

# Faculty Assessment of Geography Major Presentations Report

University of Wisconsin-Madison

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2009-2010

Geography majors at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are required to give final presentations on group research and outreach projects as part of the completion of Geography 565, the capstone course. In order to assess learning outcomes, we combined faculty evaluations of these presentations, as per our learning outcome assessment plan (originally authored by Prof. Kristopher Olds). In 2009, 9 faculty members completed 77 evaluations for 18 group presentations. In 2010, 7 faculty members completed 54 evaluations for 15 group presentations. We present data as the means of the average score of each presentation, so as to account for differences in numbers of faculty that completed evaluations for each presentation.

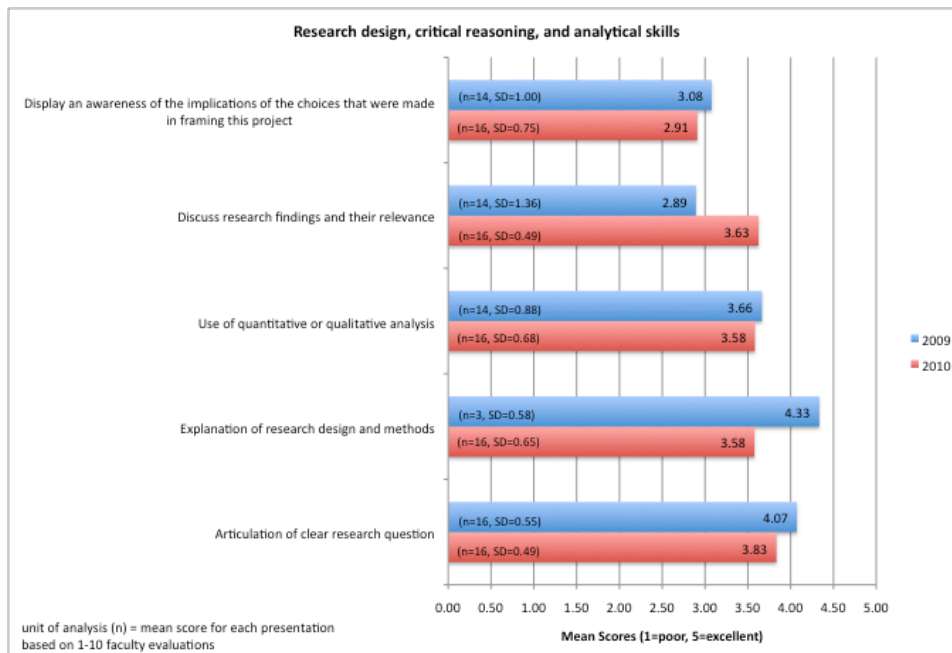
### Subfields represented by presentations

Each presentation typically represented multiple subfields; a natural outcome of the capstone goal of student collaboration across subfields in the discipline. In 2009, 12 presentations were also categorized as “area studies” in addition to the following subfields:

Subfield	2009	2010
Human Geography	12	13
People-Environment	11	8
Physical Geography	6	2
Cartography/GIS	4	8

