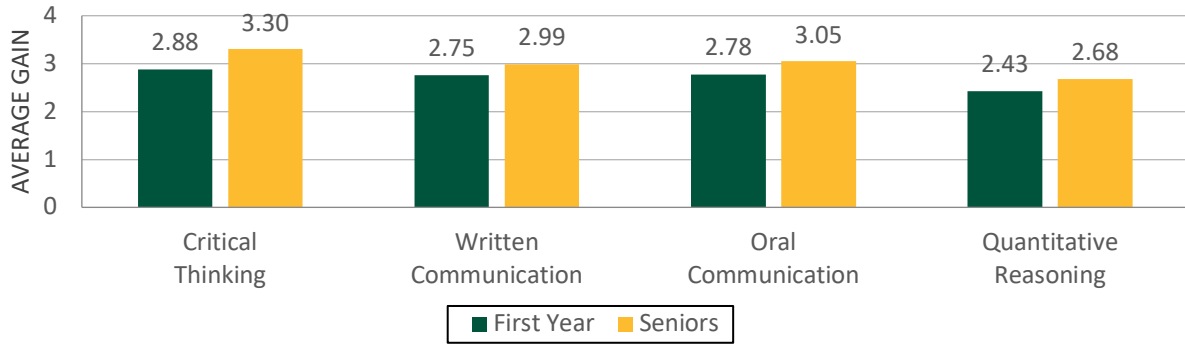


FIRST YEAR TO SENIOR COMPARISON

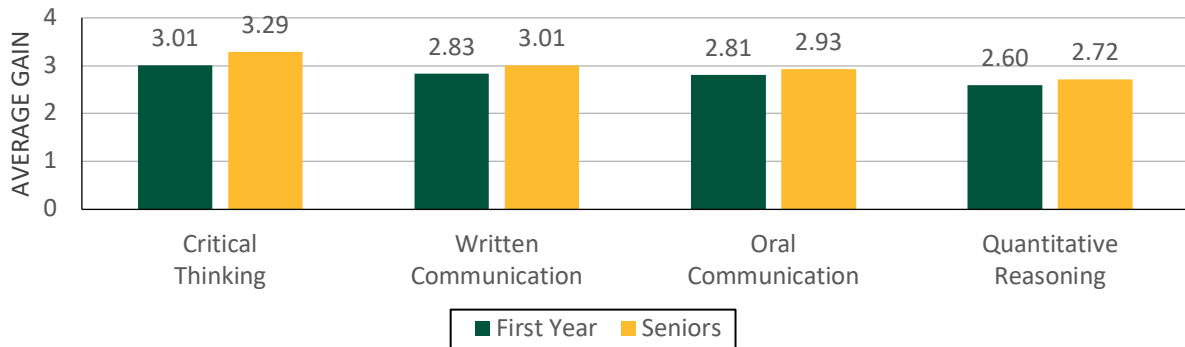
The figures below depict first year to senior comparisons by year.



