Program Evaluation of

Inquiry 1000 Program

by

Shannon Cooper, Roy Flores, Megan Frazier & Rachel Martin

MPA Program

Augusta University

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Executive Summary

This report provides the results of a comprehensive program evaluation for Augusta University's Inquiry 1000 Program. Data used for this assessment came from scholarly research, stakeholder interviews, a survey of students currently enrolled in INQR 1000, and a focus group conducted with current INQR 1000 faculty instructors. This assessment concluded the following:

- Stakeholders believe the majority of students are achieving the program's identified student learning outcomes.

- The most significant problem associated with INQR 1000 is the lack of a well-articulated purpose. The majority of stakeholders did not express a clear consensus regarding the program's purpose.

- The program lacks a well-designed and executed evaluation process.

- INQR 1000 suffers from a shortage of diverse faculty, The Pamplin College is overrepresented which potentially limits topic choices.

- Lack of INQR 1000 marketing with convenient topic displays in POUNCE makes it much more difficult for students to choose a section that they find interesting. This inhibits student engagement and faculty's ability to engage students at the beginning of the semester.

- Current INQR 1000 10 week schedule is too rigid.

Introduction and Purpose

INQR 1000 recently changed its organizational placement within Augusta University. Additionally, it has not had an outside evaluation up to this point. Therefore, this an opportune time to evaluate the program. The evaluation should help Augusta University focus a limited programmatic budget and resources on issues and concerns that are most central to INQR 1000 stakeholders.

This study uses multiple forms of data to identify the program and build from its strengths. Specifically, this study performed the following:

- Asked stakeholders for their perceptions of INQR 1000 through the collection of data via interviews, a survey, and a focus group. Stakeholders included currently enrolled students, faculty teaching in Fall 2017, administrators, and faculty involved in the initial work of designing INQR 1000.

- Reviewed syllabi used in the Fall 2017 semester, end-of-course critiques, and assessments of the end-of-course expo.

- Used this data to examine patterns of potential programmatic shortcomings, to suggest improvements.

Background

In 2013 Augusta State University began its consolidation with Georgia Health Sciences University, previously known as the Medical College of Georgia. As a part of consolidation both institutions underwent major changes, resulting in the consolidated Augusta University as it stands today. One specific change to come out of the consolidation was the increase in admission standards for Augusta University (AU) and course requirements. As a consolidated institution, the University was no longer able to offer skills-based courses. Due to this adjustment, the AU1000 course, otherwise known as "orientation", was cancelled. The new INQR 1000 was intended to transition students from the AU1000 course to a more "academically rigorous course that would be required of all students."

Another factor contributing to the creation of the INQR 1000 course was the restructuring of the Humanities (Area B) core curriculum hours. As a result of that change, a one-hour "hole" was created in Area B. A faculty committee was formed to create a course that would fill this gap. The idea, was to create a course that allowed students "to feel collegiate in a low-pressure environment".

The new course, originally conceived as a three-hour course, was intended to promote active learning. Active learning is defined as, "the process of having students engage in some activity that forces them to reflect upon ideas and how they are using those ideas" (Michael, 2006). Essentially, students are taught through practice. Student centered instruction takes the attention off the instructor and focuses on the student's impact on subject matter and activities. As a part of student centered instruction, open ended problems are assigned to foster critical and creative thinking skills. Students

engage in role playing exercises, cooperative learning, and use a self-paced regimen. Active learning allows students to become "doers", use essential skills, and put theory into practice (Michael, 2006). According to Kuh, the following specific high impact practices are beneficial for college students regardless of their background: first year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, and collaborative assignments and projects (2008). The INQR 1000 course was designed to include aspects of these practices. High-impact education practices demand students devote significant time and effort to purposeful tasks as well as requiring daily decisions that deepen their investment in their collegiate success overall. These activities, by nature, demand students interact with faculty and peers over extended periods of time. According to Kuh, making high-impact activities available to all students is the best way to ensure an even playing field for all students from varying degrees of diverse personal and educational backgrounds (2008).
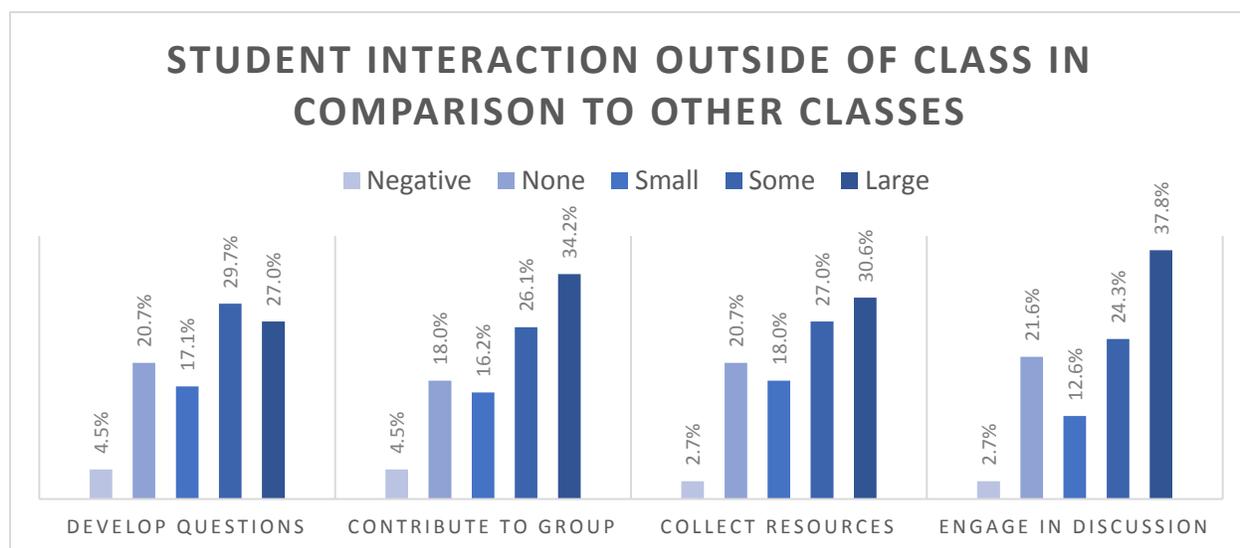
In preparation for the INQR program, the First Year Experience committee conducted extensive research, including site visits to gauge faculty and student buy-in of nationally ranked student led high impact educational programs. Appalachian State University & University of South Carolina institutions' programs were reviewed and evaluated to see what aspects might work for Augusta University's INQR 1000 course. However, the current INQR 1000 is significantly different from these other programs, suggesting that during implementation, decisions were made that could have reduced the impact of INQR 1000 on students or resulted in ambiguity concerning the purpose of INQR 1000. The most significant difference was the reduction of the class from a 3-hour class to a 1-hour class.

