A Report on Oral Communication
at the University of Virginia:

Submitted by the Oral Communication Competency Assessment Committee

Coordinated by the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies

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In summer 2005, UVa's Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies (IAS) began the assessment of undergraduate student oral communication competence. The Oral Communication Competency Assessment Committee convened to design assessment criteria. The committee defined a range of learning outcomes and set targets for achievement. The committee defined oral competency as the *effective interpretation, composition and **extemporaneous** presentation of information, ideas, and values to a specific audience*. The committee emphasized the need to distinguish "extemporaneous" from simple public recitation.

Early in the assessment process, the committee made one important discovery: true *extemporaneous* performances were rare based on the examples of participating classes. (See Section I on page 3.)

Results

Presentation evaluations fell below targets, except that no students were rated not competent: (1) Only 2.9% scored "highly competent," compared to the target 40%; (2) 74% scored "competent or better," compared to the target 85%. (See Section II on page 4.)

Committee Findings

1. The majority of our students are at least minimally competent with the most basic form of public speaking, what might be called "formal public recitation," that is, the ability to stand up and read directly from a paper, or notes, or some other text.

2. However, too few students are "highly competent"—even in regard to the most basic level of formal public recitation – than we believe should be the case at a top tier university.

3. Far too few opportunities exist—either to learn or to engage in—extemporaneous speaking at the University. (See Section III on page 5.)

Oral Communication in the Undergraduate Experience

Because of the central role strong speaking skills play in the University's Ten-Year Plan vision and the shortfall of students' oral communication competency given the assessment results, the committee believes that more should be done to bolster this skill in the curriculum. A curriculum that fosters skilled public speaking is a central goal of most peer institutions as well as within the University itself according to the committee's research.

Several questions arise based on the assessment experience, including: what is the common value of the oral communication experience, are needs being met, and are there limitations within the existing opportunities? In regard to value, students see a practical value in skilled oral communication, including building leadership skills, cultural literacy, diversity, and transferable skill sets valued in other courses and the workplace. In regard to need, current and historic evidence shows that demand for public speaking opportunities in the curriculum far exceeds supply. (See Section IV on page 6.)

Committee Recommendations

The committee recommends that the assessment results be disseminated to all faculty so that a conversation involving students, alumni, faculty, and administration might begin to define the oral communication competencies the community desires of its graduates. We also recommend that the committee be reconstituted to help implement this process of definition and goal setting. (See Section VII on page 10.)

The University's Ten Year Academic Plan draft envisions a University which provides students "communication skills through expertise in writing, speaking, foreign language, and information technology" (p. 5). To that end, the committee believes more needs to be done to bolster the speaking skills so designated as a key element in preparing students for success.

As University students move forward into an increasingly globalized culture and polarized political climate that will demand highly nuanced, sophisticated, and professionally skilled communicators, the committee stands ready to assist in constituting a more consistent, coherent public speaking program for all undergraduate students.

I. ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

In the summer of 2005, IAS began the SCHEV-mandated process of assessing the competence of undergraduate students in two areas: critical thinking and oral communication. Four other competencies had been assessed in 2002 (writing and technological competence) and 2004 (mathematical reasoning and scientific reasoning). While SCHEV required assessment of only 5% of the graduating class (about 160 students), the University Assessment Coordinator recommended, and the Vice President and Provost approved, that more students be assessed so that each of the six schools with undergraduate programs could gauge its students' performance (352 students). Faculty committees to oversee and direct the assessment process convened in June and July of 2005.

As its first task, the Oral Communication Competency Assessment Committee defined oral competency as the *effective interpretation, composition and* **extemporaneous** *presentation of information, ideas, and values to a specific audience*. "Extemporaneous" means any carefully prepared public presentation (including PowerPoint) delivered with few notes or text and involving engagement of the speaker's audience. This definition has two purposes: first, to be as inclusive as possible of the communication activities an undergraduate might engage in at the University; and second, to emphasize that the ability to speak in an engaged manner with few notes is a far more challenging intellectual endeavor than memorization or reading from a paper, notes, or other text.

The committee also defined the expected student learning outcomes of the assessment. "Undergraduate students graduating from the University of Virginia will demonstrate oral communication skills and, in an extemporaneous presentation, should be able to:

- Take responsibility for a significant topic with a clear thesis and persuasive argument.
- Provide a clear structure and adequate transitions between ideas.
- Demonstrate a substantial understanding of the chosen topic and disciplinary knowledge or genre via research, credible sources, and supporting evidence.
- Demonstrate facility with topical and disciplinary knowledge via well-crafted, audience appropriate language.
- Adapt and balance the speaker's purpose, agenda, and style with audience needs and the specific occasion.
- Demonstrate vocal qualities (pace, inflection, volume, enunciation) and physical behaviors (gestures, stance, eye-contact, movement) that augment content and maintain audience interest.
- Evince enthusiasm for the topic and occasion while projecting an engaging personal presence.
- Use visual aids, when appropriate, to provide useful illustrations or examples."

The committee developed a skills-based, ten-point descriptive scoring rubric for assessing undergraduate students in upper-level classes on the above learning outcomes and established the following targets:

- 40% would be highly competent (score of 4);
- 85% would be competent (score of 3 and above);
- 95% would be minimally competent (score of 2 and above).

In the fall and spring semesters of the academic year 2005-06, deans and department chairs of each undergraduate school identified upper-level courses in the major which required oral presentations that should demonstrate extemporaneous capability. Many, though not all, faculty teaching the identified courses volunteered to participate and received the definition of oral communication competency along with the assessment's goals, outcomes, and scoring rubric to ensure they could identify appropriate assignments for assessment. IAS filmed the presentations throughout the year.

Early on, the committee came to two important conclusions given the assumed importance of strong oral communication skills as part of a quality education:

- Oral presentations appear not to occur frequently as part of course work, based on the difficulty IAS had in locating classes with appropriate assignments for assessment.

- Based on the examples of participating classes, extemporaneous performances were rare.

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During two workshops in the winter and spring, nineteen faculty and four experienced graduate TA evaluators participated in norming sessions and then scored 352 student presentations using the scoring rubric. Each skill could receive a score from 4 (highly competent) to 1 (not competent), and an average score for each student was calculated. Two evaluators scored each presentation. In cases where the two evaluations differed significantly, a third evaluator scored the presenter. The summary results are reported in section II. For additional details about the methodology, see Appendix C, under "Description of Methodology Used to Gather Evidence."

In reflecting on the assessment process, the committee makes the following observations:

1. Students outside the Commerce and Engineering schools and the School of Continuing and Professional Studies' Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program appear to have few opportunities to learn and practice individual extemporaneous oral communication.

2. Many faculty assigning and grading oral presentations do not explicitly require that the presentations be extemporaneous.

