

ACT

Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency

What

- The following report offers results from the American College Testing, Inc.'s Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) exams. The CAAP was identified by the General Education Assessment Task Force as a cost effective and relatively burden-free method of assessing academic progress in three outcome areas: (1) Communications, (2) Computation, and (3) Critical Thinking.

Who

- This report provides analyses for both self-declared (reported on the examination) and targeted class standing. Freshmen and sophomore class standing are of interest in the CAAP Examinations. In order to obtain class standing data, the exams are administered twice per year. In the fall courses where enrollment includes at least 60% freshmen (students with less than fifteen credits) are selected for the potential pool. In the spring, courses where at least 60% of the students enrolled are sophomores (students with at least 40 credits) are selected for the potential pool. From these pools of potential courses, a random selection of courses is chosen until 125 students are selected for each test.

How

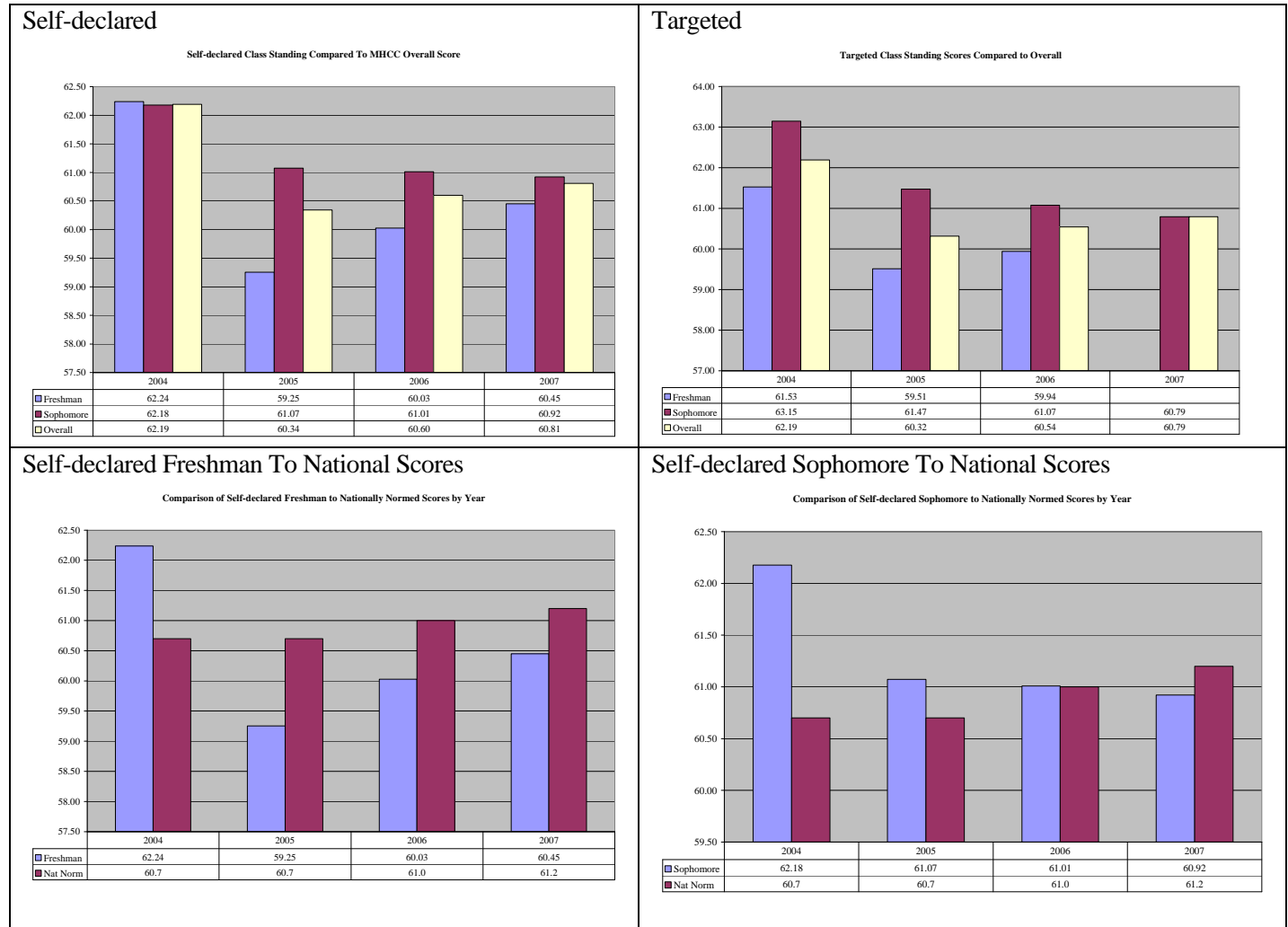
- The report has presented two separate methods of analysis. The first method is a snapshot that compares how students of self-declared academic standing (freshmen vs. sophomores) compare to like students at similar institutions. The second method – the CAAP to CAAP cross-sectional analysis – involves comparing students within MHCC. Both self-declared class standing and targeted (based on sampling methodology) are used to assess academic progress.

