

# General Education Reform at UNK

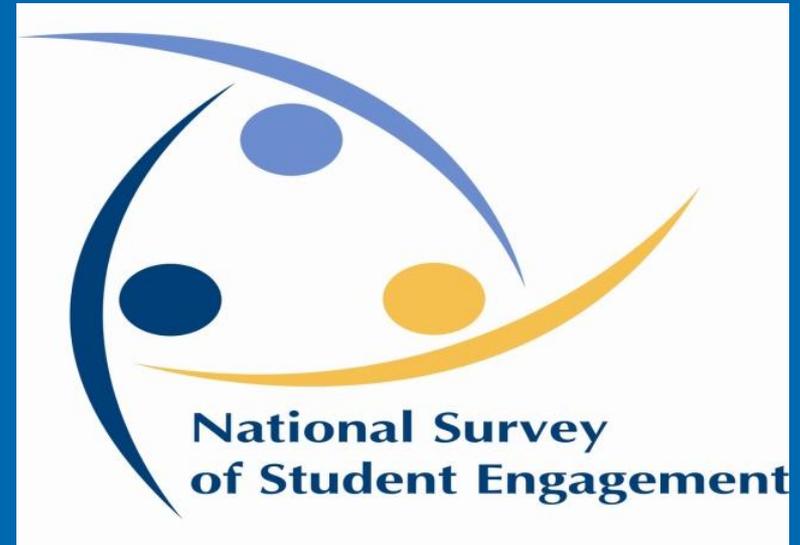
A discussion hosted by Faculty  
Senate, General Studies Council, and  
the Center for Teaching Excellence



# Motivation for Reform

- Does our current General Studies Program meet the needs of our students?
  - Student Engagement Data (NSSE)
  - General Studies APR
  - Assessment Surveys of Students and Faculty
- Can we design a better curriculum?

*National Survey of  
Student Engagement  
“NSSE”*

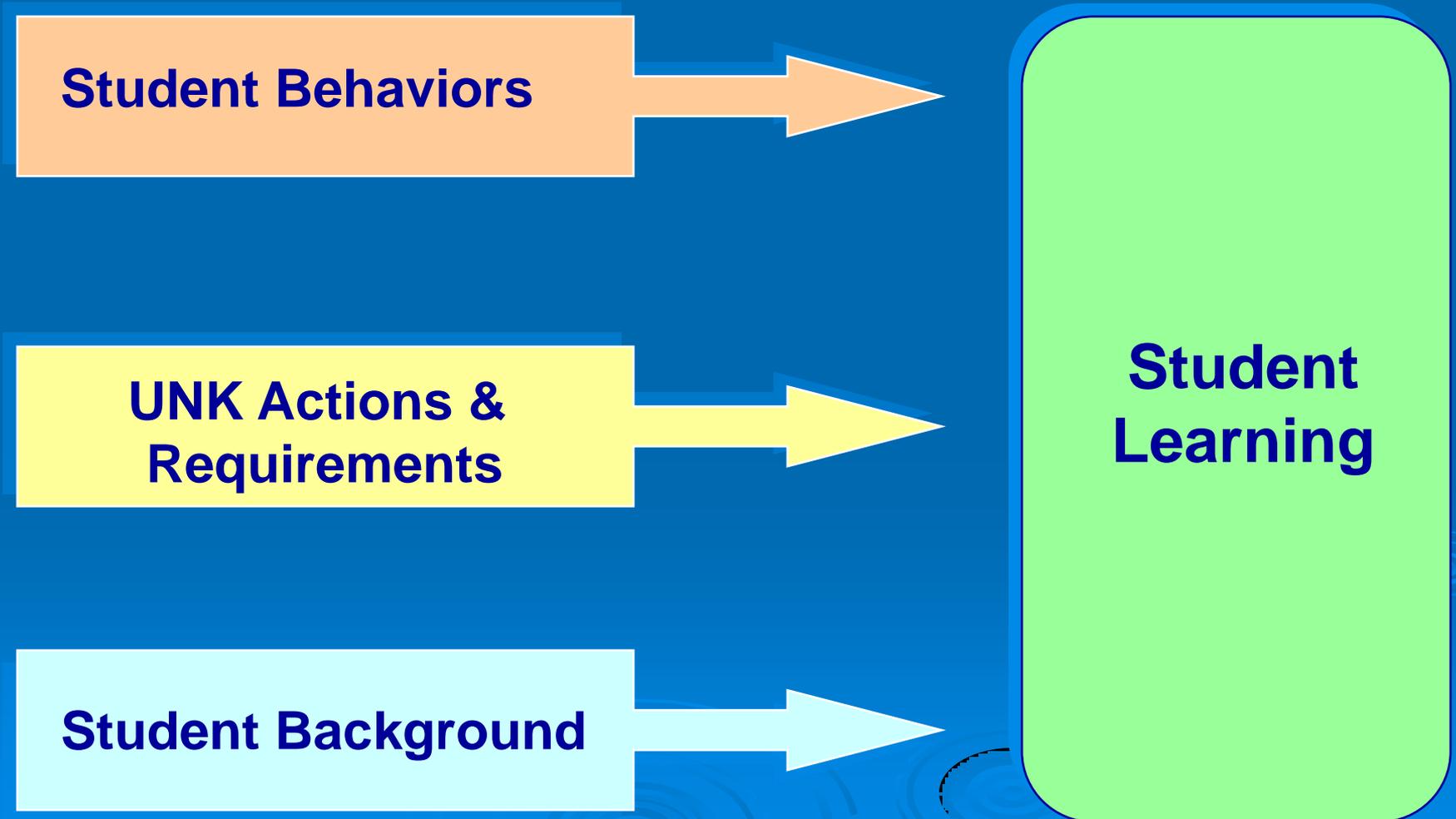


**Assesses the extent to which  
students engage in educational  
practices associated with high  
levels of learning**

# National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Scope

- **1,000,000+ students**
- **1,100+ colleges, universities**
- **50 states, Puerto Rico, Canada**
- **70+ consortia**

# NSSE's Survey Instrument



# NSSE (objective)

## Objective

- In a typical week, how many homework problem sets do you complete?

[none]

[1-2]

[3-4]

[5-6]

[6+]

- About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

# NSSE (objective)

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, etc.)

Hours per week:

[0]	[1-5]	[6-10]	[11-15]	[16-20]
	[21-25]	[26-30]	[30+]	

# NSSE (subjective)

## Subjective

- During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?

