

**Rose-Colored Glasses  
or  
Harsh Reality?  
Changes in Students'  
Perceptions of the University's  
Contribution to  
General Education Goals**

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<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/survey.htm>

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## **Population**

May 1995 and 1996 NC State Baccalaureate  
Graduates

## **Completed Surveys**

833 NC State Alumni who responded to both  
the  
1995 or 1996 Graduating Senior Survey  
and the  
Fall 1998 Alumni Survey

## Population and Response Rates

<b>Total N May '95 &amp; '96 Graduates*</b>	<b>Graduating Senior Survey Response Rate</b>	<b>Fall 1998 Alumni Survey Response Rate</b>	<b>% Responding to both Graduating Senior and Alumni Survey</b>
<b>4163</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>20%</b>

\* A random sample from the 6 largest departments was selected for the Fall 1998 Survey of Baccalaureate Alumni. All other graduates for whom accurate contact information was available were included (total N May '95 and '96 graduates included = 3082).

# General Education Goals

## Cognitive Skills

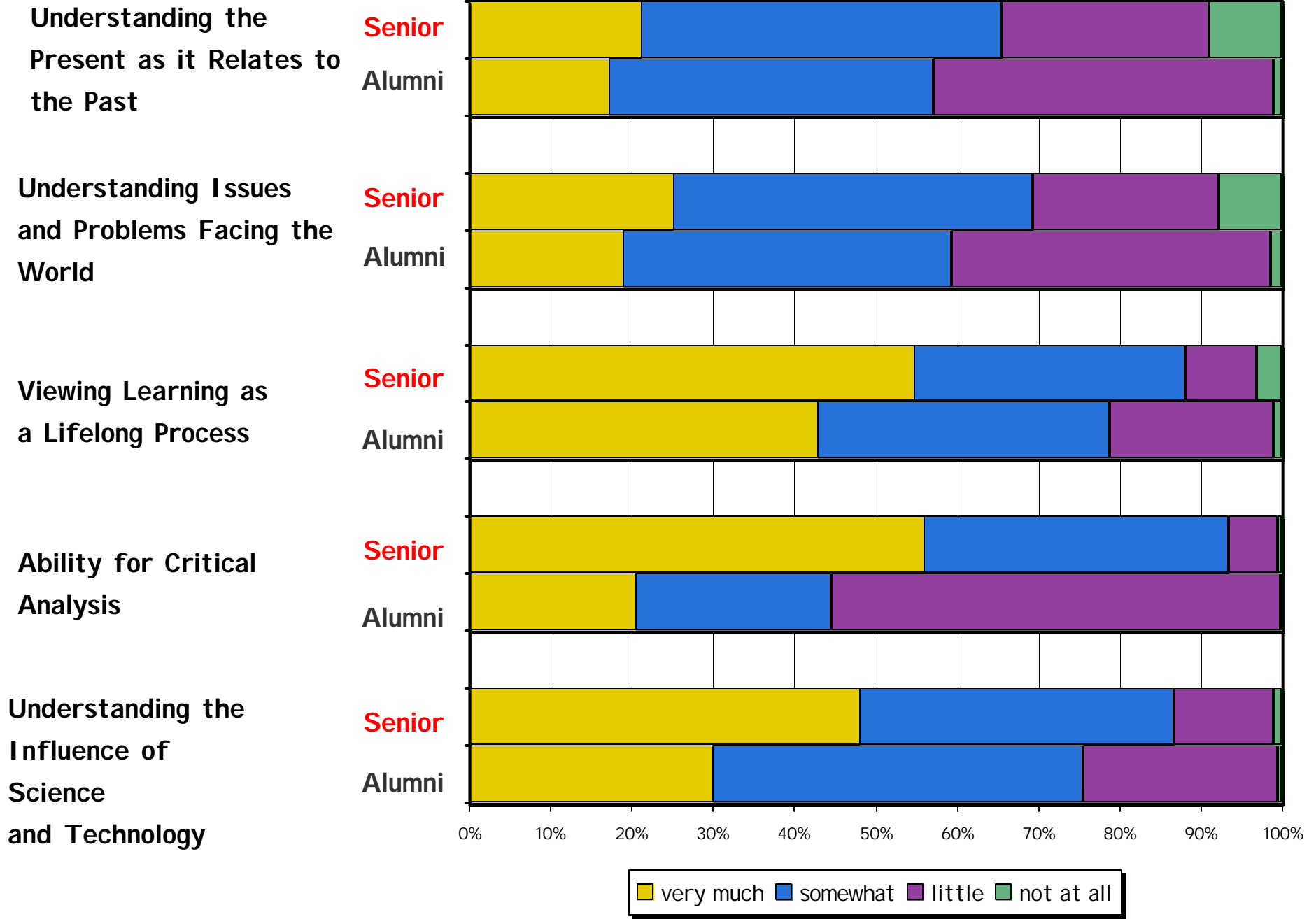
- **Continuous Learning**  
"Viewing learning as a lifelong process"
- **Critical Analysis**  
"Ability to critically analyze events, information, and idea"
- **Global Awareness**  
"Understanding issues and problems facing the world"
- **Impact of Technology**  
"Understanding how science and technology influence everyday life"
- **Understanding Human Heritage**  
"Understanding the present as it relates to historical events and processes"