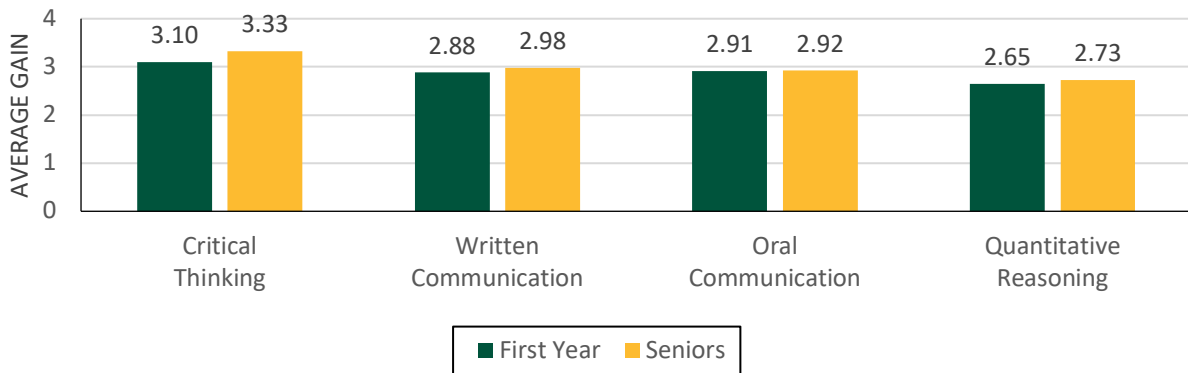
2017

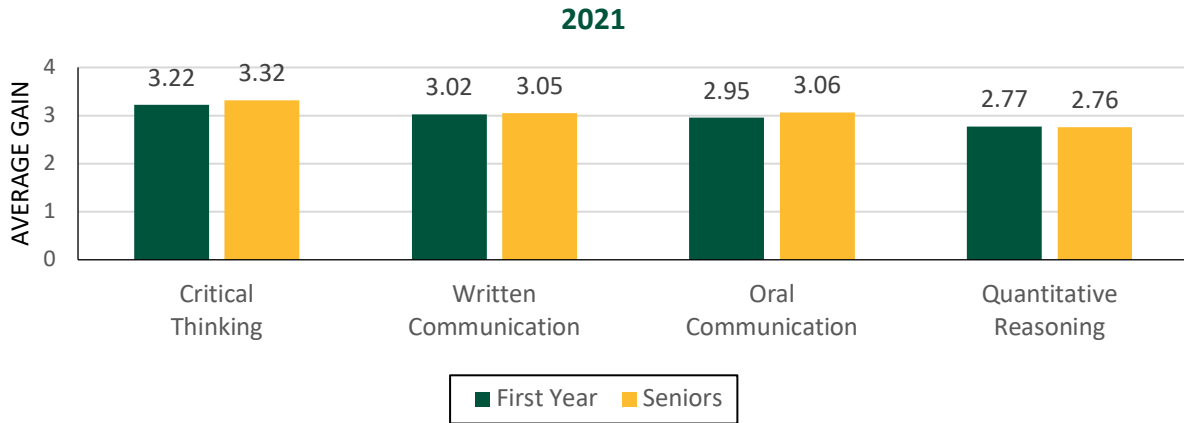