3. The rubric measured what the committee wanted it to (validity), and was applied in a reasonably consistent manner (reliability); however, many of the presentations did not fit or satisfy the learning outcomes the committee had identified.

4. Ideally, the assignments could have been more carefully matched to the expected learning outcomes. Information should have been exchanged in a more effective manner between IAS, faculty teaching the courses, and the students giving the presentations.

II. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Overall, 74% of UVa students whose oral presentations were assessed were found to be "competent or better." This was somewhat lower than the goal of 85%. In addition:

- No students' presentations were found to be "not competent," exceeding expectations.
- Only 2.9% of the 352 presentations scored "highly competent," compared to the target of 40%.
- The overall mean score was 2.7 on the four-point scale used for this assessment.
- 3.1 would have been the mean if all targets had been met exactly (40% highly competent, 45% competent, 10% minimally competent, and 5% not competent).

For further details about the overall results, see Appendix D, Table 1: Detailed Results, University-Wide and By School.

Relative ranking of all undergraduate schools was not possible due to small sample sizes. Rankings of the four schools that had sufficient sample sizes are as follows:

- The McIntire School of Commerce (mean 2.9, 79% competent or better)
- The School of Engineering and Applied Science (mean 2.9, 88% competent or better)
- The College of Arts and Sciences (mean 2.7, 69% competent or better)
- The Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program in the School of Continuing and Professional Studies (mean 2.9, 85% competent or better).[1]

For further details about the school results, see Appendix D, Table 3: School Performance by Outcome.

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[1] For the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program, despite a larger sampling error (15%) than was the minimum goal (10%) a high proportion of the BIS graduating class was included in the sample (2/3) and therefore the results are representative and worth noting.

Assessment Results Compared to Goals/Standards					
	Not Competent	**Minimally Competent**	**Competent**	**Highly Competent**	**Mean Score**
	% of individual presentations with a mean score of:				
	Less than 1.5	1.5 or higher	2.5 or higher	3.5 or higher	
Goals/standards	5%	95%	85%	40%	3.1
University	0%	100%	74%	3%	2.7
BIS	0%	100%	85%	19%	2.9
College	0%	100%	69%	2%	2.7
Commerce	0%	100%	79%	7%	2.9
Engineering	0%	100%	88%	3%	2.9
	Note: Presentations scored on a 1-4 scale				

In addition to overall performance, the oral communication assessment examined ten student learning outcomes, each of which reflects one aspect of oral communication. Listed below are the results on each in descending order of competence:

- Demonstrating appropriate understanding of the topic, discipline, or genre (mean 3.0, 84% competent or better)
- Choosing and narrowing a significant topic appropriate for the audience and occasion (mean 3.0, 85% competent or better)
- Using language appropriate to the audience and occasion (mean 2.9, 78% competent or better)
- Using visual aids, when appropriate, to provide useful illustrations or examples (mean 2.9, 75% competent or better)
- Providing appropriate supporting evidence (mean 2.9, 72% competent or better)
- Balancing purpose and occasion with audience needs and expectations (mean 2.8, 71% competent or better)
- Communicating thesis/specific purpose to audience in a clear manner (mean 2.8, 66% competent or better)
- Providing a clear, easily identified organization appropriate to topic, audience, purpose and occasion (mean 2.7, 58% competent or better)
- Use of physical behaviors--gestures, postures, movement, eye contact--that support the verbal message (mean 2.6, 53% competent or better)
- Use of vocal variety--pitch, pace, inflection, volume (mean 2.6, 52% competent or better)

For further details about the individual outcome results see Appendix D, Tables 2 and 3.

III. COMMITTEE FINDINGS

Keeping in mind the crucial gap noted earlier between the Oral Communication Competency Assessment Committee's definition of public speaking as "extemporaneous" and the actual taped presentations the members evaluated (the great majority of which were not extemporaneous), we conclude the following:

1. The majority of our students are at least minimally competent with the most basic form of public speaking, what might be called "formal public recitation," that is, the ability to stand up and read directly from a paper, or notes, or some other text.

2. Too few students are "Highly Competent"—even in regard to the most basic level of formal public recitation—than we believe should be the case at a top-tier university.

3. Far too few opportunities exist—either to learn or to engage in—extemporaneous speaking at the University.

There are both positive and negative sides to these conclusions. On the positive side, a large percentage of students perform at a competent level. But on the negative side, given the importance the University community has placed on public speaking in the past and maintains today, a scarcity of highly competent speakers and opportunities to groom these skills is, in our view, untenable.

The committee's finding that most students are competent in formal recitation falls short of competence in public speaking as defined. Nevertheless, formal recitation at least contributes basic skills to meeting the greater challenge of engaging an audience by means of one's physical and intellectual presence. What distinguishes true extemporaneous speaking so radically from formal public recitation is the insight that style and substance are existentially inextricable dimensions of communication. Rephrasing the overly-glib notion that the medium is the message: any message is what it is only in its particular medium—its style, attitude, voice (and much else besides). Change the style, you change the message.

Successful communication is vital in personal, social, scholarly, and professional situations and yet, the ability to engage publicly with others is rare even in most adult populations. Thus, the committee believes we are remiss if we do not challenge our students with this important component of professionalism and that new measures should be taken to rectify matters.

IV. ORAL COMMUNICATION IN THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE: EMERGENT TRENDS AND UVA'S CURRENT PRACTICES

The University's Ten-Year Academic Plan draft asserts a vision of UVa providing "an undergraduate experience that rivals the very best in the world" by offering undergraduates "a curriculum that prepares them for leadership in their careers and enriches and enlarges their personal lives" (*University of Virginia Ten-Year Academic Plan*, March 22, 2006, p. 4). The plan is to be actualized through eleven elements, the eighth of which is to provide students **"communication skills through expertise in writing, speaking, foreign language and information technology"** (p. 5). Because of the central role strong speaking skills play in the Plan's vision and the shortfall in students' oral communication competency given the assessment results, the committee believes that more should be done to bolster this skill in the curriculum.

The University does not appear to be the only top-tier, national university considering how it can reconstitute oral communication in the curriculum. Former and now interim President at Harvard Derek Bok has made the case quite eloquently for more oral communication in the curriculum in his book *Our Underachieving Colleges* (2006)[2]. In the work, Bok traces the historical roots of the study of rhetoric and public speaking and the recent successes oral communication has enjoyed in the curriculum at some universities. However, he laments that while recent studies (e.g., ACT College Outcome Measures Program, work by Alexander Astin, and a *Wall Street Journal* poll) reveal that students and businesses desire more study and competency in communication, colleges and universities are averse to its placement in the curriculum.

Bok (2006) goes on to make the case for more oral communication in the curriculum, "This is a disappointing state of affairs," he writes, "and a shabby testament to the reigning priorities in the modern university. All undergraduates need to speak and write with confidence and style. Under competent guidance, almost every student can make substantial progress toward this goal. Indeed few courses in the college curriculum have as much potential to offer lasting benefits to so many undergraduates" (p. 108). The committee through its assessment has come to believe, as does Bok, that one of the essential subjects of education from the *trivium* should be reclaimed in order to enhance student learning and foster flourishing academic communities.

