**GE A1 Oral Communication SLO Evaluation Report May 2019:**

**Background/Description of GE Program ePortfolio:**

Prior to the 2017-2018 AY, departments/programs were responsible for assessing GE student learning outcomes and submitting a report every year for the GE Committee to review. This system had several weaknesses. Departments and programs were responsible for deciding which of the two to four outcomes designated for a specific GE Area to assess; thus some outcomes were evaluated multiple times within a year and others were not evaluated at all in certain years. It was also not possible for departments to access and evaluate a representative sample of student work, nor was it possible to compare the results from GE courses in the same GE Area taught by different departments/programs, because each department/program used its own criteria/rubrics. Finally, the GE Committee was not able to review and analyze the GE assessment reports in a comprehensive fashion, since the committee was also tasked with reviewing all GE curriculum proposals, as well as with discussing and updating GE policies and procedures.

Therefore, Fresno State developed a proposal for a new system of evaluating GE student learning outcomes during the 2014-2015 AY. The proposal was approved by Fresno State’s Academic Senate in May 2017 and by Dr. Joseph Castro in August of 2017. Essentially, all freshmen and transfer students admitted to Fresno State beginning in Fall 2018 will submit one designated assignment aligned to one GE student outcome from lower-division (for freshmen) and upper-division (for freshmen and transfer students) GE courses to a GE Program ePortfolio. Students will also write 300-word reflections (freshmen write three and transfer students write one) about their learning and submit these to the GE Program ePortfolio. The GE Program ePortfolio was set up by the Director of Assessment and students were automatically enrolled. Handouts, videos, and other resources that were posted previously to Blackboard were uploaded to Canvas when the campus transitioned from Blackboard to Canvas.

During the first year of implementation (2017-2018 AY), efforts focused on electing members to the new GE Assessment Subcommittee and on approving common rubrics to be used to evaluate GE student learning outcomes. Fresno State’s GE student learning outcomes were approved by the Academic Senate in 2010. These are the forty outcomes that will be evaluated on a five-year schedule. Beginning in the 2018-2019 AY, a team consisting of the Director of Assessment, the ten faculty members serving on the GE Assessment Committee, and the student representative selected a random sample of student submissions for all ten outcomes in GE Areas A1, A2, and A3, then evaluated these submissions to determine proficiency in the GE student learning outcomes for GE Area A.

**GE Assessment Subcommittee: Evaluation and Norming Process:**

The GE Assessment Subcommittee had previously reviewed and approved common rubrics for evaluating each of the ten GE student learning outcomes designated for GE Area A. The committee also discussed the specific assignments submitted for each outcome and evaluated how well each assignment aligned to a specific GE student learning outcome. Finally, after two committee members were assigned to evaluate specific student learning outcomes, the Director of Assessment held a two-hour meeting with all five faculty teams; the appropriate rubric was used to evaluate sample student work as part of the norming process. Each reviewer scored the student work independently. Clarification was provided as necessary during the period in which the faculty teams were reviewing and scoring the assignments. After scoring the work, faculty teams met to identify common strengths and weaknesses; a third reviewer scored all assignments on which the two reviewers did not agree about proficiency.

**Outcomes and measures (assignments) used to evaluate A1 outcomes:**

Upon completion of an Area A1 (Oral Communication) course, students will be able to**:**

1. Demonstrate effective communication by analyzing, creating, and presenting extemporaneous informative and persuasive messages with clear lines of reasoning, development of ideas, and documentation of external sources.
2. Analyze the impact of culture and situational contexts on the creation and management of the communication choices used to inform and persuade audiences.
3. Create and criticize public arguments and reasoning, decision-making processes, and rhetorical messages through oral and written reports.