2018



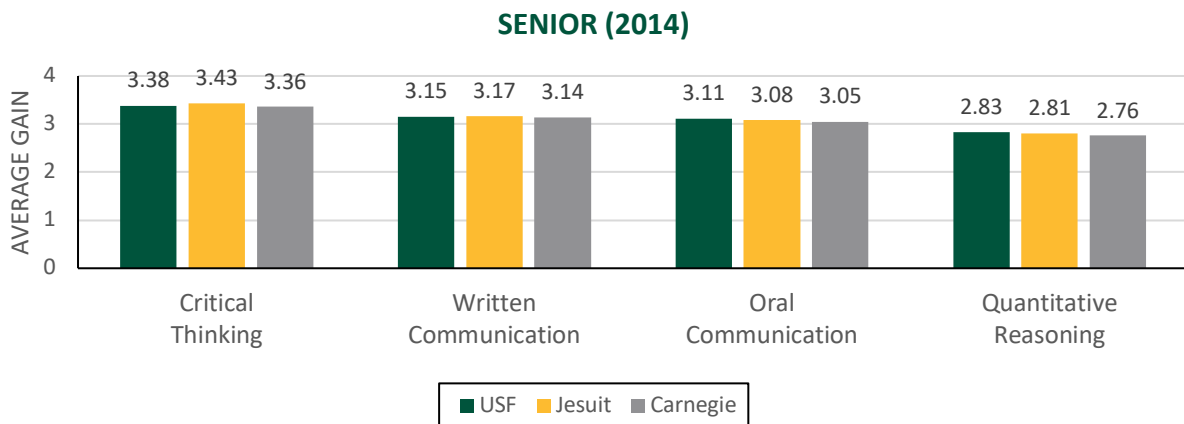
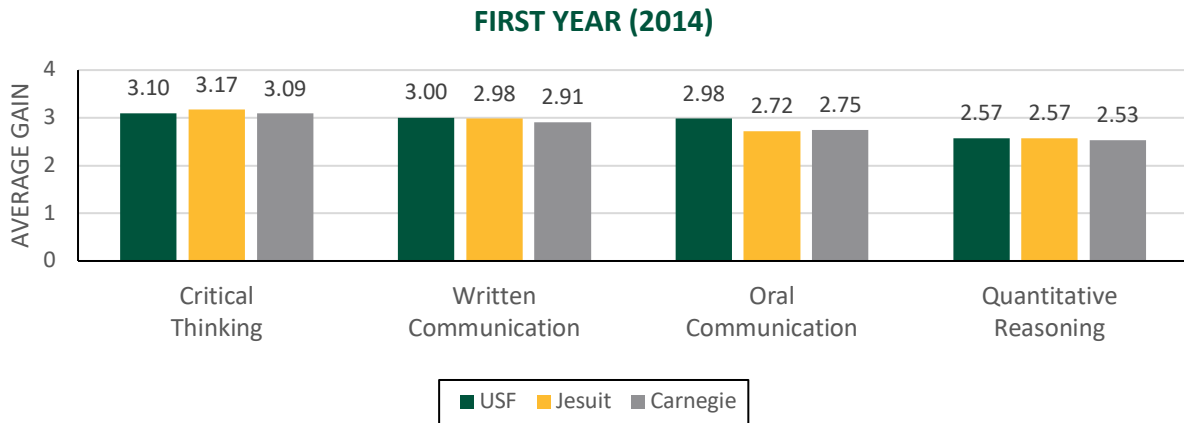
2020