When

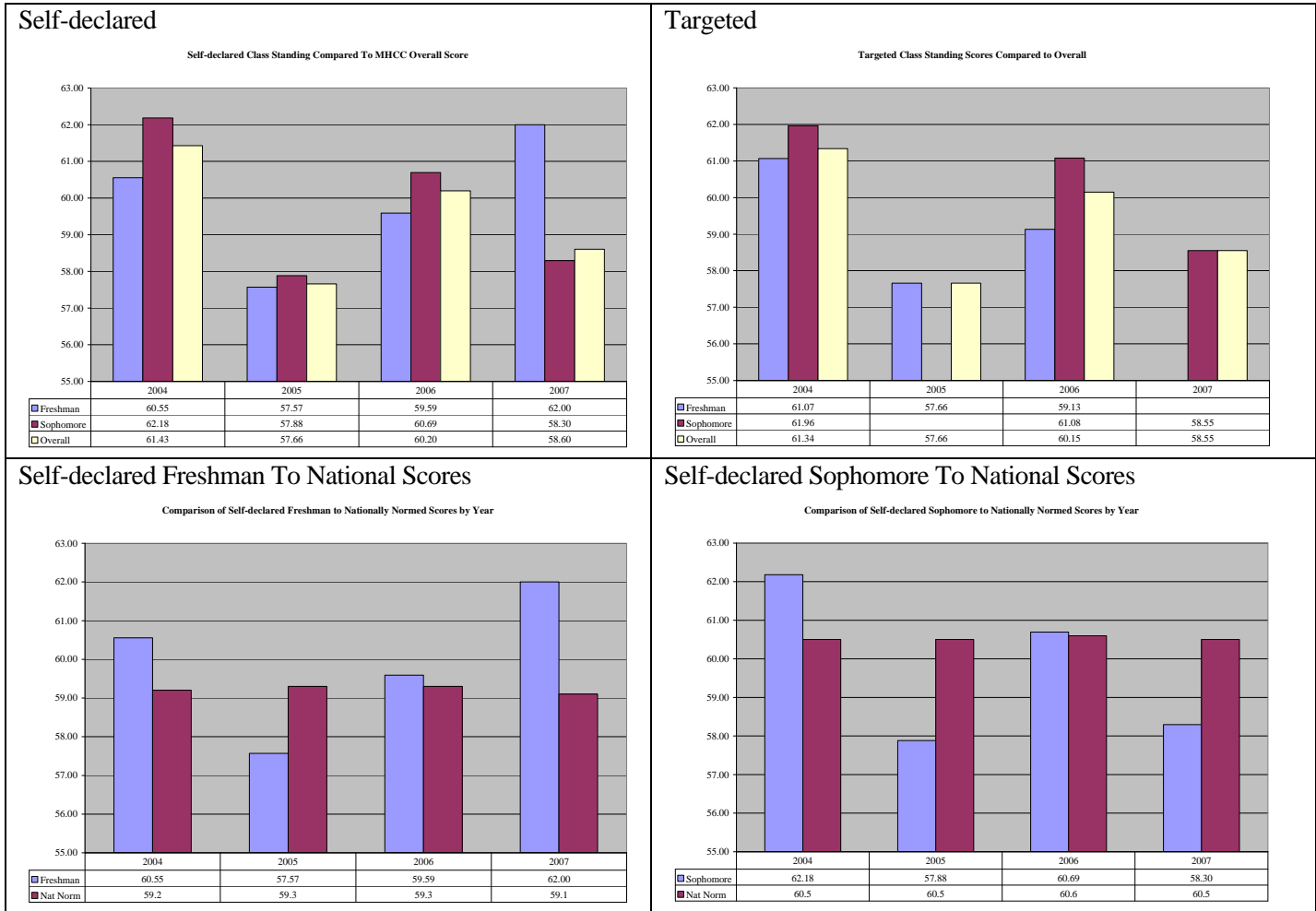
- MHCC started implementing the CAAP in the Spring of 2004. The test has been administered twice a year since that time. In the Spring, the tests are administered to a sample targeting sophomore students. In the Fall, the tests are administered to a sample targeting freshman students. Samples are based on course enrollment.

