Annual Assessment Report Template

Department: Communication Studies
Date: Sept 1 2013
Department Chair: Dr. Lesa Stern

I. **Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment**

Program Learning Outcome	Facilitator	Direct Assessment Methods	Indirect Assessment Methods	Major Findings	Closing the Loop Activities
Effective Oral Com-munication (Public Speaking)	Lesa Stern	Videotaped and Evaluated 25 speeches completed by seniors	No indirect assessment was done	Our department motto is *"wisdom with eloquence."* In alignment with this motto, our students need to make more clear and compelling arguments in their speeches. We assessed each speech for 7 competencies and found: 1. <u>Topic choice</u>: We were impressed with the thoughtfulness and appropriateness of the topics selected for projects/papers 2. <u>Communicating thesis</u>: We found that students did state a thesis is nearly all presentations, but not as compellingly as we'd like, and/or that students tended more toward presenting information and less toward making an original, compelling argument, tending more toward explaining and less toward persuading. While they chose interesting and worthwhile topics, they could improve in	1. We will consistently and systematically refer students to our argumentation guidelines/worksheet that we constructed in Fall 2012 for written papers. (Similar issues emerged in student speeches as emerged in their papers.) It Is located at: http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/ departments/communication_studies/argument.html We will also review this in classes that require a presentation and reinforce the importance of "argument" within the context of a speech. We will do this, at minimum, in COM 015, COM 130, COM 110, COM 196, and COM 190. 2. We will refer to (and review in class) our presentation rubric. We will also post the rubric to our website. Providing clear expectations and standards for speeches may help students construct them more thoughtfully. Most students take public speaking in their first or second years, and may forget some of the important guidelines as seniors. Providing more consistent exposure to these guidelines/expectations should help student performance.

				articulating the significance of the topic for the audience. We want them to address: "Why is this a thesis worth defending?" and then do so in an elegant way. 3. Supporting material: Students provided excellent evidence, research, and examples. However, they sometimes let the evidence speak for itself without providing the linkages to the argument/thesis. As for visual aids, several slides simply contained bullet points (distracting). Sometimes, a visual aid was needed to enhance the speech. 4. Organization: Many intros were lacked an attention getter that draws the audience in. Transitions were also missing. During the longer speeches, the main points were lost among the details. 5. Language: Many students were well informed on their topics, and the clarity in language and explanation was quite good. Still, we would like to hear more vivid, descriptive, precise language appropriate to the topic and the rhetorical situation. . 6. Vocal Delivery: Most speakers spoke well, though many, in our opinion, lacked energy and passion. There was an over	3. A few majors do not take public speaking until their senior year; we will make a concerted effort in our advising to encourage students to take public speaking in their first or second year. 4. We will collect and review our syllabi and/or assignment instructions for presentations and have another discussion on how we communicate our expectations to students. This discussion will happen in Sept or Oct 2013.

				reliance on note cards– this detracted from their ability to speak conversationally, or extemporaneously, and with energy. 7. <u>Physical Presence</u>: Students dressed appropriately and made good eye contact with audience members. We would like to see more engagement with the audience, however, via more meaningful eye contact, and more interactivity when appropriate. <u>Overall</u>: We are pleased that students are finding and synthesizing good information and resources, that they are articulate, and understand how to present themselves professionally. We plan to focus departmental efforts in the next couple of years to make a concerted push to improve students' abilities to make impactful speeches. We think the two main ways to accomplish this is by focusing on the argumentation, and oral delivery skills. (See table of percentages for each competency)	

Discussion: Overall, our students did a good job on their presentations. We believe that their presentations are mostly solid. However, we would like more of them to be excellent. (See "comments on our findings" that is provided with our tabled data in Appendix C.)

Proposed follow up in 3 years: Tape 15-20 speeches and use the same rubric to assess if there is improvement due to the changes we will make this year.

II. Follow-ups

Program Learning Outcome	Who is in Charge	Major Findings	Closing the Loop Activities
	No follow-ups scheduled for this year		

III. Other assessment-related projects (optional)

Project	Who is in Charge	Major Findings	Action
none			

IV. Adjustments to the Multi-year Action Plan (optional)

Proposed adjustment	Rationale	Timeline	Expected Outcome
Discussion. No adjustment. We made an adjustment last year (complete oral com this year).			

V. Appendices

A. Prompts or instruments used to collect the data

In Sept 2012, we identified all the COM courses for the year that a significant presentation required. We agreed to record the presentations done by seniors for assessment purposes.

Nature of data collected:

- We collected speeches from a variety of courses: Com 129, Com 110, Com 145, Com 190, and Com 196.
- There were 25 speeches in our sample.
- Speeches represented a variety of speaking assignments, such as project presentations and papers that were just one component of many in a class, to presenting their internship experiences and senior projects that they engaged in throughout the entire Spring semester.
- The presentations ranged in length from 10 minutes to 45 minutes.

B. Appendix B: **SPEECH / ORAL PRESENTATION EVALUATION FORM**

Excellent (B+/A); Satisfactory (C/B); Unsatisfactory (=/<C-)

PRESENTATIONAL COMPETENCIES	*DESCRIPTION*	*E*	*S*	*U*
Competency One: **Topic Selection**	Chooses and narrows a topic that is both appropriate and timely for the audience and occasion.			
Competency Two: **Communicating Thesis**	Compellingly and memorably communicates thesis/specific purpose in a manner appropriate for audience and occasion; establishes significance of the thesis / purpose			
Competency Three: **Supporting Material**	Provides appropriate & credible supporting material (evidence, presentational aids, information and analysis) that significantly supports the thesis and enhances speaker's credibility on the topic			
Competency Four: **Organization**	Skillfully uses an organizational pattern appropriate to topic, audience, occasion, and purpose; makes good use of transitions, intro/conclusion to make presentation cohesive			
Competency Five: **Language**	Correctly uses vivid and compelling language appropriate to the topic, audience, occasion, and purpose; minimal use of clichés, and empty phrases (all that stuff, you know)			
Competency Six: **Vocal Delivery**	Appropriately uses vocal variety in rate, pitch, intensity, & volume to heighten interest, enhance perception of speaker as polished and confident; minimal vocal non-fluencies (um)			
Competency Seven: **Physical Presence**	Appropriately uses physical behaviors, dress, and gestures that support the thesis and verbal message			

