

2017 – 2018
College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
Assessment of the Oral Communication Student Learning Outcome

Introduction:

In 2017 – 2018, the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSS) continued its College-wide assessment strategy to evaluate BSS majors' mastery of the oral communication student learning outcome (SLO). The oral communication SLO was selected because WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) encourages students to acquire and develop higher-order intellectual skills and oral communication is considered a [core competency](#).

Why a College-wide assessment?

In the past, each program within BSS designed and conducted its own SLO assessment. Most often, programs chose to assess content specific SLOs, which would be material covered in only one discipline (e.g., Political Science majors can demonstrate knowledge of basic structural components of national government and explain their relationship to each other and to subnational units or Anthropology majors can document, interpret, and analyze human cultural and biological diversity). These content specific SLOs, while useful and worthy of assessment, are not considered core competencies by WSCUC.

Additionally, at times, many programs' assessment strategies had flaws, which minimized the value of the final data reported. Some of these problems included, but were not limited to: not informing the students their work was being used for assessment, not using a rubric, or if a rubric was used, not providing the students the rubric in advance, and not having the assessors normed.

Occasionally, different programs would select the same SLO to assess. When the same SLO was assessed, different rubrics would be used to evaluate the students' work, so the results were not comparable. Due to these inconsistencies, the College was unable to evaluate the students' proficiency of the WSCUC core competencies at or near the point of graduation.

What is good direct assessment?

Countless books articulately and thoroughly discuss and explain quality assessment practices (see Appendix 1). This report will not belabor or dwell on the qualities of good assessment techniques. A very few of the main requisites for proper assessment include:

1. A clear and measurable SLO;
2. The SLO, the assignment, the rubric and how all three relate to each other are clearly communicated to the students before the assignment is due;
3. The assessors are normed or calibrated prior to their assessment work taking place;

4. The assessors have reasonable inter-rater reliability, and;
5. The assessment leads to actionable results that are shared with the faculty and broader constituencies as appropriate.

How did BSS design and conduct its assessment?:

The following steps were utilized to design and assess the oral communication SLO:

1. A draft rubric was created, which could also be modified to compare BSS oral communication to the General Education (GE) oral communication assessment;
2. There were two meetings held during spring 2018 to discuss, refine, modify, and finally agree to the oral communication rubric (see Appendix 2);
3. Each BSS assessment program facilitator worked with his/her department chair and the appropriate faculty to select a course “at or near the point of degree completion” to provide the student work (see Appendix 3);
4. The rubric was circulated to the faculty whose courses were providing the student work;
5. Due to the number of the faculty participating in the assessment, two norming sessions were held and the facilitators and their teams attended one of the two norming sessions, and;
6. The facilitators and their teams assessed the student work during the summer or fall of 2018 and submitted their reports during fall or winter of 2018/9.

Results:

The evaluation of BSS majors’ oral communication skills (N = 361) revealed an overwhelming 86 percent of students “met or exceeded expectations” across all three categories (please see Table 1). Conversely, 14 percent of students fell “below expectations” or “needed improvement” across all four categories. Students’ scores for content, organization, and delivery were almost identical (3.17, 3.13, and 3.10 respectively). It should be noted the mode scores for all categories was three or “meets expectations.” With regard to the reliability of the data, 11 programs provided data to compile an inter-rater reliability of the assessors, which was averaged at .57 (.73 the highest and .33 the lowest).

Comparison to the General Education oral communication SLO:

GE at CSU, Chico has also assessed the [oral communication SLO](#). As previously mentioned, the BSS rubric was designed to be comparable to the GE rubric (See Appendix 4). The main difference between the two rubrics is BSS has four scoring categories (1 – 4), while the GE rubric has three scoring categories (1 – 3). The BSS rubric has four scoring categories to provide a more nuanced assessment of student oral communication and using four scoring categories is considered best practice. The difference between the two rubrics is minimized because the two lowest scoring categories in the BSS rubric (1 – 2) can be collapsed as both scores fall below “meets expectations” or the equivalent

“adequate” in the GE rubric. In short, the BSS and GE assessment results are comparable to each other (See Table 2).

