

Faculty Senate Assessment Council

Year-End Report FY25-26

Members: Heejung An (chair), Cara Berg (chair), Hannah (Chin) Wong, Sharon Puchalski, Jenny Nesenjuk, Sandy Hill (Fall 2025)

Ex Officio Members: David Ferrier, Arnold Lewis, Jyoti Champanerkar, Bahar Ashnai, Sue Gerber

Charges

Standing charges:

1. In collaboration with the Faculty Senate, work on specialized assessment projects as directed by campus needs, Senate initiatives, or other events (i.e., surveys, focus groups).
2. Disseminate results of assessment related projects to the larger university community.
3. Work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the University Assessment Committee (UAC) to determine how the Council can inform and support their assessment efforts.

Priority charges:

1. Using the collected data from the faculty and student memorization surveys, continue exploring why there is a large gap between faculty and students in perceptions of the need for memorization in classes. What factors (type of course, class size, etc.) impact this and how can it be addressed?
2. Collaborate with Sandy Hill and the University Assessment Council on the requisite early preparation for the Middle States Review in 2028/29.
3. Work with the Faculty Senate on assessment-related issues.

Addressing the Charges

Priority Charge 1,3/Standing Charge 1, 2

Members of the council analyzed the survey data and presented at the 2025 What Works Conference. The chairs prepared a shorter version to be presented at the Faculty Senate – due to time constraints the presentation was rescheduled to Fall 2026.

Priority Charge 2/Standing Charge 3

The co-chairs serve as members of the University Assessment Committee (UAC). Preliminary discussions were had about potential future roles the Assessment Council can take to assist the work. This will need to be further explored during FY26-27.

Suggested charges for next year:

1. Present the data from the memorization student and faculty survey to the Faculty Senate
2. Work with the Faculty Senate on assessment-related issues
3. Work with the University Assessment Committee in preparation for Middle States

Student and Faculty Perceptions of the Need for Memorization in Coursework



The Senate Assessment Council

<https://wpunj.zoom.us/j/87892609188>

December 15, 2025

Senate Assessment Council Members (2025-2026)

- Hannah (Chin) Wong, CCOB Rep
- Heejung An*, COE Rep
- Sharon Puchalski, COSH Rep
- Cara Berg*, Library Rep
- Jenny Nesenjuk, Professional Staff Rep
- Sandra Hill, Admin Rep

Thanks to Ting-Han Chang!

Ex Officio Members:

- David Ferrier, COE, Assessment Coordinator
- Arnold Lewis, COAHSS, Assessment Coordinator
- Jyoti Champanerkar, COSH, Assessment Coordinator
- Bahar Ashnai, CCOB, Assessment Coordinator
- Sue Gerber, AVP, Institutional Effectiveness, Assessment, and Planning

Priority Charge

- Explore why there is a large gap between faculty and students in perceptions of the need for memorization in classes. What factors (type of course, class size, etc.) might impact this and how can it be addressed?

NSSE / FSSE 2023

Question(s)	Concerns/ Opportunities	Related Data
Faculty: How much does the coursework emphasize the memorization? Student: During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized memorization?	Students interpret most of their coursework as emphasizing the low-level skill of memorization. The gap between faculty intent and student perceptions is 50% or more. The reason for the disconnect is not evident in the NSSE data. Additional research is required. The research and recommendations of the Inclusive Teaching Task Force may be relevant.	First-year students: 76% Lower-division faculty: 24% Seniors: 67% Upper-division faculty: 17%

Students: N = 832

* By year of the study: first year (334); seniors (498)

* By college: COSH (167); COAHSS (166); CCOB (61); COE (49); Undecided (44); Missing (345)

Faculty: N = 76

* By college COSH (31); COAHSS (21); CCOB (8); COE (5); Missing (11)

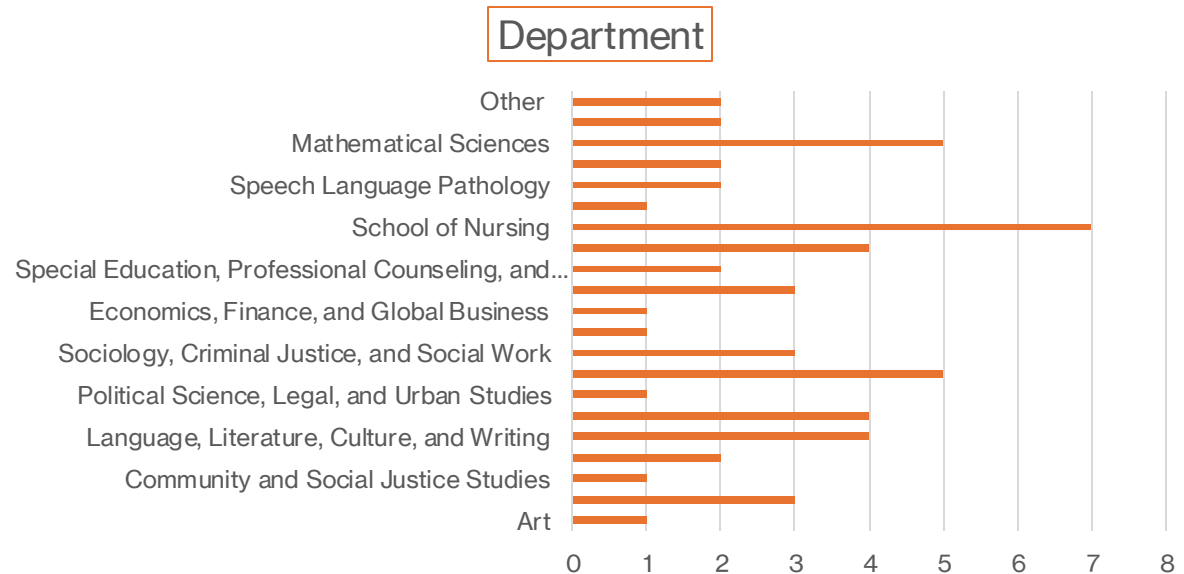
Surveys

- Faculty: <https://tinyurl.com/y7dnhts5>
N = 56
- Students: <https://tinyurl.com/4ryens2f>
N = 521 (404)