## Values

- **Ethics**  
"Recognizing and acting on ethical principles"
- **Equality**  
"Valuing gender equity"  
"Valuing racial equity"
- **Literary/Artistic**  
"Advancing my appreciation of the arts, music, and literature"
- **Tolerance**  
"Having tolerance for different points of view"

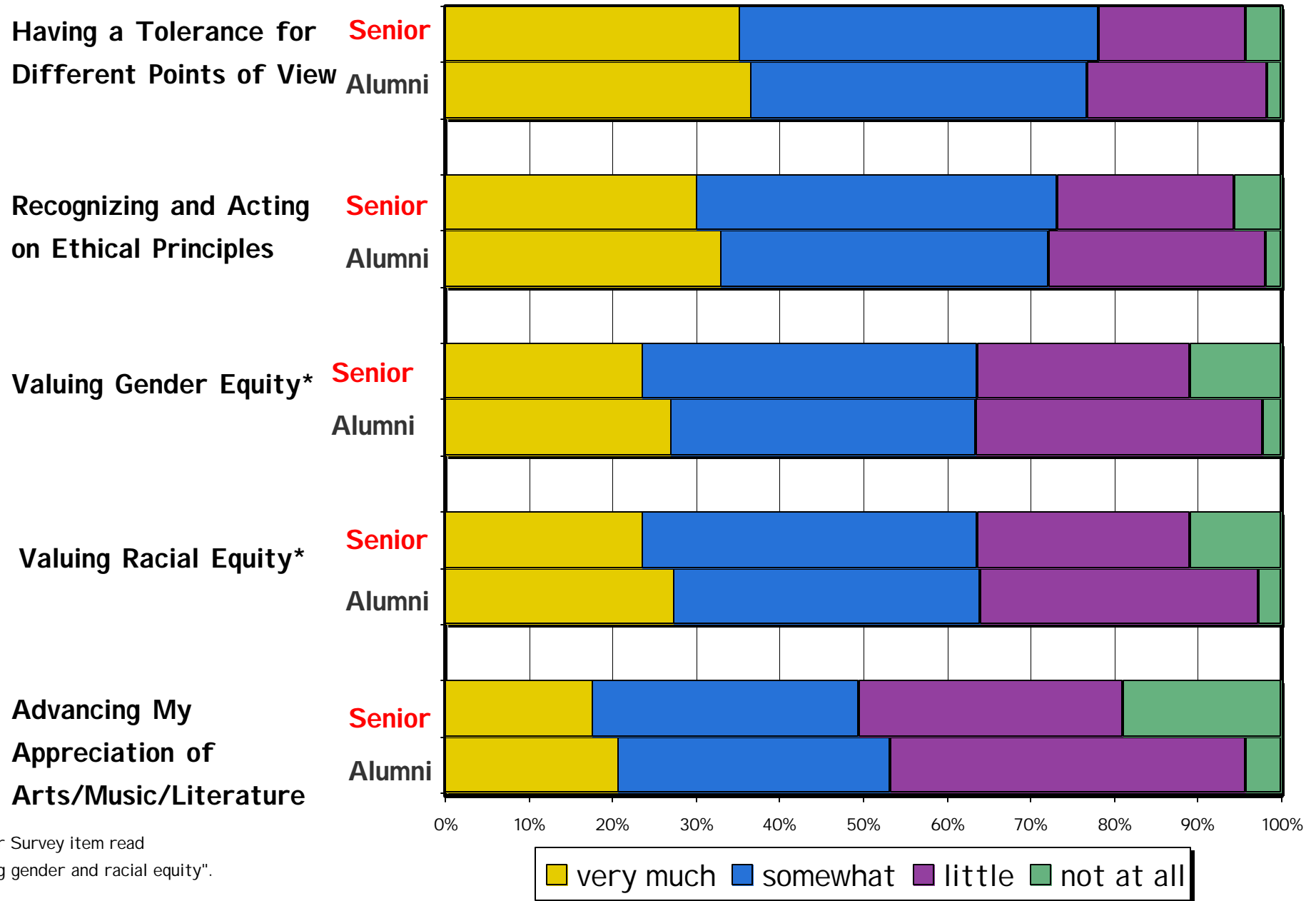
# Cognitive Skills

## Perception of NC State's Contribution to Skill Development



# Values

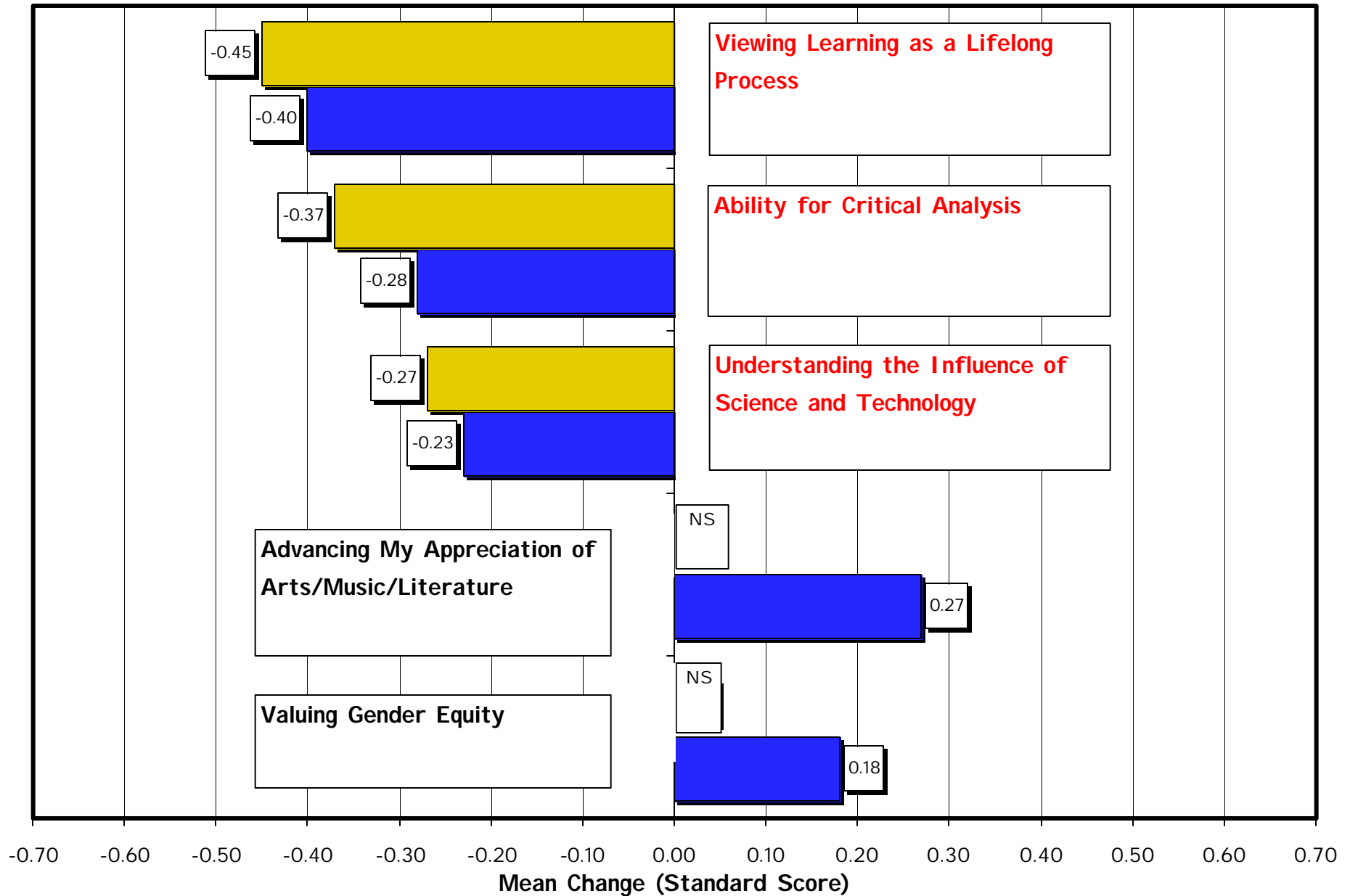
## Perception of NC State's Contribution to Value Development



