

State of the Department
Department of Speech and Communication Studies
Language, Literature & Communication Division

Guiding Assessment in the Future – Proposal

Background: The Department of Speech and Communication Studies was early to join the campus-wide assessment program developed to meet accreditation issues at Lane Community College. All of the full time faculty have participated in the creation of rubrics to reflect Lane's core values at some point or another. Many of the full time faculty have also been awarded individual grant monies to create or modify rubrics or assessment tests or generate reports of assessments completed.

During the 2013/2014 school year, the Department focused on tackling a long-standing unit plan goal of creating an assessment plan for Fundamentals of Public Speaking or Comm 111. Several years previously, an assessment plan was created under the auspices of the "A TEAM" for Basic Communication or Comm 100, although it was never used beyond the first two years.

Fall term found full time and part time faculty creating a tentative Comm 111 pre/post-test. There was much discussion about who taught what and it became apparent that there were a multitude of ideas about what constituted the course competencies. Although there are the required course competencies on file, it became apparent that there was a lack of consistency in the Comm 111 classes and much needed to be done to create a detailed list of course competencies and signature assignments.

As we struggled with the process of creating pre- and post-tests for Comm 111, many other topics were opened as we struggled to create statistically valid and instructor useful data. There were hours of discussion among the full time faculty of deep exploration about the importance of consistency and what needed to be done to "take the temperature" of the program. The aggregate data from the Comm 111 pre- and post-tests has been shared with the instructor participants, and will be shared with the Department for future discussions during the 2014/2015 school year.

Full-time department members originally proposed to the Assessment Team that we would map CLOs to course outcomes using a previously adapted rubric created by Barbara Breaden and Mara Levin. As we delved deeper into the Comm 111 structure, it became apparent that we did not have consistent course outcomes nor signature assignments within our courses to complete this goal with any sort of meaningful data. It was obvious that the lack of a departmental coordinator has taken a HUGE toll on the consistency of instruction in the Department of Speech and Communication Studies. Maintenance issues that should have been routine within a fully coordinated department, did not occur within ours. It is for this reason that the Department of Speech and Communication Studies is having to take such a broad systemic look before being able to map CLOs

Thus the data from our look at Comm 111, and the seed that it has planted, has become the nucleus of a systemic program assessment proposal starting in fall of 2014. The proposal has come from many hours of discussion among full time faculty members and campus leaders. It is broad in scope and will be a work-in-progress for many, many years.

Proposal of Assessment Action-

1. The creation of an approved textbook list for the high enrollment classes of Basic Communication (Comm 100), Fundamentals of Public Speaking (Comm 111), Intercultural Communication (Comm 115), and Interpersonal Communication (Comm 218). The previous list was approximately 10 years old and didn't include a process to add or subtract books. This work is in progress and anticipated to be in place by fall of 2015.
2. Revision of course outlines. This will include refining the outcome statements and clarifying course parameters such as giving a range for the number of speeches assigned and/or other signature assignments. This work will begin in the 2014/2015 school year and continue for several years. High enrollment classes will be completed before moving on to other offerings.
3. Generation of signature assignments for high enrollment classes. At this point in time, there are some general suggestions of what should be done in classes, but with a wide variation of intensity and application. It is hoped that these discussions could include input from both full and part-time faculty. This work will begin in the 2014/2015 school year and run concurrently with assessment action #2. It is anticipated that this goal will take many years to accomplish.
4. At some point in the not-so-distant future, work will begin on updating the department website. Although there is much of value currently on the site (we recently completed a video Q & A section used by the LCC advisors), the website lacks information about the program and specific courses that could be used by part-time and new full-time faculty to understand course outcomes and signature assignments. Time will have to be spent learning how to password protect this area—as well as learn how to add to the existing materials.
5. Another project for the not-so-distant future will be the design and distribution of a survey for faculty and students to get a sense of how both groups perceive the high enrollment course outcomes and objectives. This can be a project to help the department to assess and update programs as needed so that future instructors can benefit from the time and effort invested in our current revisions and discussions.
6. After all of the previous 5 assessment actions near completion, faculty can then begin to tackle the original goal of explicitly mapping CLOs to course outcomes using specific signature assignments.

Possible Barriers:

If we wish to reach this goal in a timely manner, a funded department coordinator will be needed on a permanent basis. At this time we have 5 full time instructors in the Department of Speech and Communication Studies. One instructor is half-way through a two year teach-out for retirement. Two instructors have medically reduced course loads. One instructor is considering retirement within a year or two. There are approximately 15 part-time instructors. In spite of our staffing challenges, we have the desire and dedication to tackle this proposed assessment action plan, but we need to have someone who can consistently coordinate the project.

Think

Engage

Create

Communicate

Apply

With such a high ratio of part-time to full-time instructors, many of our highly enrolled courses are taught predominantly (if not completely) by part-time faculty. It is important to provide incentives to assist part-time faculty in participating in the creation of more detailed course outlines and signature assignments. Without their participation and assumed “ownership” of the changes, the success of the assessment actions could be tenuous.