

Georgia State University

Assessment Data by Section

2014-2015 Communication Assessment of Core

As of: 3/15/2016 02:54 PM EST

Mission / Purpose

The Department of Communication prepares students to collaborate with and enhance local, state, regional, national, and global communities in the media age, utilizing oral, written, and visual communication skills as well as critical thinking and media literacy skills related to communication.

The Department of Communication is firmly committed to the goals of academic excellence, strong research programs and international relevance set forth in the Georgia State University's Strategic Plan. The Department encompasses multiple professional, creative and research traditions, all of which are organized around the idea that central to the human experience is the use of symbols for the purpose of making and understanding meaning. As an academic unit, the Department is committed to cultivating a deeper appreciation of the creative and intellectual traditions of communication by providing students with critical thinking and media literacy skills, enhancing students' oral, written and visual communication processes through participation in cutting edge scholarly and artistic programs and collaborating with and enhancing the local, state, regional, national and global communities related to communication.

Goals

G 1: effective communicators

Students become effective consumers and producers of communicative acts in various contexts.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

SLO 1: critical thinking (G: 1) (M: 1)

At the end of the semester, students will be able to... 1. Explain the various components of human communication. 2. Apply major principles of human communication to specific instances. 3. Create and deliver a public speech. 4. Analyze, evaluate, and provide convincing reasons in support of conclusions. 5. Consider opposing points of view when appropriate.

SLO 2: oral competency (G: 1) (M: 2, 3)

Students will be able to: 1. Engage in communication across various settings and context, including: small group discussions, meetings, interpersonal dyads and public speaking. 2. Increase their predisposition toward communication. 3. Reduce their perceived apprehension associated with communication.

Measures, Targets, and Findings

M 1: Cornell Critical Thinking Exam (O: 1)

In order to assess "critical thinking" among students who have taken SPCH1000, we define critical thinking as: "reasonable and reflective thinking on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis, Millman, & Tomko, 2005). In the past three academic years, we have adopted the Cornell Critical Thinking Exam Z as the means by which to measure critical thinking, as it was designed to test critical thinking among advanced high school students, college students, and graduate students. Exam Z is a general-content critical thinking measure, which uses content from a variety of subject matter familiar to our target group. Exam Z provides both an overall score, and subtest scores for each type of critical thinking skill. For this reason, it promises to provide more detailed data than other similar measures. As the summer 2013 term was the first time we had assessed SPCH1000 under Area B (critical thinking), our sample was extremely small, and only showed post-test results. In the fall 2013, spring 2014, and summer 2014 semesters, we conducted a full course assessment across all SPCH1000 sections, with a pre-test / post-test format. In fall 2013, we collected pre & post-test data from 1,020 students; in spring 2014, 817 students completed the pre & post-test exams; and in summer 2014, 40 students completed both pre & post-test exams. We were, therefore, successful in attaining our projected goal for SPCH1000 assessment, namely: "In the 2013-2014 academic calendar year, we plan to engage a full-fledged pilot of the Critical Thinking Assessment across all SPCH1000 sections (approximately 1000-1200 students per semester), compare pre-test & post-test scores, and break the overall critical thinking score into various skill sets." We have continued the exhaustive nature of our data collection and analysis during the 2014-2015 academic cycle, resulting in equally comprehensive assessment of the Speech Core. Based on the meta-summaries collected by Ennis et al., we expect to find the above results among our SPCH1000 students. Earlier findings of the Cornell Critical Thinking Exam Z at various academic institutions show that the mean score for upper division undergraduates is 31.7, the mean score for lower division undergraduates is 26.4, and the mean score for remedial undergraduates is 20.8. In these initial attempts at assessing critical thinking in the Core Curriculum, we predict that the percentage of SPCH1000 students will breakdown as shown in Target Scores. Due to the robust nature of

SPCH1000 assessment during the 2014-2015 academic calendar year, we have broken down the data into three categories: (a) the overall mean average for each semester; (b) the overall distribution of scores for each semester; and (c) the mean average for each subset of critical thinking skills.

Source of Evidence: Standardized test of subject matter knowledge

Target for O1: critical thinking

Based on the meta-summaries collected by Ennis et al., we expect to find the above results among our SPCH1000 students. Earlier findings of the Cornell Critical Thinking Exam Z at various academic institutions show that the mean score for upper division undergraduates is 31.7, the mean score for lower division undergraduates is 26.4, and the mean score for remedial undergraduates is 20.8. In these initial attempts at assessing critical thinking in the Core Curriculum, we predict that the percentage of SPCH1000 students will breakdown as shown in Target Scores.

Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met

All sections of Speech 1000 were selected for data interpretation using the CT measure, producing: 1258 scores in fall 2014, 760 scores in spring 2015, 69 scores in summer 2015. Due to the robust nature of SPCH1000 assessment during the 2014-2015 academic calendar year, we have broken down the data into three categories: a)Overall mean average, b)Overall distribution of scores, c)Mean average for each subset of critical thinking skills. The overall mean averages indicated an increase in students' critical thinking aptitude: From 23.14 to 24.04 (fall 2014), From 23.37 to 24.32 (spring 2015), From 23.05 to 23.95 (summer 2015). The overall distribution of scores indicates that SPCH1000 helps GSU undergraduate freshmen acclimate to the rigors of critical thinking at the university level, and prepares them for the demands of upper division courses at GSU. Both the mean average score and the overall distribution of scores shifted significantly toward the raw score expected for the majority of lower division undergraduates (26.4). There was also a trend away from what is considered to be the norm for "remedial" undergraduates (20.8), and a slight increase in students who possessed the necessary critical thinking skills for upper division undergraduate courses (31.7). The mean average for each subset of critical thinking skills demonstrates how SPCH1000 facilitates the growth of critical thinking skills in a wide range of areas, including: 1)Deduction, 2)Meaning & Fallacies, 3)Source Credibility, 4)Hypothesis Testing, 5)Planning Experiments, 6)Definition, 7)Assumption Identification.

