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Spring 3-25-2010

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Woolfork-Barnes, Toni, "A Four-Year Comparative Analysis of First-Year Experience Seminar (FYE 2100)" (2010). *Academic Leadership Academy*. 14.

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A Four-Year Comparative Analysis of First-Year Experience (2100) Seminar

Longitudinal Data

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Introduction

The first year of college for most students can be fun while at the same time anxiety producing. Within the last 25 years colleges and universities have benefitted from the work of Dr. John Gardner and others who have conducted extensive research on the first year of college and how it affects or contributes to student success.

Colleges and universities across the country have implemented some form of student success or transitional adjustment programs to support first-year students as they matriculate during the first year of college. In no uncertain terms retention is the driving force behind first-year programs.

In 2003 an ad hoc Hallmarks Advisory Task Force was created to review the first-year student's experience at Western Michigan University. The Hallmarks Task Force found that while there were numerous discrete programs and services across campus, "the lack of systematic integration and focus for first-year students [was] not sufficiently supportive of their [first-year students] education and development. Thus this information led the group to work on a re-designed first-year student program at WMU.

Therefore the plan to implement a re-designed experience began in 2005 when the University introduced a comprehensive First-Year Experience (FYE) Programs Department as a method for addressing the first-year experience for students on WMU's campus. New Student Orientation and Fall Welcome (already a part of the WMU fabric) were and continue to be programs designed to assist students in becoming more knowledgeable and familiar with the campus, and the First-Year Seminar (FYE 2100) is a 16 week fall semester course specifically designed to further facilitate first-year students' transition and engagement within the University. The Seminar was created in direct response to the Task Force review.

The overarching goal of FYE 2100 is to provide a comprehensive first year experience through the provision of information and access to support, assistance and resources to meet the needs of the first-year student.



FYE 2100 Outcomes

Students will:

- ❖ Develop critical thinking, writing and research skills
- ❖ Demonstrate competency in accessing University resources and services
- ❖ Understand the requirements for earning a bachelor's degree
- ❖ Examine personal interests and explore related WMU academic and career pathways
- ❖ Develop an appreciation of diversity in the broadest sense
- ❖ Make connections with WMU faculty, staff, student leaders and/or peers to facilitate success
- ❖ Demonstrate responsible academic and social behaviors

First-Year Initiative Survey

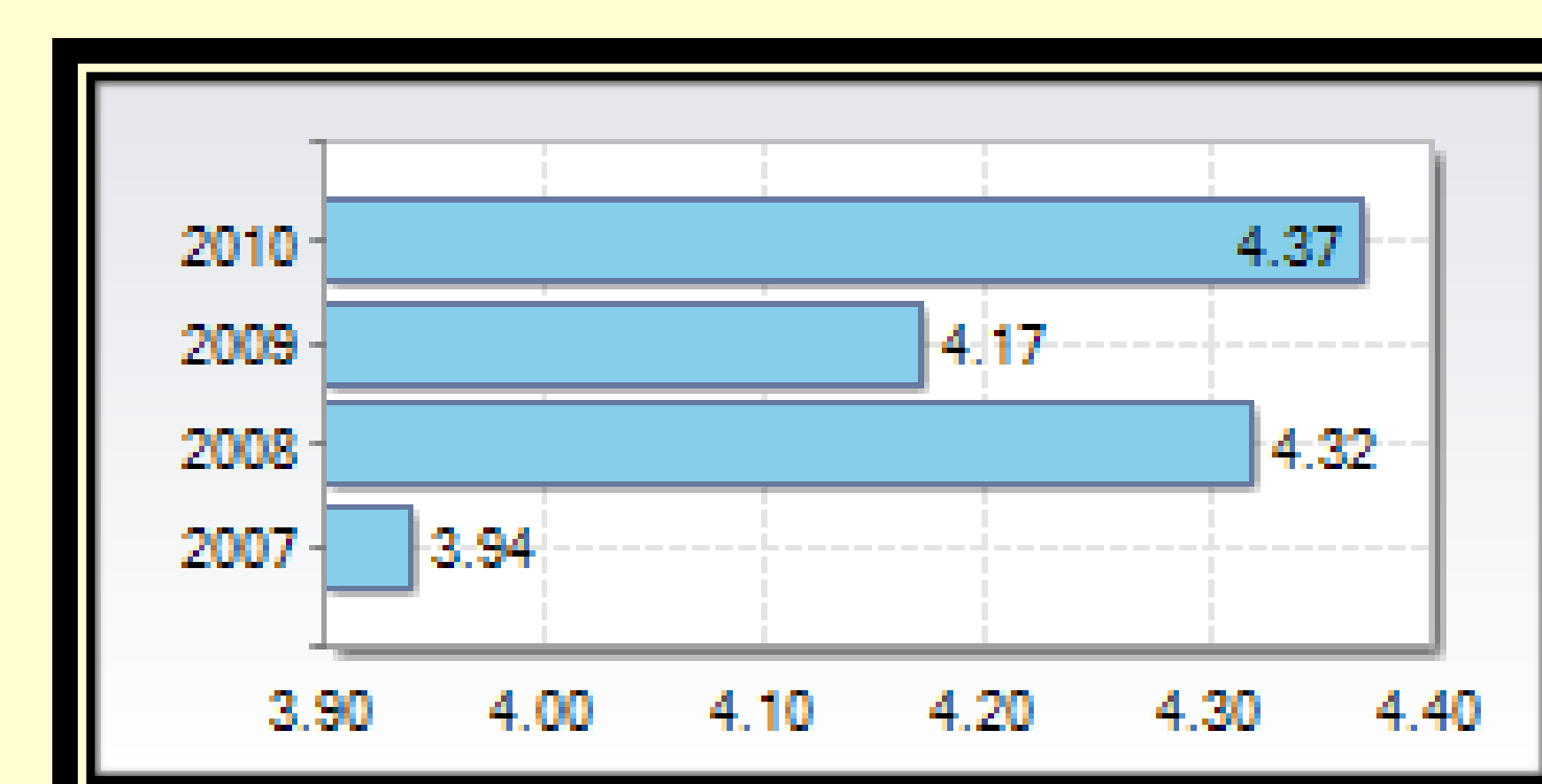
Since the 2005-2006 academic year, FYE 2100 students have completed the First-Year Initiative (FYI) survey upon completion of each fall semester.