Communications

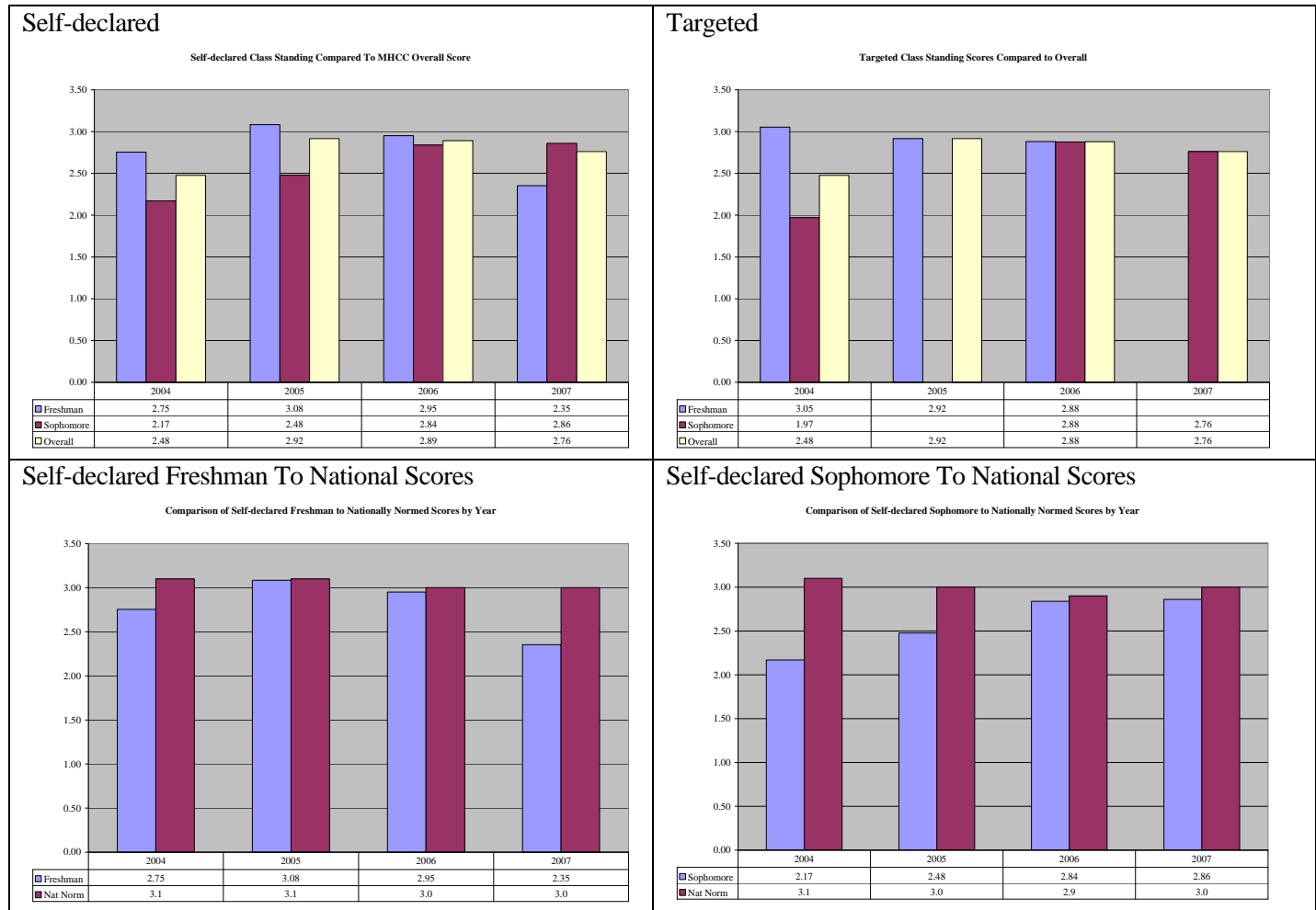
With regard to the Writing Skills exam, sophomores generally performed better than freshmen. For the 2004 administrations of the Writing Skills test, the scores for self-declared sophomores and freshmen were almost identical. By taking a composite score across all administrations of the exam, sophomore average scores were higher than freshmen scores (regardless of whether or not they were self-declared or targeted); this difference was found to be statistically significant. Compared to national scores, self-declared sophomores at MHCC generally tested slightly lower than their counterparts at other two-year public institutions.



