

Boston College
June 3, 2019

PULSE Program for Service Learning
E1A Form for Assessment of the Undergraduate Core

1) Have formal learning outcomes for the department's Core courses been developed? What are they?
(What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

Students completing the Theology core will be able to:

1. Engage the quest for truth and meaning that generate theological insight in Christianity and other religious traditions;
2. Explore the fundamental texts and practices that shape Christian theology;
3. Understand the dynamic relationship between religious truth-claims and their moral implications, both personal and societal;
4. Engage the various disciplinary methods required for theological reflection, including textual, historical, social, and cultural analysis; and
5. Relate theological inquiry to the enduring questions animating the broader liberal arts tradition.

PULSE Core Goals

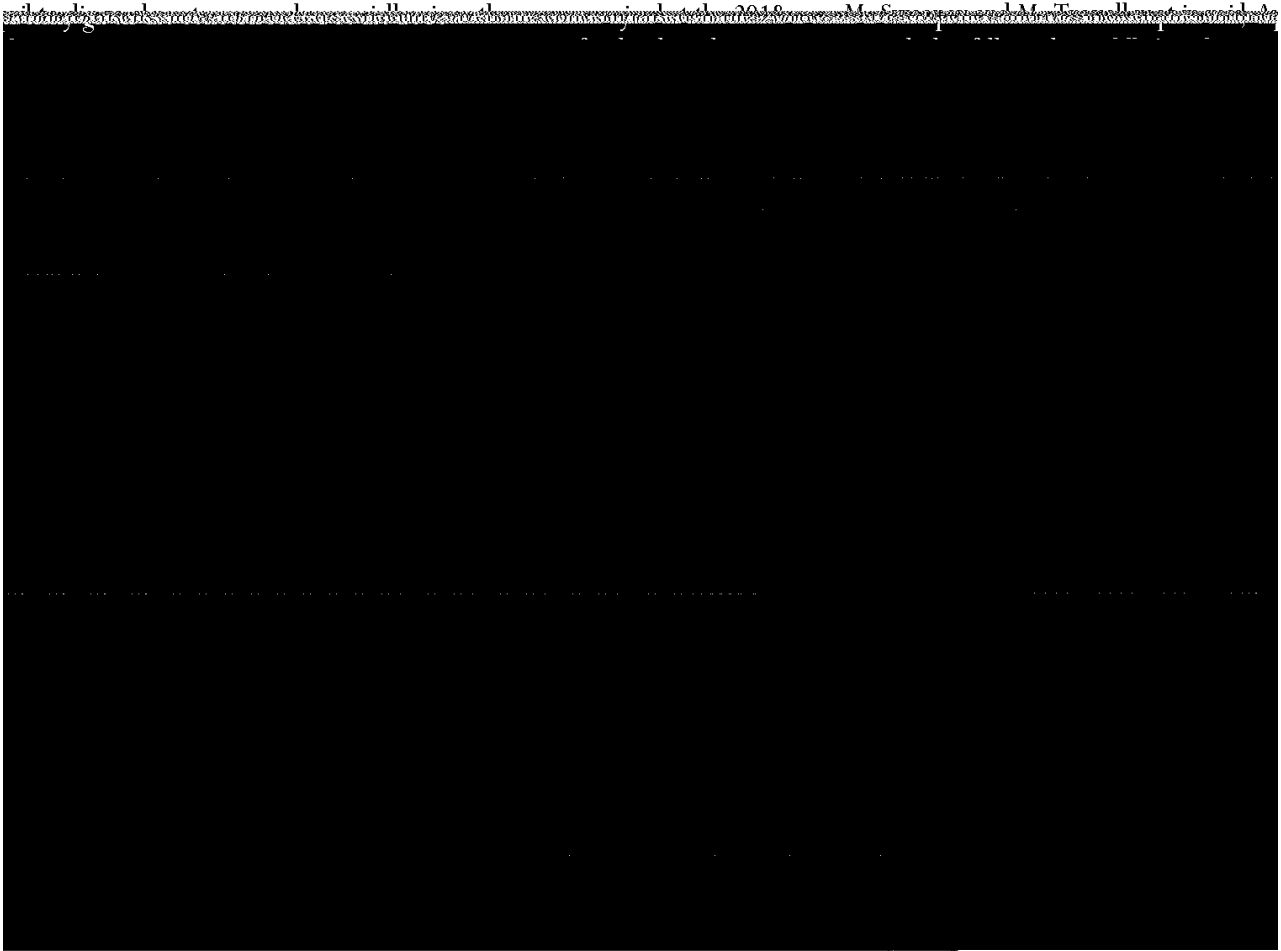
1. Students will have an understanding of the ways in which service and the study of philosophical and theological traditions inform each other;
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to employ an ongoing praxis methodology in which they *encounter* challenging social realities, critically *reflect* upon them in conversation with philosophical and theological traditions, and *act* with informed and critical agency;
3. Students will develop a critical understanding of intersectionality and interlocking structures of privilege and oppression, especially race, class,