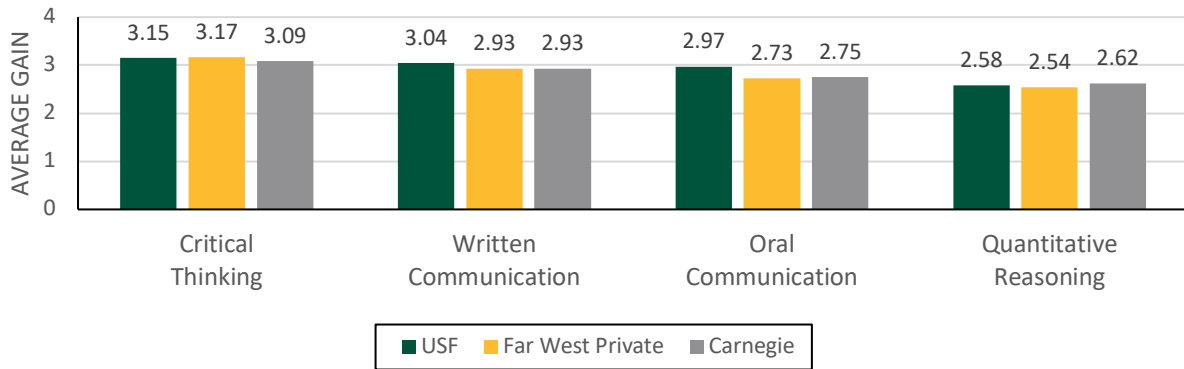


INSTITUTIONAL COMPARISONS

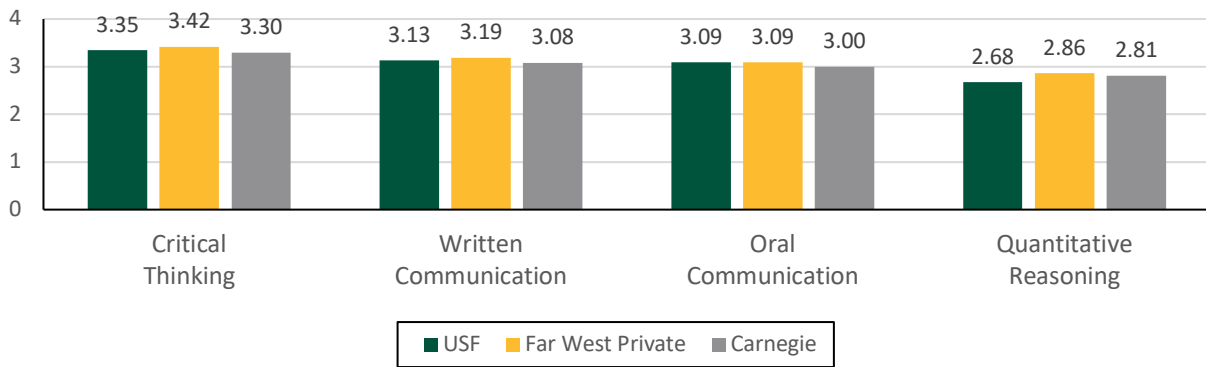
The 2014 and 2016 figures below depict how USF compares to other Jesuit schools and similar Carnegie class institutions. The 2015 figures below depict how USF compares to Far West private institutions and similar Carnegie class institutions. The 2017 – 2021 figures depict how USF compares to other Jesuit schools and peer institutions.



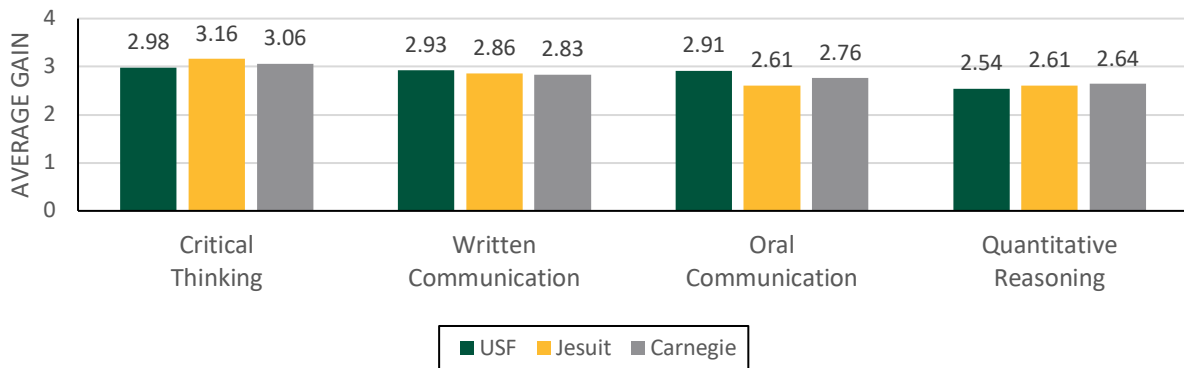
FIRST YEAR (2015)



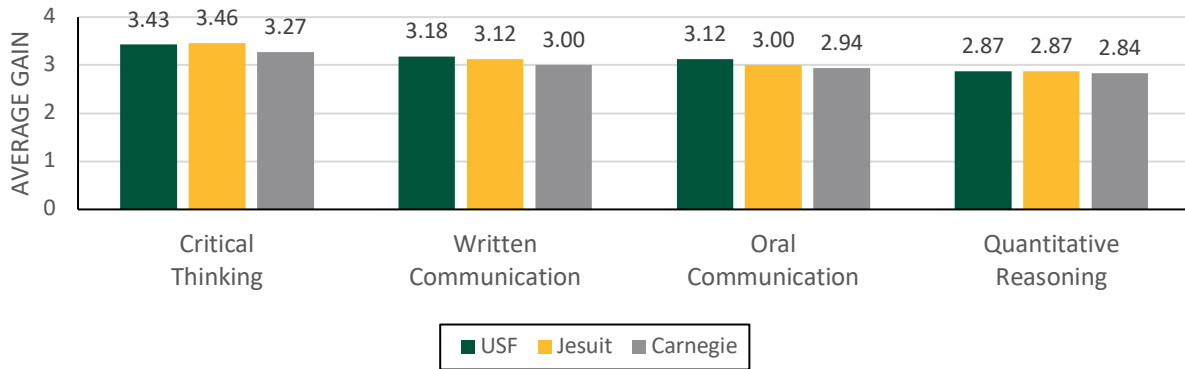
SENIORS (2015)