# NSSE (subjective)

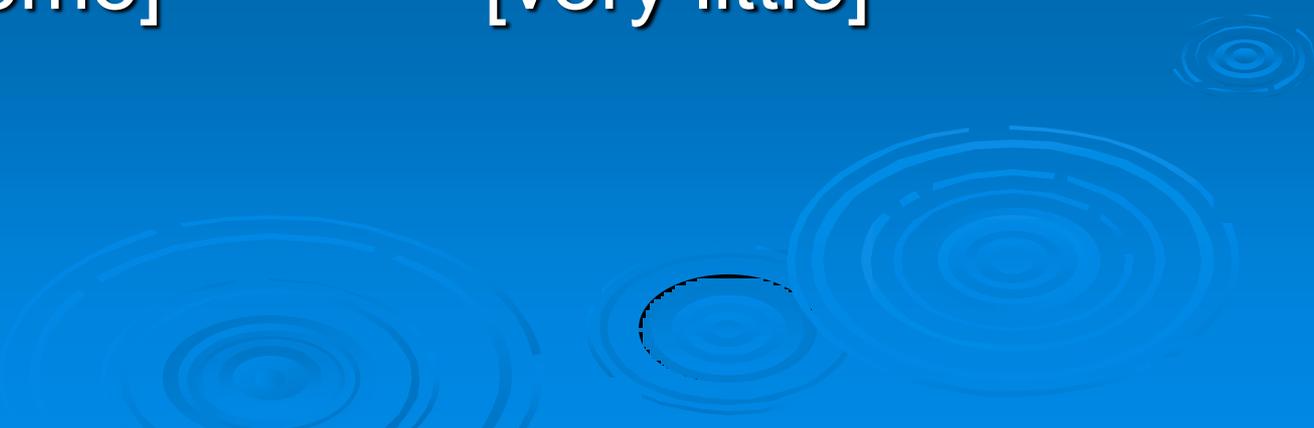
- Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships

[very much]

[quite a bit]

[some]

[very little]



# NSSE (subjective)

- How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

[Excellent]

[Good]

[Fair]

[Poor]



# GS Objectives

Does GS deliver what it promises?



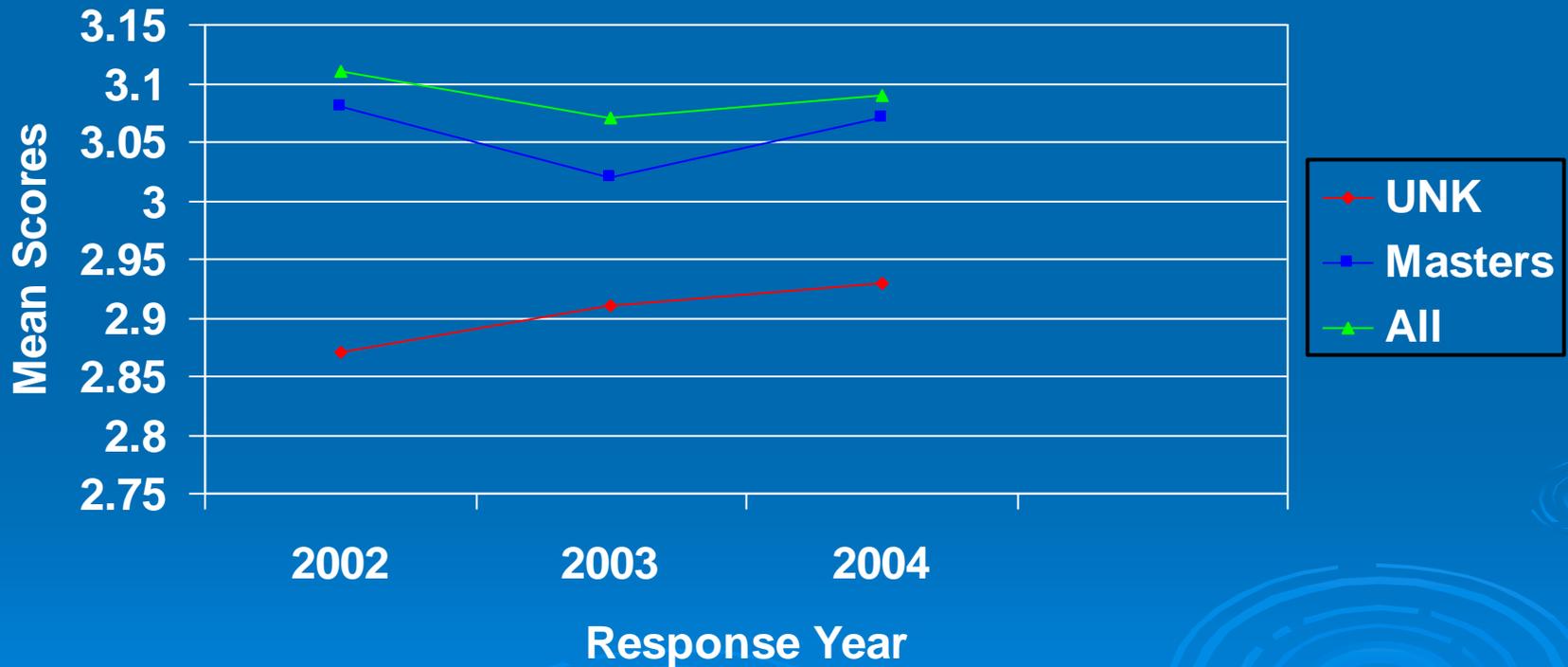
# Four GS Objectives

- #1 Locate, Gather Information
  - #2 Critical Thinking
  - #3 Communication Skills
  - #4 Understand Groups, Cultures
- 

