

**Component Area Assessment Annual Report  
Oral Communication Component Area  
2010-2011 Academic Year**

I. Assessment Activities

A. Component Area Goals

After completing the Oral Communication general education experience, students will be able to:

1. **Recognize communication as a transactional process by:**
  - a. determining audience orientation toward a message
  - b. identifying the supporting material most relevant to the intended receivers
  - c. recognizing and adjusting to nonverbal feedback
2. **Demonstrate critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages by:**
  - a. identifying reasoning that links observations to conclusions
  - b. understanding the limitations of different types of evidence
  - c. differentiating between various types of supporting evidence
  - d. identifying weaknesses in reasoning
3. **Produce organized informative and persuasive messages by:**
  - a. demonstrating the ability to capture audience attention
  - b. stating a thesis and previewing oral remarks
  - c. using signposts and transitions to clarify the organization of a message
  - d. concluding with a summary of main ideas or arguments
4. **Demonstrate effective extemporaneous speaking skills by:**
  - a. maintaining eye contact with intended receivers
  - b. using gestures which complement the verbal message
  - c. using varied vocal cues in the oral delivery of a message

B. Learning Outcomes/Data Collection

**Outcome 1:** *Recognizing communication as a transactional process by a) determining audience orientation toward a message; b) identifying the supporting material most relevant to the intended receivers; and c) recognizing and adjusting to nonverbal feedback.*

This outcome is measured by students' preparation outlines and speech proposals, in which they describe their preparation activities. They discuss their audience analysis activities and relate that analysis to the selection of organizational patterns, arguments, and supporting material. The assessment criteria for examining sample speeches include a set of criteria which focuses on audience adaptation as a basis for determining the competency of the speaker. Results of the videotape review will be reported in Section

**Outcome 2:** *Demonstrating critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages by a) identifying reasoning that links observations to conclusions; b) understanding the limitations of different types of evidence; c) differentiating between various types of supporting evidence; d) identifying weaknesses in reasoning.*

The focus on critical thinking in the course is reflected in all assignments, especially the preparation outlines, brief speeches, and self-analysis assignments. In addition, exam scores can be used to test students' understanding of evidence and reasoning. Using exam scores on selected test items allows us to account for the performance of every student in the class. Although exam scores do not reflect the specific critical thinking activities associated with student speeches, exam scores provide a reliable measure.

**Outcome 3:** *Producing organized informative and persuasive messages by a) demonstrating the ability to capture audience attention; b) stating a thesis and previewing oral remarks; c) using signposts and transitions to clarify the organization of a message; d) concluding with a summary of main ideas or arguments.*

The structural elements of speaking are evident in speech performances. To assess the basic competencies of students, video recordings of student persuasive speeches are collected. Each instructor collects 2-3 randomly selected student videos from each section of the CMM 103 course in the fall and spring semesters. This procedure yields a sample of approximately 10 percent of all final speeches delivered in the course each semester.

This year 98 usable speech recordings were collected. The sample speeches were evaluated using an assessment instrument sanctioned by the National Communication Association. The instrument measures eight basic competencies on a three-point scale (Unsatisfactory=1, Satisfactory=2, Excellent=3). A panel of three reviewers rated the videotaped speeches. Sample speeches were considered minimally competent if rated with a score of 16 out of 24. Where there was a difference between raters' scores, the speech was rated as competent if two of the three reviewers awarded a score of 16 or above. Results of this review will be reported in Section I.C.

**Outcome 4:** *Demonstrating effective extemporaneous speaking skills by a) maintaining eye contact with intended receivers; b) using gestures which complement the verbal message; c) using varied vocal cues in the oral delivery of a message.*

Students' competency in maintaining eye contact, using gestures and employing vocal variety are directly observable in their speech performances. These competencies were assessed by the instrument described in Section I.B.3. above. Results are reported in the following section.