- B. As a faculty we developed a writing prompt that was given to students by a set date early in September, and the same prompt was given by faculty at the end of the school year.
- C. Faculty were asked to submit to the PULSE office six end-of-year papers -- 2 weak, 2 middling, 2 strong – and the corresponding beginning-of-year

Scale Used

- 1 = Does not meet requirement
- 2 = Somewhat meets requirement
- 3 = Meets requirement

Method



Strong Papers

Core Assessment AY 2019-2020

Discussion regarding core assessment for AY 2018-2019 resulted in a decision to re-assess goal #3 again in AY 2019-2020 so as to enable faculty to implement any curricular changes and assess the impact of these right away (rather than having to wait to cycle through all the goals to assess impact)

The above fall prompt will be assigned to all PULSE core-level students, and the beginning-of-year papers will be due to faculty on *either* **Tuesday, September 3 (for TuTh classes)** *or* **Wednesday, September 4 (for MWF classes)**; the end-of-year date is *ibid*.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 (p. 8-9): Michelle Sterk Barrett, *Fostering the Spiritual Development of Undergraduates through*

APPENDIX 1

Source: Michelle Sterk Barrett, *Fostering the Spiritual Development of Undergraduates through Service-Learning* (PhD Dissertation, University of Massachusetts Boston, 2015), 119-121.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics related to independent variables are reported in this section.

Descriptive statistics related to the spirituality variables will be discussed in the following section analyzing the first research question.

As demonstrated in Table 10, students generally had a very strong PULSE experience. Mean responses to all of the independent variables fell between 3 and 4 indicating overall student agreement with each statement. The highest mean and lowest standard deviation was in response to whether students felt supported by their PULSE professors. It is c(w) 2 (10 (r) va) 4 (r() -10 () - (r) v) 2 4 (e)

The problems that caused people at my placement to need social services were frequently the result of circumstances beyond their control.

271 3.52 .595

APPENDIX 2

Fostering the Spiritual Development of Undergraduates through Service

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Holistic student development, the belief that education should foster the development of the whole person, is a primary mission of higher education (American Council on Education, 1937; Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2006; Kiessling, 2010). One component of holistic student development is spiritual development (Kiessling, 2010).

Studies have found that undergraduates a ET Q q9.92cm BT 50 0Tf () I 0 0589.92 cm BT 5022 cm BT 7

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a pedagogy that has shown promise in facilitating the spiritual development of undergraduates as a limited number of prior studies have found a relationship between spiritual growth and service-learning participation (Astin et al., 2011a; Cherry, De Berg, & Porterfield, 2001; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Lovik, 2010; Radecke, 2007; Yeh, 2010). The existing studies do not simultaneously use comprehensive measures of both spiritual growth and service-learning participation and, therefore, offer inadequate analysis of the relationship between the two. This study seeks to fill this gap and offer further understanding of how service-learning may be utilized as a pedagogical tool to foster spiritual growth within an academic

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2) Which aspects of the service-learning experience relate to the occurrence of spiritual growth?

