

IMPROVING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS: A UNIVERSITY-WIDE INITIATIVE

**Stewart Ross, Director of the Center for
Excellence in Teaching and Learning
Minnesota State University, Mankato**
**Tracy Pellett, Associate Vice President for
Undergraduate Studies
Central Washington State University**
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WHAT WAS IPESL?

- **Minnesota State University Mankato (MSU) was contacted during the summer of 2006 that over \$300,000 would be available for faculty development activities.**
- **This grant came from the Minnesota State legislature through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU) and ended up was titled the “Initiative to Promote Excellence in Student Learning” (IPESL).**

THE PROCESS

- **Committee formed**
- **Decision to focus project on “Improving Critical Thinking Skills”**
- **Coordinators of project selected**
- **Prospectus developed and approved**
- **Announcement to faculty to apply for grants**

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- 90 proposals received from 100 faculty
- 39 faculty selected to receive \$5,000 awards for 2006-2007 work
- Developed new instructional materials for courses

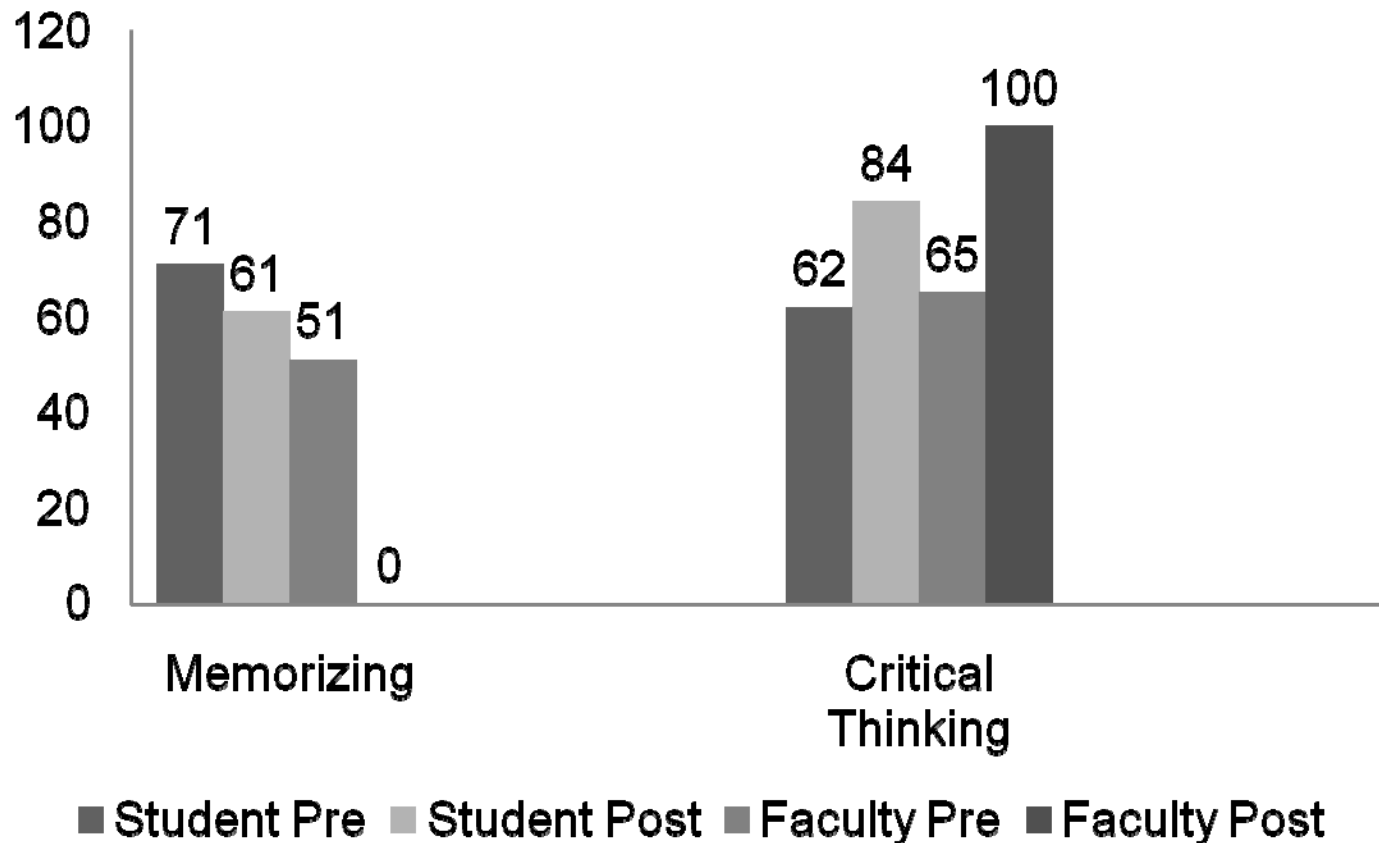
WHAT DID THEY DO?