From the administrative and faculty perspective, interviewed participants contend that the program was "well intentioned". However, many note that the execution was not as desired. The general consensus among faculty and administrative participants was that the INQR 1000 course, as a result of the demands of the consolidation, did not receive the "nurturing it needed" in order to be as successful as originally intended. Per the results of the study, many faculty and administrators feels as though the program was rushed and this contributed to the issues uncovered in this study.

Conclusions

1. **Stakeholders believe the majority of students are achieving the program's identified student learning outcomes.**

   Student learning outcomes are currently the most effective way in which to gauge the class' impact on students and the University as a whole. As a part of this study, a student survey was conducted to measure and record current student perspectives. According to the data, 29.7% of current students report that the program has had "some positive impact" on their ability to develop and ask questions that require discovery, research, and creativity. Additionally, 34.2% of current students attest that the course has had a "big positive impact" on their ability to contribute effectively to a group to produce answers to a question and 37.8% report the course as having a "big positive impact" on their ability to engage in meaningful discussion with individuals who represent multiple perspectives. See below for summary of "impact" results.

   STUDENT INTERACTION OUTSIDE OF CLASS IN COMPARISON TO OTHER CLASSES

   Negative · None · Small · Some · Large

   DEVELOP QUESTIONS: 4.5%, 20.7%, 17.1%, 29.7%, 27.0%
   CONTRIBUTE TO GROUP: 4.5%, 18.0%, 16.2%, 26.1%, 34.2%
   COLLECT RESOURCES: 2.7%, 20.7%, 18.0%, 27.0%, 30.6%
   ENGAGE IN DISCUSSION: 2.7%, 21.6%, 12.6%, 24.3%, 37.8%

   According to current research on active learning, individuals are more likely to retain more knowledge when placed in a group (Michael, 2006). Learning in small groups is

much more effective than individual learning given that all members of the group participate and actively communicate. Meaningful learning is facilitated through verbalization in that actually hearing oneself speak helps to ingrain knowledge into the mind of the learner.