# NSSE

## #1 Locate, Gather Information

Learn effectively on your own

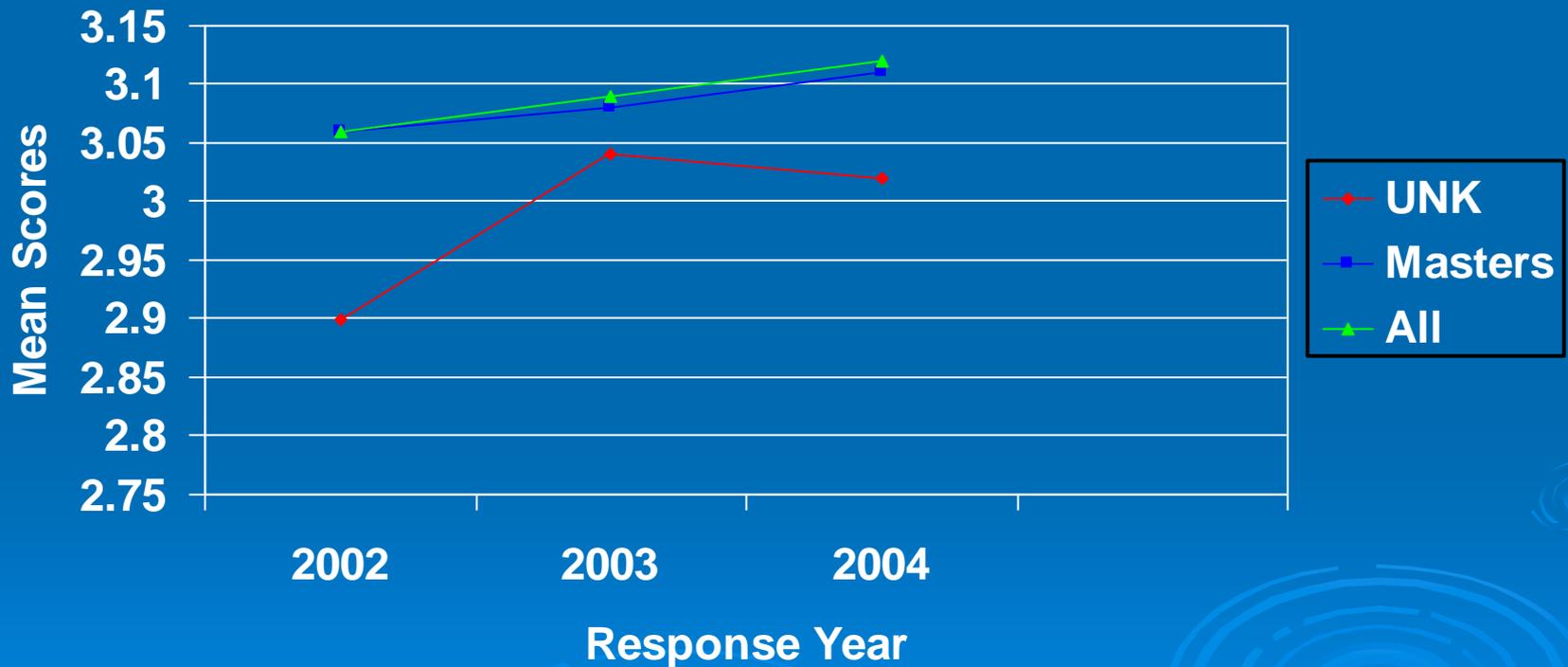


Seniors

# NSSE

## #2 Communication Skills

### Writing clearly and effectively

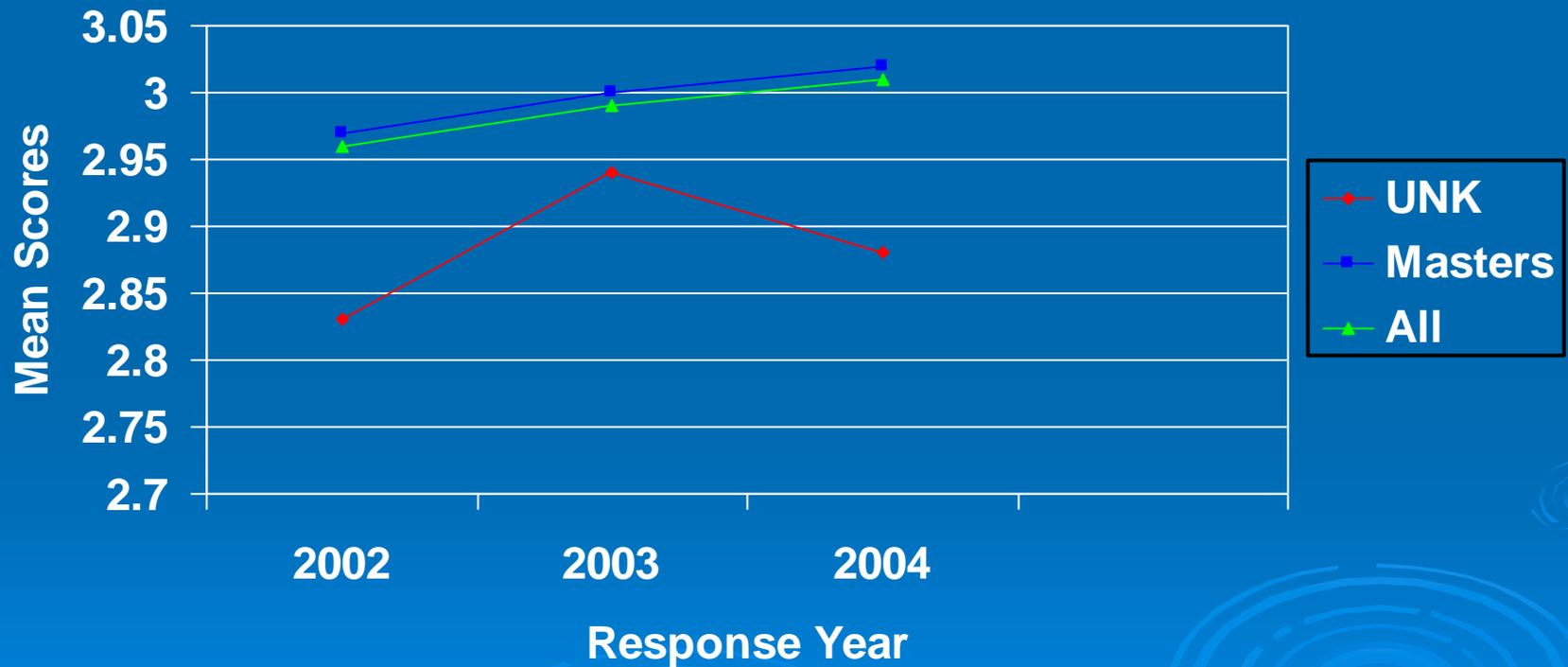


Seniors