3) What role do “challenge” and “support” play in the process of spiritual growth? These research questions were addressed through an explanatory design mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) that incorporated a quantitative and qualitative strand.

The third research question is derived from the theoretical perspective of Nevitt Sanford (1962, 1966, 1967). Sanford proposed that optimal college student development

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Interviewees were also selected to ensure variation in academic disciplines, ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds, PULSE classes, and PULSE placements.

Of the 272 study participants in the quantitative strand, 36% were male

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2001; Kiely, 2005); exposure to complex social problems without easy solutions (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kiely, 2005); exposure to social problems that seem unjust (Kiely, 2005); and written reflection activities and class discussions that ask students to think critically about prior assumptions, values, or beliefs (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler et al., 2001; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Hatcher et al., 2004; Kiely, 2005). In order to effectively process these challenges and integrate a new way of thinking into one's being, support can exist in the following ways: reflection activities that provide a student the opportunity to process his/her cognitive dissonance by connecting what he/she is observing in the placement with what he/she is studying in class (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler et al., 2001; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005) or supportive relationships with a faculty member, peers, or placement site supervisor (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher, et al., 2004; Kiely, 2005). Specifically, each student responded to his or her level of agreement with the indicators in Table A1.

For data analysis purposes, these variables were categorized in two different ways. First, independent variables were categorized into *Total Challenge* and *Total Support* scales to consider how Sanford's

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Astin, & Lindholm, 2011b; Braskamp et al., 2006; Love & Talbot, 1999; Roehlkeptian et

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differences in the individual service-learning experiences that may have related to whether spiritual growth occurred.

An interview protocol was utilized that included a list of open-ended questions consistent with the research questions. Interviews explored the role that each of the following may have played in spiritual growth: group reflection discussions, written reflection, relationships, cognitive dissonance, a high quality service experience, and connection between coursework and service experience. Interviewees were also asked about demographic characteristics that might have influenced spiritual growth including: prior community service and service-learning experience, religious background, and family background.

The unique aspects of Boston College and the PULSE Program may limit generalizability of findings to other service-learning experiences. Specifically, PULSE is distinct from other service-learning programs in that it is a full academic year, it includes more hours of weekly service (10-12) than is typical and academic content is focused on the disciplines of philosophy and theology. Boston College is unique from other higher education institutions in that it is a highly selective, Catholic higher education institution. Each of these aspects of the PULSE Program and Boston College may have impacted the way in which spiritual

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in *Spiritual Orientation* during this time frame. Analyzing the mean responses for each of the individual spirituality variables similarly demonstrates that spiritual growth occurred as all means changed in the positive direction and 43 of 54 of these changes were statistically significant (See Tables 1-6). Similarly, mean responses for all of the spirituality scales changed in the positive direction and all were statistically significant (see Table 7).

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Effect Size of Pre-Survey/Post-Survey Responses to Spiritual Identification Variables (N=272)

Variable	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		

Being on a

^aExtent to which the variable describes the respondent. 1=Not at all 2=To some Extent 3=To a great extent

^bImportance to the respondent. 1=Not important 2=Somewhat important 3=Very important 4=Essential

^cLevel of agreement with the statement. 1=Strongly disagree 2=Disagree somewhat 3=Agree somewhat 4=Agree strongly

^dFrequency of Occurrence. 1=Not at all or Not applicable 2=Occasionally 3=Frequently

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world^a

Helping others who are in difficulty ^a	3.54	.624	3.69	.500	<.001	.27
Improving my understanding of other cultures and countries ^a	3.25	.791	3.47	.659	<.001	.30
Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment ^a	2.52	.824	2.79	.880	<.001	.32
Most people can grow spiritually without being religious ^b	3.24	.777	3.40	.716	.001	.21

We

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Table 6

Means, Standard

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life; were engaged with the question of how to live their philosophy of life with integrity and authenticity; and were facing religious/spiritual struggle as a result of their PULSE experience. The one dimension of spirituality that was not consistently evident among interviewees was a desire to build a deeper relationship with God.