## C. Results

### 1. *Review of student test scores related to critical thinking.*

Critical thinking results show that students answer critical thinking questions on the exams at a rate of 70% for Fall 2010 and 67% for Spring 2011. That is a small improvement over the previous year.

*Although this would be the first year of teaching for the majority of our TAs, two of the ten were returning graduate students, four first year TAs had extensive undergraduate experience in competitive speaking, two were undergraduate majors in Communication Studies at Marshall and two were first year students with undergraduate majors from different fields. In addition we had several experienced part-time instructors. I believe that the slight improvement was due to the familiarity with argument and reasoning that this particular group of instructors brought to the classroom.*

### 2. *Review of recorded student speeches*

98 usable sample recordings were reviewed for this assessment report. This is an increase over last year's sample of 94. The review resulted in 77% of speeches being rated as minimally competent thus meeting the benchmark of 75%. This is a significant improvement over the results for previous years.

*Again the additional competitive speaking experience of the TAs may account for the improvement.*

**Summary of Results**  
**GER Assessment; Oral Communication Requirement**  
**AY 2010-2011**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Method of Assessment</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Conclusion/Action</b>
1. Recognize public speaking as a transactional process	Global assessment on 7 of 8 review criteria	Minimum score of 14 on the 7 relevant criteria	83 percent of speeches pass (82 out of 98)	Significant Improvement from previous year. Additional TA experience probably accounts for this number.
2. Demonstrate critical thinking in both the production and evaluation of spoken messages	Review of exam scores on items related to critical thinking	Average score of 75%	Average scores: 70% for Fall 2010 67% for Spring 2011	A minor improvement over last year. Still a need for greater attention to critical thinking assignments and TA training More consistency across semesters in terms of exam questions.
3. Produce organized informative and persuasive messages	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 8 evaluation criteria (average score = 16)	77% percent of speeches pass (75 out of 98)	Significant improvement Continued emphasis on basic organizational features of in class presentations.
4. Demonstrate effective extemporaneous speaking skills	Review of sample student speeches for minimal competence	Satisfactory performance on 3 evaluation criteria (average score = 6)	77 percent of speeches pass (76 out of 98)	Improvement from previous year. Continued focus on basic delivery skills.

II. BOT Initiative Compliance

The assessment procedures described in this report are consistent with BOT Initiative 2. In particular, a randomly selected sample of student work in the oral communication component of the general education

curriculum is reviewed to determine the level of competency in both oral communication and critical thinking. This year 77% of student speeches reviewed met the minimum standard for competency in the course, 23% failed to meet the standard.

III. Plan for the Current Year - The department plans to reinstate the pedagogy course, CMM 674, for all incoming TAs. This should provide a more exhaustive training than the two day pre-semester training and weekly “staff” meetings. The course will focus on the development of lesson plans, the development of focused activities, feedback and assignment evaluation rubrics and classroom management.

1. *Communication as a transaction.*

Emphasis must continue to be placed on instructor feedback to improve this assessment. In particular, instructors must become more involved in the invention stage of the speaking assignments. TA training in appropriate feedback for the proposal assignment should continue to be emphasized.

2. *Critical thinking.*

Critical thinking has been assessed using selected questions from the final exams. However, the choice of questions to be used has not been consistent. A consistent set of questions from the previous year was used but must be changed for the coming semester because new exams will be developed for next academic year.. TA experience did make a difference in the scores of students.

3 *Organization*

A significant improvement was made this year. TA training needs to continue emphasizing the importance of appropriate feedback.

4 *Extemporaneous speaking skills.*

Significant improvement was noted in this area but emphasis still needs to be placed on delivery skills. This is difficult to do in the limited amount of time instructors have with students. However, instructors need to use more oral feedback in terms of helping students to recognize and change delivery behaviors which are distracting.

IV. **Assistance needed**

The review of increasing numbers of speeches is labor intensive. We must have continued funding for reviewers to work on the videotape review project in the summer.

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