The general consensus among faculty, administrators, and students appears to be that INQR 1000 is a course designed to facilitate and promote increased faculty-to-student and student-to-student engagement in conjunction with introducing students to the concept of academic inquiry. Faculty and Administrators interviewed indicated they believed students in INQR 1000 did interact with faculty and students more in INQR 1000 than in other courses. In order to evaluate this concept, students were asked in the survey to rate their interaction with faculty and other students in their INQR 1000 course as compared with their other classes. Of the respondents, 47.7% said they never met with classmates outside of class to discuss classwork. Additionally, when asked how often they met with their faculty member teaching the course, over half of the respondents (68.4%) indicated that they never met outside of class. Refer to table below for summary of student interaction rates.
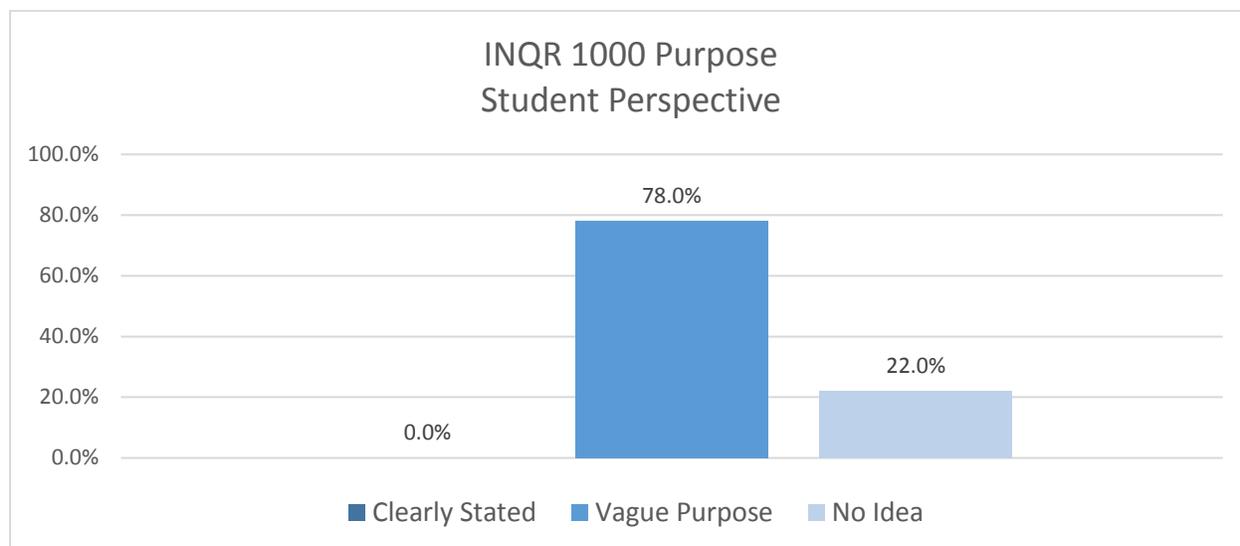

Student Interaction Outside of Class in Comparison to Other Classes
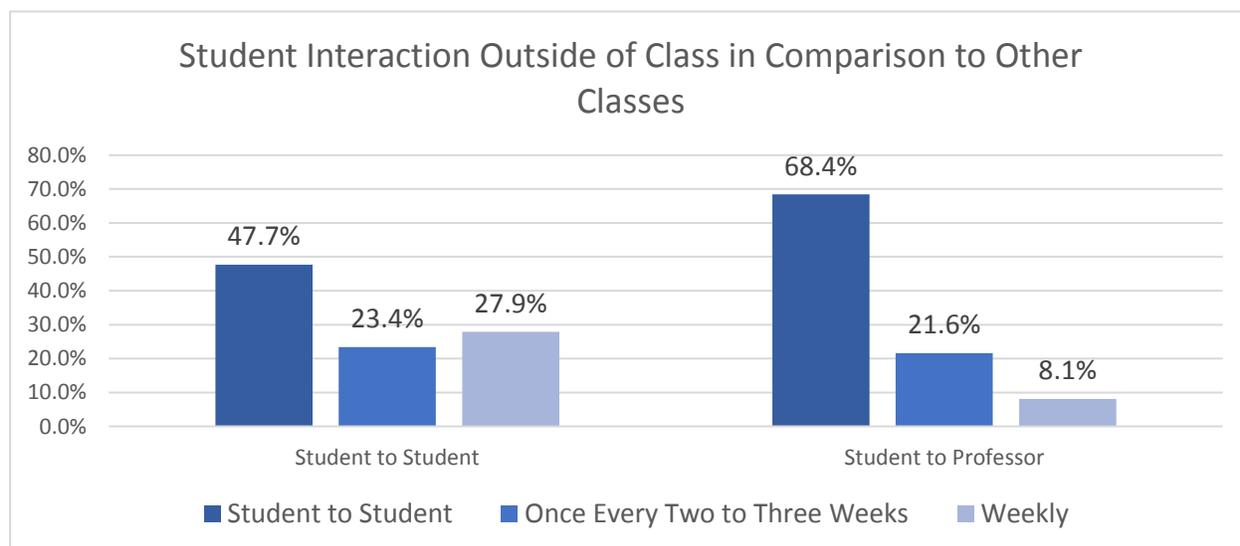
When surveyed, 36.9% of current students described their level of active participation in INQR 1000 as being "moderate". Compared to other courses, 46.8% of current students rate their level of participation being "about the same". The table below summarizes the complete student participation results among respondents. Overall, the majority of students believe they are achieving the program's student learning outcomes. However, they are not participating more or interacting with their peers and faculty more in this class than in others. See table below for summary of student participation ratings.