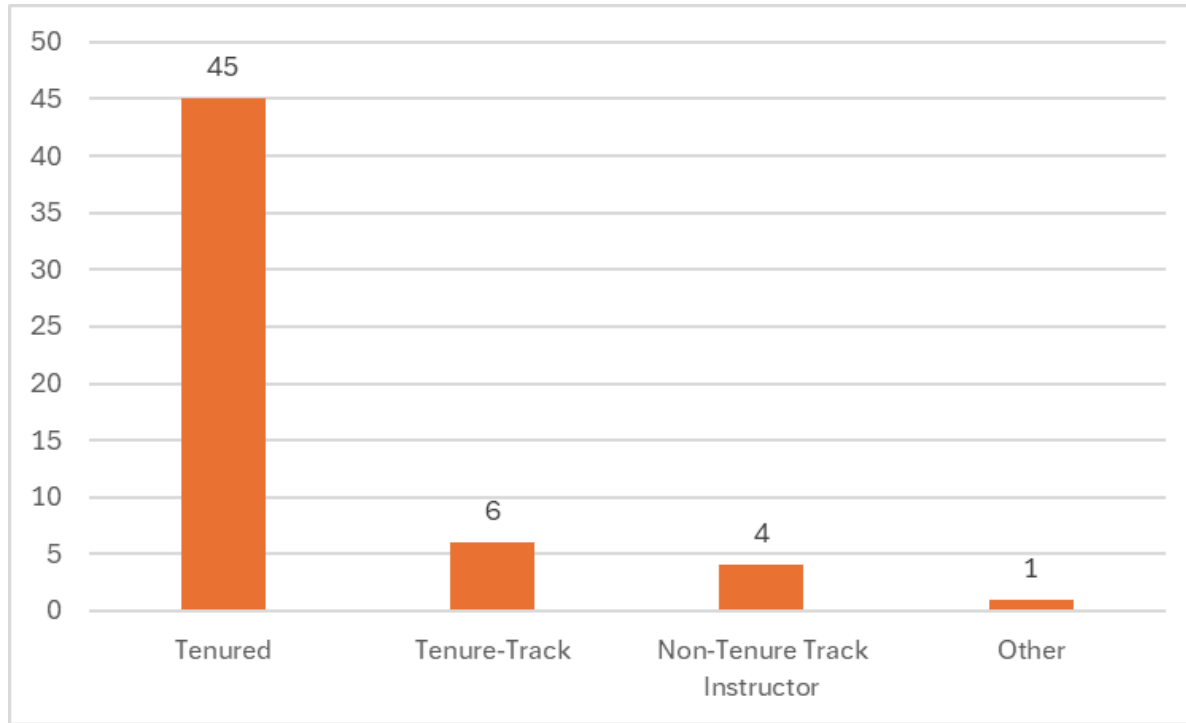
Faculty Survey Results

Q1–Q2. Faculty Respondents by College and Department (N = 56)

College	Frequency
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences	24
College of Science and Health	19
College of Education	7
Cotsakos College of Business	6



Q3. Faculty tenure status



Majority of respondents are tenured faculty

Q4. What levels of courses do you teach?



Themes from open-ended questions

Questions	Themes	Sub-themes	Representative Quotes
Q5. How do you define memorization in relation to your courses?	Recalling information	Recalling information from memory/without external sources	"Memorization means storing information for later use in practice. It is a process used to be able to do the right thing in a real-life situation based on previous knowledge."
	Retaining information for later use	Discipline-specific answers	"When learning languages, memorization is key, especially for beginners just acquiring basic vocabulary and grammatical structures."
Q7. Based on your definition of memorization, do you believe it is necessary for students to memorize certain content in your courses? Why or why not? 6/11/2026	Most answered yes (n=40)	Relation to future career Relation to overall learning/additional coursework	"Yes, certain content must be retained to eventually pass licensing exams but more importantly to adequately do their job in their field of study." "No. They have to learn concepts, and use the right terminology? It is a real stretch to consider learning the use of some words as 'memorization'."

Themes from open-ended questions

	Yes/No	Themes	Representative Quotes
Q8. In your courses, have students provided positive or negative feedback, or comments, suggesting that your teaching emphasizes memorization? If so, please share specific examples.	Most answered no or n/a (n=30)	n/a	"This is not something students explicitly comment on in my course evaluations. But there are students who say there is too much content/material, not enough content/material, and everywhere in between. I assume these later comments means they were not able to memorize or understand much of what was taught, found it too easy to memorize and understand what was taught, or thought it was a relatively fair and useful amount material."
Q10. What strategies, if any, have you used to educate your students on the significance of memorizing certain materials for success in your course?	Teach study techniques during class Highlight the importance of memorization	Provide hands on work for students to learn by doing Have students practice what needs to be memorized	"Provide additional materials to be used outside of the classroom." "Use a variety to memorization methods: gamification, anagrams, relating to students' experiences." "Relate information to students' future careers."