\*Senior Survey item read "valuing gender and racial equity".

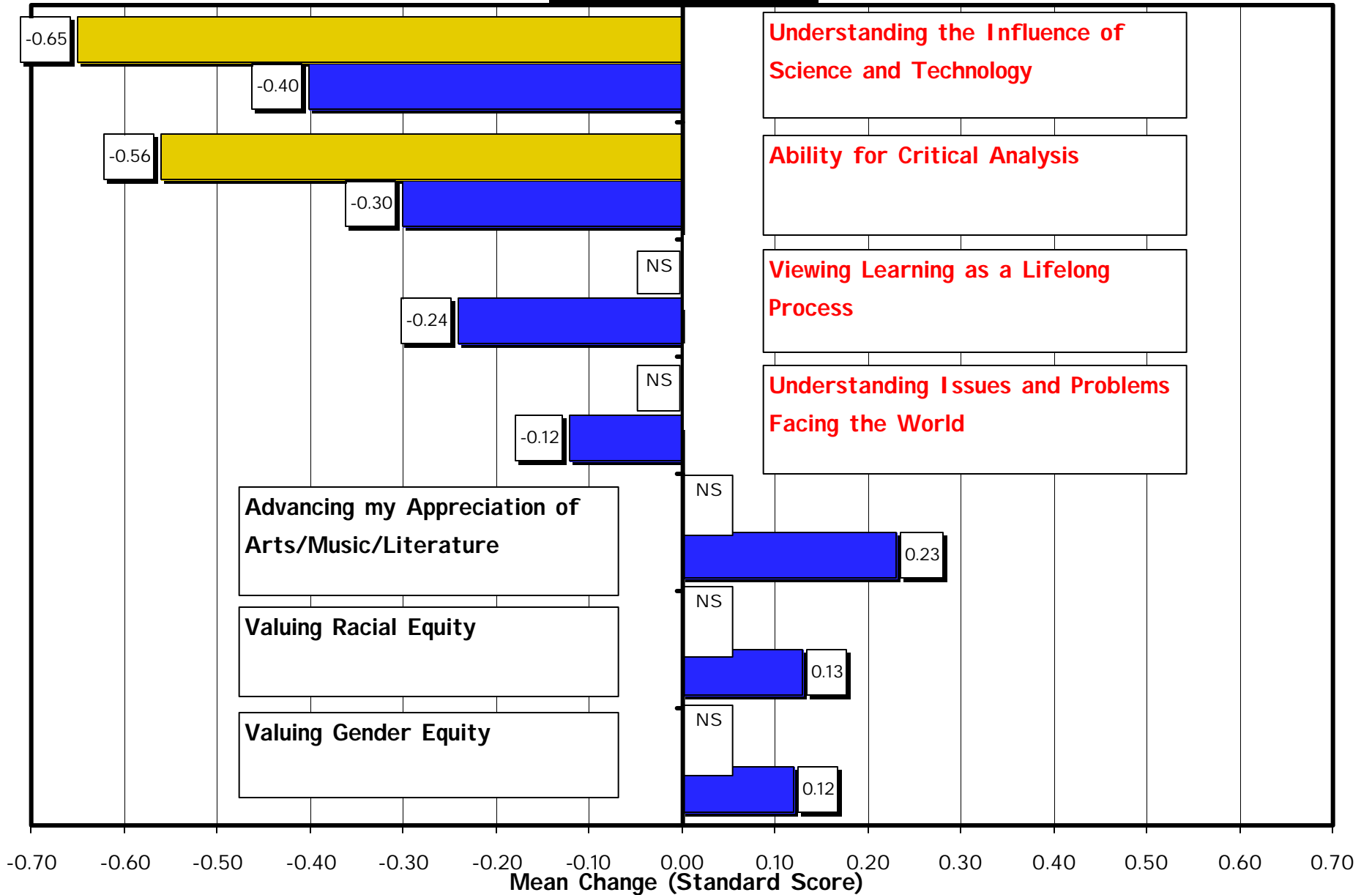
# Significant Changes in Ratings by Gender

