

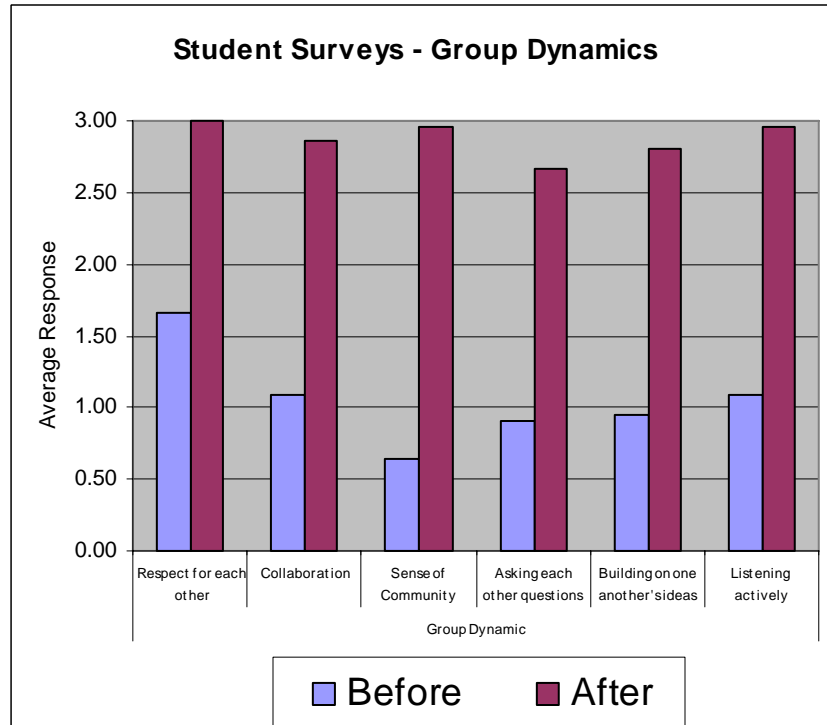
# Touchstones at The University of Oklahoma: Spring 2006

In the spring 2006, Dr. Chris Howard, then Associate Vice President for Strategic and Leadership Initiatives and current President at Hamden-Sydney College, led a course at The University of Oklahoma, called *Leader in You, Leader in Us*. In this course, students used the Touchstones volume, *Mapping the Future*. Students took turns preparing and leading the discussions using *Mapping the Future—Leader's Supplement*. Twenty-one students from the course completed a survey that asked them to rate on a scale of 0-3, how present successful group dynamics and individual skills were at the beginning and end of the course. Similar results were reported in the subsequent programs run by Dr. Howard while at the University of Oklahoma.