Student Participation In INQR 1000 vs Other Classes

	Less Than	About the Same	More Than
	17.0%	47.0%	35.0%
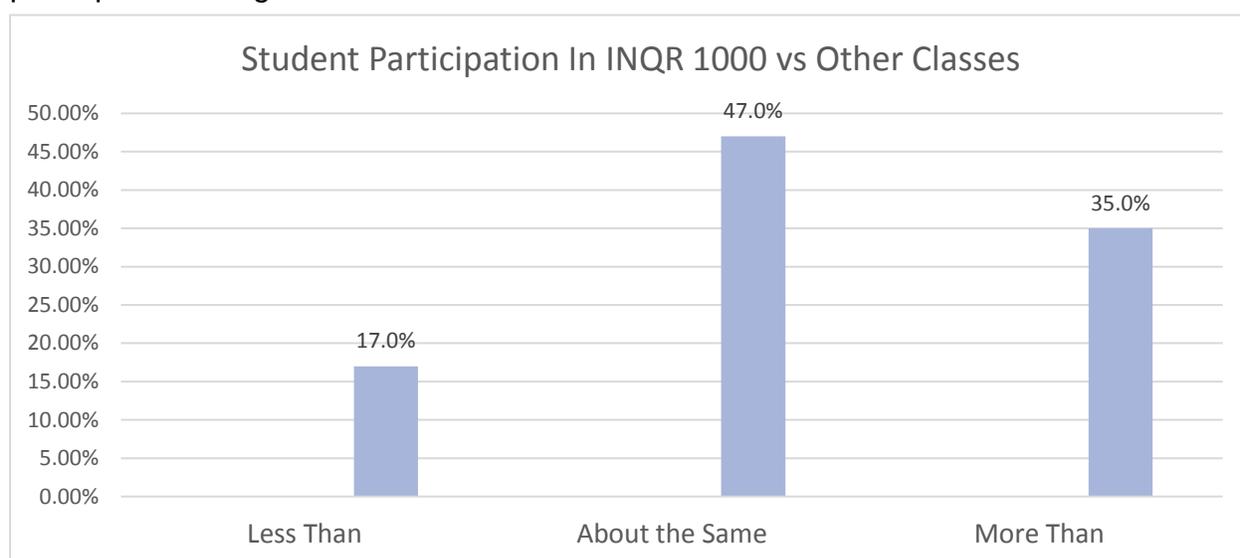
2. The most significant problem associated with INQR 1000 is the lack of a well-articulated purpose. The majority of stakeholders did not express a clear consensus regarding the program's purpose.

Based on student survey responses, 22% stated they had no idea what the purpose of INQR 1000 was. Of the remaining 78% of respondents, they reported some purposes but there was no clear consensus among the responses. In addition to the survey results, the individual interviews with faculty, staff, and administration resulted in a different response each time. No one interviewee gave the same response, further

supporting the conclusion that there has been no clearly communicated purpose for the INQR 1000 class. See table below summarizing student responses to purpose.

INQR 1000 Purpose
Student Perspective

Response	Percentage
Clearly Stated	0.0%
Vague Purpose	78.0%
No Idea	22.0%

In addition to asking stakeholders about the course's purpose, a review of current semester INQR 1000 syllabi was performed. While student learning outcomes were similar in nature across current semester INQR 1000 syllabi, there was no consistency among stated course purpose. A clear, consistent purpose describing INQR 1000 is not reflected on all syllabi. Consensus regarding the Inquiry program's purpose should be established and included on all syllabi in order to convey the programmatic purpose to all students taking INQR 1000.

3. **The program lacks a well-designed and executed evaluation process.**

Without a clear, articulated purpose, it is difficult to evaluate INQR 1000's impact on students. Moreover, since the course is required of ALL students, it is not possible to compare INQR 1000 students to others who had not taken the course. This leaves the institution dependent on either student self-reports or the critique associated with the end-of-course expo.

As it currently stands, the evaluation process performed at the end-of-course expo is vague. It is unclear as to who is actually performing the evaluations. In other words, are the students evaluating each other, are the current faculty evaluating their classes, or are outside faculty evaluating the projects? Per interviews with current faculty and expo participants, there appears to be significant energy focused on student participation and no real evaluation of the end products and how they correlate to student learning outcomes of the course. Implementing an outside evaluation process, of either faculty or program administration, could help highlight whether or not the expo results are in line with program goals.
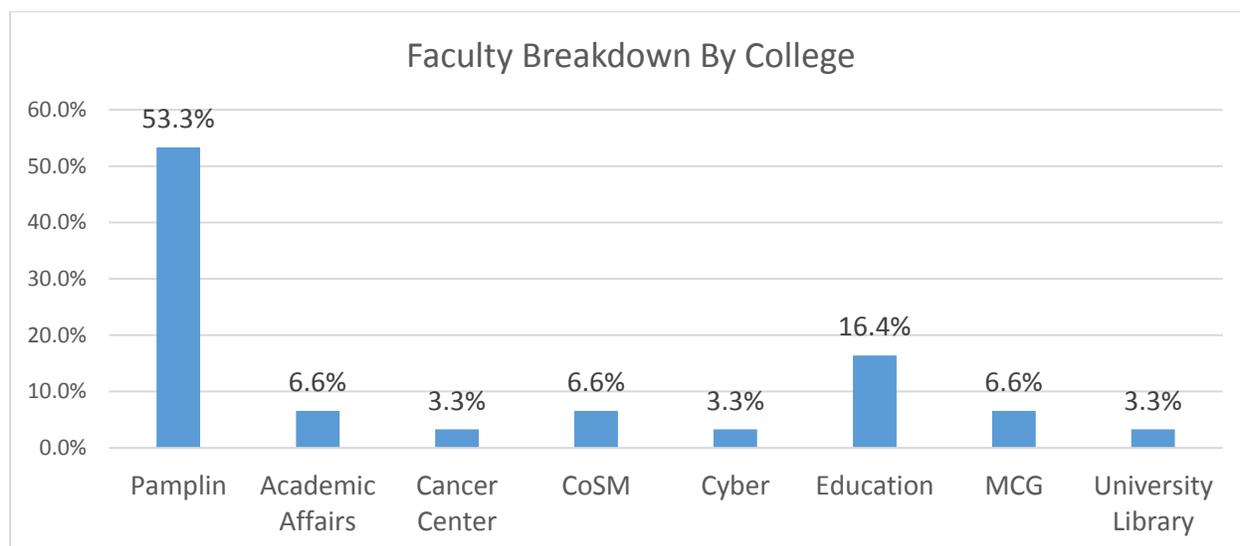
4. **INQR 1000 suffers from a shortage of diverse faculty, The Pamplin College is overrepresented which potentially limits topic choices.**