The following quotes from interviewees illustrate these aspects of spiritual growth. The first quote depicts being engaged in a dynamic process of inner reflection to better understand oneself and the meaning and purpose of one's life.

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Consistent with Sanford's (1962; 1966; 1967) theory of student development, the qualitative and quantitative aspects of this study point towards both challenge and support relating to spiritual growth. In the quantitative study, the *Total Challenge*

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Eastern Orthodox	.033	.033
Episcopalian	-.005	.024

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United Church of Christ	.041	.031	.026	.036	.040	.025
None	-.024	-.056	-.058	-.041	-.037	-.047
African American/Black	.145*	.110	.108	.109	.110	.105
Asian American/Asian	.109	.089	.087	.093	.092	.081
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.043	.032	.029	.022	.014	.006
Mexican American/Chicano	-.029	-.046	-.046	-.042	-.044	-.059
Puerto Rican	.013	.033	.036	.039	.050	.078
Other Latino	.053					

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In this proposed model, the process of spiritual growth begins when a student witnesses how injustice impacts the lives of individuals he or she has gotten to know at his or her service site. At the same time a student is being challenged by observing social justice issues at the service site, he or she is simultaneously having his or her assumptions about the world challenged in class. The combination of these challenges leads a student's eyes to be "opened" to the idea that the world is not exactly what he or she believed it to be in a very fundamental way. People living in poverty may ac0.24 12 8 12 589.92 cm q 0.24 0 0 0.24 12 5.92 cm BT50 0 0 0 22107 -190

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Opening Experience. An *Eye Opening Experience* is having an indirect effect on spiritual growth (as measured by change in *Spiritual Orientation*) through *Religious/Spiritual Struggle*.

The following quotes from study participants illustrate the concepts in this model. The first quote demonstrates a students' experience of witnessing injustice. The second quote illustrates how an interviewee was challenged in class. In the third quote, a student describes how PULSE was eye opening. The fourth quote demonstrates a student receiving support from peers while undergoing spiritual struggle. In the final quote, a student describes the dynamic interplay between all aspects of the service-learning experience that led to spiritual growth.

She had glaucoma and lost all vision in one of her eyes. When the other one started to go as well, she came to the United States to get better medical care...now she's dealing with 5% total vision. She wasn't able to work, so she became homeless with her daughter. She's struggling to make ends meet and to find a job that she can actually do. If she had

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opportunity for spiritual growth to occur in the classroom context (Astin et al., 2004).

Furthermore, integrating opportunities for spiritual growth in the classroom has the potential to lead to other personal

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relationships. The effective integration of classroom material and service can help students to make sense of

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Table A1

Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables/PULSE Components (N=272)

Variable	<i>n</i>	M	SD
I felt supported by my PULSE professor.	272	3.81	.481
Class journaling / reflective writing challenged me to think critically about my assumptions, values, and/or beliefs.	270	3.47	.672
There was a diversity of perspectives expressed in my PULSE class and discussion group.	270	3.50	.644
The problems that caused people at my placement to need social services were frequently the result of circumstances beyond their control.	271	3.52	.595
I felt supported by			

Table A5

Regression Analysis Summary for Class Challenge and Witnessing Injustice Predicting Change in Religious/Spiritual Struggle

Predictors	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-3.892	1.467		-2.653	.008
Class Challenge	.195	.116	.107	1.688	.093
Witnessing Injustice Scale	.283	.121	.148	2.342	.020