# NSSE

## #2 Communication Skills

### Speaking clearly and effectively

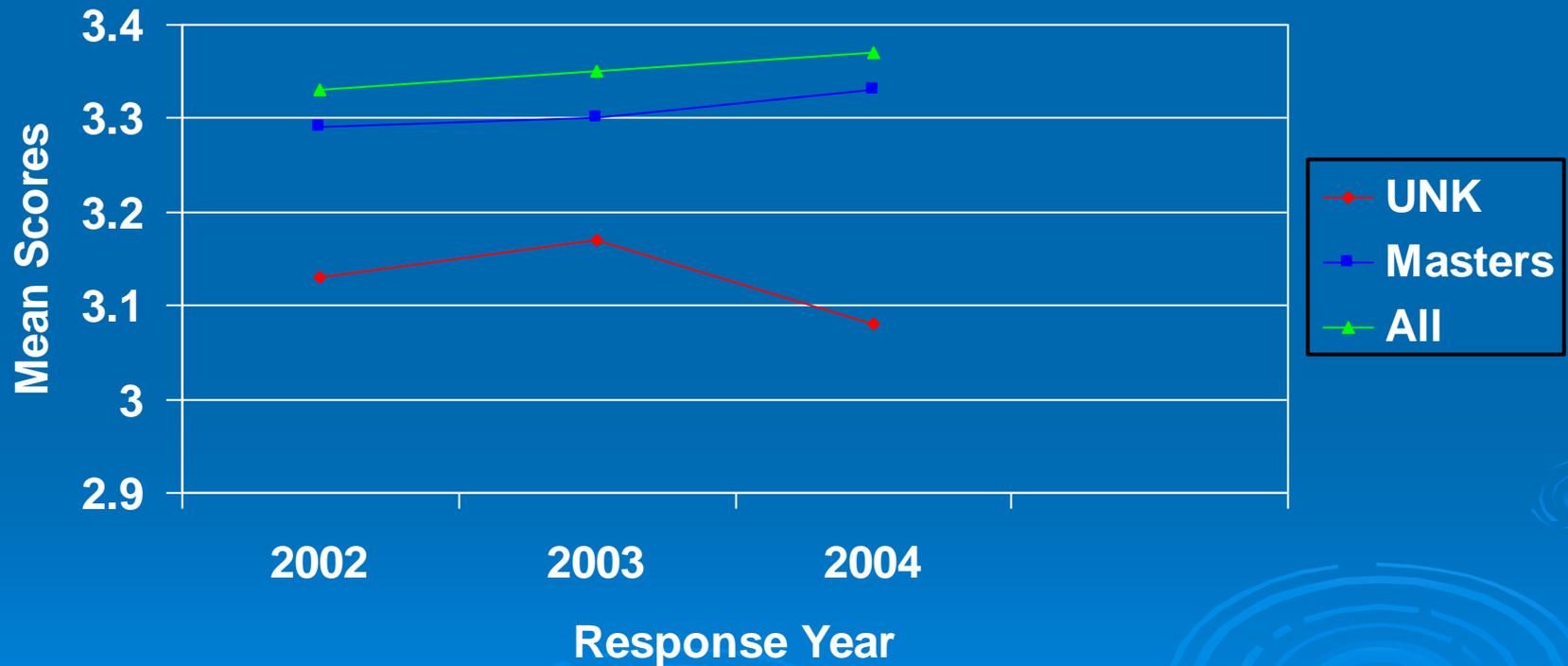


Seniors

# NSSE

## #3 Critical Thinking

### Thinking critically and analytically

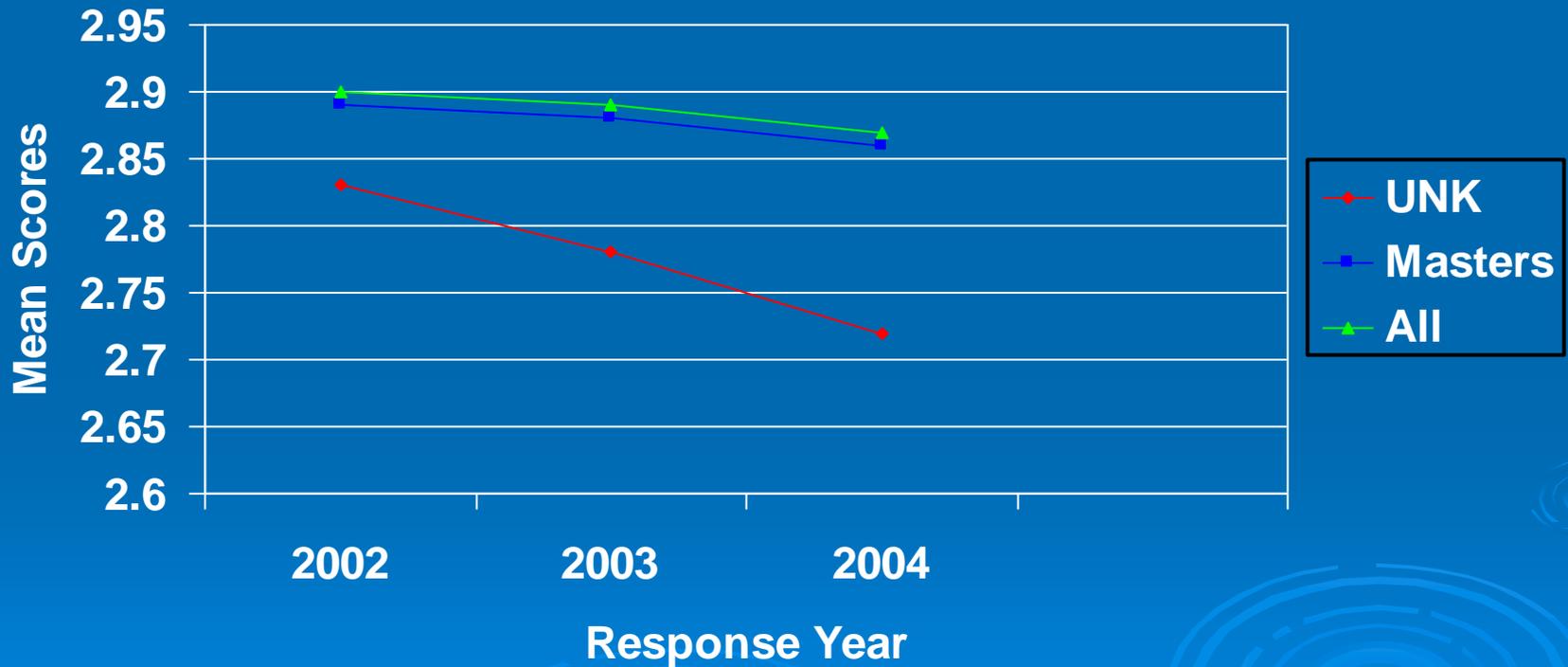


Seniors

