



Changing the Teaching Culture in a Large Research Oriented Department

Brett Gilley, Francis Jones, and Sara Harris
Earth Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences, UBC, Vancouver, BC, Canada. Contact <fjones@eos.ubc.ca>
http://eos.ubc.ca/research/cwsei/



Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative
at the University of British Columbia



"We've hit it out of the park with Earth and Ocean Sciences, one of seven departments that are part of the university-funded initiative. I will declare them to be a success.", UBC's Dean of Science, in *Science*, 2013.¹

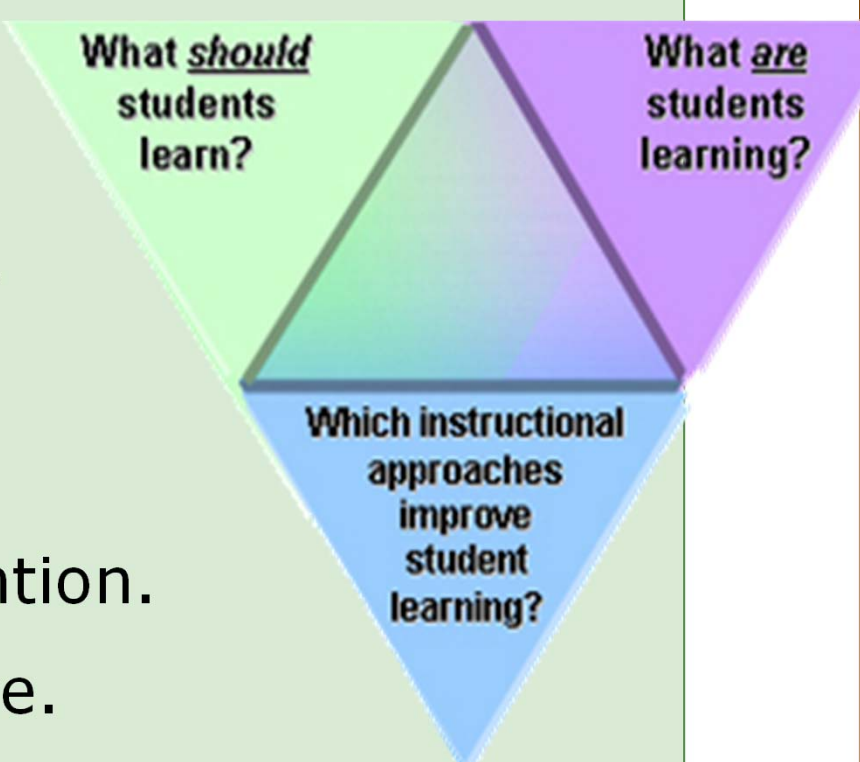
"Without exception, the more the Department as a whole has been involved and seen this as a general Departmental priority, the more successful and dramatic have been the improvements in teaching." in *Change*, 2010.²

Setting and resources

What **conditions** enabled cultural change?

Contributing Factors ...

- Consistent leadership:** UBC, Fac. of Sci, CWSEI, Dep't head, Project director
- CWSEI:** Funding, oversight, expertise, support, training, research guidance
- Framework:** use **Research Based Instructional Strategies** (RBIS)
- Focus:** Faculty and teaching assistants first, courses second.
- Emphasis:** "Visible thinking", student centric, evidence oriented.
- Engage grad.** AND undergraduate students in education development.



CWSEI Model for change:

- Use, Generate, Disseminate** research on learning, & avoid re-invention.
- Sustainability:** Changes to best practices must persist into the future.
- Time / resources** for scholarly practice. Buyout choice: teaching or TA help.
- Community development:** Regular STLF meetings, consult for research faculty, use SciEd literature, bring in expert visitors, run events and workshops, publish own research and presentations, collaborate with STLFs and other colleagues ...