For the Reading examination sophomores had slightly higher scores. Self-declared sophomores in the 2006 administration of the exam performed slightly lower than self-declared freshmen. Test data are not available for the Spring 2005 administration of the Reading test. When looking at the average scores for all years combined, the scores for self-declared sophomores were not significantly different from the scores for freshmen. Based on the targeted groups, the difference was found to be statistically significant. When comparing MHCC self-declared sophomores to their counterparts at other two-year public institutions, the scores were inconsistent. For two years, the scores were higher than the nationally normed scores; for one of the years the reading test was administered (2005) scores fell below the national score.

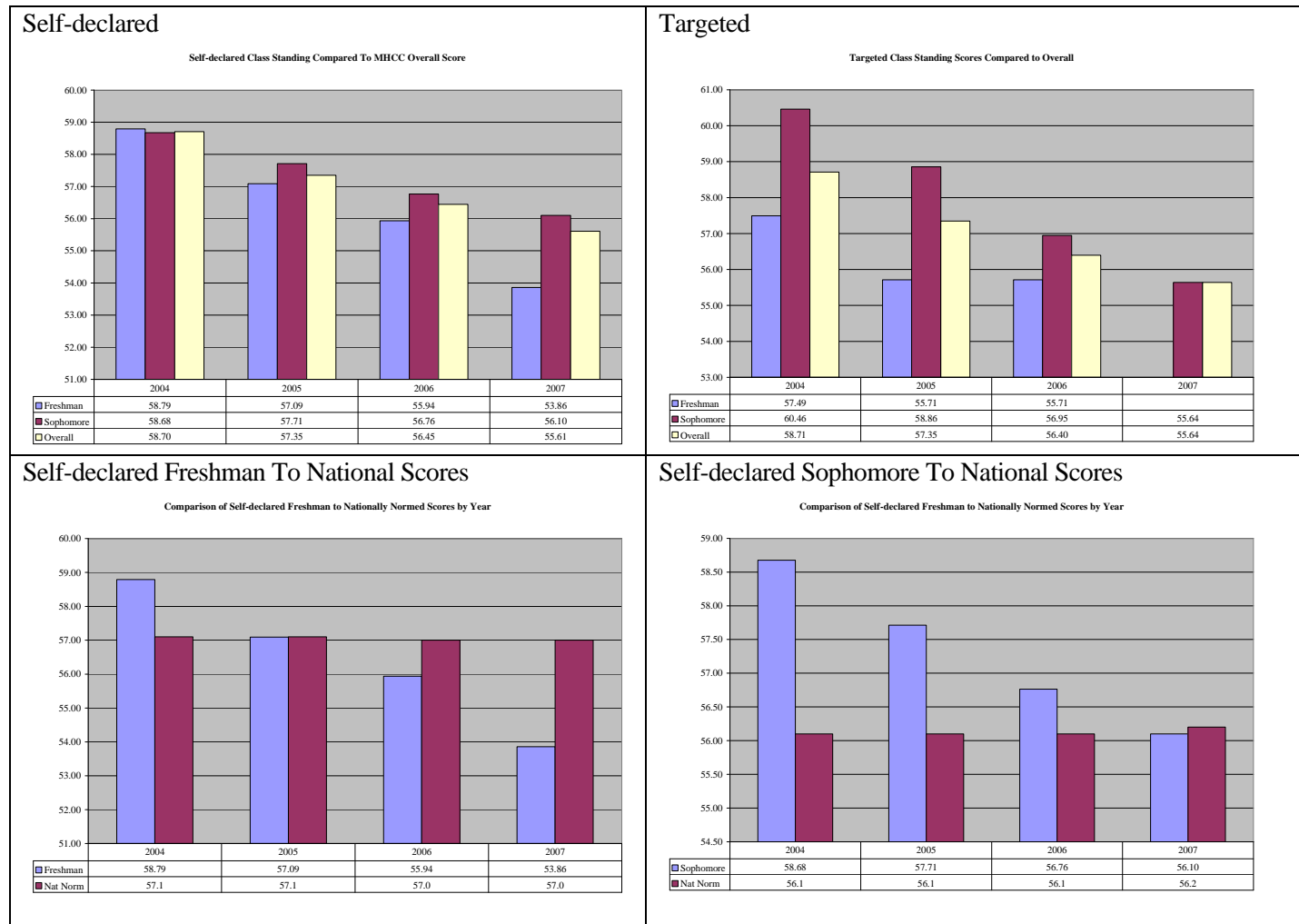


The Writing Essay exam is perhaps the most problematic with regard to General Education Assessment. Freshmen consistently out-scored sophomores on the essay exam in all cases (both when looking at individual administrations of the exam and looking at how freshmen and sophomores are grouped together). The writing portion of general education assessment needs to be reviewed with scrutiny to determine how this area can be improved or, alternatively, to identify clear reasons for this anomaly. Using aggregate scores across years, the difference between freshmen and sophomores was found to be statistically significant. National scores were much higher than the average score of MHCC self-declared sophomores. However, MHCC has been making steady improvement in this area.