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[2] Bok, D. (2006). *Our Underachieving Colleges.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

The committee's definition and assessment of oral communication underscores the importance of extemporaneous speaking to distinguish highly competent oral communication from the most basic form of public recitation. We noticed a positive relationship between the committee's definition of effective oral communication and how students in the top programs performed on the assessment. Furthermore, we did a modest amount of research into what peer institutions consider effective oral communication and noticed that their programs have a good bit of homogeneity with the committee's definition. In other words, both on-Grounds and off-Grounds best practices seem to suggest that study of and practice in extemporaneous delivery leads to higher levels of communication competence. The focus on extemporaneous delivery appears to be the common denominator separating the best from the rest. Restated, the committee would suggest that "expertise" (see Ten-Year Academic Plan) in speaking manifests itself in extemporaneous delivery. A summary of best practices and opportunities of the schools, majors, and/or programs on and off grounds is included in Appendices E and F.

The best practices:

- Emphasize extemporaneous delivery.
- Provide for experiences throughout the course and/or program to research topics and refine ideas.
- Allow for multiple opportunities to present ideas to fellow students and/or on public occasions.
- Integrate oral and written communication in single courses and/or within the curricular experience.
- Assess student performance, using rubric and evaluation tools that provide comments to students.
- Reinforce communication knowledge and skills (performance) across the program and/or across disciplines and/or a number of points during students' matriculation.

The committee believes that some programs (e.g., Commerce, BIS, and Engineering) on-Grounds rise to the level of best practices. Other programs provide opportunities for students to present their work and make gains in oral communication competency. However, too few opportunities exist for students to present their ideas orally, especially those emphasizing extemporaneous delivery and other best practices.

V. BACKGROUND CONTEXT: ORAL COMMUNICATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

In order to put into minimal context this committee's findings (see Section III), the following is a brief review of oral communication at the University of Virginia, and specifically "public speaking" as defined earlier.

At present there are few opportunities for students at the University to individually engage an audience in large or small public settings, or to learn how to do this better, but this was not always the case. Although the assessment shows that there are successful courses in public speaking in Commerce, BIS, and Engineering, these courses are not open to all students in the University and thus cannot serve the needs of the entire UVA undergraduate population that this committee was asked to assess. Historically, matters were different, when all students at the University had access to public speaking classes. IAS records show consistently full enrollment in Department of English public speaking courses from (roughly) 1995 to 2002, and before that by the Department of Rhetoric and Communication Studies reaching back at least to the 1950s. While such records overwhelmingly demonstrate student demand for public speaking instruction, they do not show the even greater numbers of students who placed themselves on waiting lists for these courses each semester.

Data from the Office of Assessment and Studies shows the following enrollment figures for ENSP 106:

Spring and Fall 1998	24 sections	360 students
Spring and Fall 1999	25	375
Spring and Fall 2000	27	405
Spring and Fall 2001	24	360
Spring only 2002	8	120

At least eight and more commonly twelve to fifteen sections of public speaking were offered each semester in the 1980s and early 1990s. Enrollment in each class was between fifteen and twenty students on average, and each course always filled and routinely had waiting lists at least as long as the allowed enrollment, often far longer. Teaching assistants who were usually master's degree students taught these classes in the English and Rhetoric departments and were trained and supervised by a faculty member (who often also taught a section). Most of the professional schools including Commerce, Nursing, and Architecture required these courses.

In addition to the rare stand-alone public speaking course or integrated public speaking curricula in the above-mentioned schools, there are also a few courses targeting public speaking taught as University Seminars, or as part of the BIS program, or in the English or Drama Departments. And, outside of the curriculum, there are a few organized opportunities for public speaking, broadly conceived, in clubs and other extracurricular organizations (e.g., the Jefferson Literary and Debating Society). However, these few opportunities alone cannot fulfill the present needs as evinced by this committee's assessment of student facility with public speaking.

Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, in which the University participated in 2005, indicate that a sizeable portion of first-years (34%) never give a class presentation, and that only 39% of fourth-years report making a class presentation "often" or "very often." These percentages are somewhat lower than students from other doctoral-extensive research institutions participating in NSSE in 2005. UVa students also give less credit to the University for contributing to their ability to speak "clearly and effectively" when compared to writing and critical thinking. For further details on the results from the 2005 NSSE, see Appendix G.

VI. Current UVa Teaching Perspectives

Throughout the committee's deliberations, several strands of inquiry have emerged which represent a variety of perspectives on current practices. These include:

1. What is the common value of the oral communication experience?
2. Are the needs being met?
3. Are there limitations within the existing opportunities?

Perspectives of Value

Those faculty who directly teach and evaluate oral communication share a common belief: rhetorical education combines practical value, intellectual scaffolding, and useful modes of inquiry. When describing the relevancy of course content, students cite, in addition to practical value, a strong relationship in building leadership skills, cultural literacy, heightened appreciation of listening to various perspectives (diversity), and the immediate transferability to skill sets both needed and valued in other courses and the workplace.

For many committee members, the perception of course value to students continues long after the students leave the university. We are frequently asked by former students to conduct workshops, seminars, and short courses at a variety of workplaces throughout the country. These requests are always prefaced with a version of "I learned so much through the oral communication course…."

Perspectives of Need

The need for direct oral communication instruction is demonstrated by internal institutional demands and external requirements. The number of students requesting course admission (many urged by their parents to do so), specific groups' requests for instruction in public speaking, and faculty and staff requests for workshops or individual coaching on speaking determined the internal perspective.

For all the faculty teaching designated oral communication courses, demand far exceeds supply. On average, the course wait lists are three to four times larger than the possible course enrollment. For example, in one business-speaking course, capped at 18, there is a wait list of 46 students. This is not an anomaly, but the rule. Another example is fourth-year students who have been on a wait list for two or three years. Sometimes students seeking to enroll identify themselves as Jefferson or Echols Scholars and express particular disappointment that courses they assumed would be offered do not exist in sufficient numbers.

> *Additional evidence of desire and need comes from requests by various groups for classes, workshops, or coaching because there is no other venue. The student- or advisor-generated requests ranged from one-day seminars, to weekend workshops, to full semester weekly instruction. Groups include the Jefferson Debate Society, Jefferson Scholars Leadership Institute, Women's Development Leadership Program (WDLP), Echols Scholars, Honors Educators, Hereford College residents, Rodman Scholars, Asian Student Union, Madison House, Engineers Without Borders, Washington Internship Program, and many more.*

International undergraduate students, graduate teaching assistants and individual faculty members represent yet another underserved population. Formal and informal requests to faculty, student services, department chairs, and University resource centers such as the Teaching Resource Center, Center for American English Language and Culture, the Graduate Student Council are numerous.