Science Teaching and Learning Fellows (STLFs):

- Background:** Geosci. PhD or MSc with Sci. Ed. expertise & interests
- Buildup of staff** and expertise over time. **Then** long term consistency of personnel.
- Facilitate** communication, consensus building, professional development of RBIS
 - ✓ **Collaborate** with faculty to develop materials and teaching approaches
 - ✓ **Serve** as a local resource for faculty
 - ✓ **Collect / distill / communicate** data to support and guide faculty efforts
 - ✓ **Ensure** sustainability by archiving and disseminating
- Consulting model**
 - ✓ Work with instructors to enhance education, on an as-needed basis.
 - ✓ Support **experienced TAs** to refine needs and develop activities (2-5 per term)
 - ✓ STLF supervises TA, and liaises with instructor.
- Conduct & publish:** Discipline Based Education Research (DBER)

Accomplishments

What was done? What was produced?

The Aim: to dramatically improve undergraduate education in our Department

- 23 courses underwent 2-3 year "transformations".
- ~15 other courses improved using the consulting model.
- ~35 instructors initially incorporated RBIS in their teaching. ~80% retain RBIS.
- 13 instructors supported for 1 course; 14 for 2 courses; 5 for 3 courses; 3 for 4.
- Two stage exams introduced – figure right →
- Faculty continue improving and transfer RBIS to other courses.
- Increase active learning in classes & using technology.
- Peer-to-peer and group interaction.
- Skills development and critical thinking are emphasized.
- Formative & summative assessments improved.
- Increased opportunities for experts to engage with students.

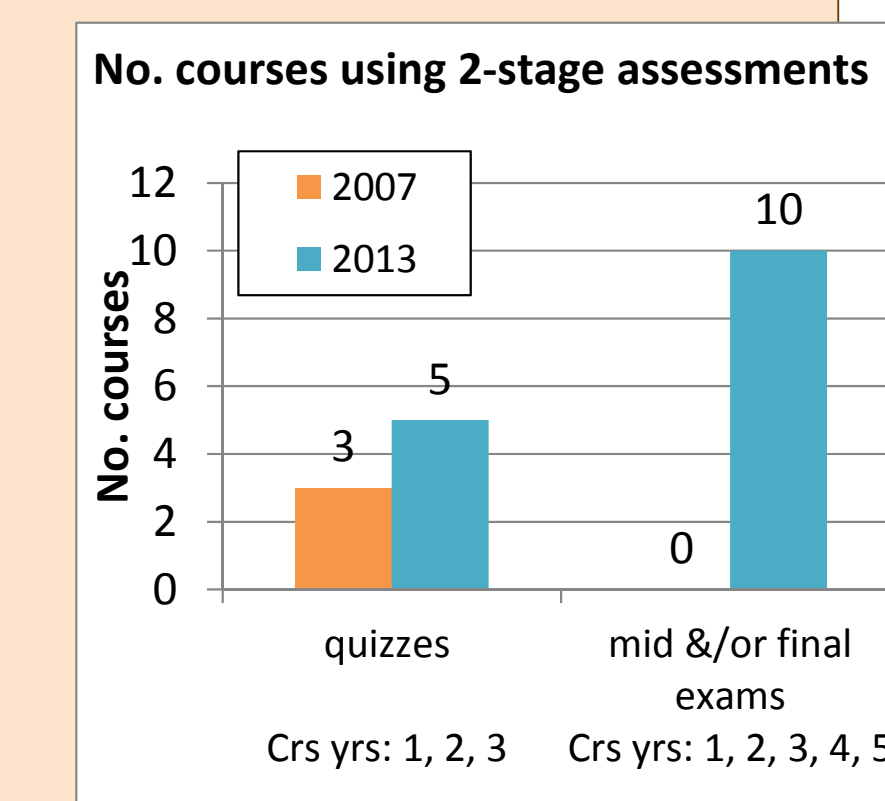
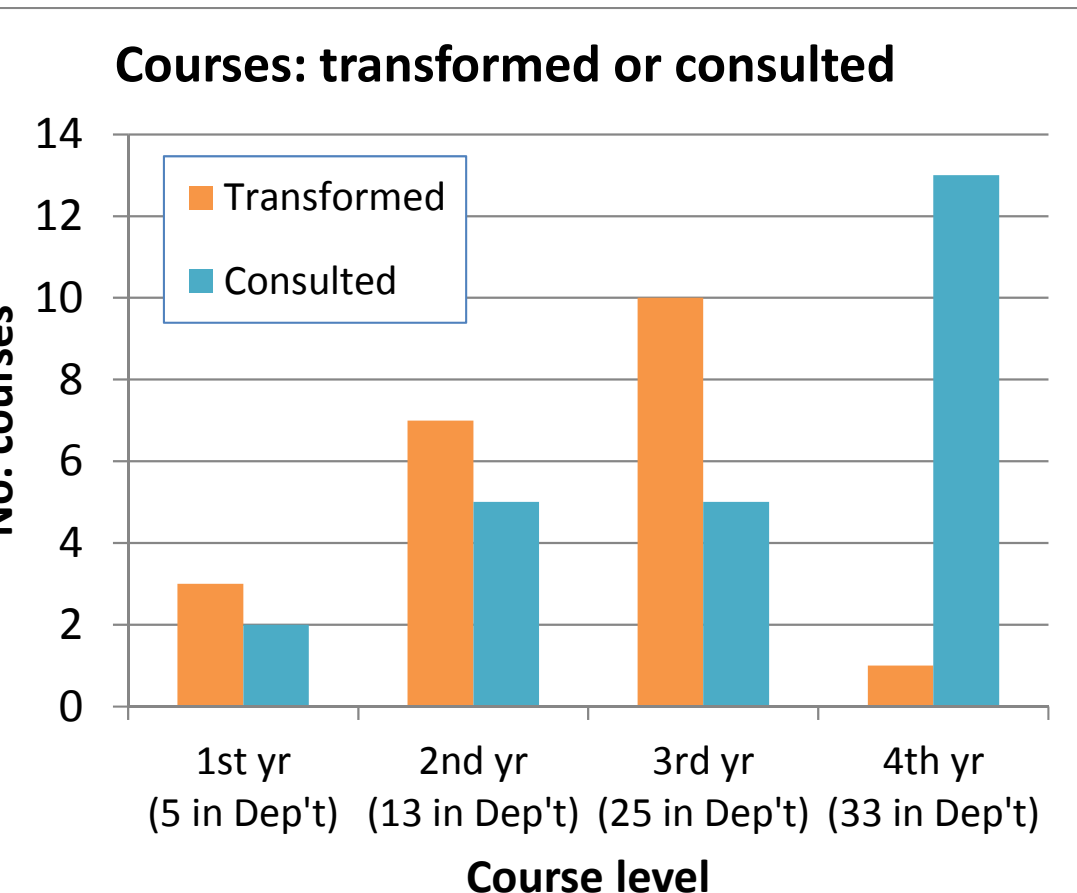