Male Female

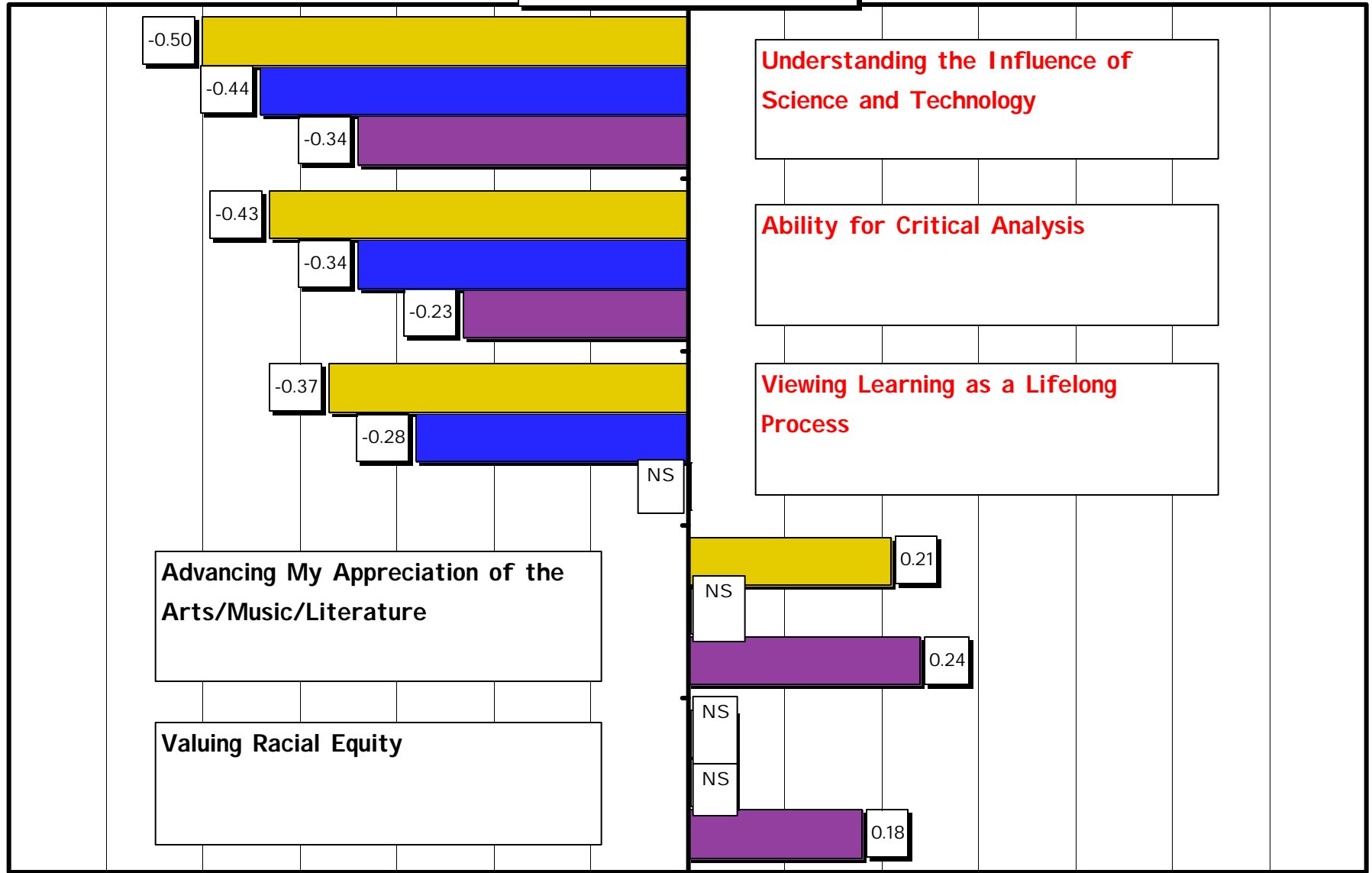
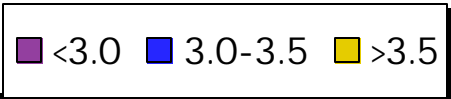