- **Placed in small learning communities for spring 2007**
- **In groups, discussed critical thinking and how to develop this in their courses**
- **Participants attended workshops by Stephen Brookfield (critical thinking issues), Barbara Millis (active learning) and Stewart Ross (course redesign).**

GOAL ONE: "PROMOTE STUDENT'S CRITICAL THINKING ENGAGEMENT AND SKILLS

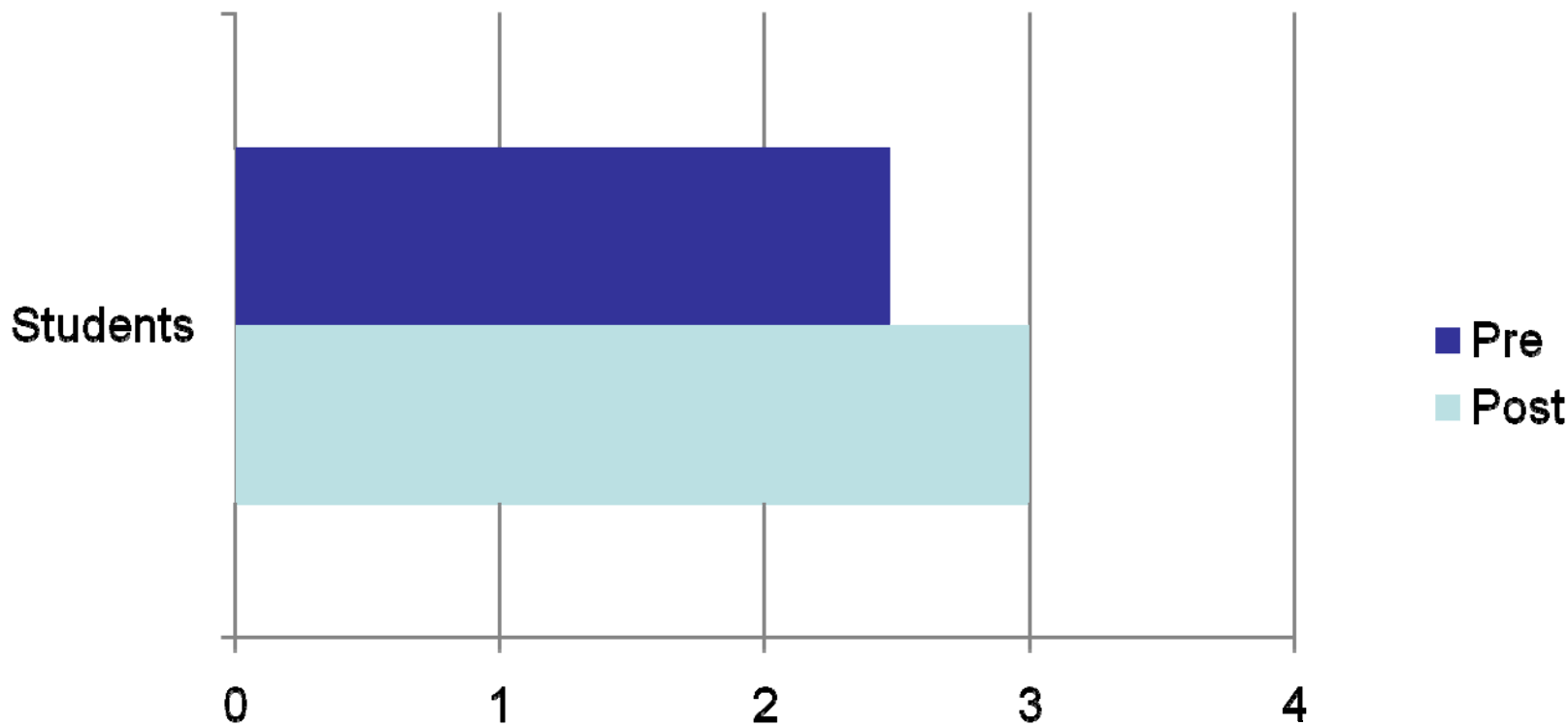
- 1. Student perception of "critical thinking" coursework emphasis (pre/post)**
- 2. Faculty perception of "critical thinking" coursework emphasis (pre/post)**
- 3. Student work sample (pre/post)**

GOAL 1: SURVEY RESULTS



*As based on 12 questions (percentage reflects often/very often response)

GOAL 1: WORK SAMPLE RESULTS



***As based on 20 students from 4 pt rubric.**

GOAL 2: "IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION AND DEVELOPMENT"

- 1. Attendance at events and meetings; 6 learning communities were formed and each met 5 times during spring semester 2007.**
- 2. Learning community summative feedback; detailed reports made by three facilitators selected for sessions.**

GOAL 3: "PROJECTS AND RESULTS WILL BE DISSEMINATED"

- 1. Website for IPESL (projects available to read). From Jan. through Aug. 2007 the site had 350 "hits"; mainly faculty working on projects.**
- 2. Papers and presentations: Nursing "toolkit" was introduced at a workshop that attracted 52 nursing faculty from 16 different colleges. Also, ITV presentation to five colleges.**

OUTCOMES

- **Some projects were completed individually while others teamed up in groups as large as 5 faculty, sometimes from different disciplines.**
- **Disciplines represented included: English, Sociology, Music, Education, Social Work, Health Science, Math, Nursing, Theatre, Engineering, Counseling, History, Modern Languages, Dental Hygiene, Women's Studies, Political Science, Economics, Chemistry, Accounting, and Information Systems.**

OUTCOMES

- **Faculty are using numerous techniques advocated by critical thinking experts such as active learning and technology.**
- **Many faculty have redesigned courses in an effort to emphasize critical thinking skills rather than memorization of information.**
- **Two departments have redesigned general education courses in an integrated approach to learning.**

OUTCOMES

- **41 faculty members attended a two day workshop on integrated course design with monies left from IPESL**
- **A new faculty learning community began meeting during the 2008-2009 academic year, working on redesigning courses for critical thinking.**

PROJECTS

- Final projects are all posted on the MSU-IPESL website at: www.mnsu.edu/grants/ipesl
- Some of the titles of these projects include:
 - Writing into Thinking
 - Accounting Capstone Course
 - Using Application and Problem solving
 - Linking General Chemistry
 - Art of Thinking Philosophically
 - Critical Thinking in English
 - Infusing Critical Thinking Throughout Speech Courses

CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Stewart Ross 507-389-1098**
stewart.ross@mnsu.edu