Table showing project flow over 7 years:

	EOS-SEI Long Term Plan, conceived in 2007, adjusted as time progress.														Consulting phase							
	Spr '07	Sum '07	Fall '07	Spr '08	Sum '08	Fall '08	Spr '09	Sum '09	Fall '09	Spr '10	Sum '10	Fall '10	Spr '11	Sum '11	Fall '11	Spr '12	Sum '12	Fall '12	Spr '13	Sum '13	Fall '13	Spr '14
No. STLFs	1	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Xfrm's in progress		2	3	7	7	10	12	10	13	17	17	16	11	8	9	1						
Grad Course																						
Attitudes (SPSS)																						
Class Obs'ns																						
Work loads																						
Multi Instr																						
Field methods																						
2-Stage tests																						
Video of teaching																						
U.Grad. research						JR				AJ												JSG
Publications																						
Others																						



Mineral Deposits: Two instructors bring closure to a group-based, whole-course synthesis exercise.



Earth and Life Through Time: Instructor helping one of 30 groups who are working on a 50-minute activity. The activity, replacing one lecture, is follow-up to a hands-on lab experience for the 150 3rd and 4th year science students.

Evidence of change

Demonstrable changes in geoscience education & teaching culture

Teaching Practices Survey: 2007 and 2013

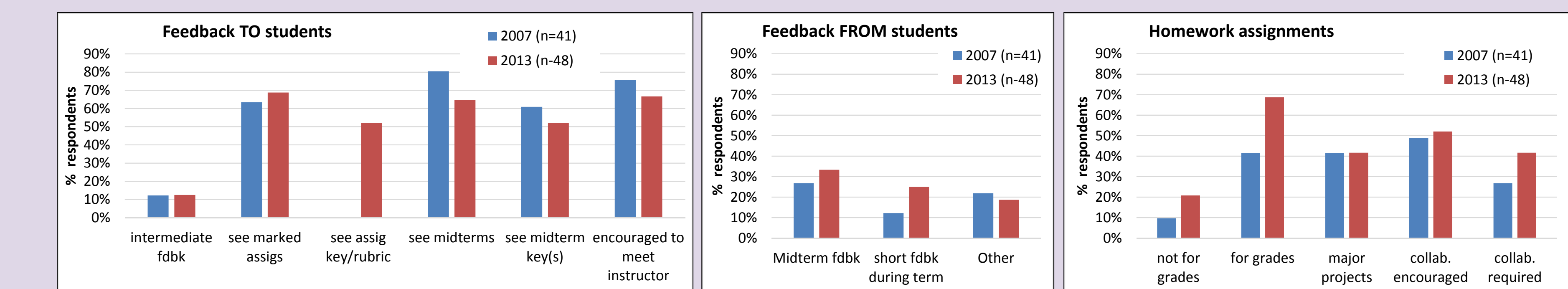
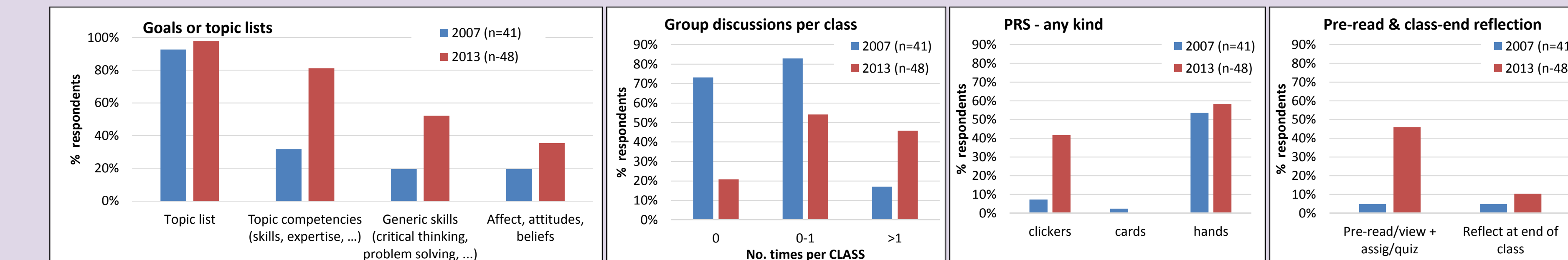
- Instructors self-reported for each course they taught:

Raw data:	Responses	Courses	Data presented here:
2007:	58	54	40 courses reported in both years.
2013:	69	62	

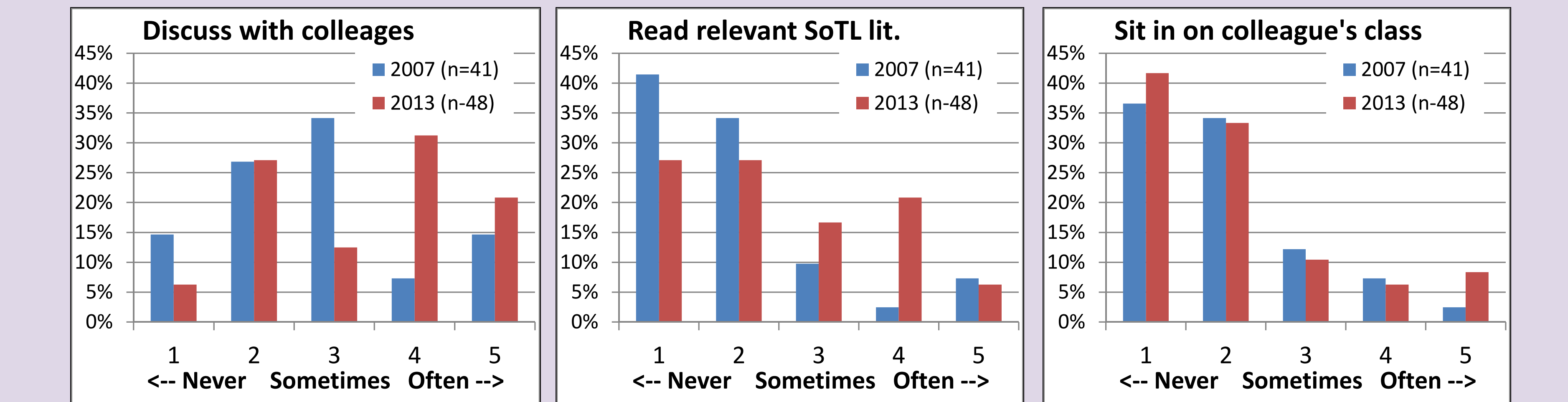
- Nearly all questions were essentially identical in both years; some additions for 2013.