Table A6

Regression Analysis Summary for Witnessing Injustice, Class Challenge, and an Eye Opening Experience Predicting Change in Religious/Spiritual Struggle

Predictors	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-6.354	1.573		-4.041	.000
Witnessing Injustice Scale	.101	.126			

References

American Council on Education (1937). *The student personnel point of view*. Retrieved from http://www.naspa.org/pubs/files/StudAff_1937.pdf

Astin, A., Astin, H., & Lindholm, J. (2004). *Spirituality in higher education:*

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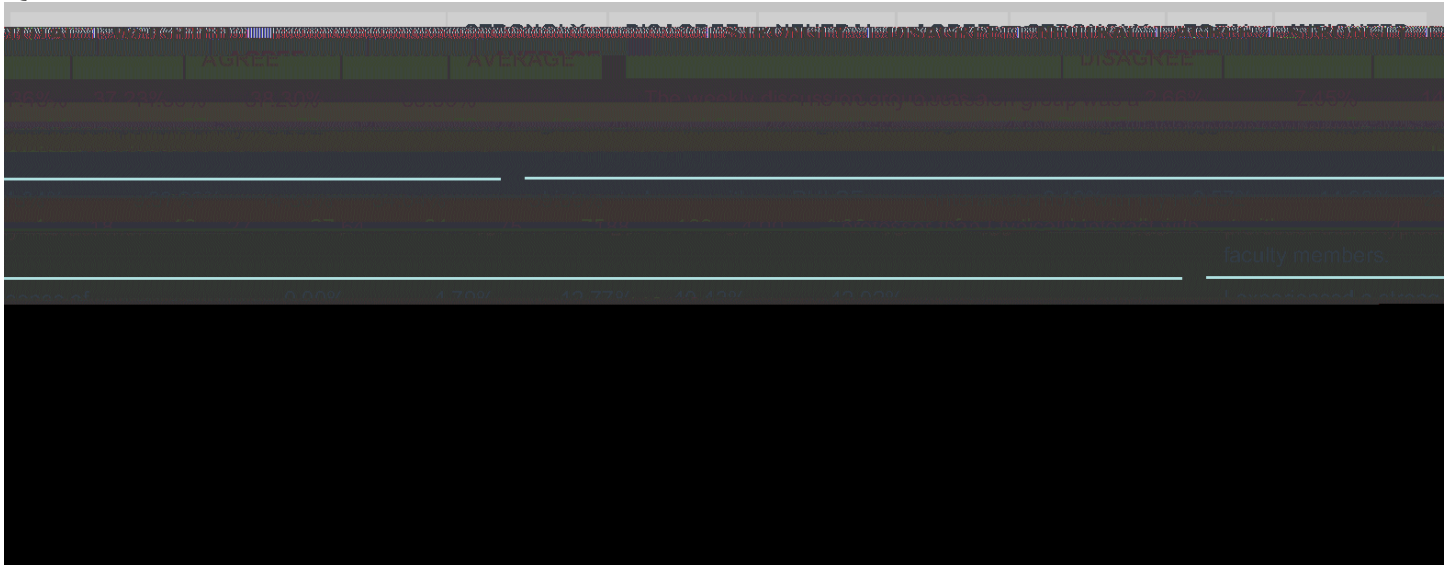
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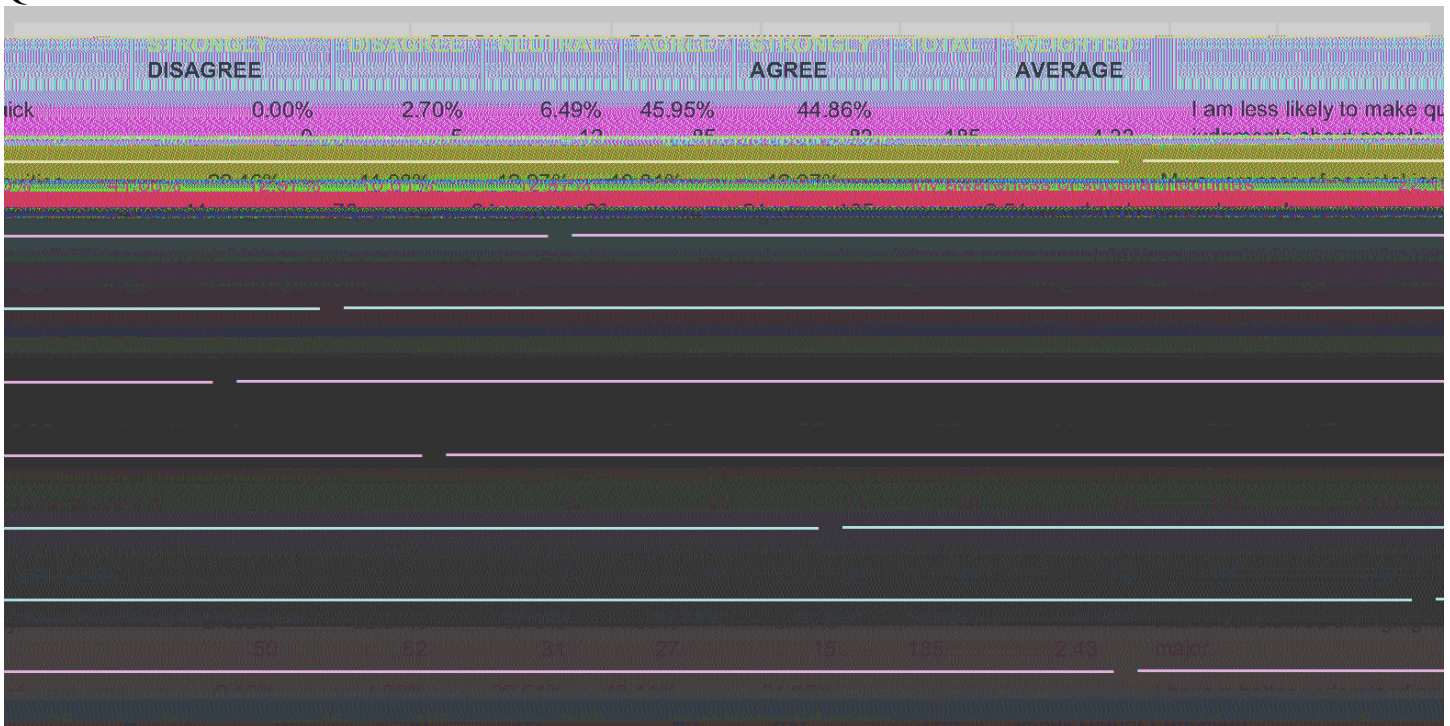
VonDras, D. D., Schmitt, R. R., & Marx, D. (2007). Associations between aspects of spiritual well-being, alcohol use, and related social-cognitions in female college students.

End-of-Year Survey

Question 3



Question 6



End-of-Year Survey, cont.

Question 5

	AVERAGE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
important to me.	4.60	1	2	7				
Prior to PULSE, I had experience in		0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	14.40%	4.40%
social service settings	4.21	82	187	421				
Prior to PULSE, I had little experience		19.79%	26.20%	16.04%	27.81%	10.16%		
I am knowledgeable about the		0.00%	2.14%	14.07%	56.68%			
U.S.								
change.	4.14	2	3	16	112			
diverse backgrounds	4.56							
justice	4.36							
experience	4.21							
I plan to re								
B.C. students	4.49	3	5	12	44	123	187	

Question 9: How would you rate PULSE in your overall Boston College academic experience?

73	Most influential course I have taken.	40.11%
91	One of the most influential courses I have taken.	50.00%
12	Less influential than other courses I have taken.	6.50%
5	Less influential than other courses I have taken.	2.75%
0	Uncertain	0.00%
TOTAL		182