Overall themes based on college/dept

College	Department	Dominant Themes
Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences	Language, Literature, Culture, and Writing	Vocabulary, repetition, “knowing by heart,” essential for language acquisition
	Music	Memorizing pieces, theory, historical facts; “know by heart” for performance
	Psychology	Recall of terms, concepts; foundation for applied thinking
Science and Health	Nursing	Quick recall for patient safety; lab values, protocols
	Mathematical Sciences	Automaticity, formulas; memorization as prep for problem-solving
	Biology	Extensive memorization for complex systems; builds on prior knowledge
Education	Teacher Education	Low-level cognitive tasks; retrieval practice; emphasis on application
Business	Accounting and Law	Memorization of procedures and definitions for problem-solving

Q6. To what extent do you believe memorization is utilized in the following assessments / assignments?

Red: highest mean
Blue: lowest mean

0 = Not at all; 1 = Slightly; 2 = Moderately; 3 = Considerably; 4 = Extensively

College	Multiple choice questions	Open-ended questions	Discussion	Essay	Project	Report	Case Study	Performance	Presentation
Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	2.35	2.13	1.88	1.74	1.64	1.58	1.67	2.44	2.33
Education	1.50	1.57	1.29	1.29	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.00	1.57
Science & Health	2.94	2.53	1.56	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.80	2.29	1.77
Business	2.60	1.60	0.80	0.60	0.80	0.40	0.40	1.00	1.80
Mean Across All Colleges	2.35	1.96	1.38	1.24	1.21	1.18	1.25	1.68	1.87

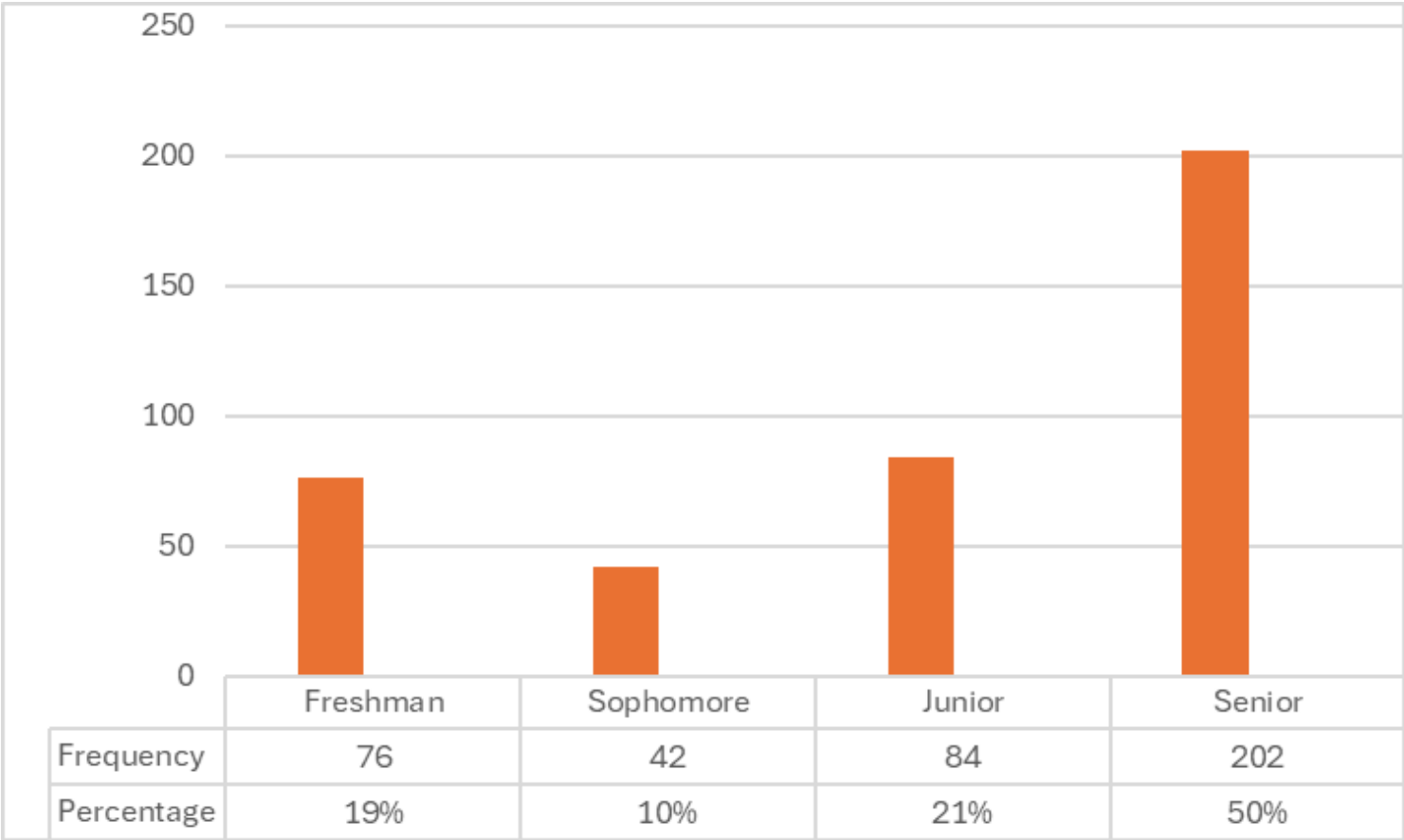
Student Survey Results

Q1. What is your major? If you are a double major, please select both (N = 521)

College	Frequency	Percentage
Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences	206	39.5%
Science and Health	152	29.2%
Cotsakos College of Business	83	15.9%
College of Education	59	11.3%
Other	14	2.7%
Adult and Professional Studies	7	1.3%