The FYI survey is developed by Educational Benchmarking Incorporated (EBI) and has partnered with WMU to assess the perceptions of first year students about their overall experience as related to transitional adjustment. The survey is designed as a diagnostic tool and categorized into 15 constructs.



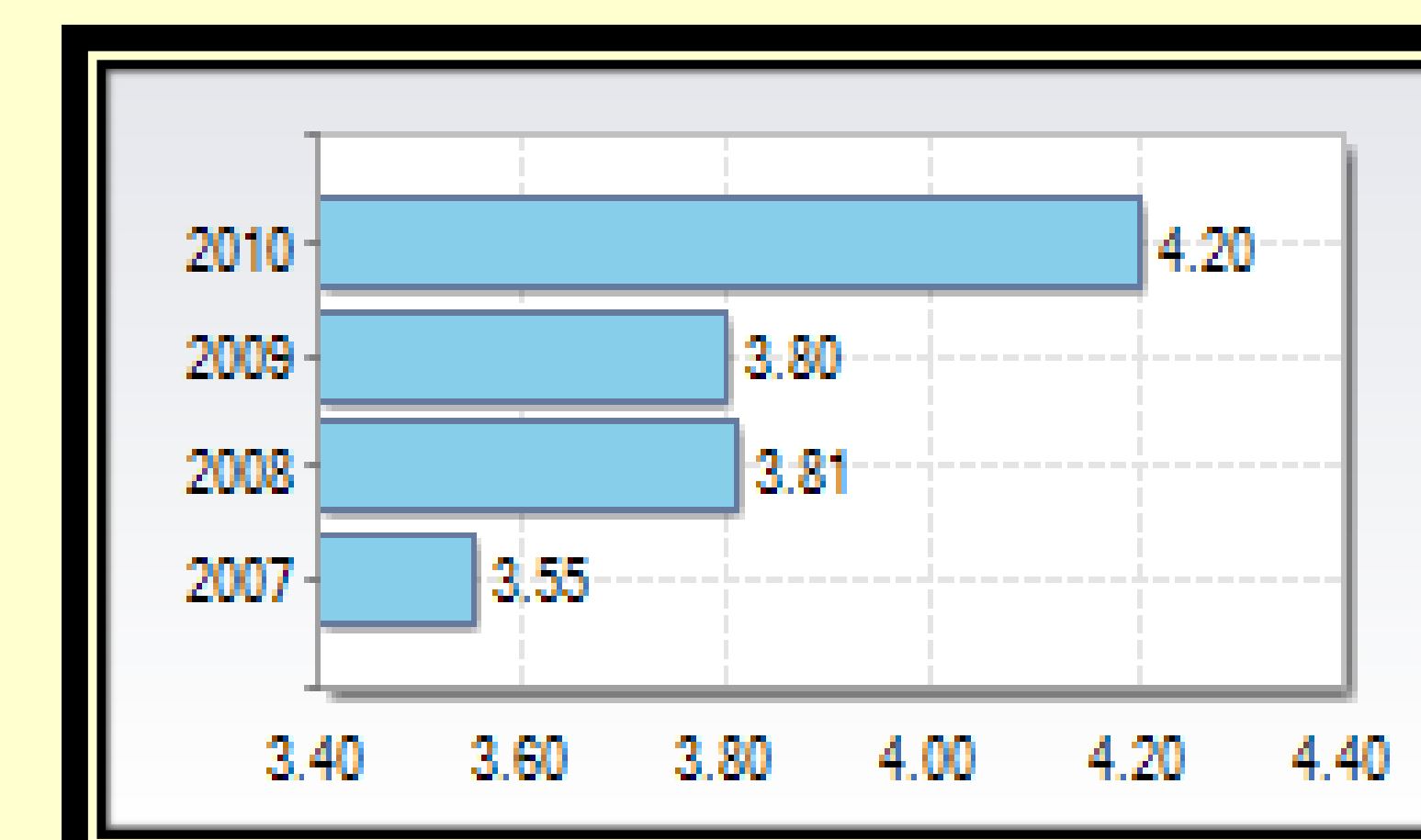
Course Factors

Factor 1: Course Improved Study Strategies