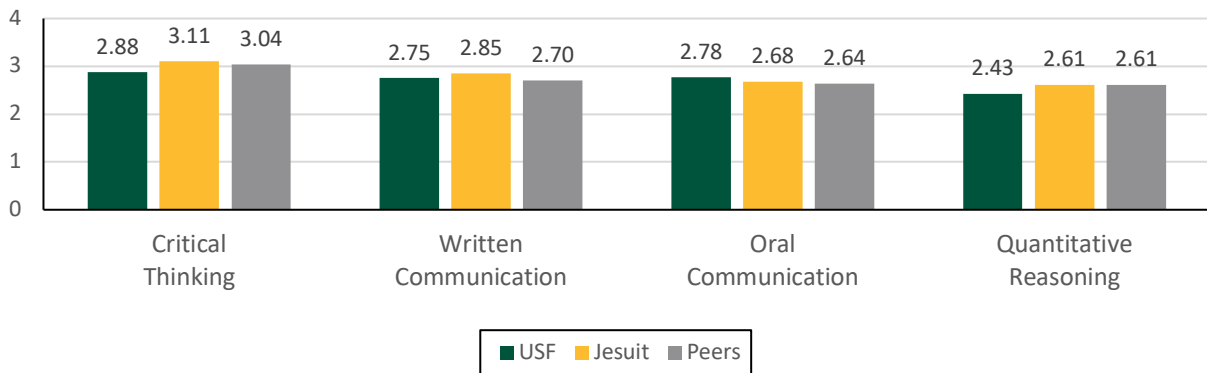
FIRST YEAR (2016)



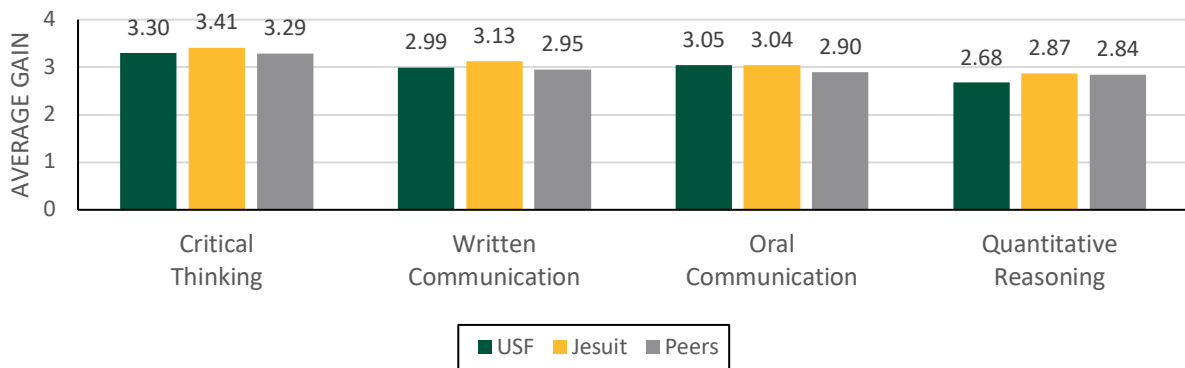
SENIORS (2016)