# NSSE

## #3 Critical Thinking

### Quantative problems

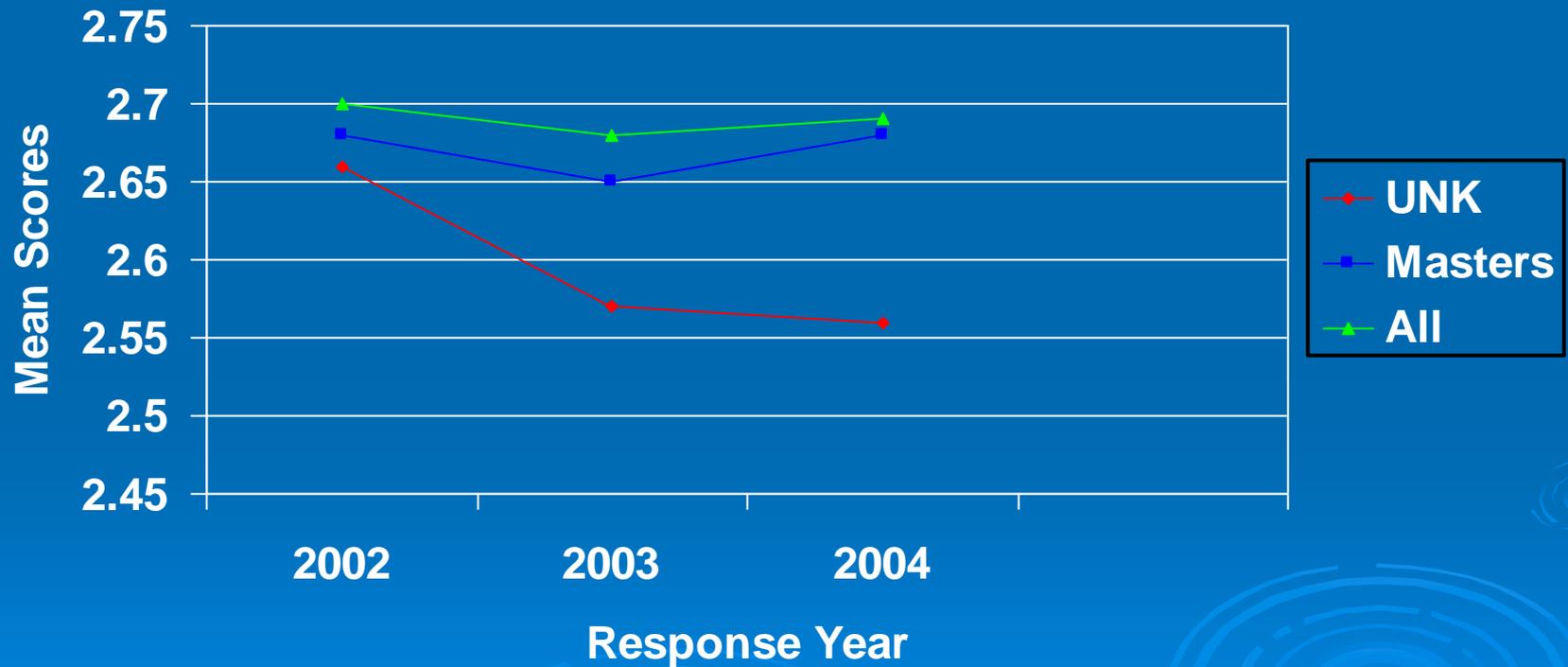


Seniors

# NSSE

## #3 Critical Thinking

### Solve complex real-world problems

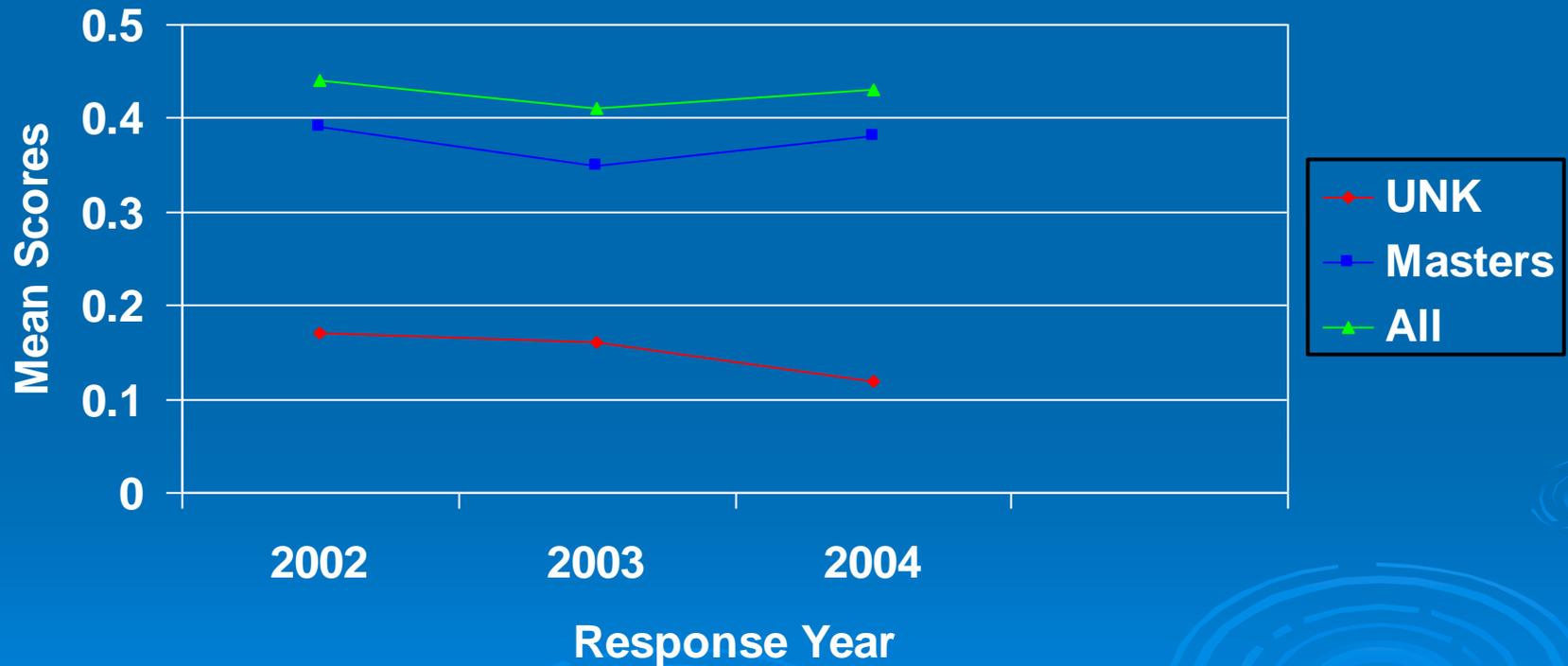


Seniors