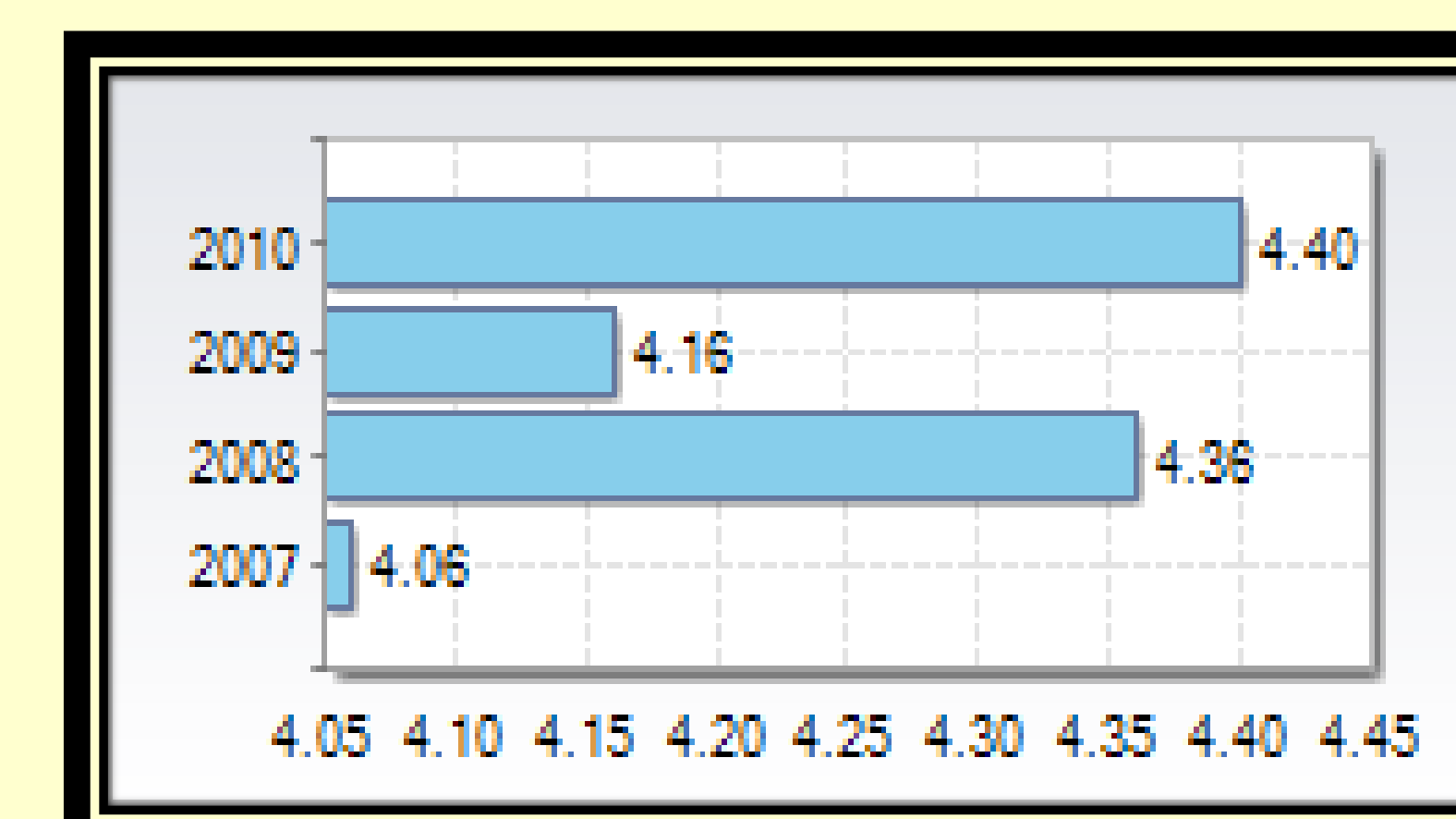


Course Factors

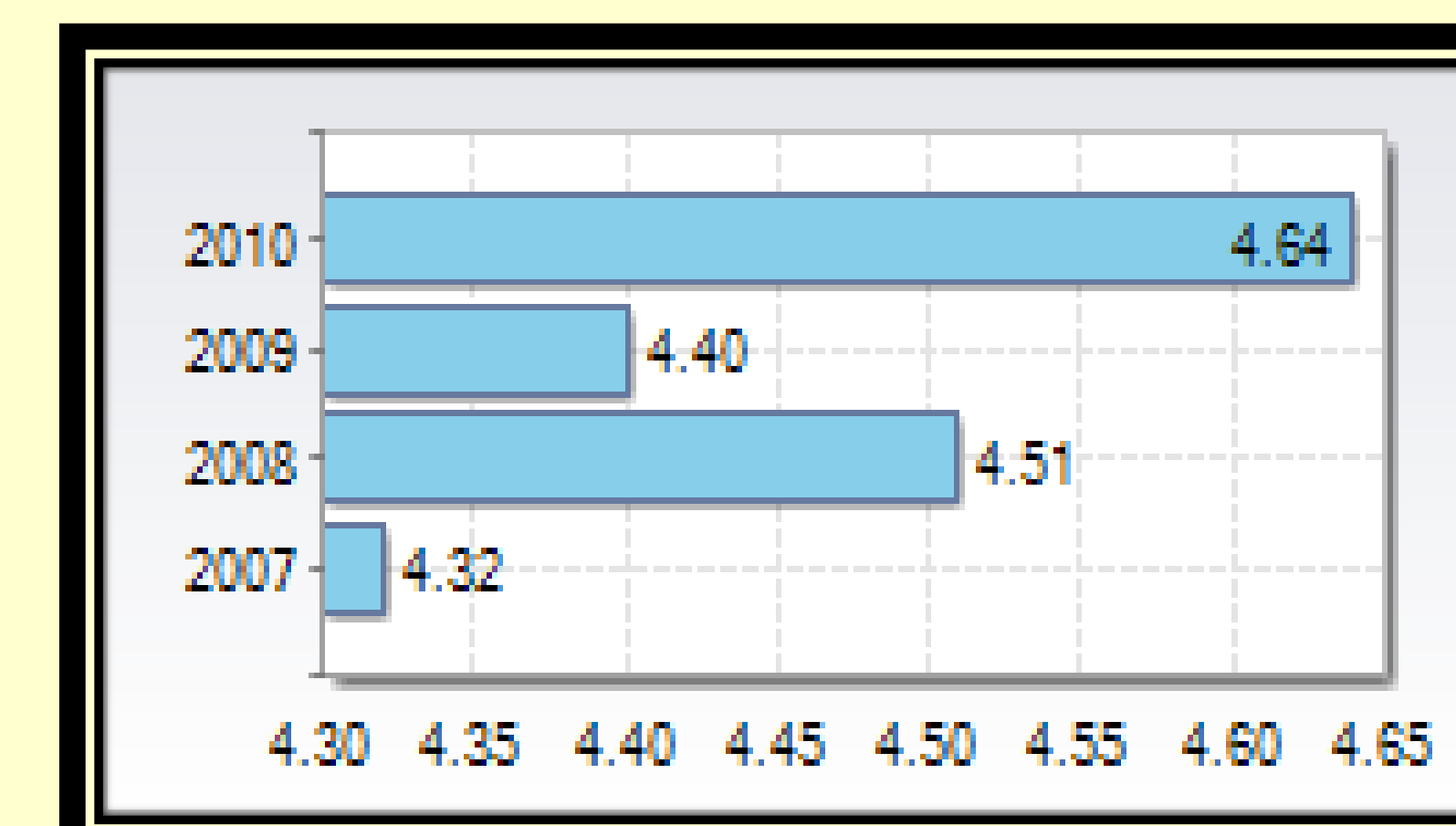
Factor 2: Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills



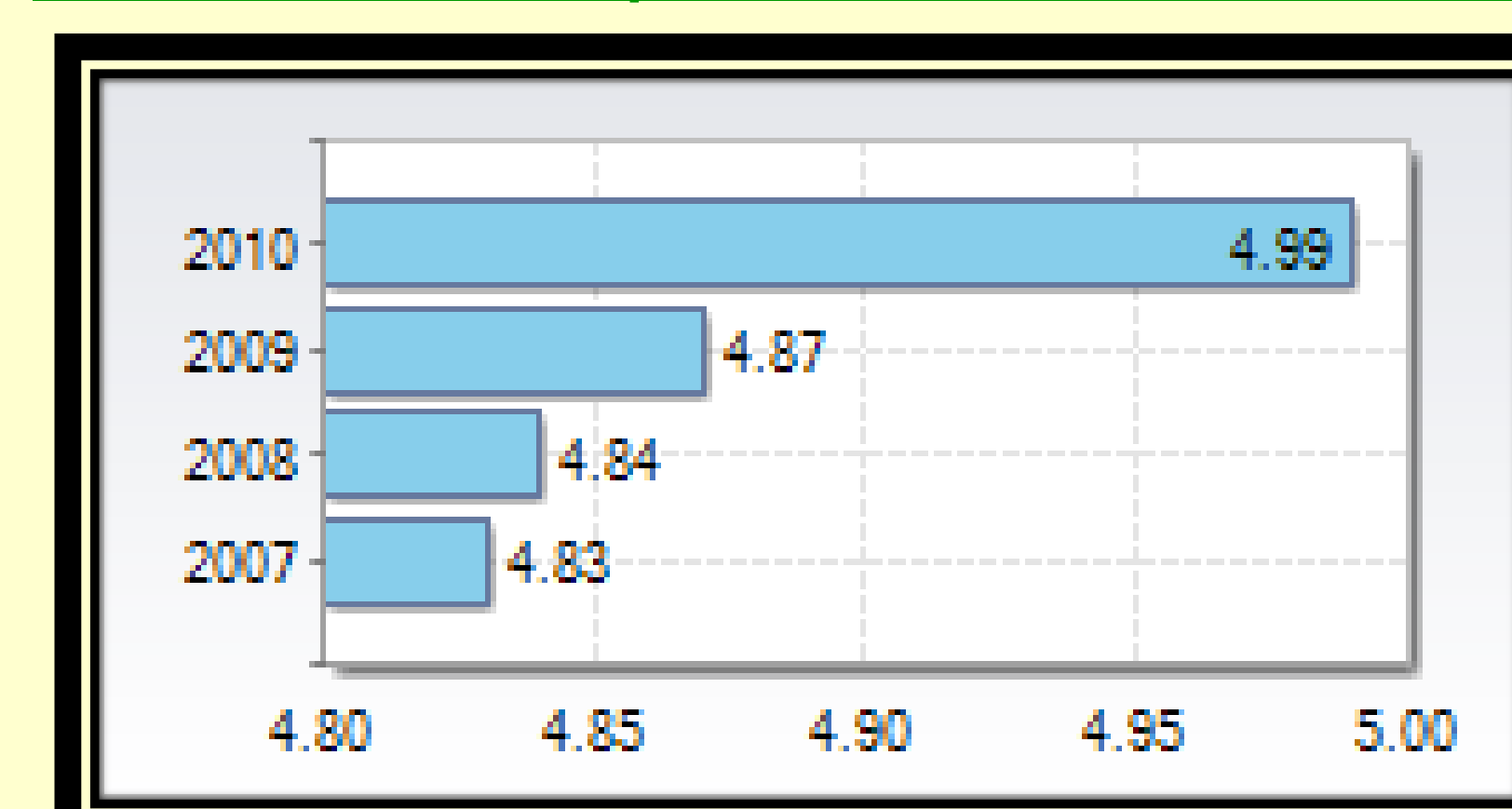
Factor 3: Course Improved Critical Thinking