[By Major](#)

Q2. What is your academic year? (N = 404)



Q4.To what extent do you believe your professors have emphasized memorization in your course Assessments/assignments? (N = 404)

Red: highest mean
Blue: lowest mean

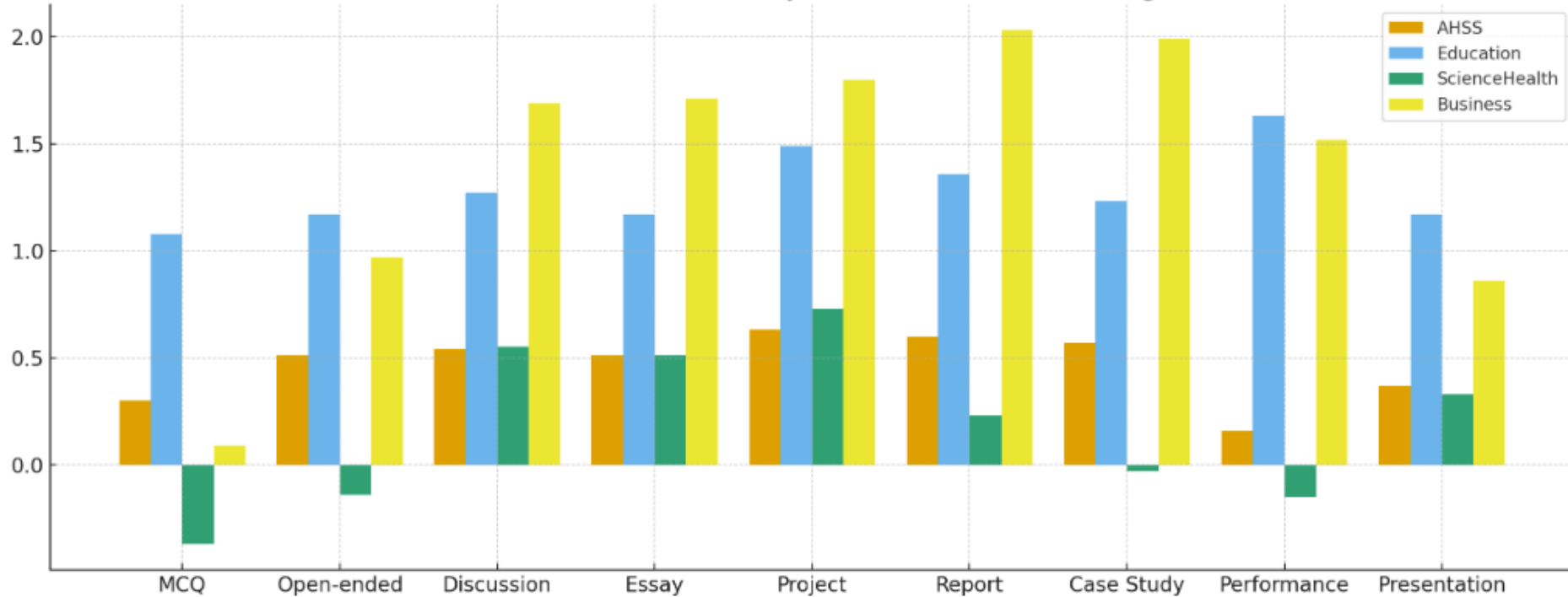
0 = Not at all; 1 = Slightly; 2 = Moderately; 3 = Considerably; 4 = Extensively

College	Multiple choice questions	Open-ended questions	Discussion	Essay	Project	Report	Case Study	Performance	Presentation
Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	2.65	2.64	2.42	2.25	2.27	2.18	2.24	2.60	2.70
Education	2.58	2.74	2.56	2.46	2.63	2.50	2.37	2.63	2.74
Science & Health	2.57	2.39	2.11	1.84	1.98	1.82	1.77	2.14	2.10
Business	2.69	2.57	2.49	2.31	2.60	2.43	2.39	2.52	2.66
Mean Across All Colleges	2.62	2.59	2.40	2.22	2.37	2.23	2.19	2.47	2.55