Since the course is included in the core curriculum but is offered as an optional teaching choice for instructors, it presents an unusual situation. Typically, for core courses, each college assigns instructors to teach the basic core courses, such as Intro to Psychology for the Psychology Department, College Algebra in the Math Department, and so forth. However, since INQR 1000 can be taught by any faculty member from any college or department, the issue has become how to encourage faculty to volunteer to teach the course. One avenue that has been utilized so far is to offer a $1,000 research and travel stipend to any faculty who teaches a section. In this way, instructors taking on the extra burden of teaching INQR 1000 on top of their regular course load are allotted extra funding for their research projects.

While this has been an incentive for some instructors, some interviewees noted that offering such an incentive is perhaps the wrong approach and sends a mixed message

to the faculty. Some interviewees felt that the true problem in faculty recruitment lies at the dean and department head levels of each college.

As it stands, the optional presentation of the class combined with the $1,000 stipend has led to an overrepresentation of instructors from colleges with fewer funding sources; notably, the Pamplin College. Refer to the table below for summary of faculty participation results by college.

Faculty Breakdown By College

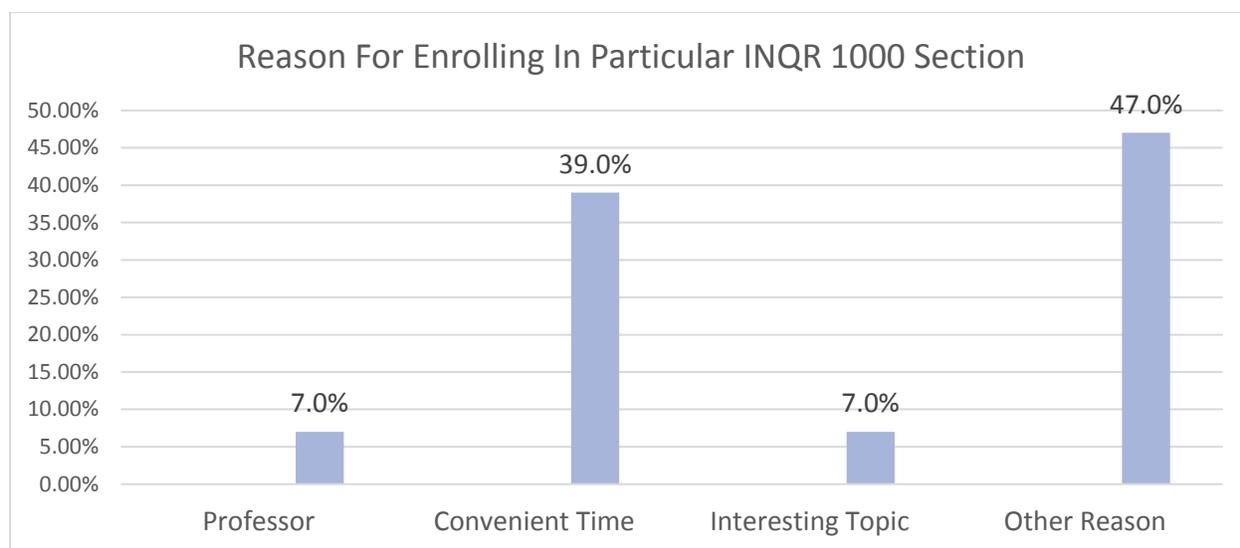| College	Percentage
Pamplin	53.3%
Academic Affairs	6.6%
Cancer Center	3.3%
CoSM	6.6%
Cyber	3.3%
Education	16.4%
MCG	6.6%
University Library	3.3%

One solution to this dilemma would be to impose a quota on each college. That is, each college would be required to provide faculty for a given number of sections. This is admittedly a drastic solution, so it might be preferable for the Provost to more actively engage college deans to encourage their faculty to volunteer to teach INQR 1000.