Factor 4: Course Improved Connections with Faculty

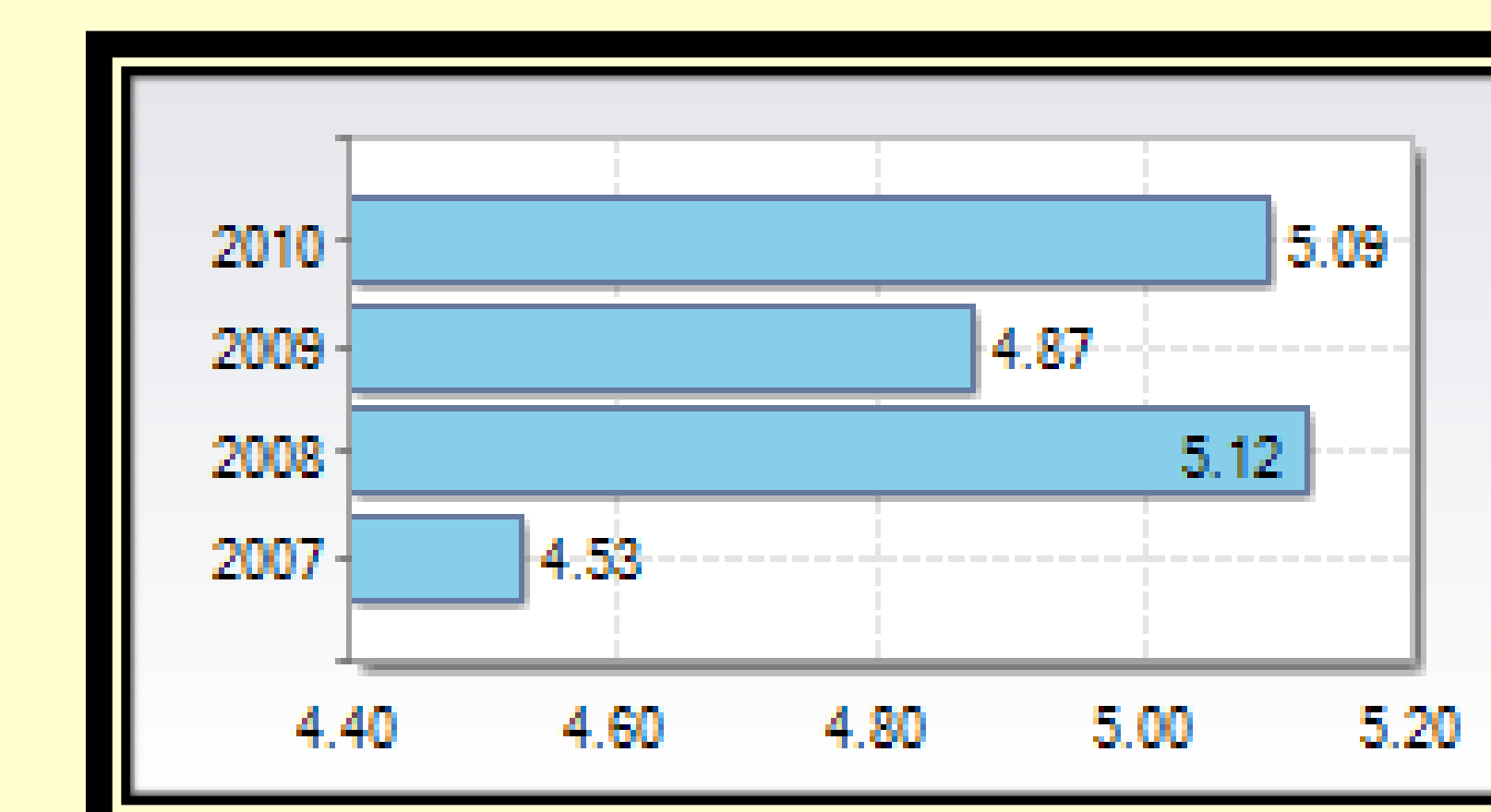


Factor 5: Course Improved Connections with Peers