# NSSE

## #4 Understand Groups, Cultures

### Foreign language coursework

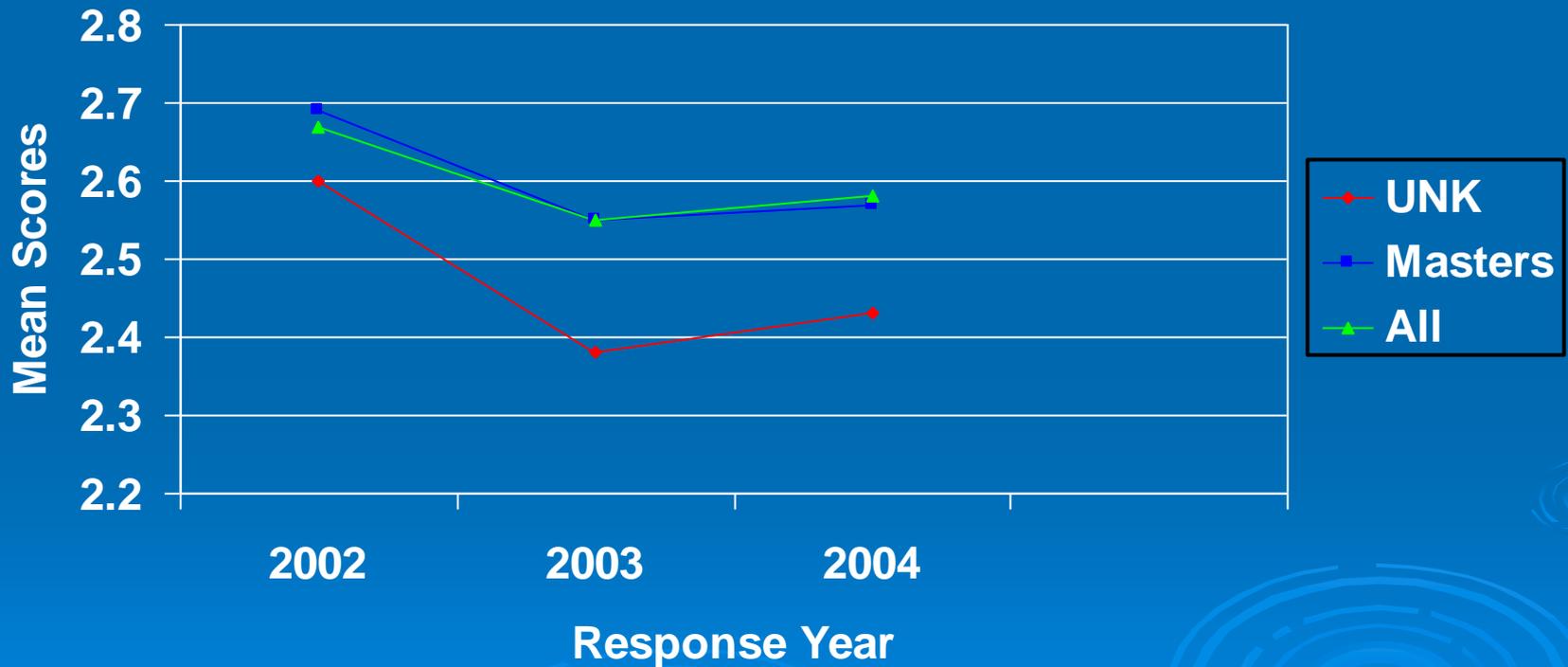


Seniors

# NSSE

## #4 Understand Groups, Cultures

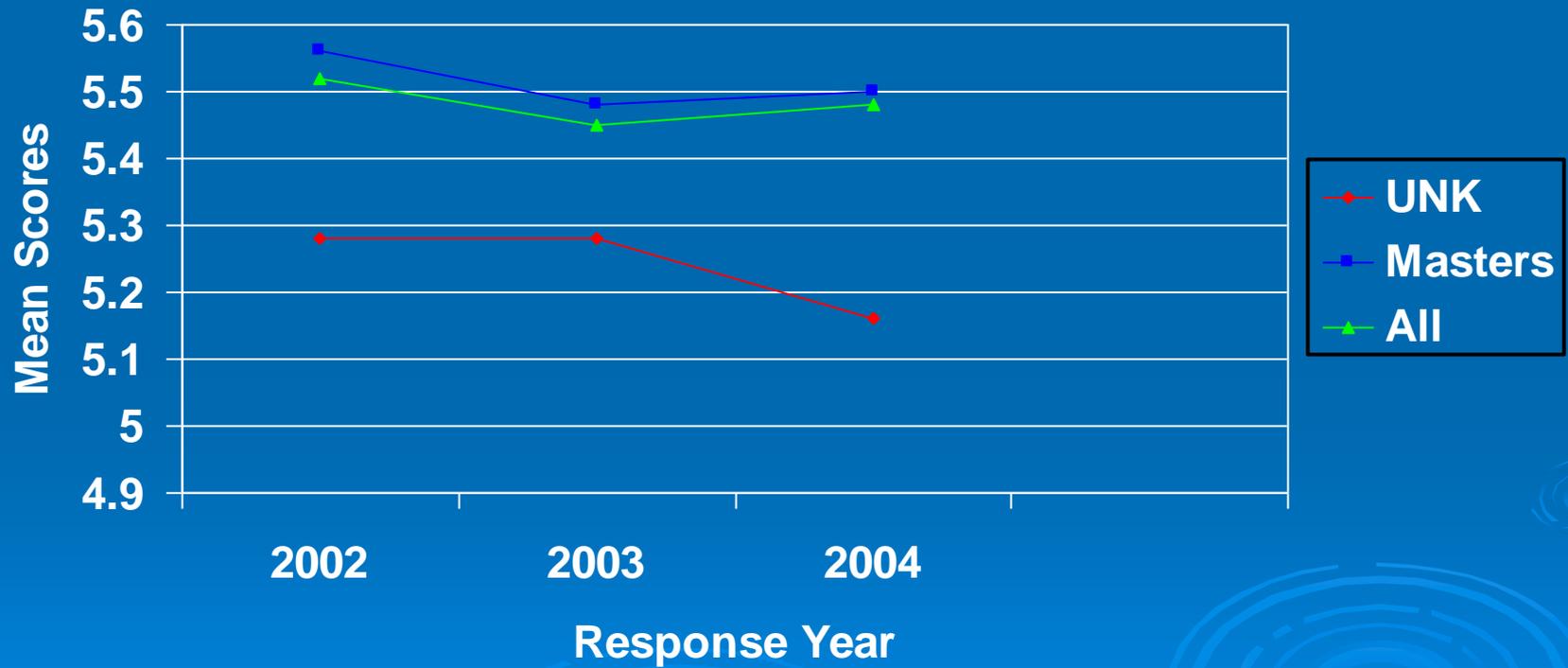
### Understand other races, ethnic backgrounds