Assignments:

Students recorded informative and persuasive speeches given in Speech 3, 7, and 8, courses that fulfill the GE Area A1 requirement at Fresno State. These speeches were between four and seven minutes long. Most were individual speeches, although a few group speeches were included in the sample. Students were asked to upload their own speech to the GE Program ePortfolio (digital repository that is password protected), but some instead provided a link. Not all links were still active when the faculty began reviewing the speeches in Spring 2019. (This issue will be discussed with faculty teaching GE Communication courses.) Once a random sample of available student speeches was identified, two faculty serving on the GE Assessment Subcommittee evaluated approximately thirty-five speeches for proficiency in outcomes 1, 2, and 3.

Review Process:

Each student’s speech selected for the assessment was only evaluated for one of the three learning outcomes, even though most speeches aligned with two or three of the A1 outcomes. Every speech was evaluated by two faculty members. If the two faculty reviewers disagreed, about proficiency, then the Director of Assessment, Dr. Melissa Jordine, also reviewed the speech and determined proficiency. These speeches aligned very well to outcome one, which focuses on effective communication, and outcome three, which focuses on public arguments in oral and written reports. The written speeches and oral presentations submitted by students were well aligned with outcome two in terms of communication choices used to inform and persuade audiences; thus this was the primary focus of the rubric. However, neither the rubric nor the assignments were genuinely aligned to, and thus could not adequately measure, the impact of culture and situational contexts on the creation of speeches, which is also part of outcome two. (The assignments and rubrics will be reviewed and revised to address this alignment issue.)

**Results for Outcomes A1 outcome 1, A1 outcome 2, A1 outcome 3**

The evaluation of A1 learning outcomes has demonstrated that Fresno State students are proficient in oral communication. Of the thirty-four students evaluated for outcome 1, which had four separate criteria, 88% of students were proficient in all four criteria. Out of thirty students evaluated for outcome 2, which had three separate criteria, 97% were deemed proficient. Of the thirty students evaluated for outcome 3, which had four separate criteria on the rubric, 77% were deemed proficient in all three criteria. Collectively out of the eleven specific criteria evaluated for the three separate student learning outcomes for GE Area A1, more than 95% of students were deemed proficient in six of the criteria for the three outcomes. More than 87% were deemed proficient in two criteria, and 80% or more of students were deemed proficient in the remaining three criteria. Furthermore, the benchmark of 90% was met for all but four of the criteria across the three outcomes. The comments emphasized the ability of students to clearly communicate key ideas, to give specific examples, and to present a well-organized speech with clear lines of reasoning.

Thirty-four student speeches were evaluated for proficiency in A1 outcome 1. The outcome included four criteria: extemporaneous delivery; clear lines of reasoning; development of ideas; references to sources. Of the thirty-four students, all of them (100%) were proficient in criteria 1, while thirty-three students, or 97%, were deemed proficient in criteria 2 and 3, and thirty, or 88%, were deemed proficient in criteria 4. The comments indicate that most students spoke clearly, identified key points, and made eye contact with the audience. Faculty noted that many of the students began their speeches with an anecdote, their speaking tone was good, and their speeches were well-organized. The only negative comments related to the first three criteria were that some of the students spoke too quickly or were nervous and less clear at the very beginning of the speech. In terms of criteria four, comments related that some students did not indicate the source of the information at all (the four deemed not proficient) and that others just barely identified their sources clearly enough to be deemed proficient.

A total of thirty students were evaluated for proficiency in A1 outcome 2. The rubric included three criteria: adapted to a diverse audience; adapted to college students; adapted to academic context. All thirty students, or 100%, were deemed proficient in all three criteria; thus the benchmark was met of 90% of students being deemed proficient in all three criteria. Comments, which primarily identified strengths, focused on the fact that the speeches were relevant and appropriate for a college audience.