The committee identified a final constituency affected by the availability of public speaking courses: those students applying to graduate schools where such courses are prerequisites. Many pharmacy, veterinary, and dental programs have such a requirement, and it seems to be an asset for Law school applicants.

Perspectives of Limitations Within Existing Opportunities

The committee recognizes that within our academic community there is a perception of value, need, desire, and enthusiasm for educating our students as scholars and citizens, focusing on developing skills of critical thinking, and oral and written communication. However, within the current range of existing opportunities there are limitations. In addition to the unfulfilled needs listed above, several other strands of concern exist.

The communication goals imbedded in many courses—especially in CLAS, Architecture, Engineering, and Nursing—are often difficult to meet for several reasons. Discussions with colleagues indicate confusion, even misunderstanding of the scope, sequence, and components of oral communication. Section I of this report clarifies the important terminology and distinct components of rhetoric.

Another factor is the amount of time required to teach extemporaneous speaking strategies and keep in balance the unique course content. Class size has also been described as a limiting factor in addressing acceptable opportunities for individual oral presentations. Finally, faculty expressed concern about creating assignment rubrics and assessing student outcomes.

> *The anecdotal perspectives from this committee serve to underscore the major premises of oral communication instruction. Understanding the difficulties in conceptualizing an audience, the role of listeners, and the complexities of interacting with other people in real time create both need and opportunity.*

VII.   COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to note that, like the committee members in the Harvard example mentioned in Section IV, the members of the present committee understand oral communication and public speaking to be defined in the contexts of (among other matters) substantive argument and ongoing intellectual debate in any and all disciplines, in dialogue and deliberation and question-and-answer sessions, in collective intellectual negotiations, and in small-group communications. Once more the committee defines public speaking as follows:

> *Oral communication is the effective interpretation, composition, and* ***extemporaneous*** *presentation of information, ideas, and values to a specific audience.*

With this understanding of "public speaking" in mind, and the concerns outlined in previous sections, we recommend the following:

1. We recommend that the results of the 2005-2006 core competency assessments be disseminated to faculty, and that a sustained discourse begin among students, faculty and administration about what knowledge of, and abilities, in oral communication students should possess upon graduation.

2. We recommend that The Oral Communication Competency Assessment Committee be reconstituted to continue work assessing undergraduate oral communication knowledge and abilities.

3. We recommend that further information from faculty, students and alumni be gathered through surveys and focus groups about how best to provide faculty and students with the experience, knowledge, and abilities they need to meet the University's goals.

4. We further recommend that

   (A)   IF the faculty and administration of the University of Virginia seek to produce highly competent communicators, THEN courses in public speaking (and related courses—e.g., speaking-intensive courses) should be implemented;

   (B)   IF the University seeks to coordinate knowledge and ability in public speaking with greater understanding of the intellectual contexts in which such matters exist, THEN more ambitious thought about possible new programs, and/or coordination of courses and new initiatives across the disciplines, should be undertaken and implemented; and finally

   (C)   IF the University of Virginia not only seeks excellence in oral communication and its intellectual contexts, but wishes to lead the way among top-tier universities (in the way that the Harvard recommendations seem to outline, and the way that UNC-Chapel Hill (See Appendix F) and the University of Wisconsin curricula presently attest), THEN the reconstituted committee should spearhead a strategic approach to these matters with vigorous support and participation at large of students, faculty, alumni, and administration.

We also recommend broadening representation of the committee to include deans and representatives from each school.

This committee has generated many more specific ideas and recommendations about ways to address the University's oral communication needs, but the ones listed above are a logical starting point to move the University forward into an increasingly globalized culture and polarized political climate that will demand highly nuanced, sophisticated and professionally skilled communicators. We stand ready to pursue the many additional ideas that we have, to draw on the best practices of UVa and other universities, and to implement these initial recommendations.

APPENDICES

ORAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT PLAN[3]
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Definition:

Oral communication is the effective interpretation, composition, and presentation of information, ideas, and values to a specific audience.

Goal:

As part of the University's stated purpose, members of the University community should "record, preserve, and disseminate the results of intellectual discovery and creative endeavors." Oral communication, therefore, is essential to the intellectual life of the University, and graduates of the University of Virginia should be able to make clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups, clarify information as needed, and facilitate an open exchange of ideas.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Students graduating from the University of Virginia will demonstrate oral communication skills and, in an extemporaneous presentation, should be able to:
- Take responsibility for a significant topic with a clear thesis and persuasive argument.
- Provide a clear structure and adequate transitions between ideas.
- Demonstrate a substantial understanding of the chosen topic and disciplinary knowledge or genre via research, credible sources, and supporting evidence.
- Demonstrate facility with topical and disciplinary knowledge via well-crafted, audience appropriate language.
- Adapt and balance the speaker's purpose, agenda, and style with audience needs and the specific occasion.
- Demonstrate vocal qualities (pace, inflection, volume, enunciation) and physical behaviors (gestures, stance, eye-contact, movement) that augment content and maintain audience interest.
- Evince enthusiasm for the topic and occasion while projecting an engaging personal presence.
- Use visual aids, when appropriate, to provide useful illustrations or examples.

Standards:

The following standards have been established:

      40% of undergraduates are expected to be highly competent (score of 4);
      85% competent (score of 3 and above);
      95% minimally competent (score of 2 and above).

Description of Methodology Used to Gather Evidence:

The University will use one standard/rubric for all the undergraduate schools, but each assessment will be conducted at the school level. Sufficient sample sizes will be used to ensure that the results can be reported by school, and the individual assessments will be conducted by school faculty. Because each undergraduate school is responsible for designing its own curriculum, this method will allow schools to make the best use of the assessment results. School results will be aggregated to form an overall result for the University.

For each school, and for each major within a school, school deans and department chairs will identify upper-level courses in the major, such as seminars and capstone courses, which require oral presentations. Within each school's list of courses, a sample of courses will be selected, from which videotaped oral

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[3] The development of the University of Virginia's oral communication competency assessment plan was coordinated by the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies. A faculty committee composed of representatives of the undergraduate schools wrote the definition, goal, learning outcomes and standards.

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presentations will be collected for the assessment. The courses in the assessment sample will be chosen, and if necessary weighted by discipline, to ensure that a majority of graduating fourth-years are represented within each school.

Using a skills-based descriptive scoring rubric, faculty evaluators from each school will score presentations. The individual skills will be assigned a score from 4 (highly competent) to 1 (not competent); an overall score for each student will be calculated by summing and averaging the scores for each individual skill. Each presentation will be scored twice and a third time if the first two overall scores differ by more than one point; final scores will be the average of the overall individual scores. Results will be reported and evaluated for the six undergraduate schools as well as aggregated for the University as a whole.