Compare results of Teaching Practices Survey in both 2007 and 2013

Examples of actions

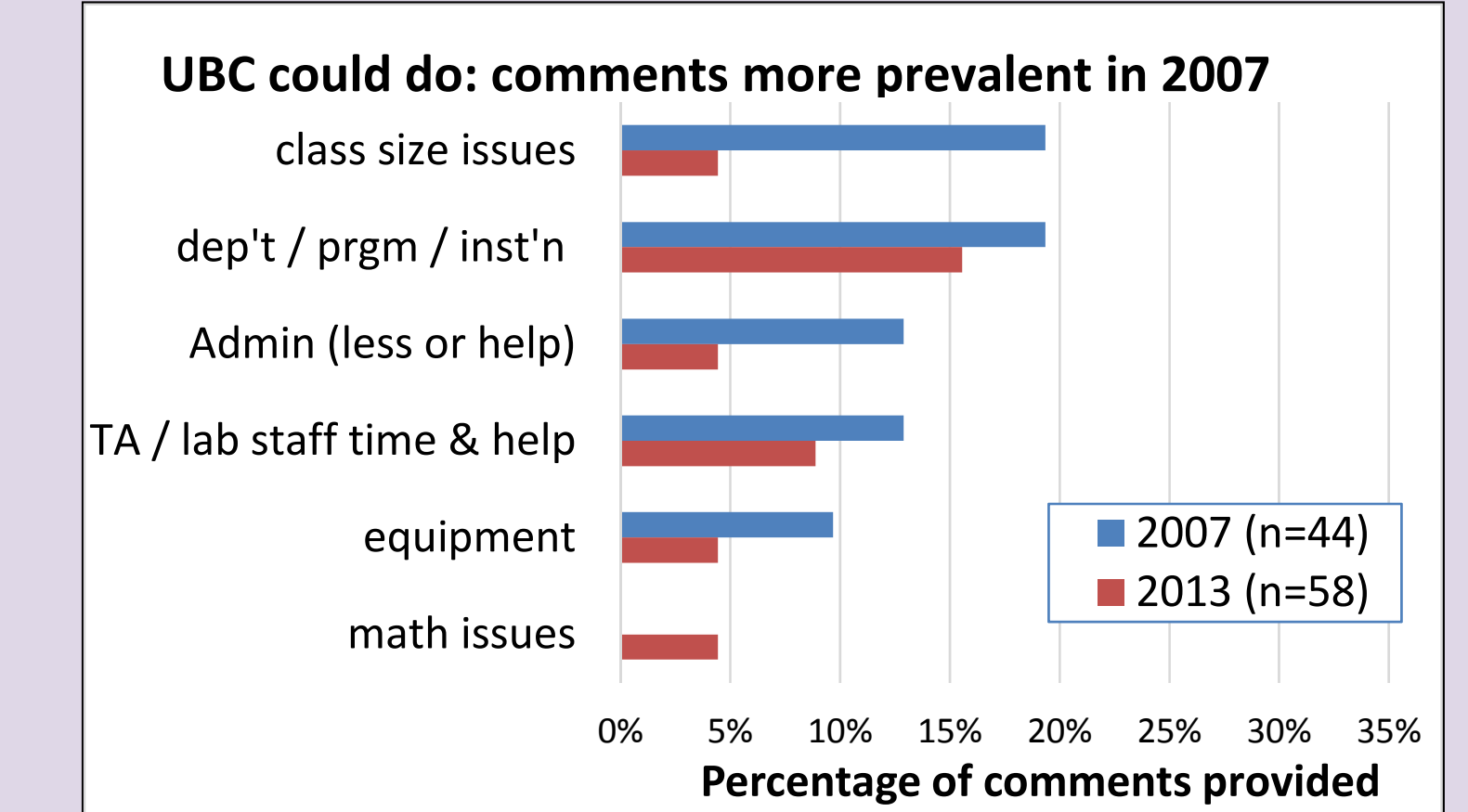
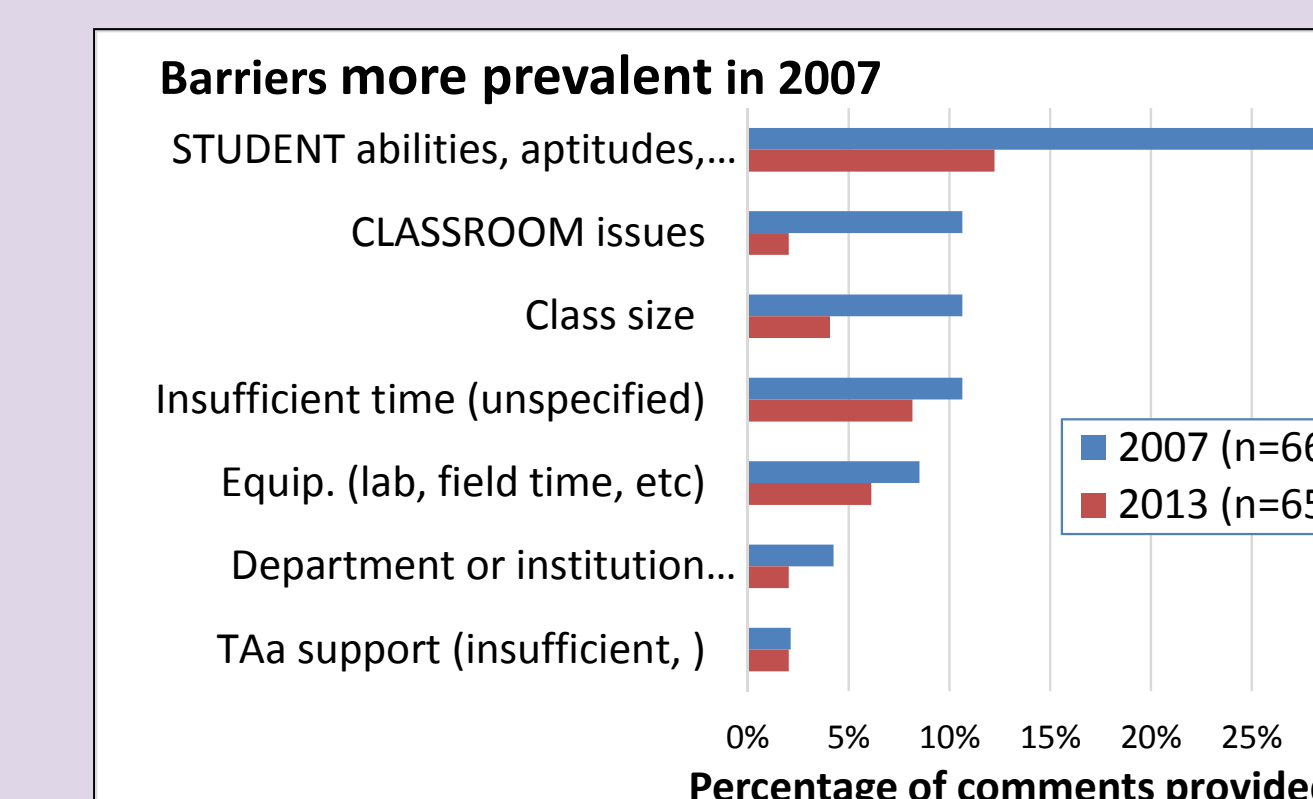
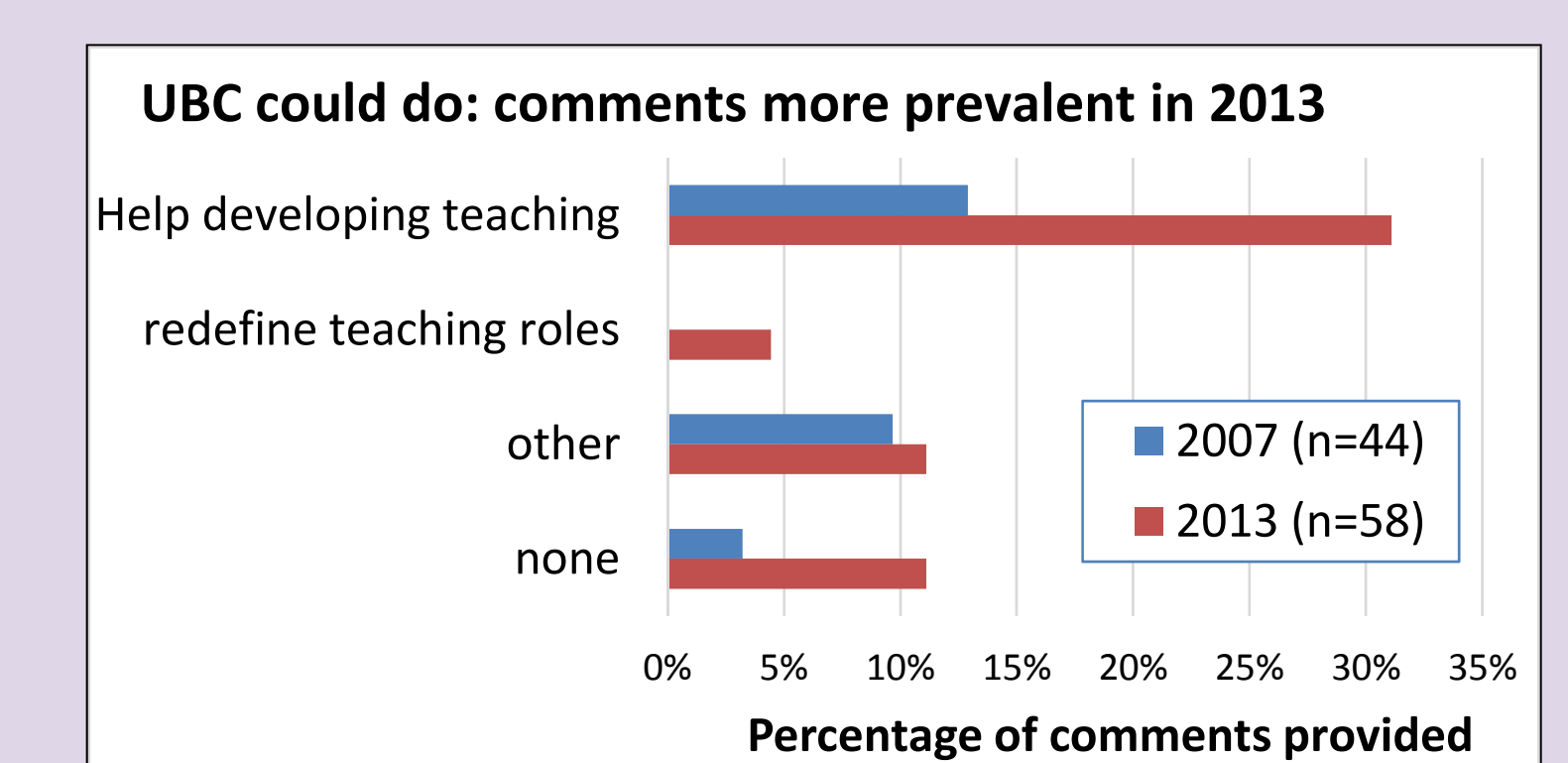