Table 1:

	Below Expectations (1)		Needs Improvement (2)		Meets Expectations (3)		Exceeds Expectations (4)		Median	Mode
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Content	14	2	93	13	358	51	237	34	3.17	3
Organization	6	1	94	13	407	58	195	28	3.13	3
Delivery	5	1	91	13	431	61	175	25	3.10	3
Total/Average	25	1	278	13	1,196	57	607	29	3.14	3

Table 2:

	College of Behavioral & Social Sciences						General Education					
	Below Expectations and Needs Improvement/Unacceptable (1)		Meets Expectations/Adequate (2)		Exceeds Expectations/Effective (3)		Below Expectations and Needs Improvement/Unacceptable (1)		Meets Expectations/Adequate (2)		Exceeds Expectations/Effective (3)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Content	107	15	358	51	237	34	22	17	80	63	26	20
Organization	100	14	407	58	195	28	20	16	82	64	26	20
Delivery	96	14	431	61	175	25	28	22	82	64	18	14
Total/Average	303	14	1,196	57	607	29	394	18	654	64	308	18

Overall, the results of the GE oral communication assessment are similar to the BSS results, with over four-fifths of the students rated as “meets or exceeds expectations.” The modal evaluation for both BSS and GE data showed that the majority of students to be rated as “meets expectations.” With respect to specific categories of evaluation, the least robust evaluation for both GE and BSS students was *Delivery*, however, the mean BSS score was numerically higher than the GE score in this category. One reason the BSS data showed more robust achievement than did the GE data may be the BSS sample came from major courses at or near the point of graduation while the GE sample did not.

Discussion:

The vast majority (85 percent) of BSS student oral communication data rated students as “meets or exceeds expectations” across all four categories. Only a combined four percent of the entire sample was “below expectations.” While this assessment is only one snapshot in time, the evidence demonstrates most of the BSS students sampled are competent in their oral communication skills. These findings, while encouraging, should also inspire faculty to maintain and increase the level of oral communication practice in their courses and across the curriculum. Experts agree it is important to be critical of the significance of one assessment result. This report creates a baseline for BSS majors’ competency in oral communication. These results are a place for BSS to begin the conversation about oral communication in the College and how to help its students achieve competency.

As these results are understood and disseminated, BSS will implement the following strategies:

1. Ensure the results are distributed College-wide;
2. Discuss the results with chairs and faculty;
3. Encourage faculty to analyze their program’s results and discuss methods to build oral communication into courses and develop best practices to increase students’ oral competencies, and;
4. Continue to provide College-wide support individually to each program and through the BSS Student Success Center.

Weaknesses:

The results of this assessment report should be tempered for several reasons:

1. The inter-rater reliability for this sample was relatively low. While the evaluators completed a “norming” process, it is clear the evaluators need to have better communication during the assessment process to minimize scoring discrepancies.
2. At times, there was a lack of communication from program facilitators to their faculty regarding the required steps of the assessment process. Ideally, the rubrics used in the

assessment process would also be utilized in the classroom evaluation as well. In some programs, there were some gaps in the proper assessment process that need to be addressed.

Moving forward:

For this academic year, BSS will assess the information literacy SLO. The BSS assessment coordinator will attempt to improve on last year's assessment process to create a more refined and impactful assessment.

Contact:

For questions or concerns regarding this report, please contact Associate Dean Ryan Patten at rpatten@csuchico.edu or 898-6171.

APPENDIX 1

- Allen, M. J. (2004). *Assessing academic programs in higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Allen, M. J. (2006). *Assessing general education programs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Banta, T. W., & Associates. (2002). *Building a scholarship of assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bresciani, M. J. (2006). *Outcomes-based academic and co-curricular program review*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Driscoll, A., & Wood, S. (2007). *Outcomes-based assessment for learner-centered education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Kuh, G. D., Ikenberry, S. O., Jankowski, N. A., Cain, T. R., Ewell, P., Hutchings, P., and Kinzie, J. (2014). *Using Student Evidence to Improve Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Suskie, L. (2nd edition; 2009). *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.

APPENDIX 2

	Below expectations 1	Needs Improvement 2	Meets Expectations 3	Exceeds Expectations 4
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient • Lacks explanation or clarity, logic problems • Content is not sourced accurately • Content includes inaccurate information and no analysis is provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginally sufficient • Some explanations are included, maybe a couple logic flaws • Content is poorly sourced • Content is mostly accurate and analysis is not present or lacking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient • Explanations are included, but only satisfactory • Content includes some sources or more than one type of evidence or support or information • Content is accurate, but analysis is lacking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better or best level of information • Explanations enhance audience understanding, clear, helpful logic is used • Content includes multiple, relevant sources, quantitative details, types of evidence and/or useful information for support • Content is accurate, provides compelling analysis
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic aspects of structure lacking overall • Content lacks a clear thesis/theme • Points lack coordination or logic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomplete or ineffective use of basic structure (intro, body, conclusion, transitions) • Content of the basic thesis/theme is slightly disorganized or unclear • Transitions from point-to-point are lacking or ineffective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses all aspects of the basic structure (intro, body, conclusion, transitions) • Content is organized with a clear or basic thesis/theme • Transitions from point-to-point are adequate with few errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation uses necessary structure (intro, body, conclusion, transitions) in an effective/creative manner • Meaningful theme/thesis used to coordinate content • Points distinct, flow easily from one to the next
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery style/use of notes (manuscript or extemporaneous) is inadequate, lacks any focus on audience • Non-verbals, flaws distract from speech (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, vocal quality, pace) • Lack of interest or energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery style/use of notes (manuscript or extemporaneous) are below average and has inconsistent focus on audience • Non-verbals (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, vocal quality, pace) are ineffective • Marginal degree of energy or interest present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery style/use of notes (manuscript or extemporaneous) are acceptable and mostly focused on the audience • Non-verbals (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, vocal quality, pace) are effective • Moderate degree of energy or interest present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery style/use of notes (manuscript or extemporaneous) is excellent, polished, and the speaker maintains a focus on the audience • Non-verbals (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, vocal quality, pace) are polished and enhance the quality of speech • Interest, enthusiasm/energy is evident

