



# RESEARCH SKILLS AND INFORMATION LITERACY



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## INTRODUCTION

The Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) test is based on standards developed by the ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries).

### Eight skill-sets are measured by SAILS:

- 1) Developing a Research Strategy
- 2) Selecting Finding Tools
- 3) Searching
- 4) Using Finding Tool Features
- 5) Retrieving Sources
- 6) Evaluating Sources
- 7) Documenting Sources
- 8) Understanding Economic, Legal and Social Issues

## RESEARCH METHODS

- Instrument: SAILS assessment (On-line assessment tool)
- Assessed skill areas are directly aligned with the ACRL standards, and the General Education competencies of technological competency, critical thinking skills and information literacy skills
- Pilot conducted Fall 2016/Spring 2017 with participation of 162 BSU students
- Comparative data examined BSU students with benchmark (other General Baccalaureate) institutions and institutions nationally

## RESULTS

The SAILS results are a powerful indicator of the information literacy/ research skills of Bowie State University students. Measuring results for freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors provides a means of assessing students' growth in these eight skill areas over their college careers.

The data presented in the table represents average scores of students overall and by year. Scores of BSU students are compared to scores from students representing benchmark institutions and national institutions.

**Table 1 - SAILS Performance Results (Average score)\***

	Bowie State Univ. (%) n=162	Benchmark Inst. (%) n=1711	US Inst. - All test-takers (%) n=15,866
Overall	44.3	56.4	53.4
<b>CLASS STANDING</b>			
Fresh.	41.1	52.8	52.6
Soph.	39.4	55.0	51.4
Junior	47.4	57.1	54.3
Senior	56.3	60.0	57.4

\*SAILS Proficiency=70% and Mastery=85%

## CONCLUSION

Overall the scores shown in Table 1 demonstrate the expected growth for BSU students over the course of their academic careers. The average score for BSU students increased between freshman and senior year. The dip in the average score sophomore year mirrors the dip in national scores for sophomores.

### Score trajectory (Fr. → Senior year):

- Bowie State students +15.2 points
- Benchmark institutions +7.2 points
- National institutions +4.8 points

## DISCUSSION

The initial results show that BSU students, while starting with a lower average SAILS score freshman year, increased the average score by class standing at a higher rate compared to benchmark and national institutions.

The data from SAILS will be triangulated with other national standardized assessments such as iSkills and the Collegiate Learning Assessment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the many faculty members who volunteered their class time so that the SAILS assessment of research skills and information literacy could be administered to their students.