Seniors

# Other

## Challenge of exams

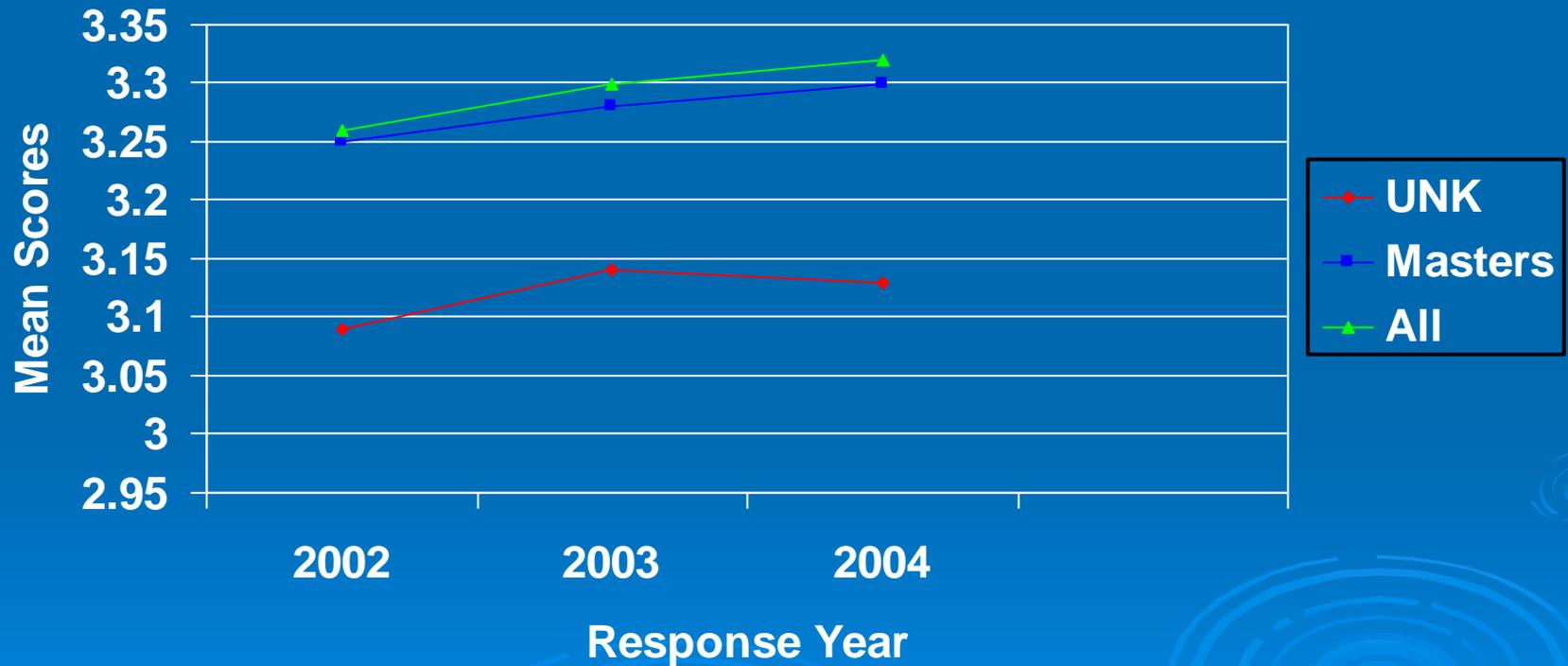


Seniors

# NSSE

## All Four GS Objectives

### Acquiring a broad general education



Seniors

# GS Objectives

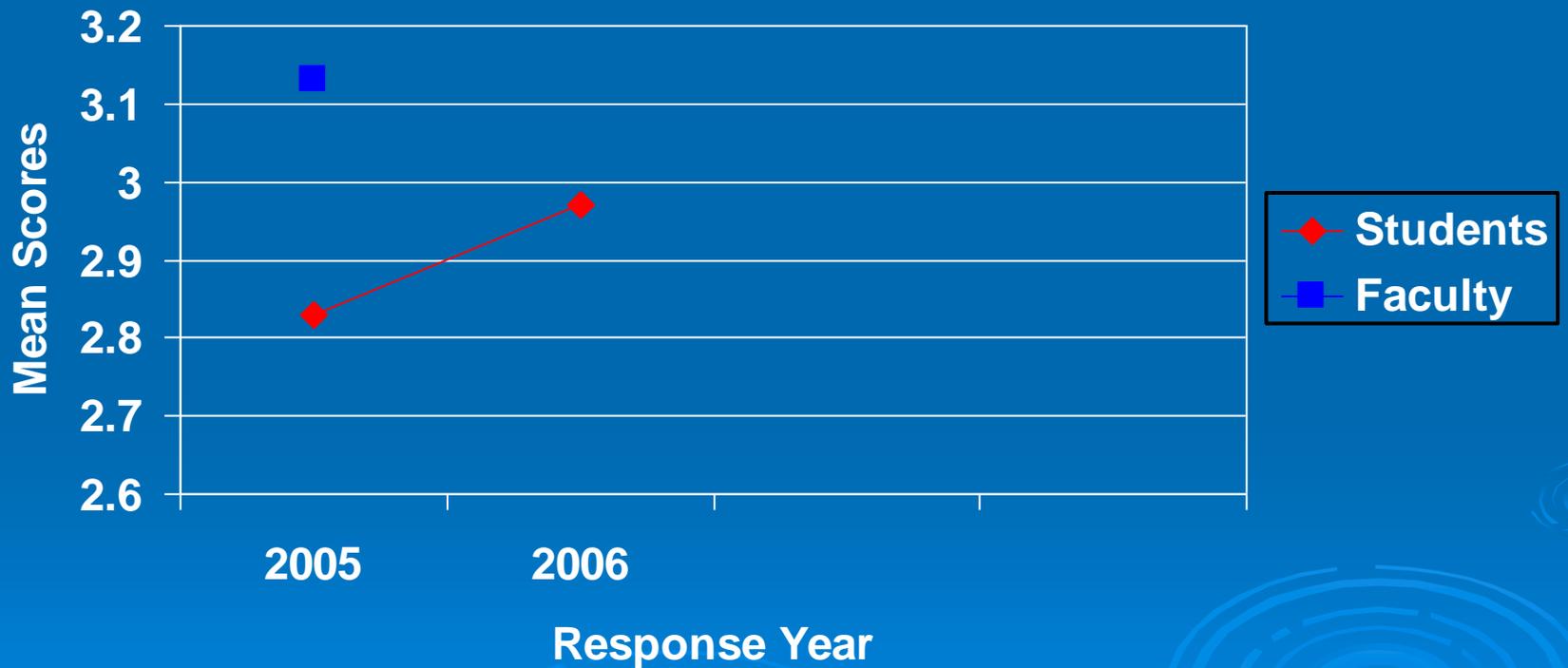
Does GS deliver what it promises?

UNK below National Means



# UNK surveys about GS

## Clarity of Purpose of GS Program

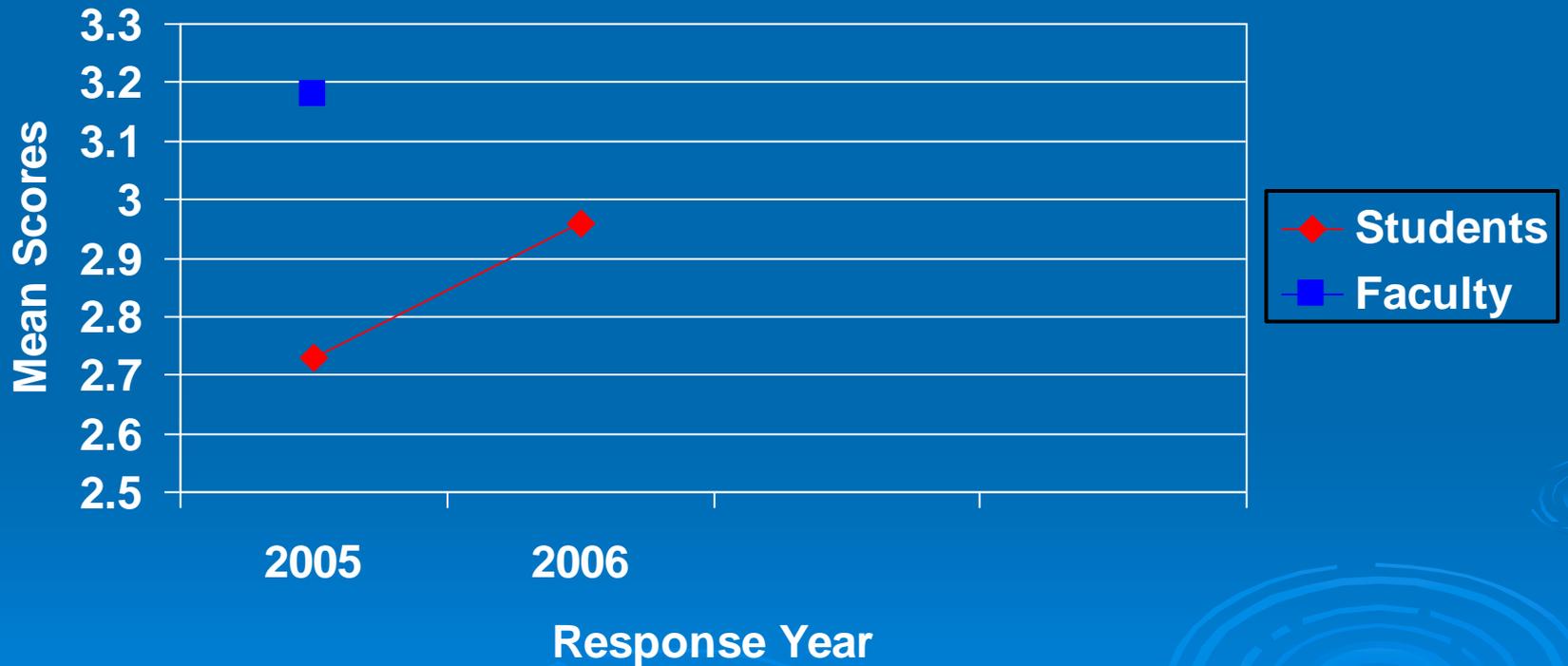


Students N=631

Faculty N=102

# UNK surveys about GS

## Disciplinary Links GS ↔ Major



Student N=631

Faculty N=102

# UNK surveys about GS

## 2005 Faculty

- **Clarity of purpose of General Studies**  
(mean = 3.13 out of 5)
- **27 additional questions, responses average around**  
**3 out of 5**

## 2005 Students

- **75% of students: GS courses were NOT related to their major**

UNK surveys about GS

No strong enthusiasm  
about GS Program



# 2006 Student Survey

Major changes to the GS Program?

**54% of students “agree” or “strongly agree”**

**13% “disagree” or “strongly disagree”**

# We're in good company

- AACU survey (2000) of 567 four-year institutions
- 54% responded
- 64% said GS renewal a high priority
- 56% had revised their GS since 1994

# APR

## Identified Strengths

- Single program
- Broad curriculum – expertise
- Comprehensive rationale
  - Structure
  - Purpose
  - Assessment
- Transfers
- Change process clear
- “A dialogue” – Roundtable