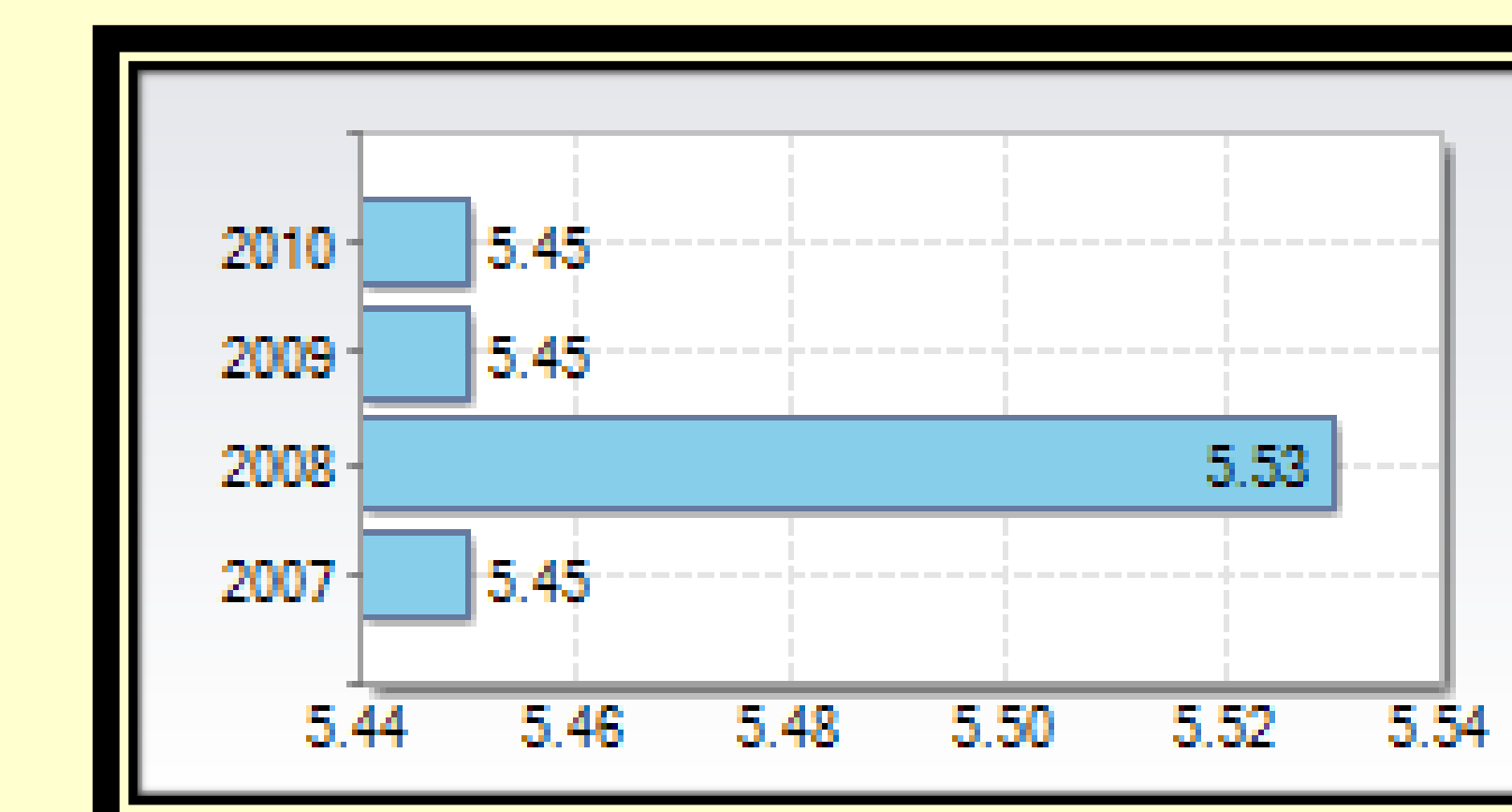


Course Factors

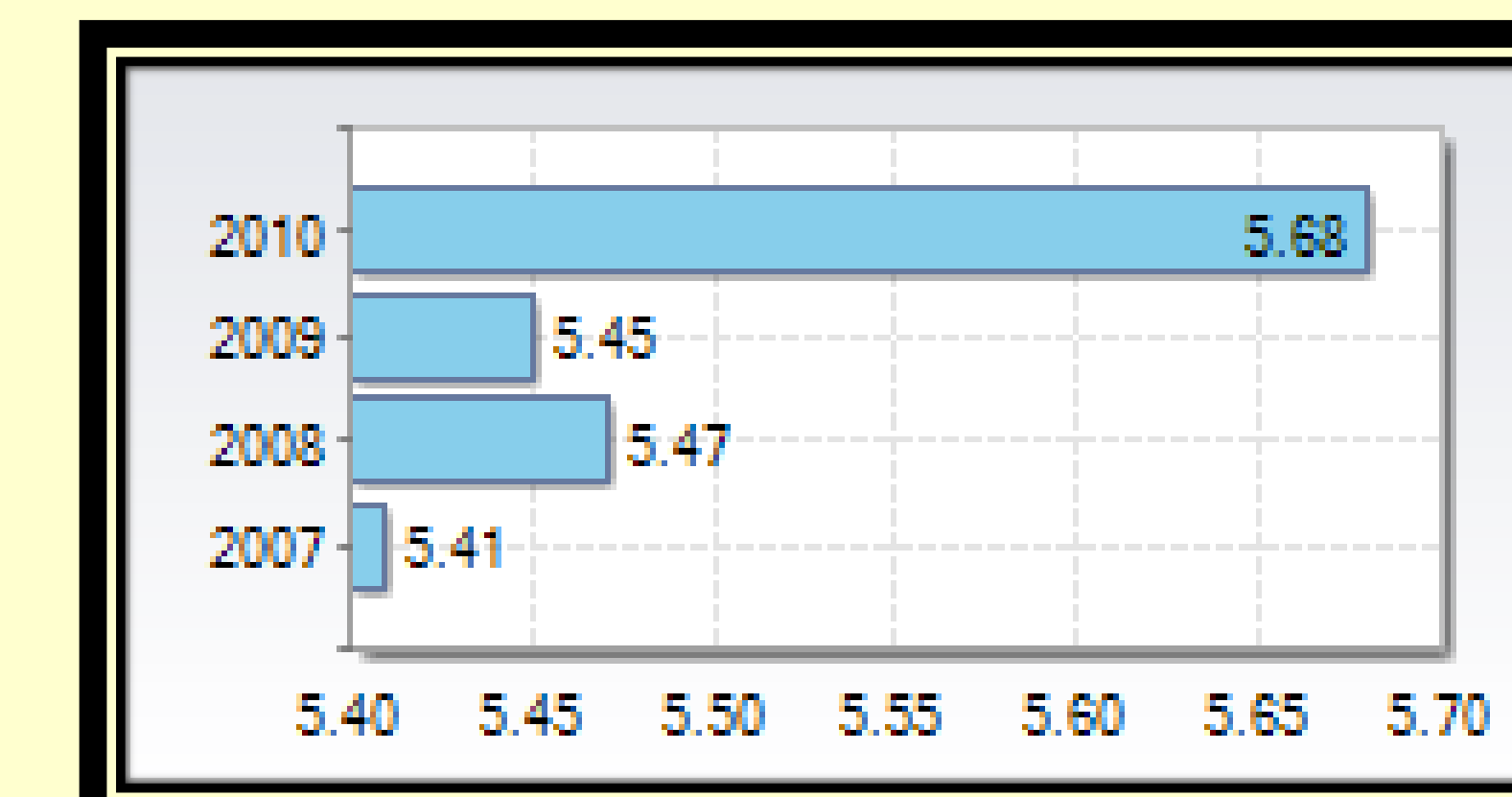
Factor 8: Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services



