

SACS

Speaking Across the Curriculum

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Robert O. Weiss, Editor

East Tennessee State University

In December 1995, East Tennessee State University approved a comprehensive revision of its general education program. An important element of the newly approved general education core is the requirement that every student take at least two courses in which graded oral communication assignments play a major role. The aim of this requirement is to build skills including effective listening, articulate expression in conversation and public presentations, and oral argumentation. Requiring students to take at least two "oral communication intensive" (OCI) courses will enhance skills essential for career success, responsible citizenship, and rewarding interpersonal relations.

The university will begin offering OCI courses in fall, 1995. The number of OCI courses offered will grow steadily. ETSU is also developing plans for an oral communication center to serve students with special needs, such as speech anxiety, and to provide additional training for interested students, faculty and staff. The university is currently conducting a national search for a director of oral communication to oversee the program and direct the center for oral communication.

Request from W & M

Professors Tamara Burk and Loralee Clark are in the process of assembling a book focusing on oral communication across the curriculum. If you have any exercises, activities, and/or assignments revolving around oral communication which span across disciplines and departments or if you know of anyone who does, please contact them at: Dept. of Theatre and Speech, College of William and Mary, PBK Hall, Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795

You are invited to send news for the next (September) issue to the editor:

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Briar Cliff College

Recently Briar Cliff College, Sioux City, Iowa, has undertaken a comprehensive Oral Communication across the Curriculum emphasis (concurrent with others in writing, computer usage, and moral/ethical reasoning). Faculty within each major are developing discipline-specific standards for oral communication competence.

Phillip Glenn, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, spoke to the faculty in August, 1994 on rationale, models, and procedures for OCAC. Glenn also spent two days with Briar Cliff faculty in January, 1995, meeting with individual departments and presenting workshops on such issues as helping students cope with speech anxiety and evaluating student presentations.

In oral communication, as in the other three across the curriculum competencies, the Briar Cliff approach emphasizes departmental autonomy on such issues as identification of competency skills and procedures for training and certifying students. A college-wide Academic Council reviews all department plans. Making oral presentations and leading group discussions are the two skill areas most emphasized in the various majors.

Retention Rates

We earlier neglected to mention here the summary of a 1993 Title III evaluation report sent in from the Borough of Manhattan Community College by Howard Budner.

An assessment was made of the implementation of across-the-curriculum speaking/listening, reading/writing, and computer courses, along with "paired" and "blocked" courses at BMCC.

Among the interesting findings: "A more objective assessment involved a comparison of student pass rates and retention rates between students in each across-the-curriculum course and students in all other sections of the same course. Results showed that students in all of the across-the-curriculum courses withdrew less often from the course, as compared with students in regular courses. This was particularly true with blocked courses, S/L courses, and computing courses. A more moderate effect was seen for pass rates, with students only in blocked courses and R/W courses having higher pass rates than students in analogous sections of the same course."

Doctoral Research at Toledo

A. Anne Bowers, Jr., informs us that she is pursuing speaking across the curriculum as her dissertation topic for her Ph.D. in Higher Education Curriculum Instruction at the University of Toledo. (College of Education and Allied Professions, Toledo, OH 43606-3390.)

Her research seeks to identify those colleges and universities that currently have implemented a college-wide program in Speaking Across the Curriculum or departmental SAC program; how and when the program got started; and what was the administration's role. She would like assistance in obtaining information.

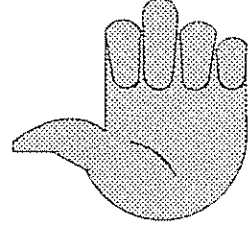
TEACHING SOCIOLOGY, HISTORY, PHYSICS . . .

A useful resource for discipline-oriented approaches to speaking across the curriculum is to be found in the pedagogical journals associated with almost every academic field. While as a genre such journals tend to be myopic and inclined to reinvent the wheel, they are addressed to faculty concerned with teaching their own specialties and provide an abundance of applications of participatory methods involving oral communication.

We found interesting the October 1994 issue of *Teaching Sociology*, a special issue devoted to "Interpersonal and Interactional Aspects of Teaching." C. Auster and M. MacRone describe "The Classroom as a Negotiated Social Setting: An Empirical Study of the Effects of Faculty members' Behaviors on Student Participation." A. Lusk and A. Weinberg write about "Discussing Controversial Topics in the Classroom: Creating a Context for Learning." And W. McBroom informs readers of "An Alternative to a Traditional Lecture Course."

The latter tells us (surprise, surprise) that "the course is organized around short daily reading assignments, class discussions rather than lectures, and daily testing." The Auster and MacRone study, we might add, has also been summarized in the March 1985 issue of *The Teaching Professor*, a helpful pedagogical newsletter out of Penn State U.

Two Thumbs Up



The Oral Communication Program at Radford (VA) University has conducted a six-year evaluation of its communication-intensive courses. This evaluation utilized two separate survey instruments that were administered to faculty and students, respectively.

Approximately 3,000 students and 50 faculty members were surveyed. The responses were overwhelmingly positive.

Of the students surveyed, 97% felt they learned more in their classes because of the inclusion of oral communication activities.

The faculty survey revealed that 100% of the faculty strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the communication components were worthwhile for their students.

Copies of the survey instrument, data tables, and analysis can be obtained from the Oral Communication program. Please call (703) 831-5750 to request a copy.

Note: The above information appeared in the Spring 1995 edition of the OCP's newsletter, *Speak Easy*.

WV Wesleyan Workshop

A two-week faculty workshop on writing and speaking across the curriculum conducted by Walter Cannon, Central College, at West Virginia Wesleyan College last summer attracted 24 teachers from WVWC and three others from Morris Brown College in Atlanta.