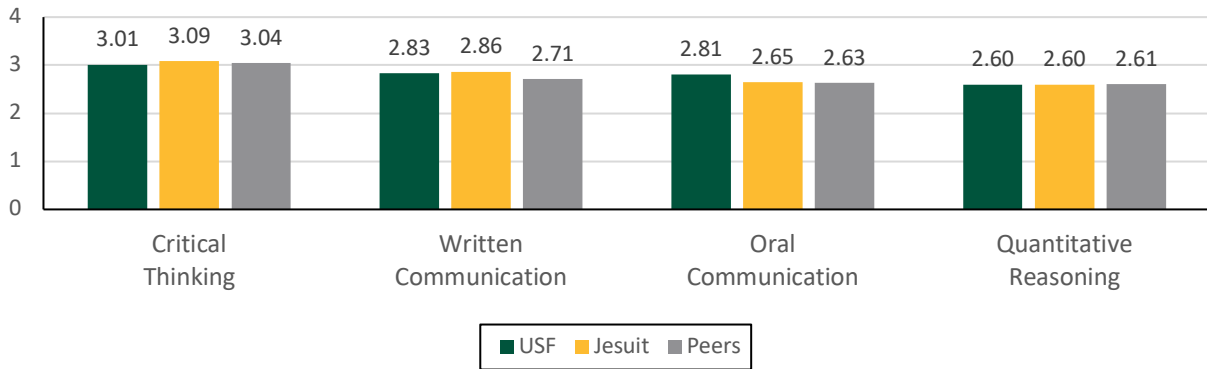
FIRST YEAR (2017)



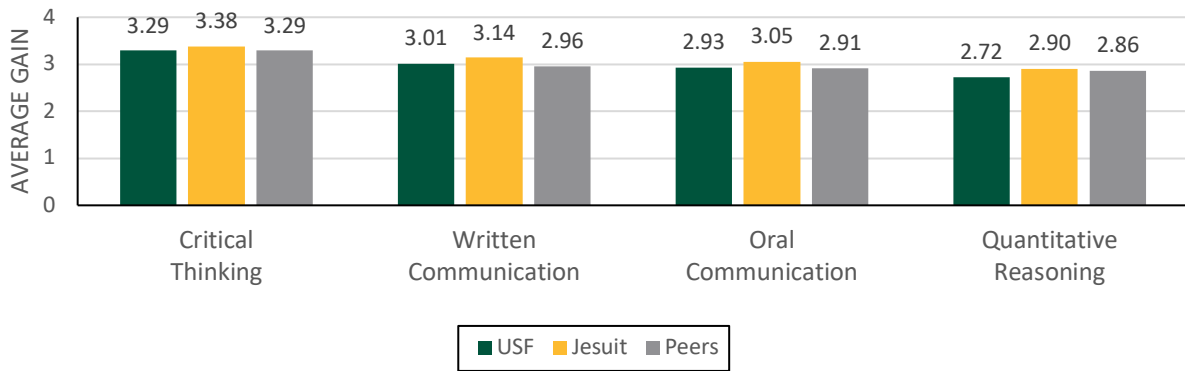
SENIORS (2017)



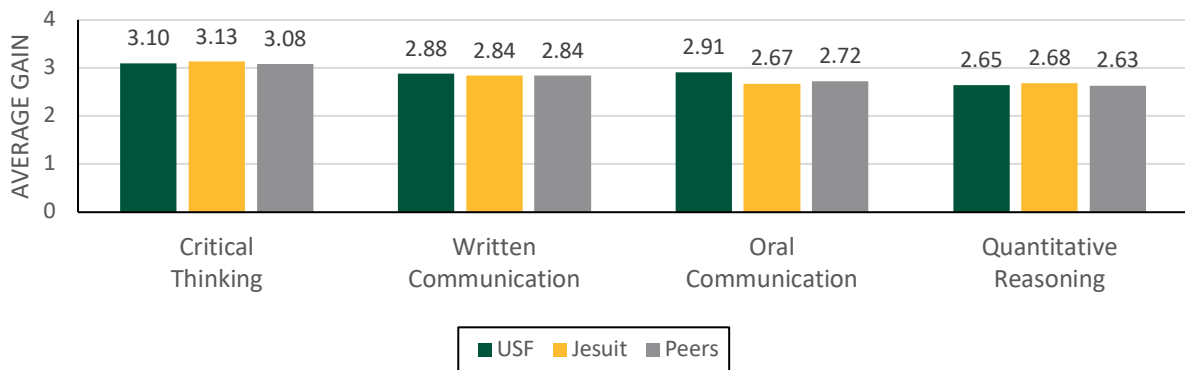
FIRST YEAR (2018)