# Significant Changes in Ratings by Race

White Minority



# Significant Changes in Ratings by GPA

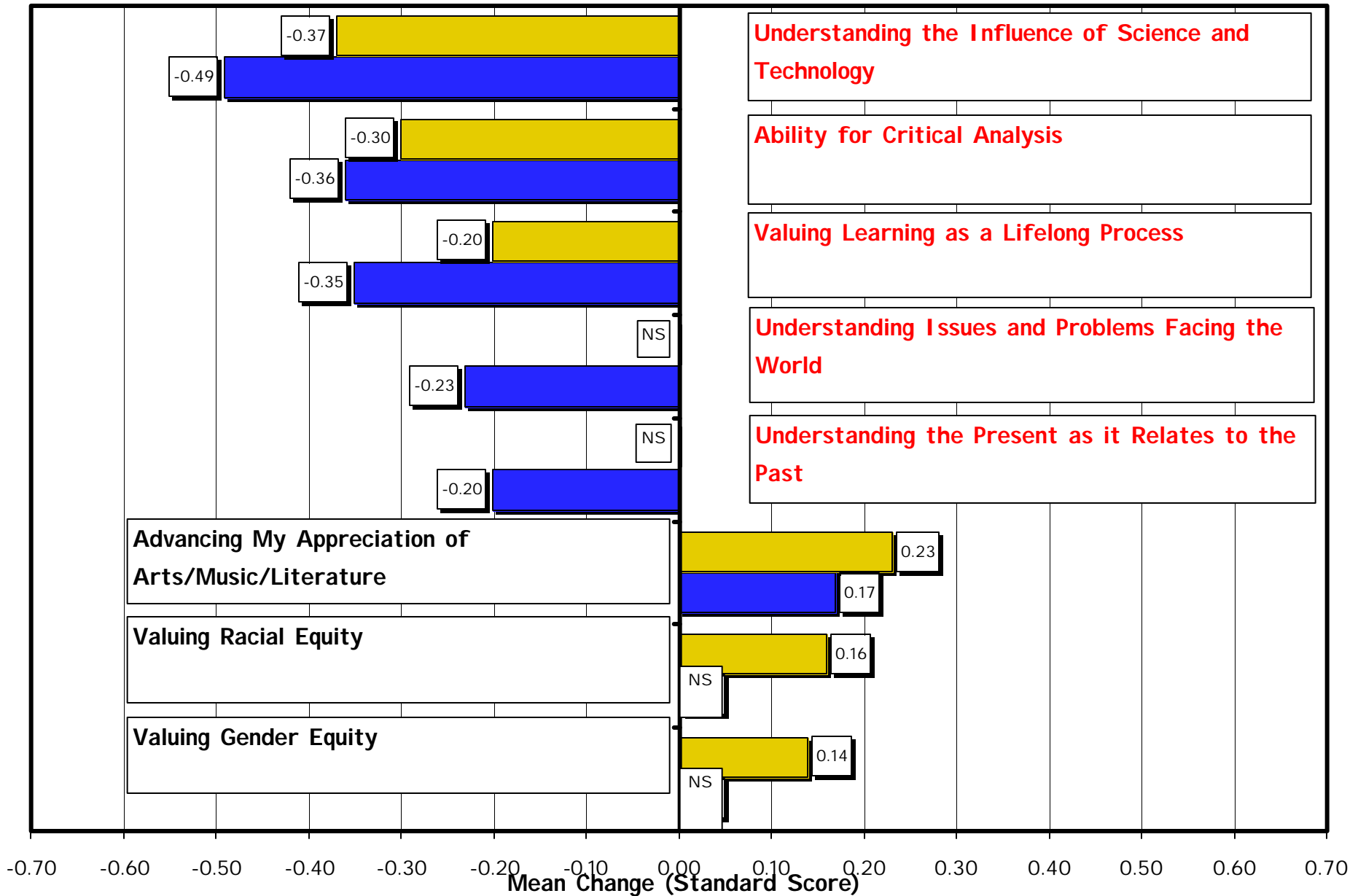


-0.70   -0.60   -0.50   -0.40   -0.30   -0.20   -0.10   0.00   0.10   0.20   0.30   0.40   0.50   0.60   0.70