A total of thirty students were evaluated for outcome 3. The rubric focused on four criteria: thesis; main ideas; evidence and reasoning; and rhetorical strategies. Of the thirty students evaluated, twenty-five, or 83%, were deemed proficient in criteria one; twenty-eight, or 93%, were proficient in criteria two; twenty-five, or 83%, were proficient in criteria three; and twenty four, or 80%, were proficient in criteria four. The benchmark was only met for criteria two, but at least 80% of students were proficient in all four criteria. Speeches that were deemed proficient focused on the fact that, overall, the speeches were clear and included good points. Speeches that were deemed not proficient were characterized as disjointed, vague, or lacking a clear thesis or key points.

**Inter-rater reliability**

Fresno State’s benchmark for inter-rater reliability is 90% or higher, and this was not met for many of the specific criteria for the three outcomes. For outcome 1, criteria 1, reliability was 74%, and for criteria 2, 3, and 4, reliability was 91%. This is explained by the ratings of one of the two faculty members assigned to review the speeches for outcome one. This faculty member rated the student as a 2 (not proficient) if the student paused more than once or made minor mistakes in language that did not obscure the meaning of the sentence. During the norming session, the faculty had agreed that minor mistakes would not prevent a student from scoring a 3 (proficient). Clearly, more time needs to be spent discussing whether the clarity of statement is more important than the number of mistakes a student makes during a speech.

For outcome 2, there was a 100% reliability rate for criteria 1 and 2 and a 77% reliability rate for criteria 3. Despite meeting and norming, two faculty members interpreted the third criteria for outcome 2 slightly differently. One faculty member evaluated whether or not the topic was appropriate for an academic setting (a university speech course) as discussed and agreed upon during the norming session. However, the other faculty member assessed whether or not the language and level of the speech was appropriate for a college audience. Since the two faculty members were evaluating slightly different aspects of the speech (appropriateness of topic vs. appropriateness of language and level of speech), the reliability rate was relatively low. (This issue will be discussed and resolved prior to the next evaluation of the A1 student learning outcomes.)

For outcome 3, there was a 67% reliability rate for criteria 1. This suggests that the two reviewers were not adequately normed, since they disagreed one-third of the time, although the criteria of whether or not the thesis was clearly stated seemed to be relatively straightforward. For criteria two, the rater reliability was 83%, which suggests that the reviewers were evaluating this criteria based on a greater consensus of what constituted proficiency. For outcome three, the rater reliability was 70%. Again, this suggests that the reviewers were not interpreting the criteria in the same way. For outcome four, the rater reliability was 67%. Thus it is clear that additional norming and greater discussion of the rubric, as well as additional guidelines, are necessary to help reviewers interpret and evaluate the criteria in the same way.

**Conclusions**

The rubric for outcome two needs to be reviewed and revised. The outcome and revised rubric must be discussed with the faculty teaching sections of Communications courses that satisfy the requirements for GE Area A1. Clearly necessary are additional meetings that focus on discussing the rubric criteria and reviewing actual student work as part of the norming process. There was also a significant difference between the scores by evaluators who are currently teaching GE and those who are not teaching GE courses, but are primarily teaching and evaluating students in upper-division courses. The difference in scores — when considered along with the fact that the Director of Assessment more often agreed with the scores recorded by faculty who are teaching GE — suggests that faculty who are not teaching GE may have expected a higher standard than is necessary to demonstrate basic proficiency.

Overall, despite the need for additional discussion and agreement on criteria, it is clear that Fresno State students can deliver a speech that clearly communicates key points and lines of reasoning. These results, which show a high level of proficiency of students in oral communication in the A1 courses, correspond to the results from the oral communication core competency assessment. Students at a point near graduation were assessed for proficiency in oral communication as part of the assessment of the WSCUC core competencies during the 2017-2018 AY. More than 90% of students were proficient in each of the three separate criteria, although only 80% were proficient in all three outcomes. These two assessments of very different student populations at Fresno State correlate. They provide conclusive evidence that students are proficient in oral communication. This is the first time common rubrics were used to evaluate the GE student learning outcomes and this is also the first time faculty who are not teaching in the GE courses have evaluated student work. Despite the fact that this was the initial implementation of the new system, the overall process and rater reliability were good.