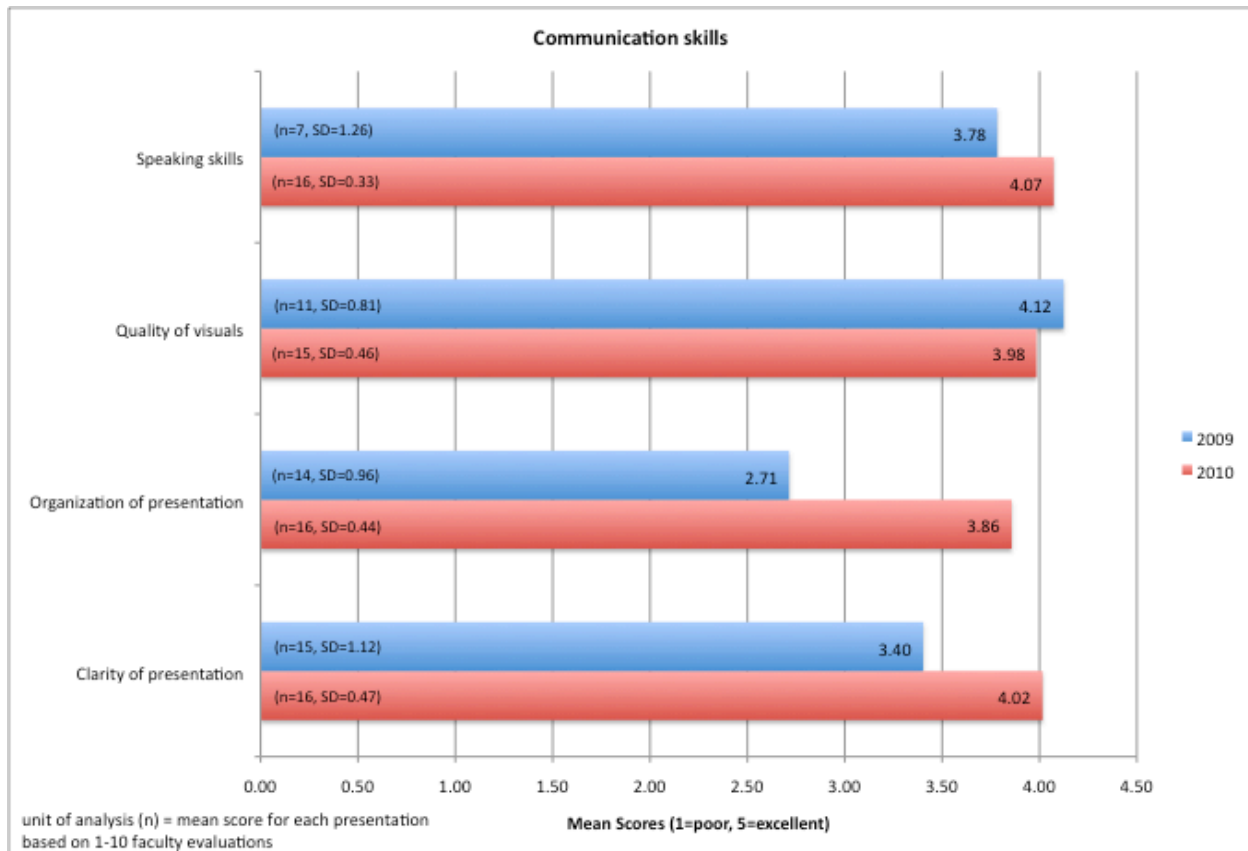
### Research design, critical reasoning, and analytical skills

Evaluations ranked general qualities of the presentations on a score of 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good), and 5 (excellent). The overall average for this category in 2009 was 3.61 and in 2010 was 3.51. Generally faculty ranked presentations as good to very good. The first question (“Display an awareness...”) showed greatest variability within and between years, and the lowest overall score.