M 2: Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (O: 2)

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, used widely in the field of communication studies due to its internal validity and reliability, measures students' perceived apprehension across diverse communication contexts, including: small group discussions, meetings, interpersonal dyads and public speaking. Although the survey generates data regarding apprehension in all areas, the public speaking context remains the most relevant to our current assessment goals.

Source of Evidence: Faculty pre-test / post-test of knowledge mastery

Target for O2: oral competency

We hope to find an overall decrease in students' communication apprehension in the various situations. Logic suggests that the public speaking assignment in SPCH1000 will result in a significant decrease in the public communication score. We also expect to find a decrease in communication apprehension in other situations: group, meeting, and interpersonal.

Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met

All sections of SPCH1000 were selected for data interpretation using the PRCA measure, producing: 1255 scores in fall 2014, 944 scores in spring 2015, 72 scores in summer 2015. The mean scores indicated an overall decrease in students' communication apprehension in the various situations: From 64.75 to 64.50 (fall 2014), From 64.40 to 63.92 (spring 2015), From 64.05 to 63.83 (summer 2015). Logic suggests that the public speaking assignment in SPCH1000 is partly, but not wholly, responsible for the decreases in the public communication score (see corresponding document). All other situations showed a decrease in students' communication apprehension, as indicated by the corresponding document.

M 3: Willingness to Communicate (O: 2)

The Willingness to Communicate Scale, also used universally among Speech Communication departments, indicates students' predisposition to engaging in or avoiding communication contact. Like the PRCA-24 survey, WTC measures students' responses in different communication settings and once again the public communication setting is most relevant to assessing oral communication competencies in the Speech 1000 curriculum.

Source of Evidence: Faculty pre-test / post-test of knowledge mastery

Target for O2: oral competency

We hope to find an overall increase in students' willingness to communicate in the various situations. Logic suggests that the public speaking assignment in SPCH1000 will result in a significant decrease in the public communication score as well as the communication with a stranger score. We also expect to find an increase in willingness to communicate in other situations: group, meeting, and interpersonal.

Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met

All sections of SPCH1000 were selected for data interpretation using the WTC measure, producing: 1255 scores in fall

2014, 944 scores in spring 2015, 72 scores in summer 2015. The mean scores indicated an overall increase in students' willingness to communicate in various situations: From 65.27 to 66.23 (fall 2014), From 64.79 to 66.25 (spring 2015), From 62.71 to 63.91 (summer 2015). Logic suggests that the public speaking assignment in SPCH1000 is partly, but not wholly responsible for the increases in both the public communication score and communication with a stranger score (see corresponding documents). All other situations showed an increase in students' willingness to communicate, as indicated by the corresponding documents.

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

2. Analysis of Assessment Findings: Where appropriate, discuss the significance of the findings in light of (1) the desired results, (2) findings from previous years, (3) recent changes in the educational program or the assessment process, etc. What did you learn from the assessment? In particular: (1) What strengths and weaknesses do the findings reveal about the program and/or the assessment process? (2) What impact have recent program changes had on student learning (indicate those program changes that resulted from previous assessment findings)? (3) What impact have recent changes in the assessment process had on the quality of the findings?

All 3 assessment measures for the Communication Core (PRCA, WTC, CT) have produced consistent and significant results for the 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 academic calendar years, showing a substantial increase in critical thinking skills and reduction in communication apprehension among SPCH1000 students. The move to online data collection and standardization of assessment measures have improved the quality and quantity of the data collected. The data not only demonstrates the success of course standardization for SPCH1000, as student scores remain consistent across multiple sections and a diverse teaching pool for the course, but it also indicates that SPCH1000 has indeed met the goals and student learning objectives set forth in the Core Curriculum.

4. Use of Assessment Findings for Program Improvement: Describe any changes in (1) the educational program and/or (2) the assessment process that are planned or being implemented in response to this year's assessment findings. Be as specific as possible with regard to the nature and timing of the changes to be made as well as their linkages to the assessment findings. Also, briefly summarize the status of previous years' action plans.

In the 2013-2014 Assessment Report, we proposed the following: "We plan to begin a larger conversation with instructors and graduate students who teach SPCH1000. The goal of that conversation is to develop teaching strategies in SPCH1000 that more directly target the various subsets of critical thinking, including: 1)Deduction; 2)Meaning & Fallacies; 3)Source Credibility; 4)Hypothesis Testing; 5)Planning Experiments; 6)Definition; 7)Assumption Identification. From this conversation and introduction of new teaching methods into SPCH1000, we expect to see a greater increase in both the overall CTA scores, as well as specific increases in the subset scores." We successfully began this action plan in 2014-2015, and will continue the conversation in 2015-2016, developing more specific teaching methods in SPCH1000 to target the improvement of critical thinking skills in the Communication Core.