APPENDIX 3

BSS Courses Providing Student Oral Communication Assignments			
Name of Program	Course Number	Title of Course	Students Assessed
Anthropology	377z	Anthropology of the Islamic World**	23
Child Development	495	Senior Seminar in Child Development*	32
Economics	495 & 499H	Capstone in Economics* & Capstone Honors	23
Geography and Planning	390	Foundations of Geographical Analysis and Writing	9
Health and Community Services -- Health Administration	530	Health Services Administration Capstone Seminar*	26
Health and Community Services -- Health Education	362	Environmental Health	44
Multicultural and Gender Studies	380 & 495	Gender, Science, and Society & Senior Seminar in Multicultural and Gender Studies*	26
Criminal Justice	459D	Senior Seminar in Criminal Justice*	22
Legal Studies	491	Trial and Appellate Advocacy	18
International Relations	441	Senior Seminar in Comparative Politics & International Relations*	17
General Political Science	429	Capstone in American Politics*	23
Public Administration	462	Organizational Theory	21
Psychology	401 & 499H	Capstone in Psychology* & Capstone Honors	42
Sociology	441	Public Sociology	11
Social Science	495	Capstone Seminar in Social Science*	13
Social Work	445	Social Work Methods	11

Total N = 361

* Capstone course
** General Education Course

APPENDIX 4

General Education Scoring Guide for Oral Communication

AREA A-1 ORAL COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT INDIVIDUAL RUBRIC (5-1-14 VERSION)			
	EFFECTIVE Good or better, above average level of achievement 3	ADEQUATE Proficient or average level of achievement 2	UNACCEPTABLE Below adequate or average level of achievement 1
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech uses necessary structure (intro, body, conclusion, transitions) in an effective manner • Structure can be organized in a creative/interesting manner, in addition to being very clear and logical • Meaningful theme/thesis used to coordinate content • Points distinct, flow easily from one to the next 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech uses some aspects of the basic structure (intro, body, conclusion, transitions), some more helpful than others • Content is organized with a clear or basic thesis/theme • Parts of the speech are distinct, some blur together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic aspects of structure lacking overall • Content lacks a clear thesis/theme • Points lack coordination or logic
CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content contains good or better information • Explanations enhance audience understanding, clear, helpful logic is used • Content includes multiple, relevant sources, quantitative details, types of evidence and/or useful information for support • Content is accurate, provides clear details based on a solid understanding of the information used and cites sources consistently, when necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content contains sufficient, information • Some explanations are included, some helpful, some not, maybe a couple logic flaws • Content includes some sources or more than one type of evidence or support or information • Content is mostly accurate and sources are cited at times, when necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is not sufficient • Lacks explanation or clarity, logic problems • Content is too general, vague, not well selected • Content includes inaccurate information, is not well understood, and sources are rarely cited, if at all.
DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker's delivery style/use of notes (manuscript or extemporaneous) is effective, the speaker maintains a focus on the audience • Displays mostly consistent and audience-focused non-verbals that enhance parts of the speech (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, vocal quality, pace) • Confidence, interest, enthusiasm/energy is evident • Speaker consistently adjusts to the audience (choice of language, adjusts or rephrases, answers questions), when necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker's delivery style/use of notes (manuscript or extemporaneous) are average, inconsistent focus on audience • Displays basic competence in non-verbals, some aspects of speech are enhanced (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, vocal quality, pace) • Moderate degree of energy or interest present • Shows some evidence of adjusting to the audience (choice of language, adjusts or rephrases, answers questions), when necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker's delivery style/use of notes (manuscript or extemporaneous) is not adequate, lacks focus on audience • Lack of competence in the non-verbals, flaws distract from speech (eye-contact, facial expressions, gestures, body movement, vocal quality, pace) • Lack of interest or energy • Speaker fails to adjust to the audience