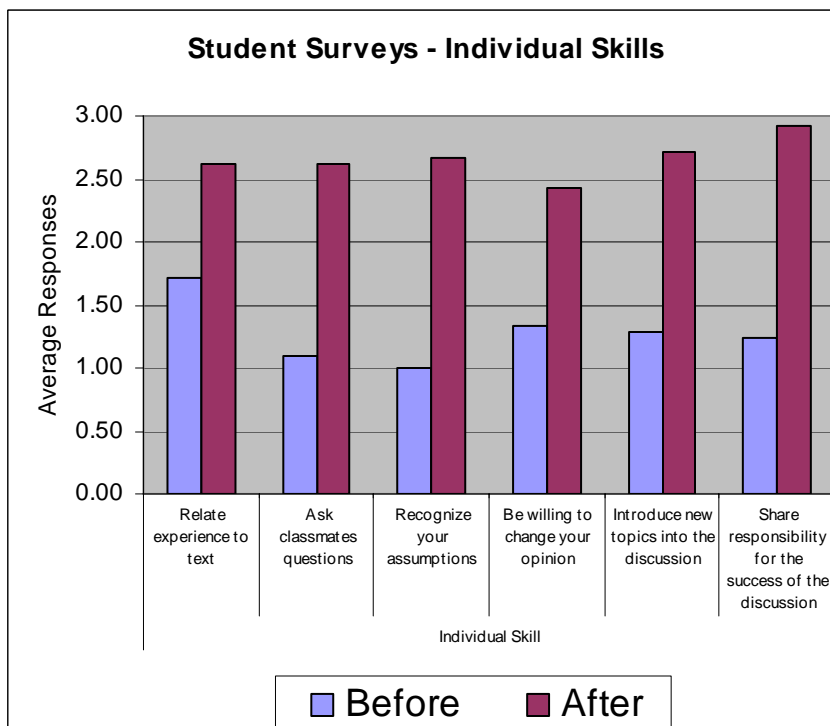
## Group Dynamics

Students reported dramatic improvements in the group's performance within the discussions. The scale was from 0 (Dynamic was not present at all) to 3 (Dynamic was consistently present). *Collaboration*: 1.10 before to 2.86 after, *Asking each other questions*: 0.90 to 2.67, *Building on one another's ideas*: 0.95 to 2.81, and *Listening actively*: 1.10 to 2.95, show large improvements in their interactions by the group as a whole.

*Respect for each other*: 1.67 to 3.00 and *Sense of community*: 0.64 to 2.95 show the additional community building that Touchstones discussions achieve.



Scale: 0-Dynamic not present, 1-Rarely present, 2-Occasionally present, 3-Consistently present.



Scale: 0-Skill not present, 1-Rarely present, 2-Occasionally present, 3-Consistently present.

## Individual Skills

While slightly less dramatic than the group dynamics, students consistently described personal improvement in both their participation skills as a discussion member (*Asking classmates questions*: 1.10 to 2.62, *Introducing new topics into the discussion*: 1.29 to 2.71, and *Sharing responsibility for the success of the discussion*: 1.24 to 2.93) as well as the higher order reading and thinking skills (*Relating personal experience to the texts*: 1.71 to 2.62, *Recognizing their assumptions*: 1.00 to 2.67, and *Being willing to change their opinion*: 1.33 to 2.43).

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## Student responses to open-ended questions

*Would you recommend this course to other students? (All 21 students answered in the affirmative.)*

- Absolutely. This class has not only challenged me intellectually but also challenged me to improve as a person.
- YES! Nothing like it is available in other departments. Increases self-awareness and stretches your mind to its limits.
- Yes, it is beneficial to one's leadership and social skills. You broaden your mind and learn to communicate ideas in an engaging and thought-provoking fashion.
- I believe this course has the power and potential to transform the social, intellectual, and organizational dynamics at our university, for the better.
- Absolutely. I grew intellectually and personally. This class allowed me to not only perfect my leadership skills but explore my inner-self (as well as selves of other students) which will make me a more efficient leader and individual in the future.
- Yes. The text, professor, and experience with other students offer an unparalleled opportunity to challenge one's self and peers. The growth shown over the semester is atypical of most collegiate courses.

*What was the biggest strength/benefit of the discussions to you as an individual?*

- I learned about my prejudices, not to individuals but to ideas. I have learned to re-evaluate why I think the way I do and to see beyond the borders of what I think I know.
- It has helped me to become more self-aware and challenged me to question not only my beliefs, but everyone else's as well. I feel more confident in participating in discussions of all types, overcoming an over-reliance or deference to expertise, while also increasing my ability to actively listen to others and respond meaningfully to comments.
- I feel that I really learned how to listen; not just listen, but really try to understand the other person.
- I have never felt this much passion for topics in a classroom before.
- It has helped me to know myself better; I know my strengths and weaknesses.
- I now fully consider other people's views and opinions. Prior to this, I was only half listening and still judging them through my beliefs.
- The other members of the discussion group. I was able to learn so much about each of them and through them. Absolutely this course has forever impacted how each of us relates to others.

*What was the biggest strength/benefit of the discussions to the class as a whole?*

- We learned to respect one another and put aside our agendas and fear of grades to collaborate to have a meaningful, interesting discussion.
- After we became comfortable with each other, there was an openness that allowed us to speak freely about difficult or complex subjects—really enhanced the learning experience.
- We learned a lot about each other which in turn helped us learn about ourselves.
- The building of a sense of 'community'. After this class, I think we all learned our differences, but put those down to become friends.
- The ability to open up and act unselfishly in a group. Now people don't just talk so people know they have something to say—there is much more thought and consideration.
- Different personalities and perspectives were challenged, molded, and transformed.
- It helped everyone to grow together as an effective body or community. It helped us develop respect for one another.