<https://tinyurl.com/5xzavzb3>

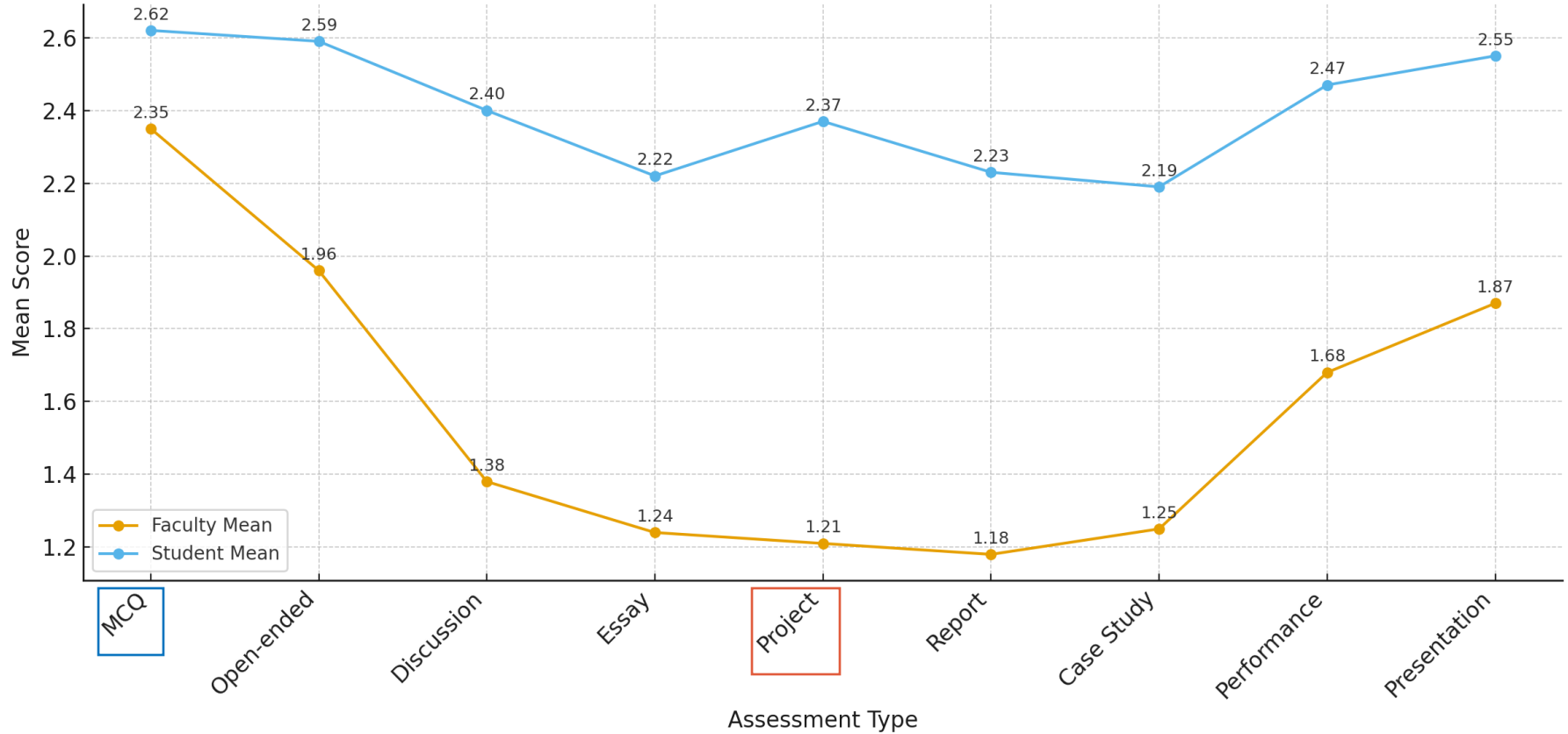
(This table includes the N for reference, since the number of responses varies across the data)

Combined Student-Faculty Differences Across Colleges



- Education and Business show the largest overall discrepancies.
- Students consistently perceived greater emphasis on memorization in Discussions, Essays, Reports, Projects, and Presentations.
- Faculty in Science & Health perceived higher levels of memorization use in MCQ, Open-Ended Q, and Case Study, and Performance.

Faculty vs Student Mean Scores Across Assessment Types



The largest gaps are in:
Project (+1.16), Report (+1.05), Discussion (+1.02)

The smallest gap:
Multiple choice (+0.27)

Q3. Briefly, in your own words, how do you define memorization in relation to your classwork? (N = 404)

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Memorization as remembering or recalling information (n = 178)	1a. Remembering course related content, such as terms, formulas, and rules (n =163) 1b. Remembering tasks/due dates related to the course (n = 15)
Theme 2: Interplay of memorization and understanding (n = 74)	2a. Distinguishing memorization from understanding (n = 24) 2b. Memorization through understanding (n = 8) 2c. Memorization as a foundation for understanding (n = 22) 2d. Equating Memorization and Understanding (n=20)
Theme 3: Memorization for practical use (n =136)	3a. Memorization for real-world and career application (n = 37) 3b. Memorization to support course performance (n = 99)

Q3. Briefly, in your own words, how do you define memorization in relation to your classwork?

Themes	Sub-themes	Representative Quotes
Theme 1: Memorization as Remembering or Recalling Information (n = 178)	1a. Remembering Course Related Content (e.g., Terms, Formulas, and Rules) (n = 163)	“To not forget something so you never have to look it up. It is important to remember certain steps, rules, or facts to complete your work efficiently and expand your knowledge.” “To me, memorization means learning information like definitions, formulas or steps for solving problems so I can recall them when needed, especially for quizzes or exams. In my stats class, I use memorization a lot to remember things like how to calculate the standard deviation or what different symbols mean, even if I don’t fully understand everything yet.”
	1b. Remembering Tasks/Due Dates Related to the Course (n = 15)	"Memorization can be to remember tasks for homework." "I define memorization as remembering all the days of the week when certain classes have work due."

Q3. Briefly, in your own words, how do you define memorization in relation to your classwork?

Themes	Sub-themes	Representative Quotes
Theme 2: Interplay of Memorization and Understanding (n = 74)	2a. Distinguishing Memorization from Understanding (n = 24)	"Memorization in relation to classwork means learning and remembering information so you can recall it later, like for a test or assignment. It's about storing facts, terms, or steps in your mind without necessarily fully understanding how or why they work." "Memorization does not imply comprehension."
	2b. Memorization Through Understanding (n = 8)	"I try to understand things first, and that helps me memorize better. When I understand the topic, I don't need to just repeat it. It stays in my memory easier." "I try to focus on understanding first, and memorization usually comes naturally from that. In my computer science classes, I've noticed memorization works up to a point—until you're faced with something that's just a little different, and then real understanding matters more. I mostly memorize rules, definitions, and things that are easy to forget. It's more of a short-term tool that helps when learning something new, but eventually I aim to truly understand the material."
	2c. Memorization as a Foundation for Understanding (n = 22)	"Memorization in relation to classwork is the process of intentionally committing facts, concepts, or procedures to memory so they can be recalled when needed, like during tests or discussions. It helps build a foundation for deeper understanding, but it's not the same as truly learning or applying the information." "Memorization is necessary for learning we take in the information and incorporate it where it needs to be in order for to understand it in totality."
	2d. Equating Memorization and Understanding (n = 20)	"A certain amount of memorization is required but with understanding comes the ability to memorize, so they are synonymous." "Memorization is the understanding of whatever topic it may be."