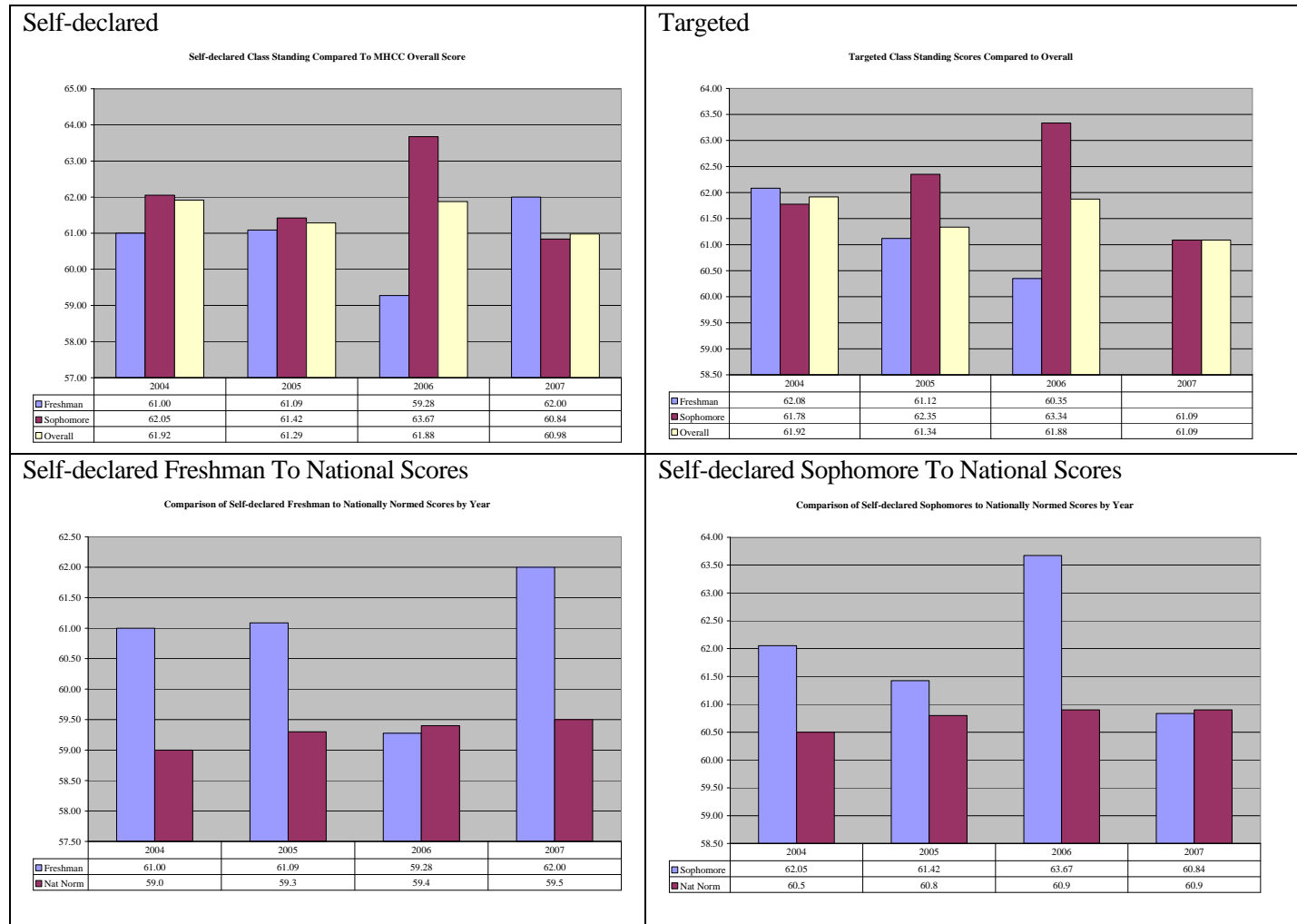
Computation

The Mathematics portion of the survey had mixed results but, generally, sophomores performed better than freshmen. For the self-declared groups, the 2004 administration revealed almost identical scores between sophomores and freshmen. When looking at the data across years, the average scores for the self-declared groups were not statistically significant. Based on the targeted group scores, sophomores received a higher grade than freshmen; the difference on the targeted groups' scores was significantly different. National scores were consistently lower than MHCC self-declared sophomore scores. Self-declared sophomores seem to be well prepared in the area of mathematical computation.



Critical Thinking

In all cases (across years and grouping methods) sophomores obtained higher average scores than did freshmen. The one exception is the 2004 targeted administrations; freshmen received a higher average score than targeted sophomores. When averaging scores across years, self-declared sophomores received higher scores than did self-declared freshmen; these differences were statistically significant. Although the scores for targeted groups did not have a statistically significant difference, sophomore targeted average scores were slightly higher. Critical thinking scores of MHCC self-declared sophomores are consistently higher than national scores; it would seem MHCC is doing a good job of preparing students in this area.



Conclusion

In general, the CAAP indicates that sophomores are achieving academic progress at MHCC. There are several areas that deserve some focus. Most important of these is in the area of essay writing. Concerted effort must be made to determine the factors that are influencing the poorer performance of sophomores. Although of less concern: the Mathematics, Reading, and Critical Thinking exams revealed far smaller differences between freshmen and sophomores. Further investigation into these areas may be warranted.

Additional Discussion

Concerns:

Currently, the General Education Task Force has been interested in the CAAP to CAAP Cross-sectional analysis. The sampling methodology and reports have been developed to address this analysis. There are, however, problems with conducted this analysis. These include:

- ACT recognizes that MHCC's method is used by a number of institutions. However, they caution that this form of analysis is extremely difficult because students should have similar characteristics (See Handout: "Guide to General Education Outcomes Assessment"). The freshman group is not likely to be the same as the sophomore group on characteristics such as motivation or interest in degree obtainment. Consequently, making direct comparisons is suspect.
- The sampling methodology is burdensome. Administering the test twice per year is time consuming. Additionally, in order to identify classes that meet the selection criteria, the sample cannot be selected until the fourth week of the term. Faculty are resistant to the late notification and having to give up class time to take the test.

