

End-of-Program Review Workshop June 2012
Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum 2006-11
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Almost all Evergreen programs are including critical thinking, and the majority (>75%) are incorporating it at the extensive level. There was some difference in the presence of specific modes of critical thinking across the curriculum but the survey as it stands does not allow us to draw strong conclusions from these data. There appears to have been some confusion regarding the definitions of different modes of critical thinking, based on faculty responses. In addition, the fact that there was no way to indicate the extent of engagement with each mode of critical thinking makes it difficult to identify areas for improvement.

The majority (80%) of Evergreen programs in 2006-11 included 4 or more of the 6 modes of critical thinking (analysis, synthesis, judgment/critique, argument, problem-solving, diverse perspectives). Almost all programs incorporated analysis (94%), synthesis (90%), and argument (84%) in program content. However, across Evergreen's curriculum there appeared to be less of an emphasis on judgment/critique and diverse perspectives, which were only incorporated in 77% and 75% of programs respectively. Most notably, problem solving was only incorporated in 58% of Evergreen programs. It is interesting that faculty's emphases on certain modes of critical thinking are consistent with the 2010 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) wherein freshman and senior Evergreen students' responses showed that their frequency of critical thinking via analyzing, synthesizing, and making judgments (evaluating) in course-work was above the national average. In the same NSSE 2010 survey, Evergreen students' responses showed that their frequency of "Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations" was only meeting the national average, and it is possible that this reflects the faculty's lower emphasis on problem-solving in the curriculum.

In future surveys, it might be helpful to elucidate the specific aspects (moderately or extensively) of critical thinking that are being incorporated in Evergreen programs. It could be particularly useful/important to understand which of the individual modes of critical thinking are being incorporated at moderate/extensive levels (as opposed to "just a little") in order to produce a more nuanced and informative data set. We also noticed that programs with apparently similar content sometimes yielded different faculty responses to the survey questions. It is possible that changes in the descriptions of the different modes of critical thinking might allow for more uniform responses to the survey, which again would improve this data set.