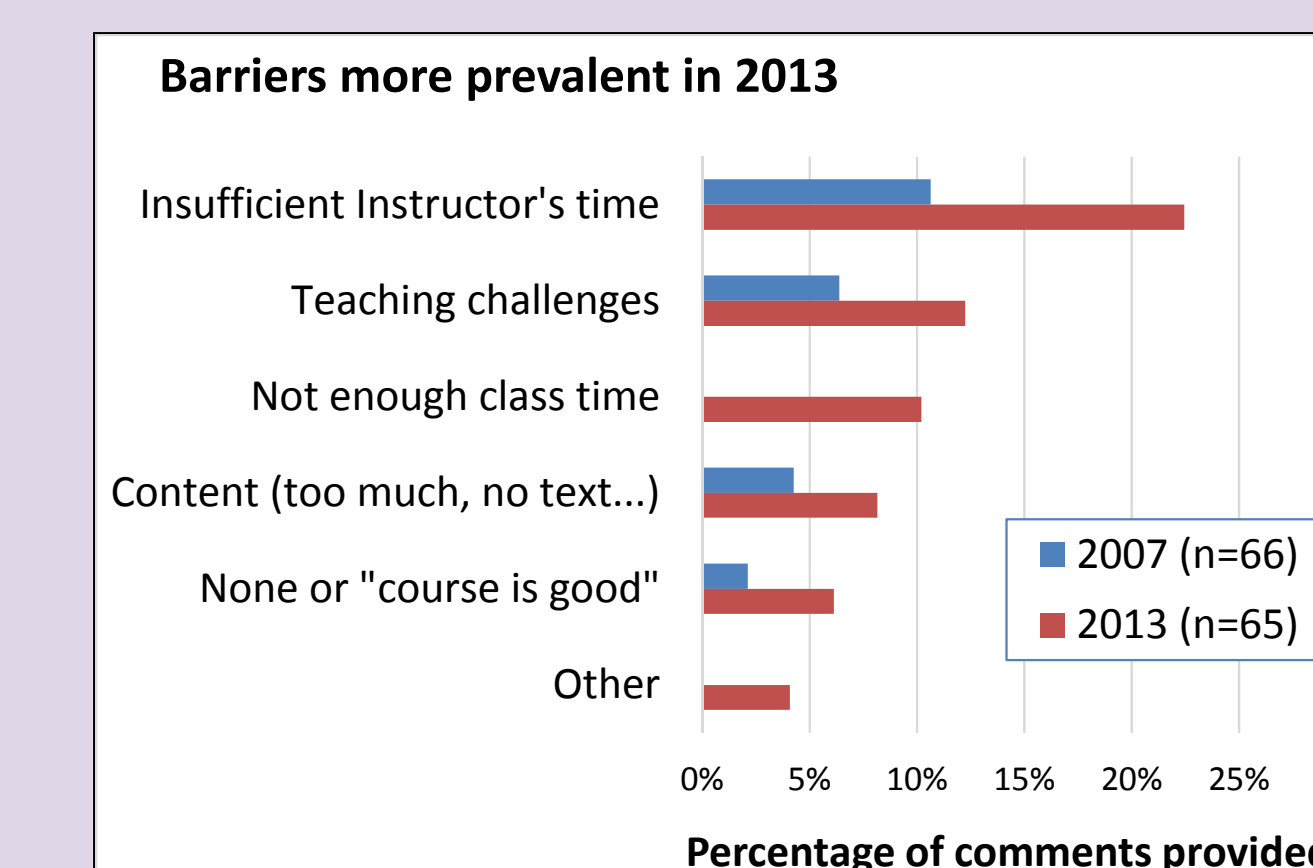


Instructors' attitudes (culture)



Coded answers to two open-ended questions:

- "What is the biggest BARRIER to achieving more effective student learning in your course?"
- "What CHANGES could be made at UBC to help you teach more effectively?"



1. Mervis, Jeffrey: "Transformation Is Possible if a University Really Cares", *Science*, 19 April 2013: Vol. 340 no. 6130 pp. 292-296.
 2. Wieman, C., K. Perkins and S. Gilbert, "Transforming Science Education at Large Research Universities: A Case Study in Progress", *Change*, The Magazine for Higher Education, pp. 7-14 (March/April 2010).