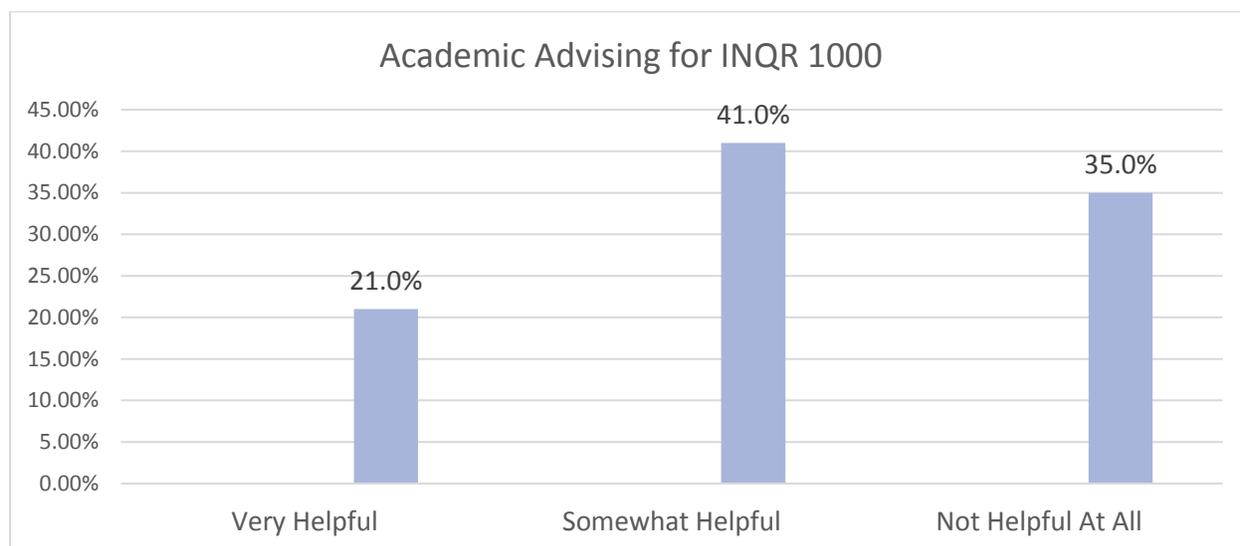5. **Lack of INQR 1000 marketing with convenient topic displays in POUNCE makes it much more difficult for students to choose a section that they find interesting. This inhibits student engagement and faculty's ability to engage students at the beginning of the semester.**

A major concern among students is their inability to see course themes listed at the time of registration. Only 7.2% of current students report that they chose to enroll in their section of INQR because of interest in the topic. See table below for complete compilation of students' reasons for enrolling in INQR 1000.

Reason For Enrolling In Particular INQR 1000 Section

Category	Percentage
Professor	7.0%
Convenient Time	39.0%
Interesting Topic	7.0%
Other Reason	47.0%

While this is a frustration among students, the faculty focus group expressed completely different sentiments regarding student's ability to see course themes at the time of registration. Per the focus group, some current faculty stated that they actually liked that students could not see course themes beforehand. According to instructors, this provides for a much more diverse classroom and captures students from differing majors and of course, those who are undecided. Having an array of different student majors challenges the instructors to think on their feet and keep the class interesting for everyone. However, they acknowledged that the inability of students to see course themes pre-registration was an inconvenience that makes for an uphill battle at the start of each term. Students coming into the course blind place a burden on instructors to build momentum and establish a level of interest in the themes provided. Given the

course is only ten weeks, this places a strain on the level of productivity achieved in the course. In the survey, only 40.5% of students responded that their academic advisor was somewhat helpful in selecting their INQR 1000 course. This is most likely because academic advisors themselves cannot view course descriptions in Pounce, so they cannot suggest sections that might fulfill student interests or talents. The table below summarizes student impressions of their advising experience in relation to INQR 1000.

Academic Advising for INQR 1000

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful At All
	21.0%	41.0%	35.0%

Chart y-axis scale: 0.00%, 5.00%, 10.00%, 15.00%, 20.00%, 25.00%, 30.00%, 35.00%, 40.00%, 45.00%

6. Current INQR 1000 10 week schedule is too rigid.

Faculty in the focus group and interviews expressed frustration with the current 10-week schedule. First, when students come into INQR 1000 without knowing the topic it takes about 2 weeks to get the students interested. This takes away from an already tight schedule. Faculty stated, if students knew the topic ahead of time and were selecting their INQR 1000 course based on the topic, they could hit the ground running with engaged, interested students versus having to introduce the topic and build interest among the students.

An additional class meeting or two would allow for more assessment potential after the INQR expo. For example, faculty at the focus group suggested a wrap-up class meeting after the expo would be beneficial to them and the students alike.

Faculty also pointed out that the tight schedule was particularly difficult this semester with the missed class session due to Hurricane Irma. Some flexibility added to the INQR schedule to permit adjustments in the event of inclement weather, sickness, emergencies, etc is needed.

Overall Research Conclusion

The research performed thus far has shed some light on the general impression of INQR 1000 from the student, faculty, and administrative perspectives. However, without a comparison group or a longitudinal component, we cannot evaluate the full impact of INQR 1000 on students. While the total impact of the program was not evaluated, the above research provides a baseline structure for future evaluators to build upon in order to continue to improve the program moving forward.

Recommendations

1. Augusta University should focus attention and resources on developing a clear purpose for INQR 1000. That purpose should be clearly and consistently presented in syllabi and other program documents.