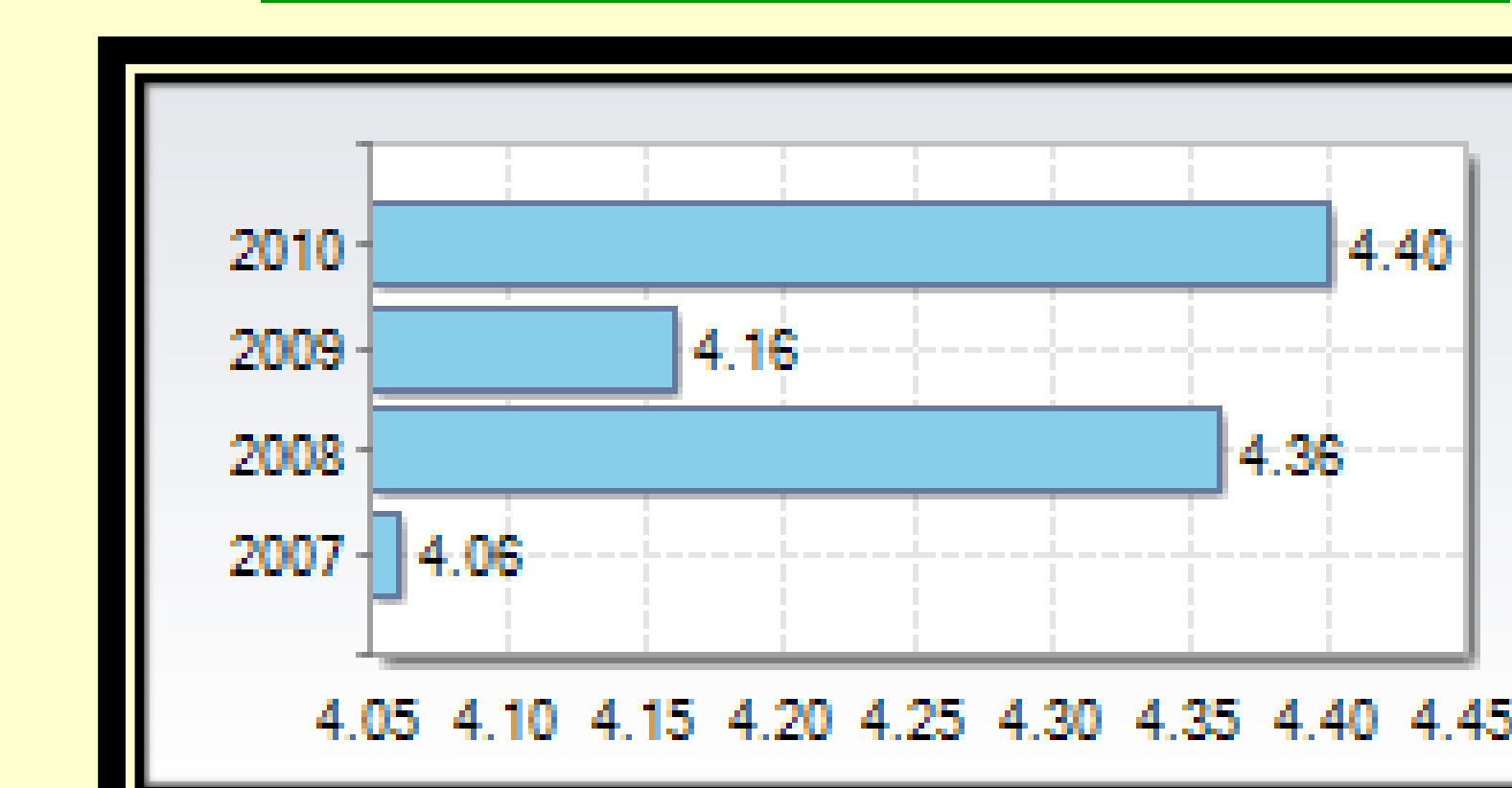
Factor 11: Course Improved Sense of Belonging



Factor 13: Satisfaction with College/University



Factor 15: Overall Course Effectiveness



Next Steps

- ❖ Further Analysis of Data
- ❖ Continue to benchmark ourselves against quality programs
- ❖ Modify FYE 2100 based on findings