Q3. Briefly, in your own words, how do you define memorization in relation to your classwork?

Themes	Sub-themes	Representative Quotes
Theme 3: Memorization for Practical Use (n =136)	3a. Memorization for Real-world and Career Application (n = 37)	“I definitely remember the things that I will need for future success.” “I remember key concepts so I can use them later in clinical or real-world situations.” “I can relate to the majority of my classwork because most of it pertains to what I am currently doing in my career.”
	3b. Memorization to Support Course Performance (n = 99)	“Being able to reflect on and interpret the topics and apply what was learned in the homework or discussion board.” “I define memorization in relation to my classwork as loading key facts into my brain so I can quickly go back and remember them for discussions or test.”

Additional Findings

Variation in Memorization by Major:

"There is not a lot of memorization in my major." [art]

"The majority of **biology** classes are memorization."

"I'm taking mostly **studio** classes, so I don't need to memorize much information"

Memorization Strategies:

"I try to **write things down/take notes** as this is the most efficient way for me to memorize facts."

"Memorization plays a huge role in my life. I **create flashcards for each class**. This helps me to study for quizzes and tests."

"It is going back and **rereading and even read out loud words**."

"I **read and read the book and listen to the video** to get the material to stick in my head."

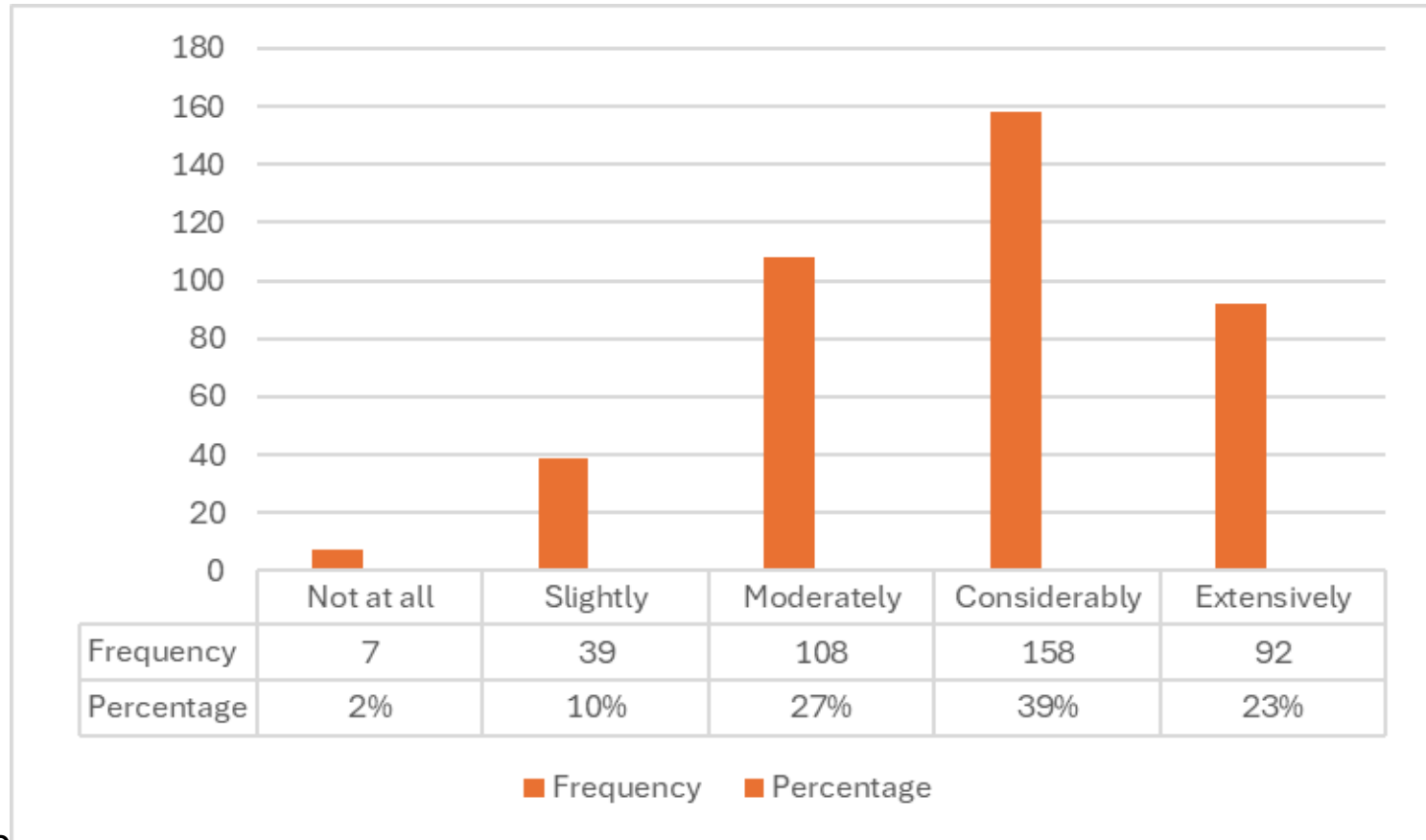
College and Year of Study with the Highest Number of Responses by Sub-Theme