**Mean Change (Standard Score)**

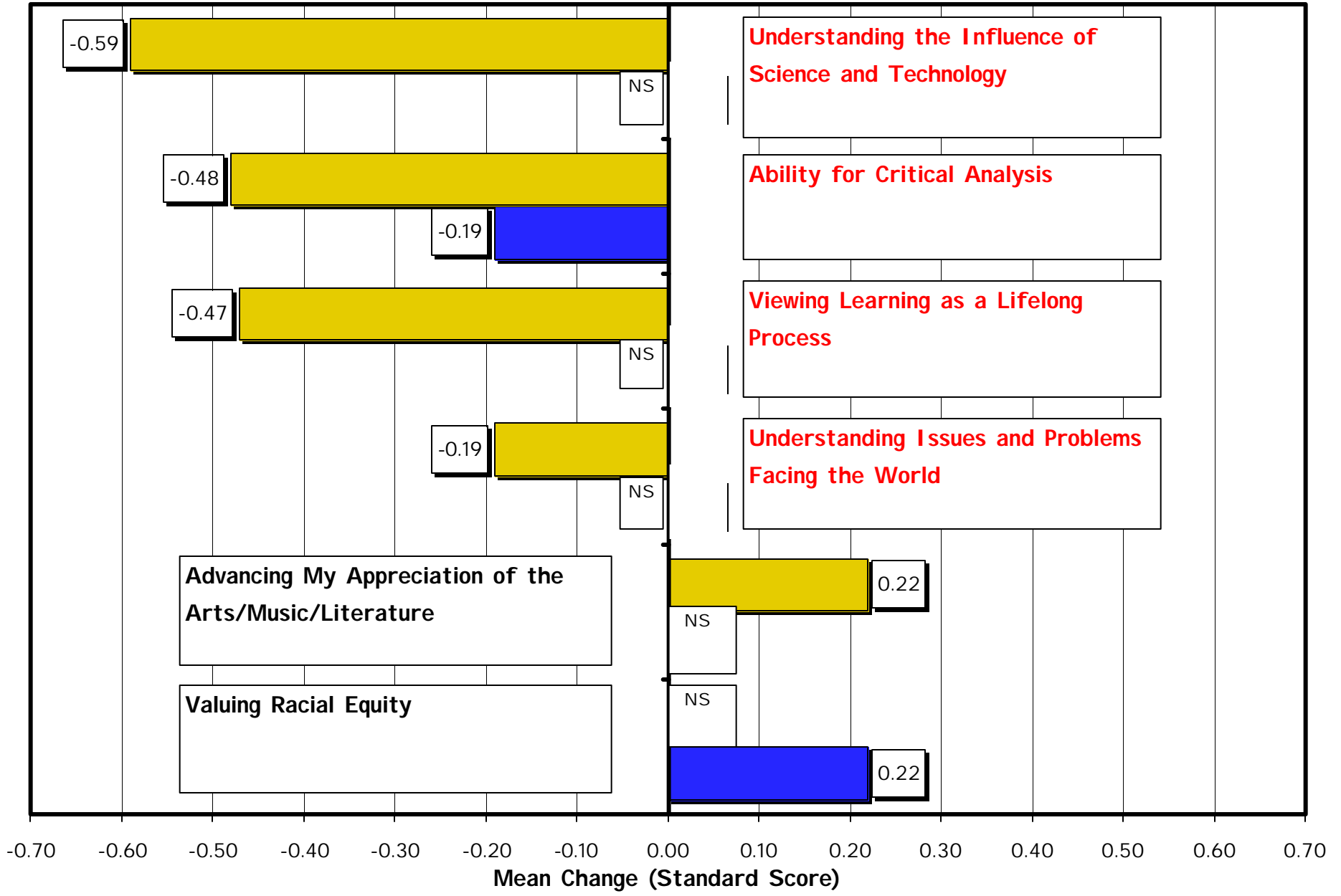
# Significant Changes in Ratings by Graduate School Attendance

■ Grad School
 ■ No Grad School

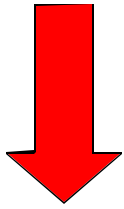


# Significant Changes in Ratings by Alumni Ratings of Goal Importance

Very Important <Very Important



## FINDINGS



Perceptions of university's contribution to development of **cognitive skills** decline.

Negative change is particularly likely among women, minorities, high achievers, those going on to graduate school, and those not rating the skill as very important.

## Possible Reasons Why...

- Graduating senior ceiling effect may produce regression to the mean when alumni
  - Most graduating seniors give highest rating; their ratings as alumni can't increase.
  - Proportionally more of those giving the highest rating as seniors decline than do those giving lower ratings as seniors.
- Graduating seniors may have rose-colored glasses about their cognitive skills
  - A possible "relative expectations" among women, minority, and high achieving seniors -- "You've taught me everything I need to know to be a success!"
- Harsh reality of post-baccalaureate experiences may change perceptions about cognitive skill development
  - "Why didn't you teach me everything I needed to know?" or "The more I learn, the more I realize I don't know."

## FINDINGS



Perceptions of university's contribution to development of **values** are generally stable, but what change does occur is positive.

Positive change is particularly likely among men, whites, low achievers, and those not going on to graduate school.

## Possible Reasons Why...

- Graduating seniors may not appreciate the value of apparently "non-marketable" skills  
Males, whites and low-achievers in particular focus on developing cognitive skills that increase their marketability. General education goals related to developing values are viewed as a distraction.
- Real-world experiences of alumni may help them re-evaluate the importance of all aspects of a liberal education  
Most notable change in ratings comes from seniors saying NC State did nothing to contribute to value development to saying there was some university contribution. Real-world experiences may help males, whites, and low-achievers appreciate the cultural sensitivity the university tried to help them attain. "Gee, sexual and racial discrimination can have serious consequences!"