Summary: *(Provide analysis of results)*

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
CORE COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT
ORAL COMMUNICATION SCORING RUBRIC

SCORING GUIDE:
1 = Not Competent 2 = Minimally Competent 3 = Competent 4 = Highly Competent

Assign one whole number to each objective:

OBJECTIVE	Not Competent	Minimally Competent	Competent	Highly Competent	Not Applicable
Chooses and narrows a significant topic appropriate for the audience and occasion	1	2	3	4	NA
Communicates thesis/specific purpose to audience in a clear manner	1	2	3	4	NA
Balances purpose, and occasion with audience needs and expectations	1	2	3	4	NA
Provides a clear, easily identified organization appropriate to topic, audience, purpose and occasion	1	2	3	4	NA
Demonstrates appropriate understanding of the topic, discipline, or genre	1	2	3	4	NA
Provides appropriate supporting evidence	1	2	3	4	NA
Uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion	1	2	3	4	NA
Uses vocal variety (pitch, pace, inflection, volume	1	2	3	4	NA
Uses physical behaviors (gestures, postures, movement, eye contact) that support the verbal message	1	2	3	4	NA
Uses visual aids, when appropriate, to provide useful illustrations or examples	1	2	3	4	NA

This rubric was adapted from "The Competent Speaker" Speech Evaluation Form developed by the National Communication Association.

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STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
ORAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT REPORT[4]
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
JUNE 1, 2006

Definition:

Oral communication is the effective interpretation, composition, and presentation of information, ideas, and values to a specific audience.

Goal:

As part of the University's stated purpose, members of the University community should "record, preserve, and disseminate the results of intellectual discovery and creative endeavors." Oral communication, therefore, is essential to the intellectual life of the University, and graduates of the University of Virginia should be able to make clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups, clarify information as needed, and facilitate an open exchange of ideas.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Undergraduate students graduating from the University of Virginia will demonstrate oral communication skills and, in an extemporaneous presentation, should be able to:

- Take responsibility for a significant topic with a clear thesis and persuasive argument.
- Provide a clear structure and adequate transitions between ideas.
- Demonstrate a substantial understanding of the chosen topic and disciplinary knowledge or genre via research, credible sources, and supporting evidence.
- Demonstrate facility with topical and disciplinary knowledge via well-crafted, audience appropriate language.
- Adapt and balance the speaker's purpose, agenda, and style with audience needs and the specific occasion.
- Demonstrate vocal qualities (pace, inflection, volume, enunciation) and physical behaviors (gestures, stance, eye-contact, movement) that augment content and maintain audience interest.
- Evince enthusiasm for the topic and occasion while projecting an engaging personal presence.
- Use visual aids, when appropriate, to provide useful illustrations or examples.

Standards:

The University of Virginia expects 95% of its graduates to be minimally competent in oral communication.

Description of Methodology Used to Gather Evidence:

The University of Virginia used one standard and rubric for all the undergraduate schools. It was hoped that sufficient sample sizes would ensure that the results could be reported for each of the undergraduate schools.[5] Because each undergraduate school is responsible for designing its own curriculum, this method allows schools to make the best use of the assessment results. Unfortunately, the sample sizes for some of the schools were not large enough to make the results useful at the school level. School results have been aggregated to form an overall result for the University. The sampling error for the University results was a very acceptable .05 at a 95% confidence level.

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[4] The development of the University of Virginia's oral communication competency assessment plan was coordinated by the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies. A faculty committee composed of representatives of the undergraduate schools wrote the definition, goal, learning outcomes, and standards, created the scoring rubric and conducted the evaluations of student work. Institutional Assessment and Studies staff coordinated the videotaping of the presentations and the evaluation workshops, conducted the data analysis, and wrote this report.

[5] Results for undergraduates in the Curry School of Education were not compiled separately because students in the five-year joint BA/MT degree in the Curry School are included in the sampling of students from the College of Arts and Sciences.

In the fall and spring semesters of the academic year 2005-06, for each undergraduate school, and for each major within a school, deans and department chairs were asked to identify upper-level courses in the major, such as seminars and capstone courses, which required oral presentations *and* expected oral communication skills to be demonstrated. Within each school's list of courses, a sample of courses was selected, from which oral presentations were videotaped for the assessment. The courses in the assessment sample were chosen, and if necessary weighted by discipline, to ensure that a majority of graduating fourth-years were represented within each school.

For the Oral Communication competency assessment, 352 presentations were collected from upper-level courses in 22 majors, representing 52% of the graduating fourth-years at the University. Within the College of Arts and Sciences, presentations in courses from 6 different majors were videotaped, representing 37% of the graduating fourth-years in the College. In a number of these classes where presentations were filmed, students outside of the major were enrolled, adding a small sample of respondents from 8 additional majors. Outside of the College, presentations from 16 majors were videotaped, representing 100% of the graduating fourth-years from the schools of Architecture, Commerce, Engineering, Nursing, and Continuing and Professional Studies (BIS).

Using a skills-based, ten-point descriptive scoring rubric (see Appendix), nineteen faculty and four experienced graduate TA evaluators scored the presentations during a series of workshops in the winter and spring. Norming sessions were held at the beginning of each workshop. The ten individual skills were assigned a score from 4 (highly competent) to 1 (not competent); an overall score for each student was calculated by summing and averaging the scores for each individual skill. Each presentation was scored twice, and a third time if the score on four or more skills differed by more than one point. The University's final scores are the average of the overall individual scores.

Reliability analysis was used to evaluate the reliability of the rubric and evaluators. The results indicate that the ten items on the Oral Communication rubric form a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha was .89). In terms of inter-rater reliability, the percentage of exact agreement among item ratings (first two reviewers) was 43.3%. The percentage of disagreement by more than one point among item ratings was 9.2%. The need for third raters thus was low.

Summary:

For assessment of the oral communication core competency, the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies coordinated the videotaping of 352 student presentations in third- and fourth-year classes in the major. The University was required to assess 5% of the graduating fourth-year class (approximately 170 students); more than twice this number were assessed in the hope that the results could be broken down by each undergraduate school. The presentations were evaluated by a faculty committee which developed a descriptive scoring rubric for that purpose. Application of the rubric resulted in the following scores.

Overall Scores - Weighted by School and Discipline			
Score*	Count	%	
4	10	2.9	(3% Highly Competent)
3	251	71.3	(74% at least Competent)
2	91	25.7	(100% at least Minimally Competent)
1	0	0.0	

*4 = Highly Competent (3.5-4.0), 3 = Competent (2.5-3.499), 2 = Minimally Competent (1.5-2.499), 1= Not Competent (<1.5)
The data in this table are weighted by school and discipline within the College of Arts and Sciences. Breaking weighted results down can lead to slight discrepancies in the total n due to rounding.