Recommendation:

Discontinue the Cross-sectional analysis. Focus on comparisons – primarily – of MHCC sophomore students to the nationally normed data. By focusing on the sophomore standing relative to like-students and other two-year public institutions, the college will receive a number of benefits:

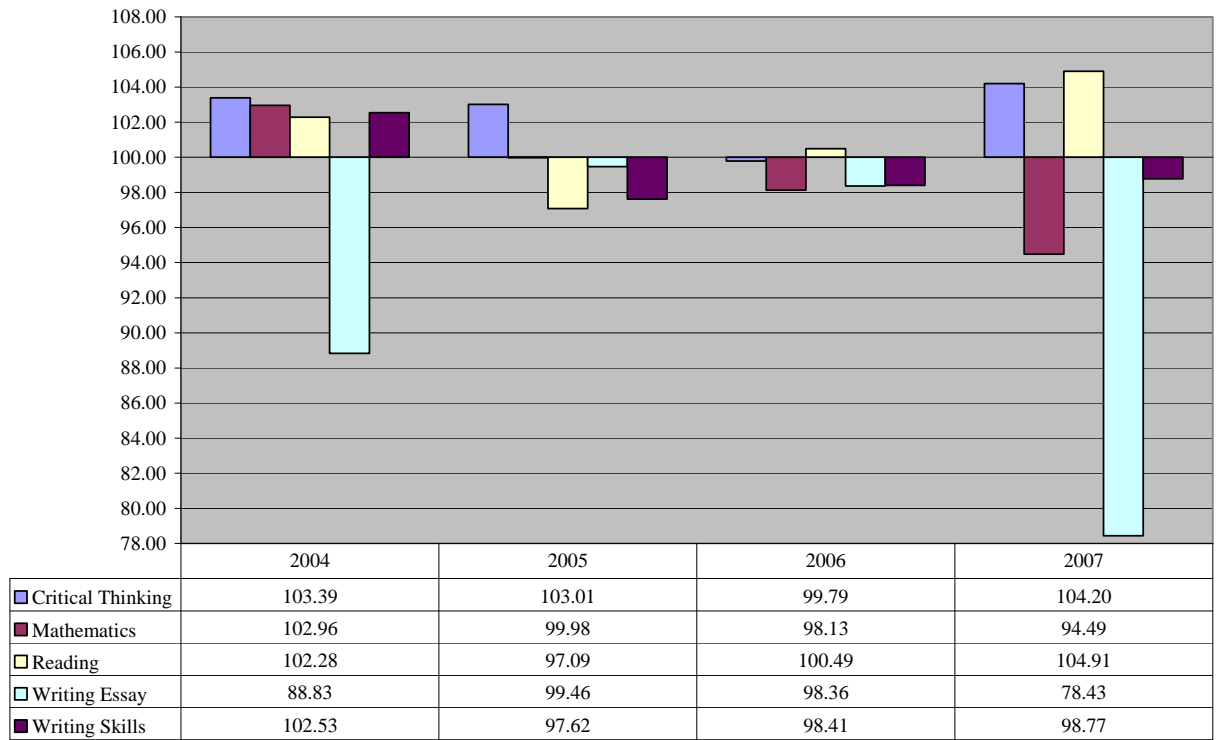
- **Sampling.** MHCC will only be required to administer the CAAP exams once per year; the spring term is recommended. The number of students required can (and should) be increased; the more substantial samples will provide the institution with greater confidence in the accuracy of test results.

The sample can be selected earlier in the term giving faculty and the testing center more time to coordinate administration of the tests. The sample would target courses primarily attended by sophomores.

- **Targets.** By focusing on sophomores relative to national norms, the General Education Assessment Task force can make informed decisions about where MHCC sophomores should be. Clear targets (e.g. for test X, sophomore students should be no less than Y% below the nationally normed score) can be set. This would allow for specific measurement of goal attainment; either the institution is within the targeted percentage or it is not.

Self-declared freshmen would be picked up in the sampling procedure. These students comparing these students to their national norm would provide additional guidelines for establishing targets.

Freshmen



Sophomores

