
SCA

Speaking Across the Curriculum

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Greg Gardner Visits

The Hamilton Holt School of Rollins College began a communication across the curriculum project in August. In preparation, Greg Gardner received a summer grant to visit institutions with on-going programs. He reports:

At DePauw, Robert and Ann Weiss explained the nuances of the university's 10-year old program as I visited their Speaking Across the Curriculum Office and the Speaking and Listening Center. At Radford, George Grice and Michael Cronin discussed their innovative ideas of the workshop and consulting models of CAC as I toured their center and viewed their interactive video facilities. At Hamline, Patricia Palmerton and I had long and fruitful discussions about the theoretical implications of across the curriculum programming and how language can improve student learning.

Robert O. Weiss, Editor

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

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Freshman Orientation Course

From the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Sherry Morreale reports the introduction of pre- and post-testing of students' oral communication competencies in the communication intensive freshman orientation course. Further assessment of the same population will take place next year.

Speech Communication Association Convention October 29-November 1, 1992

Numerous programs at the upcoming SCA convention in Chicago will be of relevance to persons interested in speaking across the curriculum.

Short Course

On Thursday afternoon a short course on "Oral Communication Across the Curriculum: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing a University-Wide Program" will be conducted by Michael Cronin and George Grice. The deadline for enrollment by mail is October 1, but additional registrations may be taken on site if space is available.

EPB Undergraduate General Education Committee

A program schedule for 5:30 Friday is "A Progress Report on Preliminary Actions by the Committee on Communication in the Undergraduate General Education Curriculum." Included is a subcommittee report by George Grice: "Implementing Required Oral Communication-Intensive Courses as Part of the GE Curriculum."

Some Other Interesting-Looking Papers

Thomas K. Worthen and Gaylen N. Pack, "Classroom Debate as an Experiential Learning Activity Across the Curriculum."

Louis Rosso, "The Critical Issues Symposium: Group Discussion Across the Disciplines."

Cathy A. Fleuret, "The Oral Communication Dilemma: A Descriptive Analysis of the Fulfillment of the Oral Communication Competency Requirement by Universities and Colleges Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools."

I might add that the programs of which these papers are a part appear to offer additional "interesting-looking" research.

DePauw Assessment

At DePauw University, a Task Force has completed an assessment of the Oral Communication Competence requirement which was established in 1982.

Data for the assessment was accumulated through surveys, focus groups, and interviews with faculty members, students, and alumni of the program.

The assessment report is to be submitted to a committee which is reviewing graduation requirements of the university.

Among many other items, faculty and alumni were asked globally whether the requirement should be retained:

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Und. | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---------|----------------|-------|------|----------|-------------------|
| Faculty | 35 | 27 | 25 | 05 | 08 |
| Alumni | 53 | 38 | 04 | 02 | 02 |

One important aim of the DePauw program is to improve learning and teaching. Respondents were asked whether they thought the oral communication emphasis helped students learn subject matter better:

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Und. | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------|----------------|-------|------|----------|-------------------|
| Alumni | 22 | 48 | 09 | 19 | 02 |
| Students | 34 | 50 | 10 | 09 | 03 |
| Faculty | 48 | 50 | 02 | 01 | 00 |

While noting areas of concern, the Report does conclude that "the S program has realized most of the goals established for it by the original Task Force and the faculty."

In the Carolinas

The *Carolinas Speech Communication Annual*, Vol. VII, 1991, includes several articles dealing with speaking across the curriculum programs and issues.

Writes Louis J. Rosso, "Winthrop College was reviewed by the SACS during 1989-91, and the college's intensive speech communication component met the SACS oral communication requirement."

Students at Winthrop are required to complete an intensive oral communication course meeting explicit guidelines and approved by the Intensive Writing/Oral Communication Committee. Each course is to be reviewed every three years by the Committee. Long range goals include an increasingly active role by the Department of Speech Communication.

Rosso adds, "The intensive oral communication requirement and the speech communication across the curriculum strategy has been well received by faculty and students."

At Appalachian State University, Terry W. Cole reports the institution of a requirement that "All students must take at least two courses that require formal speaking. Designated with an 'S', these courses must require oral presentations of a formal nature that are evaluated not only on content, but also on the quality of presentation; one of these speaking courses must be in the major." Guidelines for implementation make an additional distinction between 'S' and 'LS' (Laboratory-Speaking) designations.

While applauding the high priority given to oral communication by the university's Task Force on Educational Goals and recognizing the validity of the across the curriculum concept, Cole sets forth several serious concerns about the program, including "the absence of any required communication course in the proposal, the lack of an instructional component in the 'S' course requirement, and the limited provisions for training the non-communication faculty member."

Hampden-Sydney College

At Hampden-Sydney College, according to Lowell Frye, the Task Force will submit a re-drafted Speaking Across the Curriculum proposal to the faculty this fall.

In preparation, a special summer Workshop was conducted for Task Force members and others with Patricia Palmer-ton as a guest expert. Eleven departments participated. Then the draft proposal was discussed by all members of the faculty meeting in small groups at the college's regular Pre-term Workshop.

"Poised Performance Won't Cut It"

Walter Cannon, Director of the "Across the Curriculum" communication skills effort at Central College, writes to describe the continuing development of a program which rests ultimately upon departmental endorsements of communication competence. I liked this paragraph:

"What I see after being at this for over a decade is that our new way of teaching has exposed problems in critical and analytical thinking and general learning that we would have never seen before. . . . What might have passed for a 'poised' presentation from a student ten years ago, won't quite cut it today. Students need to do better than that. We're all looking more deeply at students' communication abilities as they engage with various assignments in our classrooms and we're trying to find new strategies to meet the problems we're finding."