These overall scores are weighted by school, and scores from the College of Arts and Sciences are weighted by discipline, to ensure that the results are representative of the University's graduating fourth-year class.[6] Sampling error for the University score is 0.06 at a 95% confidence level.

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[6] In calculating the weights by discipline within the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Institutional Assessment and Studies relied on the proportions of 2005 fourth-year graduates in the arts and humanities, sciences, and social sciences. The original sampling plan did not break the College down by discipline but relied instead on the total number of third- and fourth-year students in academic year 2004-2005. To weight the data, it was assumed that the proportion of third- and fourth-year students in the various majors within the College would be close to the proportion of 4th-year graduates.

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As stated in the standards section above, the University expected 95% of its undergraduates to be minimally competent in oral communication. Overall the University exceeded this goal for minimal competence with 100% of the presentations rated minimally competent. Moreover, the mean and median scores of 2.7 (for both) indicate that the majority of UVa students substantially exceeded minimal competence on the oral communication assessment. Nevertheless, the University's Oral Communication Core Competency Assessment Committee will review the overall results, as well as the results of specific outcomes within the rubric, to determine if there are areas for improvement. The committee will also examine the appropriateness of the rubric and the efficacy of the process. Next steps and recommendations will be made to the Provost over summer 2006. In addition, meetings will be held with school representatives to examine the results for each school.

Table 1
DETAILED RESULTS, UNIVERSITY-WIDE AND BY SCHOOL

University-Wide (Weighted by School, CLAS Weighted by Discipline)			
Score*	Count	%	*Sampling error = 5.1%, Mean = 2.73*
4	10	2.9	(3% Highly Competent)
3	251	71.3	(74% at least Competent)
2	91	25.7	(100% at least Minimally Competent)
1	0	0.0	

Architecture (ARCH) – Unweighted			
Score*	Count	%	*Sampling error = 13.3%, Mean = 2.70*
4	1	2.4	(2% Highly Competent)
3	31	73.8	(76% at least Competent)
2	10	23.8	(100% at least Minimally Competent)
1	0	0.0	

Continuing & Professional Studies (BIS) – Unweighted			
Score*	Count	%	*Sampling error = 15.0%, Mean = 2.93*
4	5	19.2	(19% Highly Competent)
3	17	65.4	(85% at least Competent)
2	4	15.4	(100% at least Minimally Competent)
1	0	0.0	

Arts and Sciences (CLAS) – Weighted by Discipline			
Score*	Count	%	*Sampling error = 9.4%, Mean = 2.66*
4	2	1.9	(2% Highly Competent)
3	71	67.0	(69% at least Competent)
2	33	31.1	(100% at least Minimally Competent)
1	0	0.0	

Commerce (COMM) – Unweighted			
Score*	Count	%	*Sampling error = 9.9%, Mean = 2.93*
4	6	7.0	(7% Highly Competent)
3	68	79.1	(86% at least Competent)
2	12	14.0	(100% at least Minimally Competent)
1	0	0.0	

Nursing (NURS) – Unweighted			
Score*	Count	%	*Sampling error = 25.4%, Mean = 2.81*
4	1	7.1	(7% Highly Competent)
3	10	71.4	(79% at least Competent)
2	3	21.4	(100% at least Minimally Competent)
1	0	0.0	

Engineering (SEAS) – Unweighted			
Score*	Count	%	*Sampling error = 10.6%, Mean = 2.90*
4	2	2.6	(3% Highly Competent)
3	67	85.6	(88% at least Competent)
2	9	11.5	(100% at least Minimally Competent)
1	0	0.0	

* 4=Highly Competent, 3=Competent, 2=Minimally Competent, 1=Not Competent

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Table 2
UNIVERSITY-WIDE PERFORMANCE BY OUTCOME

RATING	Not Competent (1)	Minimally Competent (2)	Competent (3)	Highly Competent (4)
OUTCOME	% of valid (non-missing) individual rater scores (Totals do not always equal 100% due to rounding effects)			
Chooses and narrows a significant topic appropriate for the audience and occasion	1%	15%	67%	17%
Communicates thesis/ specific purpose to audience in a clear manner	5%	29%	48%	18%
Balances purpose, and occasion with audience needs and expectations	3%	26%	58%	12%
Provides a clear, easily identified organization appropriate to topic, audience, purpose and occasion	4%	39%	44%	14%
Demonstrates appropriate understanding of the topic, discipline, or genre	1%	15%	66%	19%
Provides appropriate supporting evidence	1%	26%	58%	14%
Uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion	2%	20%	65%	13%
Uses vocal variety (pitch, pace, inflection, volume)	9%	39%	41%	11%
Uses physical behaviors (gestures, postures, movement, eye contact) that support the verbal message	10%	36%	41%	12%
Uses visual aids, when appropriate, to provide useful illustrations or examples	4%	22%	56%	19%
OVERALL PERCENTS*	4%	27%	54%	15%

*The final score for each presentation was the average of all competencies across two or more raters. This table reports *raw* scores, before results were averaged. Thus it is not surprising that 15% of the individual competency scores could be "4" (highly competent), while only 3% of the presentations were rated *overall* as "highly competent." At the other end of the scale, while *no* presentations were rated overall as "incompetent," 4% of the individual competency scores were "1" (incompetent).

Table 3
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE BY OUTCOME

In the table below, the mean scores for the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program, the College, and the Schools of Commerce and Engineering were tested for statistical significance against the theoretical score of 3.1, which would be the approximate mean score if the University had met its goals of 40% highly competent, 45% competent, and 10% minimally competent. Statistically significant differences are highlighted in gray. Nursing and Architecture were not tested due to an insufficient number of cases.

	OUTCOME	ARCH (N=42)	SCPS-BIS (N=26)	CLAS[1] (N=106)	COMM (N=86)	NURS (N=14)	SEAS (N=78)
1	Chooses and narrows a significant topic appropriate for the audience and occasion	2.83	3.18	2.92*	3.14	2.85	3.05
2	Communicates thesis/specific purpose to audience in a clear manner	2.61	2.96	2.60*	3.06	2.69	2.82*
3	Balances purpose, and occasion with audience needs and expectations	2.72	3.01	2.61*	2.93**	2.94	2.89*
4	Provides a clear, easily identified organization appropriate to topic, audience, purpose and occasion	2.39	2.82***	2.59*	2.92**	2.62	2.78*
5	Demonstrates appropriate understanding of the topic, discipline, or genre	2.96	3.17	2.92*	3.04	3.11	3.21***
6	Provides appropriate supporting evidence	2.71	3.12	2.82*	2.77*	3.07	2.99
7	Uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion	2.76	3.12	2.85*	3.03	3.02	2.84*
8	Uses vocal variety (pitch, pace, inflection, volume)	2.35	2.56**	2.32*	2.79*	2.58	2.68*
9	Uses physical behaviors (gestures, postures, movement, eye contact) that support the verbal message	2.56	2.64**	2.27*	2.72*	2.46	2.78*
10	Uses visual aids, when appropriate, to provide useful illustrations or examples	3.10	2.88	2.75*	2.73**	2.97	2.92**
	Overall Scores	**2.70**	**2.93**	**2.66***	**2.93***	**2.81**	**2.90***
	Sampling Error[2]	13.3%	15.0%	9.4%	9.9%	25.4%	10.6%

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

[1]Data from CLAS (College of Arts & Sciences) is weighted by discipline.