# APR

## “Propositions”

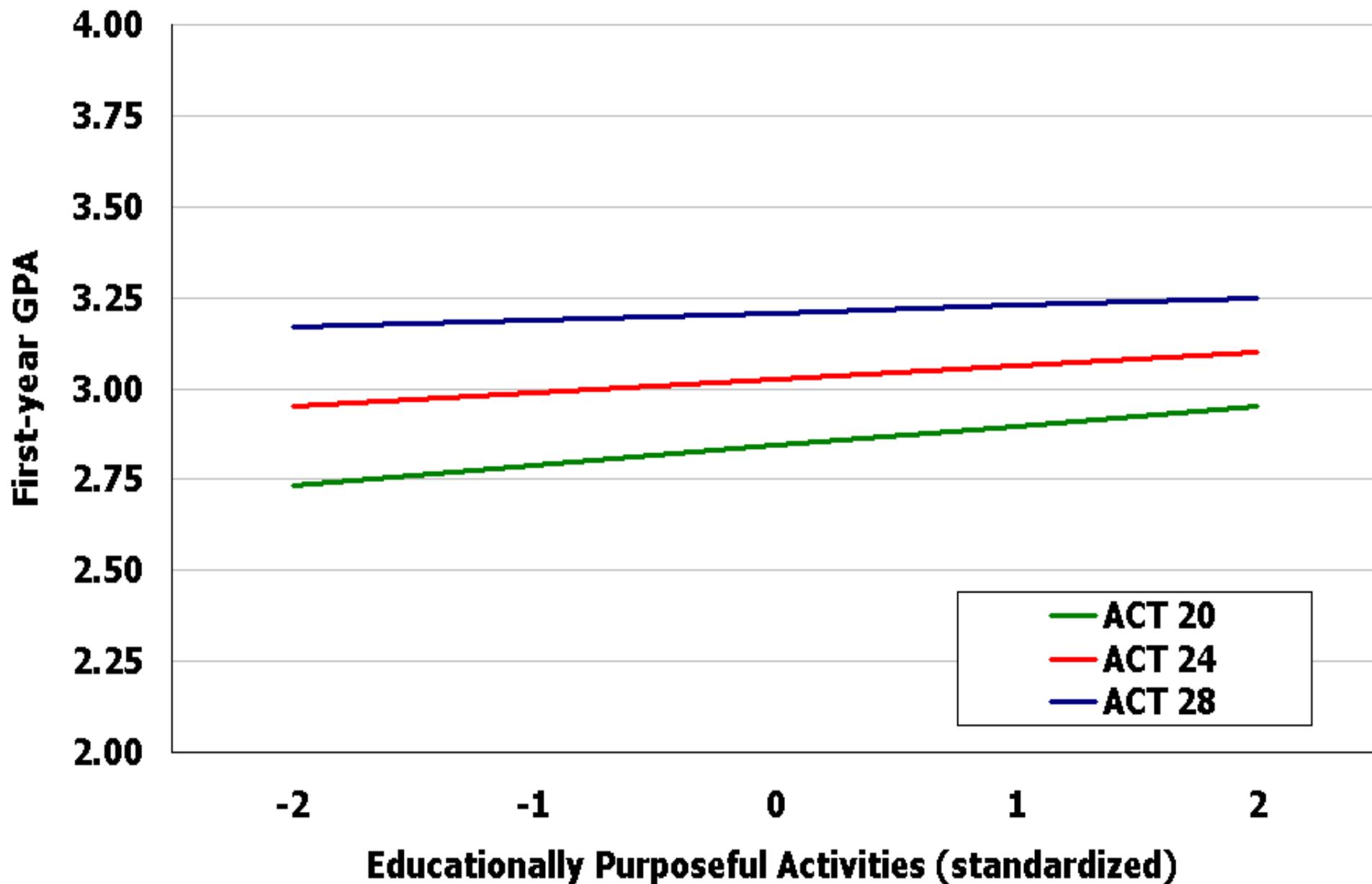
- Course Outcomes intentional / transparent
- Emphasize student learning
- GS & major cognizant of one other
- Distinctive
- Coherence: portal > disciplinary core > capstone
- Professional development
- Assessment “built in” – drives creation of new program

# *Effective Educational Practices*



- ★ **First-Year Experiences**
- ★ **Common Intellectual Experiences (“Core”)**
- ★ **Writing-Intensive Courses**
- ★ **Collaborative Assignments**
- ★ **Undergraduate Research**
- ★ **Global Learning**
- ★ **Service Learning**
- ★ **Internships**
- ★ **Capstone Courses and Projects**

## Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on First Academic Year GPA by Pre-College Achievement Level



**Association of American  
Colleges & Universities  
(AAC&U)**

**Essential Learning Outcomes**

Students should prepare for  
twenty-first-century challenges by acquiring:



# *The Essential Learning Outcomes*

- **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**
  - **Intellectual and Practical Skills**
  - **Personal and Social Responsibility**
  - **Integrative Learning**
- 

# *The Essential Learning Outcomes*

## ➤ **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**

- Through study in

sciences / mathematics

social sciences

humanities

histories

languages

arts

## ➤ ***Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring***

# *The Essential Learning Outcomes*

## ➤ **Intellectual and Practical Skills, including**

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

***Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance***

# *The Essential Learning Outcomes*

## ➤ **Personal and Social Responsibility, including**

Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global

Intercultural knowledge and competence

Ethical reasoning and action

Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

## ➤ ***Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges***

# *The Essential Learning Outcomes*

## ➤ **Integrative Learning, including**

Synthesis and advanced accomplishment  
across general and specialized studies

*Demonstrated through the application of  
knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to  
new settings and complex problems*

# Renewal driven by...

- Assessment data
  - Two APRs
  - Faculty and Student Surveys
  - Changed philosophy of general education
  - Changing nature of higher education
  - Accreditation
- 

# A Process for Change

General Studies Roundtables



# Phase I Roundtable

- Create mission statement, goals and expected student outcomes of an ideal general education program
- *The General Studies program at UNK will facilitate the development of students' skills that transfer across all disciplines. Students will understand the accomplishments of civilizations and world cultures, engage in logical and creative thought in different disciplines, and experience personal growth that enhances their ability to be lifelong learners, and ethical and responsible citizens.*

# Current General Studies Program

- “Cafeteria” Style Program
  - Faculty and Department Driven
    - Too many courses as introduction to majors
    - Lacks integration of various disciplines
  - Difficult to assess programmatically
- Does not correspond well with Phase I mission and student outcomes

# Phase II Roundtable

## ➤ Charge:

- Design an ideal program that meets the needs of our students (foremost) and that will prepare them for life-long learning and active participation in society

# Phase II Program DRAFT

## ➤ Pedagogical Principles

- Extensive use of:
  - Primary texts
  - Writing
  - Critical thinking and analysis
  - Discussion
  - Cultural and Global Diversity
- No repetition of high school course work
- Higher expectations for incoming competency
- Integration throughout collegiate career

# Phase II Program DRAFT

**Portal Course: 3 cr. hrs.**

**Core Curriculum: 12 cr. hrs. (Skills)**

**Foundations of Literate Society / Historical Sources: 3 cr. hrs.**

**Foundations/Modes of Inquiry: 12 cr. hrs.**

**Disciplinary Focus : 13 cr. hrs.**

**Capstone Course: 2 cr. hr.**

-----

**Total: 45 cr. hrs.**

# Phase II Program DRAFT

- **Core Curriculum: 12 cr. hrs.**
  - Writing – 3 cr. hrs.
  - Wellness – 3 cr. hrs
  - Math for the Educated Person – 3 cr. hrs.
  - Communications – 3 cr. hrs.
- **Foundations of Literate Society /  
Historical Sources: 3 cr. hrs.**

# Phase II Program DRAFT

**Portal Course: 3 cr. hrs.**

**Foundations/Modes of Inquiry: 12 cr. hrs.**

Natural Sciences – 3 hrs.

Social Sciences – 3 hrs.

Arts – 3 hrs.

Humanities – 3 hrs.

**Disciplinary Focus / Follow-Up to the Modes: 13 cr. hrs.**

Natural Sciences – 4 hrs. (lab course)

Social Sciences – 3 hrs.

Arts – 3 hrs.

Humanities – 3 hrs.

**Capstone Course: 2 cr. hr.**

# General Education Reform at UNK

Comments and Questions?