Additional Comments:

Appropriateness: Especially suitable or compatible. A speech on the horrors of torture might be inappropriate for younger children or recent survivors of torture. A speech peppered with medical jargon might be appropriate for surgeons, but inappropriate for middle school students. In terms of ethics, appropriate can also mean that sound ethical reasoning, evidence, and calls to action are incorporated, as opposed to making "inappropriate" referrals to less than sound evidence or calls for action that would be morally questionable or of questionable efficacy.

PRESENTATIONAL COMPETENCIES	EXCELLENT	SATISFACTORY	UNSATISFACTORY
Competency One: **Topic Selection**	Chooses and narrows a topic that is both appropriate and timely for the audience and occasion.	Chooses and narrows a topic sufficiently, though it is unclear that this topic is timely, of broad interest, or responsive to the occasion / call	Audience struggles to grasp the basic topic; it appears that very little audience analysis has taken place on the part of the speaker; the speech seems inconsistent with the occasion
Competency Two: **Communicating Thesis**	Compellingly and memorably communicates thesis/specific purpose in a manner appropriate for audience and occasion; establishes significance of the thesis / purpose	Thesis is clear and consistent with the supporting material, though perhaps not particularly memorable	Thesis may be deduced by audience, but the communication of the thesis is generally weak; it is not clear this thesis needs defending
Competency Three: **Supporting Material**	Provides appropriate and credible supporting material (evidence, explanations, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities, & analysis) that significantly supports the thesis and claims made and enhances speaker's credibility. Presentational aids illuminate the specific purpose and enhance the speaker's ethos.	Supporting materials make appropriate reference to information or analysis that at least partially supports the presentation or establishes the speaker's credibility on the topic; presentational aids are helpful.	Insufficient supporting materials or poorly designed presentational aids, some evidence may even detract from speaker's credibility; presentational aids are distracting and/or unprofessional.
Competency Four: **Organization**	Skillfully uses an organizational pattern appropriate to topic, audience, occasion, and purpose, making the content of the presentation cohesive; introduction and conclusion are compelling, sequenced material within the body and transitions are artfully arranged and delivered and lend both structure and fluidity	Specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions are mostly observable and lend cohesiveness to the presentation, though the transitions are less artful than desirable and some elements need work.	Specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions are intermittent at best, choppy, or largely missing.
Competency Five: **Language**	Correctly uses vivid & compelling language appropriate to the topic, audience, occasion, and purpose; language is largely free of error and trite phrases	Language is appropriate and mostly correct, though word choice is largely ordinary and routine; errors and trite phrases are few	Language choices are mundane or commonplace, or inappropriate to audience or occasion or are there too many errors
Competency Six: **Vocal Delivery**	Appropriately uses vocal variety in rate, pitch, intensity, and volume to heighten interest and enhance perception that speaker is polished and confident.	Delivery techniques enhance the presentation and speaker appears mostly comfortable. Vocal non-fluencies (false starts, "ums") are minimal.	Delivery detracts from the understandability and interest of the presentation; speaker appears uncomfortable, or disengaged
Competency Seven: **Physical Presence**	Dress is professional; gestures and behaviors are purposeful and support the thesis and verbal message; eye contact is meaningful; speaker is engaged	Speaker makes some eye contact, is dressed appropriately, and uses movement and gestures purposefully	Speaker is dressed inappropriately, gestures or paces in a way that detracts from the message (too wild or too stiff); avoids eye contact

C. Relevant assessment-related documents: Table of Results

Percentages of COM speeches rated excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory on seven competencies

PRESENTATIONAL COMPETENCIES	EXCELLENT	SATISFACTORY	UNSATISFACTORY
Topic Selection	80	20	0
Communicating Thesis	24	68	8
Supporting Material	64	32	4
Organization	32	64	4
Language	32	68	0
Vocal Delivery	20	72	8
Physical Presence	44	52	4

N= 25

Comments on our findings:

Topics Selection: We were impressed with the thoughtfulness and appropriateness of the topics selected for projects/papers.

Communicating thesis: Students tend to inform rather than persuade. However, they need to present an argument and defend it in their speeches. While their topics were important, they could improve in articulate the significance of the topic for the audience. We want them to address: "Why is this a thesis worth defending?" and then do so in an elegant way (Students do not see this step as crucial).

Supporting material: Students provided excellent evidence. However, they sometimes let the evidence speak for itself without providing the reasons. As for Visual aids, several powerpoints were simply bullet points of words (distracting). Sometimes, a visual aid was needed to enhance the speech (and none was provided).

Organization: Many intros were boring and lacked an attention getter that draws the audience in. Transitions were also missing. During the longer speeches, the main points were lost among the details. We see need of improvement here.

Language: Many students were well informed with their topic, therefore their language was clear. Yet, we would like to see improvement in vivid/compelling language. Students seem to revert to standard language that is not as precise and descriptive.

Vocal Delivery: Most speeches were adequately delivered. However, several speeches lacked passion and enthusiasm. There was an over reliance on note cards– this detracted from their delivery.

Physical Presence: Students dressed appropriately and made sufficient eye contact with the audience. However, they can improve their engagement with the audience.