<https://tinyurl.com/ppan5jun>

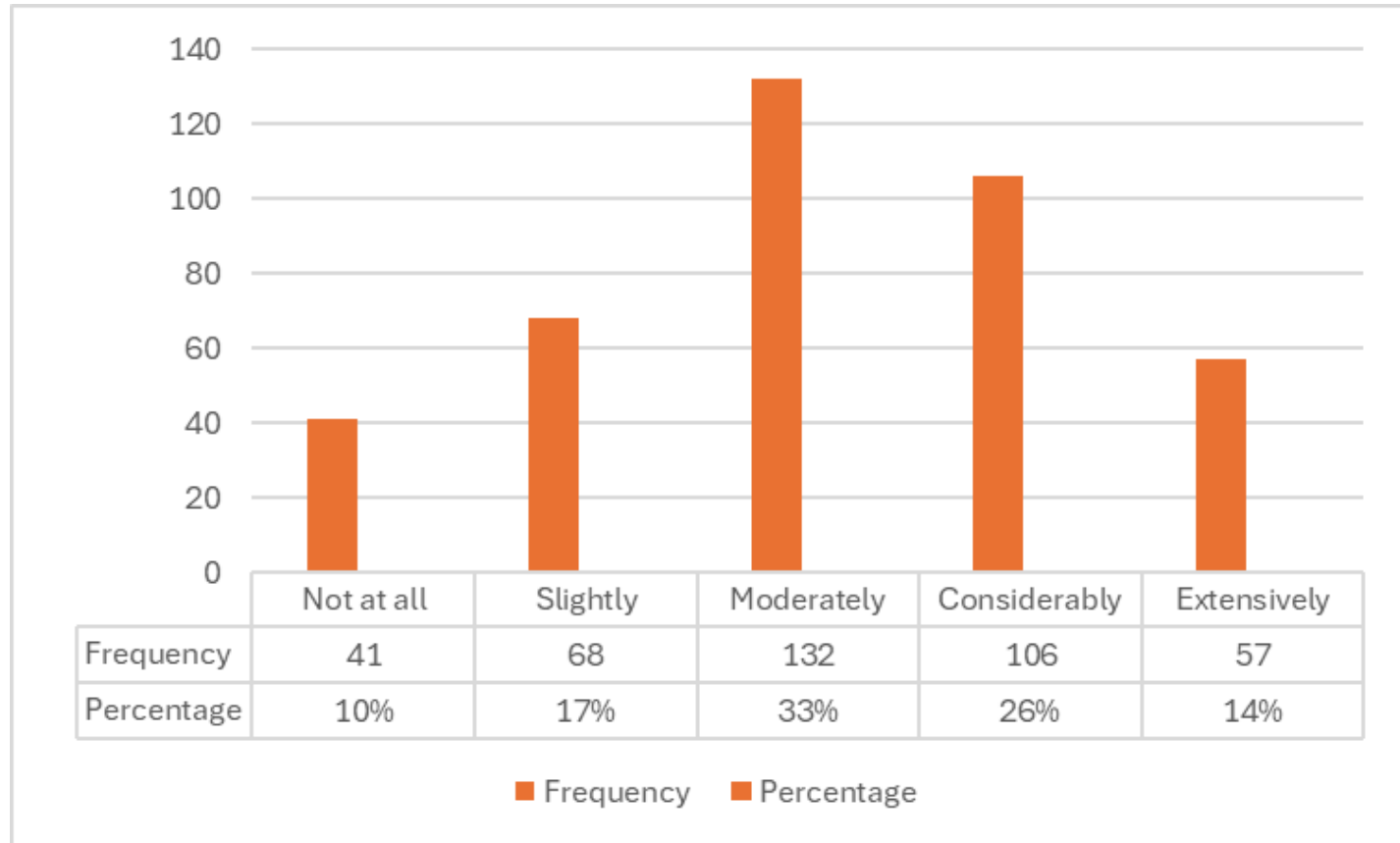
Take-aways:

- Across all colleges, senior students most frequently perceived memorization as "*Theme 1a: Remembering course-related content, such as terms, formulas, and rules.*"
- Most responses for "*Theme 1b: Remembering tasks and due dates related to the course*" were from freshman students."
- Across all colleges, senior students most frequently perceived memorization as "*Theme 3b: Memorization to support course performance.*"

Q5. Do you believe it's necessary to memorize certain content in your coursework? (N = 404)



Q6. How much have your instructors explained to you the significance of memorizing certain components of the course materials in order for you to be successful in the course? (N = 404)



Q7. Is there anything else you would like to share about the role of memorization in teaching and learning at William Paterson University? (N = 241)

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Different Perceived role (n = 56)	1a. Useful Role (n=25) 1b. Limited Role (n=31)
Theme 2: Wide Variation Among Professors, Courses, Majors, and Modalities (n = 39)	2a. Variation Across Professors (n=19) 2b. Variation Across Majors (n=16) 2c. Variation Across Modalities (n=4)
Theme 3: WPU's Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Conceptual Understanding Over Memorization (n=13)	
Theme 4: Challenges with Memorization: Overload and Pace (n = 8)	
Theme 5: Suggestions for How Faculty Could Effectively Support Memorization in Learning (n = 7)	5a. Need for Clear Guidance and Memorization-Supportive Instructional Strategies (n=5) 5b. Consideration of Equity and Individual Differences in Memorization Expectations (n=2)

Themes	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes
Theme 1. Different Perceived Role of Memorization (n=56)	1a. Useful Role (n=25)	"Memorization plays an important role in learning at WPU by helping students retain key concepts, definitions, and foundational knowledge needed for deeper understanding." "It's important not just to pass the class but also for future, higher classes." "In terms of overall learning, you need to be able to memorize terms and standards given and in terms of the field, there are a considerable amount of rules and policies for each individual school to memorize and follow."
	1b. Limited Role (n=31)	"I haven't felt much of a focus on memorization. It seems that my courses focus on primary information and problem solving than pressure on memorization. I feel in 2025 with more access to resources, problem solving and critical thinking are more applicable in everyday life and work." "Memorization is important and has its place, but conceptual understanding is more important in my perspective."