[2]The sampling error for each overall score is calculated at a 95% confidence level. The sampling error would be larger for any individual competency, or for any other "breakdown" of the data.

CURRENT ON GROUNDS OPPORTUNITIES

The committee's definition of effective oral communication in Section II emphasizes extemporaneous speaking as a critical difference between students' highly competent oral communication and the most basic form of public speaking. The following Schools, majors, and programs on grounds provide opportunities for students to present ideas orally, although these opportunities may or may not require true extemporaneous speaking. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, but presents the best available information of oral communication emphases within the curriculum.

McIntire School of Commerce: Commerce uses an innovative integrated core experience (ICE) where communication skills are integrated in the curriculum. Several courses in ICE feature the refinement of extemporaneous oral and written communication knowledge and skills with an emphasis placed on the simulation of real problems and projects in business and industry. In addition, ICE is reinforced in the various course offerings making up the programs of concentration in the undergraduate degree. For example, COMM 464 Advanced Managerial Communication hones "writing and speaking skills while increasing student understanding of how managers communicate with diverse audiences."[7]

School of Engineering and Applied Science – Department of Science, Technology, and Society (STS): STS offers four courses required of all Engineering majors and offers a myriad of 200-, 300-, and 400-level courses. STS 101 Engineering, Technology, and Society "framed as an introduction to the profession, the course promotes students' abilities in creative and critical thinking and their skills in communication used in engineering practice, including oral presentations, written proposals, technical descriptions, memoranda, and abstracts" (*Undergraduate Record 2005-2006*, p. 310). In addition, the acquisition of communication knowledge and skills emphasizing extemporaneous delivery is a part of all STS courses.

School of Continuing & Professional Studies- The Bachelors of Interdisciplinary Studies Program (BIS): Most courses within BIS factor extemporaneous presentations into course design and evaluation. Additionally, BIS uses a pro-seminar and capstone approach that allows students the opportunity to hone research skills, strengthen analytical and critical thinking skills, and develop a proposal for presentation of their ideas and work toward fulfilling the capstone project. The capstone experience culminates in students' extemporaneous presentations of the capstone project in an academic conference setting. Additionally, courses in rhetorical theory/criticism, acting, and drama are options for students to take in the liberal studies seminar core. Students must take two 300-level and one 400-level liberal studies seminars within the first four consecutive terms of enrollment. Liberal studies seminars "use a multidisciplinary approach to problems, academic writing [and speaking] skills, and research fundamentals"[8]

College of Arts & Sciences – Drama: Multiple sections of DRAM 202, Acting/Directing I, are offered each semester. In the course students explore basic theories and techniques of theatre performance through exercises, improvisations and scenes from contemporary dramatic literature. One 12-student section of Oral Interpretation is offered in spring semester, with another usually available during summer term. After the Public Speaking sections were dropped in 2002, Drama began offering one or two sections of the course in summer. All the courses described above are heavily enrolled and have wait lists, attesting to the desire on the part of students to build oral communication skills to enhance their experience at UVa and beyond.

University Seminars and J-Term Courses: Recently, University Seminars and the J-Term programs have offered courses in argumentation, rhetoric, and public speaking to first-year and other undergraduate students. These courses expose students to relevant skills and knowledge development in communication

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[7]*Undergraduate Record, 2005-2006*, p. 258.
[8]http://www.scps.virginia.edu/bisdegree/curriculum.htm

and/or the construction of cogent argument, which then presumably may be applied to the context of effective oral communication. Some courses in these programs emphasize extemporaneous speaking.

School of Architecture: The Department of Urban and Environmental Planning required undergraduates to complete a course by the end of their third year in public speaking up until the time that these courses were no longer available in 1995-1996. For the next five years an optional one credit course "Public Speaking for Planners" was offered to both undergraduate and graduate students. The instructor was a public speaking professional who traveled from Washington DC to offer this course on a series of Saturdays. This course has not been offered in the past few years though public speaking continues to be an important ability for planners and others in the design and public policy fields offered in this School. Currently a number of courses in urban planning and architectural history embed ideas of visual rhetoric and the connections visual rhetoric has to memory, tradition, and the effective planning and design of healthy communities and environments. Effective oral communication is also addressed in several upper-division courses as a professional skill and a factor in subsequently developing a successful career in planning and design. None of the faculty in this School is, however, specifically trained in public speaking. Students are given pointers in developing proposals that are presented and critiqued, but little explicit teaching takes place on the topic of effective public speaking. There is, as a result, a gap between aspirations and achievement in these programs in this School that recognize the importance of public speaking.

College of Arts & Sciences - The Political and Social Thought Major (PST): PST is an interdisciplinary major. Students at the end of their second year apply to the program and if accepted enroll in a seminar in the fall of the third year. This seminar emphasizes effective oral communication skills, such as effective manuscript speaking, the use of effective language, active listening, and the construction of salient theses and arguments. The third-year seminar and other experiences in the program prepare students for the annual Thesis Conference. The conference is a structured panel experience with 3-5 students per panel. Students have 8-10 minutes to present their theses to the conference attendees. Expectations include prepared delivery, attention to time, active use of language, and clear, persuasive, and engaging arguments. In addition, students must prepare for and engage in a question and answer discussion after formal remarks. The program director said the overall goal of the communication experiences in PST is "a process of moving the responsibility for effective communication to the students and away from the instructor."[9]

School of Nursing: One of the student learning objectives for the undergraduate program in nursing is to "utilize communication techniques effectively."[10] A number of nursing courses focus on student acquisition of communication knowledge and skills, especially in the interpersonal and small group contexts of the care provider-patient relationship. Other courses, seminars, and practicum experiences build on the earlier communication knowledge and skills emphasized in the curriculum.

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[9] Personal interview, Michael Smith, Thomas C Sorenson Professor of Policy and Social Thought, July 25, 2006.
[10] *Undergraduate Record 2005-2006*, p. 318.

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BEST PRACTICES OF PEERS

Harvard University

Selections from the *Report of the Committee on the Teaching of Writing and Speaking in Harvard College[11]*

[On oral communication see especially numbers 57-58, 61, 67-68]

51. We recommend strongly that the College entirely regroup and coordinate the efforts of Expository Writing, the Harvard Writing Project (including Gordon Gray grants), individual departments, the Bok Center (Graduate Writing Fellows), the Writing Center (peer tutoring), and writing instruction offered by the Bureau of Study Counsel. Faculty in the Freshman Seminar program may also wish to participate in this coordination. The result of such coordination would be a genuine center for all the functions these various entities now perform. This might be called the Keller-Adams Program in Writing and Speaking (KAP).