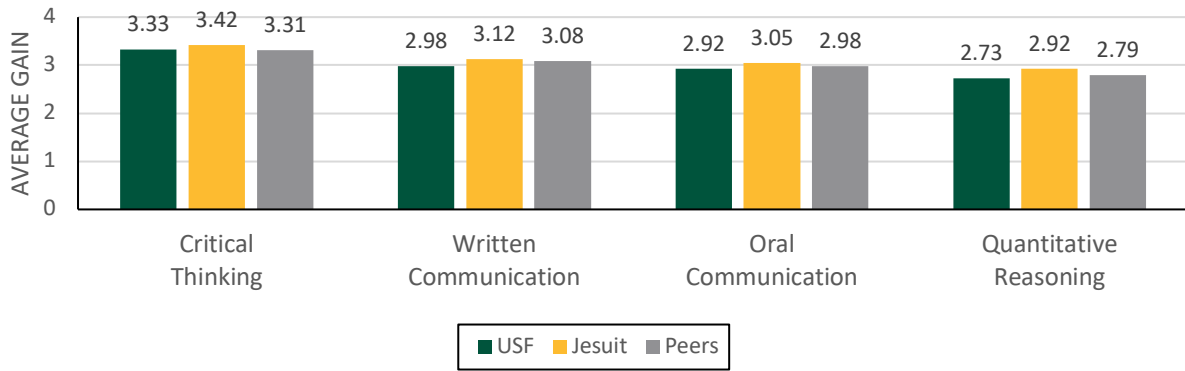
SENIORS (2018)



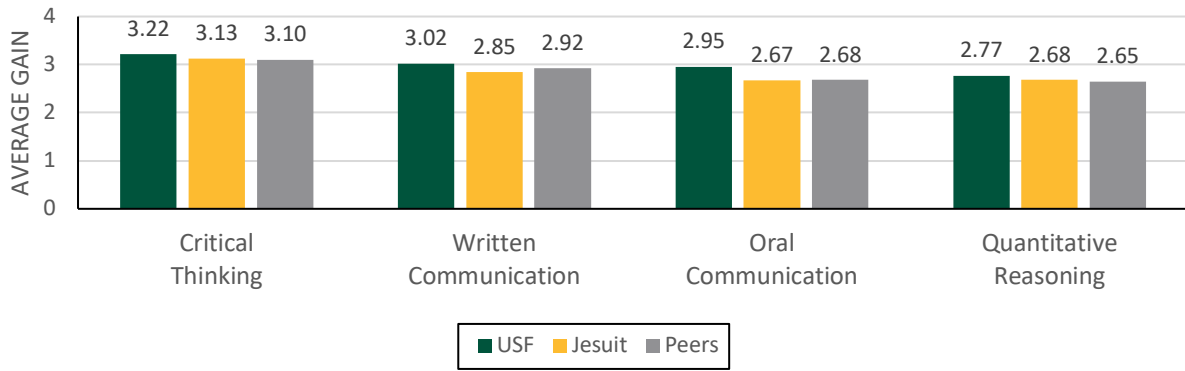
FIRST YEAR (2020)