2. Develop a means of systematically evaluating INQR 1000

3. Increase faculty diversification and recruitment.

4. Make topic visible in Pounce for students and advisors.

5. Increase flexibility in schedule of class meetings to provide for unforeseen emergencies and/or a wrap-up session after the INQR expo.

References

Michael, John. (2006). Where's the Evidence that Active Learning Works? *Advanced*

    Physical Education, 30, 159-167*.*

Kuh, George D. (2008). High-Impact Educational Practices. *Association of American*

    Colleges and Universities, 1-35.

Appendix A: Methodology

The majority of data discussed in this report comes from four sources: interviews, student surveys, syllabus review, and a faculty focus group. Each of these sources of data has its strengths and weaknesses. The strength of this report rests on the ways in which data from the various sources reinforces conclusions from the other sources.

Interviews

We interviewed 3 groups: Administrators, INQR Committee Faculty, and Current Faculty Teaching INQR. Interview questions were developed for each group based on their specific role in the INQR program. We selected members from each group and contacted them to schedule an interview. All those contacted agreed to participate in an interview. A total of 9 interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted in teams, with one researcher asking the questions and one researcher taking notes. The interview questions for each stakeholder group are provided at the end of this appendix.

Student Survey

The survey used for this study was developed after the review of the current state of the INQR program and its proposed SLOs. The survey was administered in one format: online. The survey instrument is provided at the end of this appendix. The version provided is a downloaded version of the on-line survey and contains the coding scheme; codes are indicated by the number in parentheses that accompanies each of the potential responses.

No attempt was made to distribute the survey randomly; the survey was sent to all currently enrolled INQR 1000 students. The survey was distributed before the INQR Expo as to increase likelihood of student participation.

The survey was sent to all 337 currently enrolled students in INQR 1000. Of this number, 120 responded to the survey. Nine responses were removed because the respondent did not agree to take the survey. Altogether, there were 111 usable responses for a response rate of 32.9%.

Syllabus Review

A syllabus review was completed of current semester INQR 1000 syllabi. We reviewed common course purpose and learning outcomes based on the template given to faculty. It is included at the end of this appendix.

Focus Group

The final data collection method used was a faculty focus group. The primary purpose of the focus group was to gain the perspective of the faculty currently teaching INQR 1000. A total of 4 faculty members attended the focus group. The focus group was conducted by one of the researchers with two other researchers present as note-takers. The script was developed in a way that allowed participants to identify and discuss INQR in its totality as well as provide insight and reflections on the faculty's perspectives of INQR 1000. The script is provided at the end of this appendix.

Interview Questions

Questions for Administrators

1. What do you believe is the purpose of INQR?
2. Does INQR improve student retention/student performance and ultimately student graduation rates?
3. What is your general impression of INQR?
4. Have you ever taught INQR? Why or Why not?
5. What is unique to INQR that separates it from the university's former orientation class?
6. Is there a reason why INQR is only a 1-hr course vs a 3-hr course?
7. Do you think that if INQR were a 3-hr course that it would be more attractive to both faculty and students alike?
8. In your opinion, what are some of the strengths and weaknesses of INQR?
9. Look at logic model?

Questions for Committee Faculty

1. What was your role on the INQR committee?
2. In the beginning, what did you think was the goal of INQR?
3. How did the goal evolve as the committee progressed?
4. What is your general impression of INQR?
5. In your opinion, would making INQR a 3-hr course make it more attractive to you as a faculty member? Why or why not?
6. What was your greatest frustration with the INQR process?
7. What made you decide to leave the INQR committee?
8. Look at the logic model?

Questions for Current Faculty Teaching INQR

1. What do you believe is the purpose of INQR?
2. What is your general impression of INQR?
3. Why did you decide to teach INQR?
4. In your opinion, would making INQR a 3-hr class make it more attractive as a faculty member? Why or why not?
5. How does INQR contribute to student retention and academic performance?
6. What would you say are some of the strengths and weaknesses of the INQR program as it now stands?
7. Look at logic model?

Student Survey

INQ 1000 Student Survey

You are being asked to participate in a research study to learn more about students' experiences in the INQR 1000 classes. You are being asked to participate because you are currently enrolled in INQR 1000. This research is being conducted by graduate students in the Master of Public Administration program, as part of their coursework. Your individual responses will be kept confidential. The results of this study will be shared with INQR 1000 leadership to help improve the program.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:
You have read the above information.
You voluntarily agree to participate.
You are at least 18 years of age.

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.
- ❍ Agree (1)
- ❍ Disagree (2)

Q1 What do you think the purpose of INQR 1000 is?

_____

Q2 Why did you choose to enroll in this section of INQR 1000?
- ❍ I wanted this particular professor (1)
- ❍ The time slot was convenient (2)
- ❍ I was interested in the topic (3)
- ❍ Other (4) _____

Q4 Please rate the impact this course has had on your ability to

	A negative impact (1)	No impact (2)	A small positive impact (3)	Some positive impact (4)	A big positive impact (5)
Develop and ask questions that require discovery, research, and/or creativity to answer (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Contribute effectively to a group to produce answers to a question (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Collect appropriate resources to help answer a question (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Engage in positive and meaningful discussions with individuals who represent multiple perspectives on a question (4)	○	○	○	○	○

Q5 How often do you meet with classmates outside of class to discuss classwork?
- ○ Never (1)
- ○ About once every 2 or 3 weeks (2)
- ○ About once a week (3)
- ○ More than once a week (4)

Q6 How often do you meet with the faculty member teaching your INQR 1000 class outside of class to discuss classwork?

