**ASSESSMENT REPORT, AY 2016-17**

**Department of Communication**

**College of Arts & Humanities**

**1. Learning Outcomes Assessed.**

In 2016-17, Learning Outcome 3.4 (students will be able to use theoretical perspectives to analyze and produce effective persuasive discourse) was assessed.

**2. Instruments (and assignment) Used in Assessment**

Twenty student persuasive speeches in Communication 103 (Advanced Public Speaking) and Communication 149 (Freedom of Speech) were assessed. The Communication 103 students were presenting TED-style Talks, which required them to blend research, rhetorical strategies, storytelling, and oral performance to convince an audience of their claim. The Communication 149 student speakers selected a contemporary freedom of speech issue and developed a persuasive message to support their stance on the issue. They were required to defend their position with research and reasoning.

A rubric (see appendix) was used to evaluate the content and delivery of the student’s persuasive messages. A 4-point scale was used to assess each student’s overall performance and their performance on each subcategory of the assessment.

4—Accomplished

3—Competent

2—Developing

1—Beginning

Students were evaluated in four areas: use of persuasive strategies, evidence and reasoning, delivery, and organization.

It was expected that 75% of students would score 2.5 or higher (competent) on the overall assessment and on each subcategory of the assessment.

**3. Findings From the Data**

After applying the rubric to the speeches, students were evaluated based on the following scale:

3.5 to 4.0--Accomplished

2.5 to 3.4--Competent

1.5 to 2.4—Developing

0 to 1.4—Beginning

Based on this scale, the number of students in each category was as follows:

Accomplished 6

Competent 12

Developing 2

Beginning 0

With respect to the subcategories, the mean student scores were:

Persuasive Strategies 3.22

Evidence and Reasoning 3.03

Delivery 3.39

Organization 3.25

The data indicate that 90% of the student presentations scored in the competent or accomplished range. The mean score of the speeches fell in the competent range each of the subcategories, with each score placing in the top half of the range. Considering the relative scores, student performances were strongest in the category of delivery and the area with the lowest score was evidence and reasoning.

By looking at comments that were provided along with the scores, some common themes emerged:

* **Persuasive Strategies.** Students who did well on this category applied their message to the audience and showed how the topic was relevant to them. They made effective use of ethos, pathos, and logos in their presentations. They used additional strategies, such as effective use of reasoning or two-sided messages. Although most students were rated accomplished or competent, some students made a sound case for their thesis but did not consistently connect their topic to the audience.
* **Evidence and Reasoning.** Top performances on this metric cited multiple sources during their presentation. The sources were credible for the topic being discussed. The logic supporting their ideas were sound. A few speeches were rated lower because they contained fact claims that were not supported by an evidence source or were supported by a source of low or uncertain credibility. The speeches sometimes relied on proof surrogates (“my research showed…”). Their reasoning sometimes contained fallacies such as loaded language or hasty generalizations.
* **Delivery.** The most successful speakers made excellent eye contact, limiting their references to notes. They exhibited vocal variety and presented their message with confidence. They displayed command of their presentation. Gestures were used to emphasize ideas in the speech. The most common delivery mistakes were excessively reading from notes or looking at the screen rather than the audience when using presentation aids or Power point slides. Some speakers’ movement and gestures seemed less controlled.
* **Organization.** Speeches scoring high on organization had a clear thesis that was expressed at the beginning of their speech. The speeches were clearly divided into an introduction, body, and conclusion. These speakers used transitions to indicate movement from one main idea to the next and their supporting materials related well to their main points. Although most speakers did have an introduction, body, and conclusion, in less organized speeches it was difficult to ascertain what point the speaker was addressing at points in their speech.

**4. Actions Taken as a Result of the Findings**

The data indicated that the students had developed and delivered effective persuasive speeches. 90% of the students assessed scored either accomplished or competent. No corrective action is warranted at this time. The department will continue to assess this outcome in future assessments to determine whether this standard is being maintained.

**5. Assessment Activities in 2017-18.**

The department completed a program review in spring 2017. The review team commended the department’s annual assessments. The review team also recommended that the department revise and update our learning outcomes after deliberating and reaching consensus on our department vision and curriculum revisions. The department’s learning outcomes will be revised in light of this process and a new schedule will be developed. The department will assess the first learning outcome(s) selected for the new assessment schedule.

**APPENDIX. Rubric used to assess student performance on Goal 3, Learning Outcome 4 (Persuasive Discourse)**

**Persuasive Strategies**

4**.** The speaker uses appropriate persuasive strategies when developing each main idea. The message is related to the audience effectively.

3**.** The speaker generally uses appropriate persuasive strategies when developing each main idea. The speaker relates the message to the audience.

2. The speaker includes persuasive strategies, but some main points to not incorporate strategies. The speaker makes a limited effort to relate the message to the audience.

1. The speaker rarely includes rhetorical strategies in the message and the connection to the audience is not apparent.

**Evidence and Reasoning**

4. The speaker regularly cites credible sources to support claims and uses appropriate forms of reasoning to develop main ideas.

3. The speaker cites credible sources to support most claims and generally uses appropriate forms of reasoning to develop main ideas.

2. The speaker cites some research sources but asserts some key fact claims without evidence. There are some fallacious reasoning patterns.

1. The speaker does not cite research sources or generally supports main ideas with uncertain or fallacious reasoning patterns.

**Delivery**

4. The speaker consistently makes eye contact with the audience. The speaker’s voice is conversational and engaging. The gestures reinforce the message. The presentation is polished and confident.

3. The speaker generally looks at the audience. His or her voice is clear and usually conversational. The speaker’s tone is varied. (S)he includes gestures and generally avoids distracting mannerisms.

2. The speaker makes some effort to look at the audience. His or her delivery is generally clear, but not consistently conversational or engaging. At times, the delivery includes nonverbal errors that detract from the presentation.

1. The speaker’s voice is difficult to understand or the speaker is so uncomfortable when presenting that the vocal or nonverbal delivery detracts from the presentation.

**Organization**

4. The presentation is clearly divided into an introduction, body, and conclusion. Main points can be easily identified and they are supported with relevant ideas. The speaker uses transitions, previews, and signposts to make the speech structure clear.

3. The presentation includes an introduction, body, and conclusion. Main points can be easily identified and it is generally possible to follow the speaker’s message development.

2. The speech includes a number of appropriate organizational strategies, but the main points are not consistently clear and at times it is not apparent what point is being developed.

1. The speaker’s main ideas are not clear and it is not apparent how the ideas are connected or developed.