Themes	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes
Theme 2. Wide Variation Among Professors, Courses, Majors, and Modalities (n=39)	2a. Variation Across Professors (n=19)	"Professors often encourage students to go beyond just memorizing to actually connect ideas and use them in real-world or analytical situations." "My professor really ingrains in our class that we need to know the material for not only the class, but to help us understand what we do when we go out into the workforce." "Most of my professors are good at helping us understanding concepts instead of just straight memorization."
	2b. Variation Across Majors (n=16)	"I'm a music major. We often have to memorize music for performances." "Memorization is really ONLY used in my Japanese class as it is a language course (so a lot a memorization will automatically be involved in learning vocabulary, grammar, and alphabet as the Latin alphabet is not used). As for math, the only things I truly memorize are basic formulas, but the emphasis is always put on understanding the methods we learn in that chapter and knowing how to use them. As for public speaking, emphasis is not put on rote memorization but rather memorization of topics that will be discussed and points to make, with occasional help from an outline in order to ensure a smooth presentation." "As an artist, memorization may not be as crucial in coursework aside from art history classes but we still need to remember the components that come into play when creating."
	2c. Variation Across Modalities (n=4)	"For the accelerated online courses, there's so much information being presented within a 7-week period, that there is little time to memorize the material effectively. I believe to commit information to memory repetition is necessary. Focusing on a slightly different topic each week doesn't leave much room for long term retention. But, if classes are structured effectively, courses that follow will often revisit topics covered previously which significantly increases the likelihood of memorizing more of the material." "My online courses rely more heavily on this."

Themes	Representative Quotes
Theme 3. WPU's Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Understanding Over Memorization (n=13)	"At William Paterson University, memorization helps build a foundation, but the focus is also on understanding and applying concepts through active learning, especially in classes like psychology and statistics." "It is a given that in understanding a concept you are memorizing. most of my classes didn't place emphasis on memorizing it was critical thinking and understanding and applying the concepts at hand."
Theme 4. Challenges with Memorization: Overload and Pace (n=8)	"I believe a lot of students struggle with memorization."

Themes	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes
Theme 5. Suggestions for How Faculty Could Effectively Support Memorization in Learning (n=7)	5a. Need for Clear Guidance and Memorization-Supportive Instructional Strategies (n=5)	"There needs to be a module, within the first week of class, that can be effective for ANY class we take at WPU. Many professors I have had did not touch upon this subject, nor addressed how memorization could be impact full in our courses. It is just a known concept when coming to tests, quizzes, papers or projects." "I do wish that it was outlined in courses the things we absolutely need to remember and that would benefit us most in our future careers rather than having to remembering everything you learn and figuring it out on your own what's most important and what's not as relevant." "Introduce more activities that enhance memorization, such as presentations, and prioritize targeted retention of facts or concepts." "I believe professors should recommend sites such as Quizlet to successfully be able to memorize content."
	5b. Consideration of Equity and Individual Differences in in Memorization Expectations (n=2)	"Different people memorize different things different ways and that should presented in the beginning of each course to minimize frustration and failing grades. Sometimes it takes a person weeks to figure it out. Just because one method worked for one course doesn't mean it will work for the next one." "I'm sure the importance of memorizing information is different for every discipline. a neurosurgeon should have a larger internal lexicon and database than a studio artist. I also feel stressing memorization is easier for certain types or mentality. It is not exactly equitable to expect neurotypical learners and neurodivergent ones to perform the same in this regard, but that argument doesn't consider the actual import of memorizing information. I know memorization helps with neuroplasticity. I am not trying to say it has no value. I attest that rote learning and memorization no longer are practical in a world wide flood of info. the sheer volume of functional information we are expected to hold in our heads is already truly nuts."

College and Year of Study with the Highest Number of Responses by Sub-Theme

<https://tinyurl.com/3xtkyv97>

Take-aways:

- Seniors play a dominant role in defining memorization
- COAHSS shows the richest conceptualizations of memorization.
- COE students express the least concern with memorization - Focus is more on application and understanding.

Conclusion

Gap in Perceptions of Memorization: Although faculty and students both agreed that memorization is important for "course performance" and "real-world application," they differed significantly in *how* they understand its role.

1) Different Priorities:

Faculty Perspective

- View memorization in a **unified**, foundational way that supports deeper understanding, critical thinking, and higher-level application.
- See memorization as a base for solving real-world problems and integrating concepts.
- Emphasize moving beyond rote recall.

Student Perspective

- Hold more **diverse** and task-focused interpretations of memorization.
- Connect memorization to immediate academic survival (passing classes/exams, managing workload).
- Often see it as more significant because it is tied to grades and short-term outcomes, not long-term professional growth.

2) Context-Dependent Views:

- Perceptions vary by major, with some areas requiring more factual recall than others.
- Perceptions vary by assessment type.

3) Student Level Differences:

Upper-level students (juniors and seniors) expressed different views about memorization, recognizing when it was necessary and when deeper understanding mattered. However, they still tended to relate memorization strongly to short-term academic performance.

Thank you!