❍ Never (1)
❍ Once this semester (2)
❍ Two or 3 times this semester (3)
❍ Four or more times this semester (4)

Q8 Compared to your other courses, rate the relative frequency you meet with your INQR 1000 classmates and faculty outside of class to discuss classwork.

	Less often (1)	About the same (2)	More often (3)
Faculty (1)	❍	❍	❍
Classmates (2)	❍	❍	❍

Q9 If it was not a required class, would you take INQR 1000 as an elective?

❍ Yes (1)
❍ Maybe (2)
❍ No (3)

Q10 Thinking only about the INQR 1000 class, about how much do you actively participate in class discussion?

❍ A great deal (1)
❍ A lot (2)
❍ A moderate amount (3)
❍ A little (4)
❍ None at all (5)

Q11 Compared to your other classes, rate the relative frequency you participate in your INQR 1000 class.

❍ Less than my other courses (1)
❍ About the same as my other courses (2)
❍ More than my other courses (3)

Q12 How helpful was your academic advisor in selecting your INQR 1000 section?
- ❍ Not helpful (1)
- ❍ Somewhat helpful (2)
- ❍ Very helpful (3)

Q13 Have the skills you are learning in INQR 1000 impacted your work in the other courses you are currently taking?
- ❍ Not at all (1)
- ❍ Limited positive impact (2)
- ❍ Positive impact (3)

Q14 What do you think could be improved about the INQR 1000 class?

_____

Q15 What do you see as the benefits of being in the INQR 1000 class?

_____

Q16 What about your INQR 1000 class makes it different from your other classes?

_____

End of Block: Default Question Block

Syllabus Review

Inquiry (INQR) 1000: Section Topic Title
Day of Week, Time of Day, Room Number

Instructor's Name
Instructor's Office
Instructor's Office
Hours Instructor's
Telephone Instructor's
Email

Common Course Description
Inquiry 1000 is a one credit hour, small group, discussion-based course designed to engage lower division students in the discovery, exploration, and analysis of ideas that faculty members, across a variety of disciplines, study and investigate. Throughout the course, students will discuss how professors, and ultimately students, formulate questions to research/explore, discuss ways to collect and analyze data to help answer questions, and convey the results to answer a specific question.

Common Learning Outcomes
At the conclusion of the course, the student will be able to
- Develop and ask relevant questions which require discovery, research, and/or creativity to answer;
- Collect appropriate resources to help answer a question;
- Engage in positive and meaningful debates with various individuals within the class representing multiple perspectives on a question; and
- Contribute effectively to a group to produce answers to a question using written, oral, and/or graphic skills.

Attendance
Attendance policies to be followed as outlined in the Georgia Regents University Catalog.

Assignments
This course is topic-driven, designed to encourage active engagement with the material. All assignments will determined by the individual professor.

Grading
This course is graded in a traditional A-F system.

Focus Group Script

Welcome!

My name is _____. We are MPA fall 2017 graduation candidates conducting research in order to gain some insight into the teaching aspect of the INQR 1000 class and obtain an overall understanding of the faculty perspective. Thank you for being here today and sharing your thoughts and concerns with us about the INQR program as it now exists. Please let me introduce _____. They will be taking notes on our conversation. Rest assured that they will not write down anyone's name and your answers and responses will remain anonymous so please feel free to participate.

1. What do you think is the purpose of the INQR class?

    - Based on class discussion and feedback, how do you feel this is in line with what students perceive the purpose to be?

1. What was your main reason for teaching the class?

    - How do you determine what the topic of your class is going to be?

    - How do you think the program would change if a standard topic was assigned for each semester?

    - What method do you use to evaluate students when assigning grades?

1. What do you like best about teaching the INQR class?

1. What, if any, is your least favorite part about the INQR class?

1. What are some areas of the INQR program you feel could be improved upon?

    - What do you feel is needed to bring about these improvements?

1. Do you feel the 1 hour credit is adequate time for the class? Why or why not?

1. What is your general impression of how students perceive the INQR class?

- What are some examples of positive feedback you have received from students regarding the INQR class?

- What are some examples of negative feedback you have received from students regarding the INQR class?

1.   Do you believe that the Office of the Registrar and the academic advisors are properly assigning INQR classes to incoming students? If not, where do you think the disconnect is?

1.   Do you believe that the INQR program and classes better prepare incoming students to succeed academically and ultimately graduate?

Thank you very much for participating in today's focus group. Your feedback has helped us to gain a better understanding of the problems and concerns and successes of the INQR program from a faculty viewpoint—With your feedback and the feedback of the students from a survey they took, our hope is that we can provide feedback that will shape INQR into a successful and enriching program for all incoming students that allows them to succeed academically and of course leads them to graduate from Augusta University.