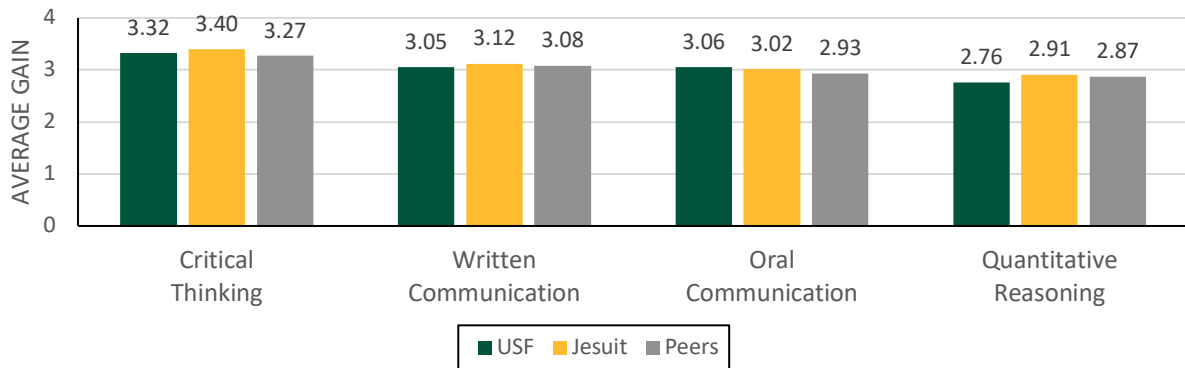
SENIORS (2020)



FIRST YEAR (2021)



SENIORS (2021)



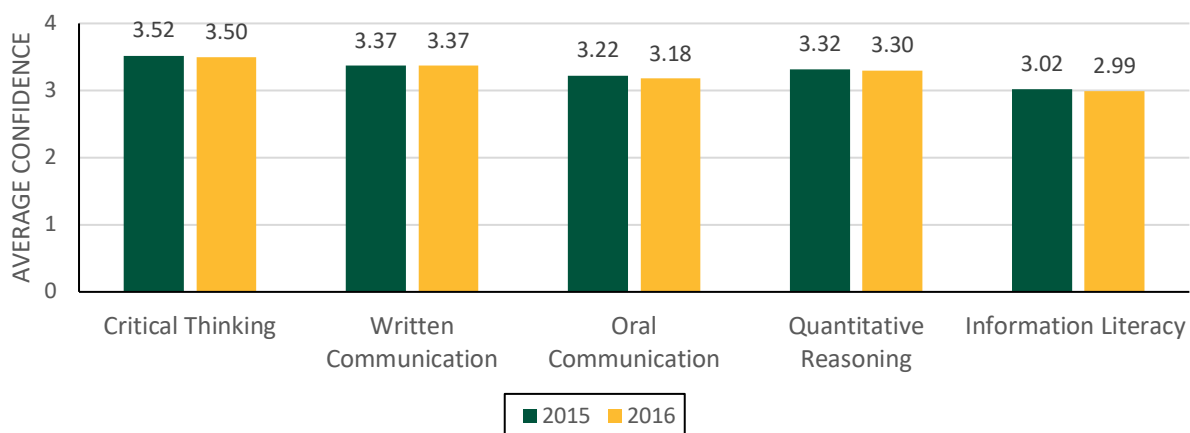
CONFIDENCE IN SKILLS AND ABILITIES

In 2015 and 2016, USF participated in the First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions topical module. USF did not participate in this module in any other years. Seniors responded to “How much confidence do you have in your ability to complete tasks requiring the following skills and abilities?” on a 4-pt. scale (1 = *Very little*, 4 = *Very much*). Six items were used to measure the five core graduation competencies. The competency appears in bold with the corresponding questionnaire item below:

1. **Critical thinking:** a) Critical thinking and analysis of arguments, and b) Information and creative thinking and problem solving¹
2. **Oral communication:** Persuasive speaking
3. **Quantitative reasoning:** Research skills
4. **Written communication:** Clear writing
5. **Information literacy:** Technological skills

YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISONS

The figure below depicts how much confidence seniors, on average, reported they had in their skills and abilities relative to the five competencies for 2015 and 2016. First year students were not administered these items.



¹ The average confidence level in critical thinking is the average of both “critical thinking and analysis of arguments” and “information and creative thinking and problem solving” combined.

INSTITUTIONAL COMPARISONS

The figures below depict how USF seniors compare to other institutions that participated in the First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions topical module in 2015 and 2016.