57. Oral communication should be taught as public speaking and also as debate and oral argument. A course or courses in rhetoric should be offered.

58. The College should hire faculty to teach these courses in rhetoric and public speaking.

61. In each concentration an individual faculty member should be designated responsible for the overall teaching of writing and speaking.

63. Specific graduate student funding and fellowships might profitably be tied to writing instruction in the departments, degree programs, general education, and specific courses in writing and speaking.

64. Departments should explore the joint appointment of teaching personnel hired with the program in writing and speaking.

65. House Masters should encourage House writing tutors, other House tutors, and students to use the program in writing and speaking as a resource.

66. Staff members of the Harvard College Library provide invaluable research and writing assistance to students and faculty. In each concentration, the faculty liaison to KAP, in conjunction with the Head Tutor or DUS, should ensure that connections between students and appropriate library staff are established and maintained.

67. Pending the final report of the Committee on General Education, any courses offered in rhetoric or public speaking might be considered to fulfill part of the requirement in General Education.

68. The College should confer a certificate in writing and speaking on graduates who complete, over and above the one-term course required in the first year, three additional courses selected from the following: a writing-intensive freshman seminar, a course in creative writing, a course in rhetoric, a writing-intensive general education course, a course in public speaking. At least one of these three courses must be in either public speaking or rhetoric. Conferral of such a certificate should be recorded on the transcript.

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

Selections from the *Criteria for General Education Requirements[12]*

Communication is a required foundational course in the general education curriculum at the University of North Carolina (UNC). Foundations are part of a larger general education curriculum clustered into three categories of courses: foundations, approaches, and connections. The foundations cluster features a 17-hour curriculum, which includes English composition and rhetoric, foreign language, quantitative reason-

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[11] The full report is available online:
http://www.fas.harvard.edu/curriculum-review/Recommendations1.pdf
[12] http://www.unc.edu/depts/uc/docs/criteria_3-7-05.pdf

ing, and lifetime fitness. A number of courses satisfy the foundation course requirement, including Rhetoric A & B. Rhetoric A is an introduction to argumentation (extemporaneous speaking and writing, composition, research and literacy skills, and rhetorical analysis) Rhetoric B builds upon the introductory experiences by going into specific disciplinary contexts and requires students to write papers and construct speeches and oral arguments of a "greater length and complexity than required in Rhetoric A" (*Criteria for General Education Requirements*, 2005, p. 3).

Additionally, communication is reinforced in the connections cluster requirements, as students must complete at least one communication-intensive course. Communication-intensive courses are designated as such and these courses require that writing and extemporaneous speaking are integrated into the subject matter of the course, "making effective communication of the content a substantial portion (at least 20%) of the grade of the course. The emphasis of the course must be on the content as well as on the way in which the content is communicated" (*Criteria for General Education Requirements*, 2005, p. 9).

The University of Wisconsin-Madison
Excerpts from *General Education Requirements*[13]
Communication is a core general education requirement at Wisconsin (UW). The basic core requirements at UW include: communication; quantitative reasoning, natural science, humanities, social studies, and ethnic studies. Students must fulfill a communication requirement by taking one course from a number of offerings known as Communication A courses and another communication course from a grouping titled Communication B courses. Generally, students fulfill the Communication A requirement by taking either speech composition (Communication Arts (Com Arts) 100) or freshman composition (English 100), but other courses such as a two-credit course in basic communication (EDP 155), an honors course titled elements of speech (Com Arts 181), introduction to communication: inquiry & exposition (FAM COM 100), and a few other courses satisfy the Communication A requirement. Students may also test out of Part A of the requirement.

Once students satisfy the Communication A requirement they may take courses from the Communication B list. These courses are advanced courses in communication arts, English, and other courses in other disciplines deemed communication-intensive courses. For purposes of fulfilling the general education requirement, all students at UW are required to take 4-6 credits (or the equivalent) in the area of communication. The speech courses within Communication A offerings emphasize extemporaneous speaking.

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[13] http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/Students/default.htm

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT RESULTS[14]

In the most recent National Survey of Student Engagement (2005), students, especially first-years, report making class presentations somewhat less often than their peers from other doctoral-extensive (doc.-ext.) institutions participating in NSSE:

- 34% of first-years report never making a class presentation, compared to 22% from other doc.-ext. institutions
- Only 7% of fourth-years report likewise, identical to other doc.-ext.
- Only 13% of first-years report making a class presentation "often/very often," compared to 22% doc.-ext.
- 39% of fourth-years report making a class presentation "often/very often," compared to 52%.

UVa students report that the University contributed "very much" to their ability to speak clearly and effectively about the same as their doctoral-extensive peers (19% of first-years and 35% of fourth-years) but less than other important skills such as thinking critically and analytically (42% 1st and 60% 4th) and writing (26% 1st and 43% 4th).

National Survey of Student Engagement 2005

		First-Year Students				Fourth-Year Students			
		UVa		Doc-Ext		UVa		Doc-Ext	
	Response Options	Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %
How Often: Made a class presentation	Never	288	34%	1,464	22%	48	7%	448	7%
	Sometimes	451	53%	3,702	56%	398	55%	2,700	41%
	Often	94	11%	1,111	17%	197	27%	2,192	33%
	Very often	19	2%	297	5%	86	12%	1,235	19%
	Total	852	100%	6,574	100%	729	100%	6,575	100%
Contributed to: Speaking clearly and effectively	Very little	128	16%	772	13%	37	5%	504	8%
	Some	269	34%	1,954	34%	191	27%	1,669	27%
	Quite a bit	251	31%	1,939	34%	228	32%	2,254	37%
	Very much	149	19%	1,066	19%	246	35%	1,663	27%
	Total	797	100%	5,731	100%	702	100%	6,090	100%
Contributed to: Writing clearly and effectively	Very little	59	7%	419	7%	16	2%	324	5%
	Some	214	27%	1,576	27%	136	19%	1,454	24%
	Quite a bit	315	40%	2,303	40%	248	35%	2,444	40%
	Very much	209	26%	1,435	25%	303	43%	1,867	31%
	Total	797	100%	5,733	100%	703	100%	6,089	100%
Contributed to: Thinking critically and analytically	Very little	17	2%	172	3%	6	1%	129	2%
	Some	139	17%	981	17%	46	7%	834	14%
	Quite a bit	304	38%	2,551	45%	226	32%	2,365	39%
	Very much	337	42%	2,025	35%	425	60%	2,762	45%
	Total	797	100%	5,729	100%	703	100%	6,090	100%

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[14]NSSE data is available on the IAS website: http://www.web.virginia.edu/iaas/reports/subject/nsse/data.htm.

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