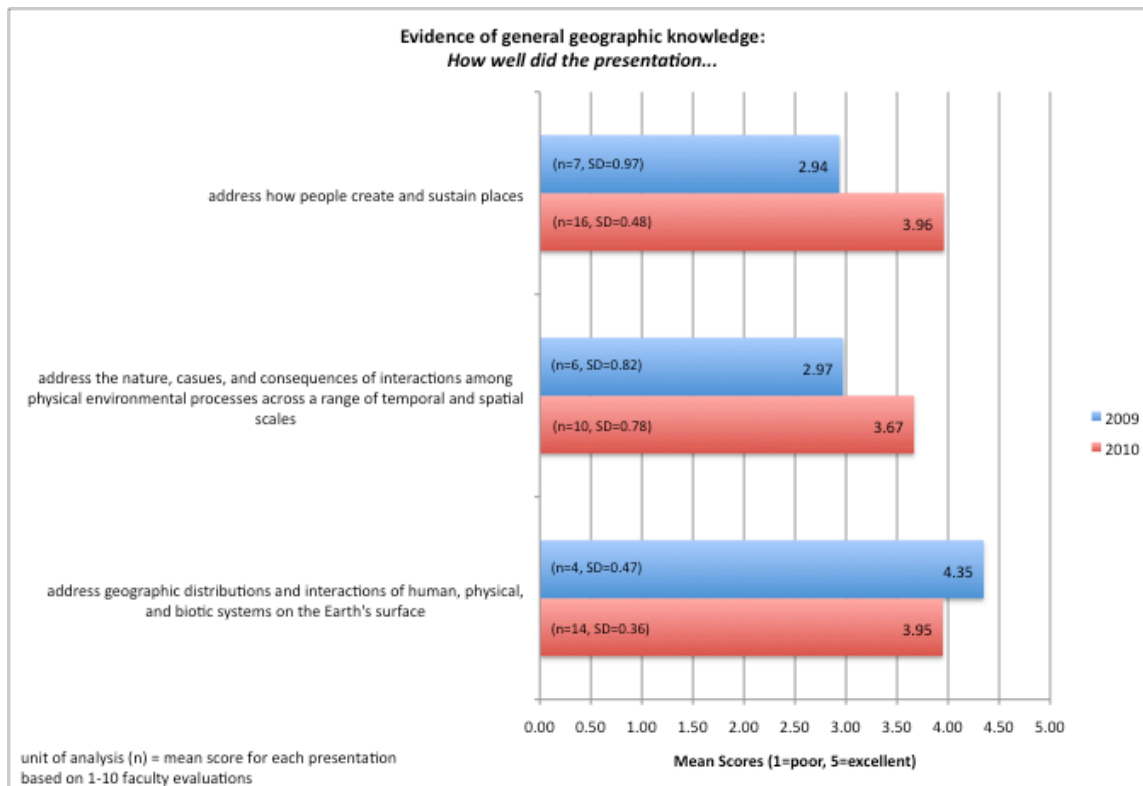
## Communication skills

Faculty rated the communication skills of the presenters on a score of 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good), and 5 (excellent). The overall average for this category in 2009 was 3.51 and in 2010 was 3.98 (higher than scores for previous questions on research design). These communication skills scores roughly match self-rankings by students in exit surveys (see Student Exit Survey Report for details). Students ranked their improvement in communication skills as an average of 3.56 in 2009 and 3.29 in 2010 on the same scale.



## Evidence of geographic knowledge

Faculty also rated each presentation on how well it demonstrated evidence of various aspect of geographic knowledge. For general geographic knowledge the same scale of 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good), and 5 (excellent) was used. The overall average for this category was 3.42 in 2009 and 3.86 in 2010. This was also comparable with students' ratings of their perceived increase in geographic knowledge, although students' ratings were a little higher: 3.92 in 2009 and 3.96 in 2010 (see Student Exit Survey Report for details).



Faculty also evaluated how well each presentation demonstrated evidence of specific geographic knowledge within each subfield. Evaluations for these categories used a scale of 1 (a little), 2 (somewhat), 3 (quite a bit), and 4 (a lot). These also can be compared to averages of students' perceived knowledge (see Student Exit Survey Report for details). For knowledge regarding People-Environment themes, the faculty overall average ranking was 2.67 in 2009 and 3.05 in 2010, whereas students ranked their knowledge as an average of 2.38 in 2009 and 2.93 in 2010. For Human Geography themes, faculty scores were higher (3.25 in 2009 and 3.32 in 2010); but students ranked themselves roughly the same as their counterparts in people-environment geography (averaged 2.89 in 2009 and 2.95 in 2010). Both remaining subfields scored higher in faculty assessment, and again, roughly comparable in student rankings. For Cartography/GIS themes, faculty averaged 3.83 in 2009 and 3.64 in 2010; students ranked their knowledge as 2.38 in 2009 and 2.21 in 2010. For Physical Geography themes, faculty averaged 3.92 in 2009 and 3.75 in 2010; students averaged 2.05 in 2009 and 2.22 in 2010. Generally, faculty ranked the presentations as demonstrating more specific geographic knowledge than students' believed they had learned from their coursework. This difference may be due to a distinction in the questions however: for faculty they referred to the specific presentation, whereas for students they referred to an increase in knowledge from their courses.

