

REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF LIBERAL STUDIES CORE CATEGORY C3 (ORAL  
COMMUNICATION)

FEBRUARY 2017

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## OUTLINE

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## I. OVERVIEW OF THE CHARGE TO THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

The charge to Liberal Studies Assessment teams indicates that the primary tasks for the members are to (1) use the Liberal Studies rubrics to score samples of student work as a way to determine how well students are achieving the associated outcomes of the Liberal Studies Program, and (2) to review the syllabi of the courses taught in the category under review. The overarching goals of the Liberal Studies assessment are to determine how well students achieve the Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes, and to determine how consistent the goals of the Liberal Studies Program are with what faculty and departments are delivering.

The Guiding Principles for Liberal Studies Program Assessment are to answer the following questions:

- 1) Are we delivering what we say we do?
- 2) Are students learning what we want them to?
- 3) What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?

This results of this team's assessment are thus outlined based upon these guiding principles and questions.

## III. STUDENT LEARNING: A REVIEW OF RANDOMLY SELECTED STUDENT WORK

A total of 44 artifacts (digitally recorded videos of student presentations) were used in this assessment. The presentations were examples of student work from Oral Communication (COMM 201) classes, required for the fulfillment of the C3 category. Prior to collection, the faculty identified the Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes that were best reflected in the assignment. Four Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) of the Liberal Studies Program were identified by the faculty as relevant to the selected assignments:

Liberal Studies SLO 3C:

- a) Demonstrate the ability to speak clearly
- b) Demonstrate the ability to speak coherently
- c) Demonstrate the ability to speak effectively
- d) Demonstrate the ability to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience

The 44 artifacts represented the total number of artifacts available. The videos ranged between 4 and 11 minutes long. Identifying factors were removed, and the videos were stored in the Panopto video server of Blackboard for use in the assessment. The team of three reviewers were each randomly assigned 22 videos to assess, and each video was independently assessed by two reviewers. The reviewers met for a single norming session with the Director of Assessment, then viewed and scored the artifacts separately. During the norming activity, the scorers agreed that the video samples did not provide an opportunity to assess the "adapting modes of communication" criterion (d). As a result, N/A

was recorded as the score for “adapting modes of communication,” and is not included in the total score. During the scoring, it was discovered that three videos were not scorable due to poor sound quality. The resulting number of artifacts scored was 41.

The reviewers met a second time with the Director of Assessment to rescore artifacts where there was disagreement between the initial two reviews. In the event the two scorers differed by more than one performance level on any SLO, the student work sample was scored a third time by a different reviewer.

## A. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Tables 1 and 2 below, generated by the Director of Assessment from the scoring spreadsheets used by the Assessment Team members, indicate the distribution of the ratings assigned to the 41 artifacts scored. Artifacts were scored as 1, 2, 3, or 4, corresponding respectively to “Emerging,” “Developing,” “Achieving,” and “Exemplary” levels of ability (see Appendix A: Rubric). Charts 1-4 below help to illustrate the frequency distribution of scores for artifacts, with values representing means of individual scores of the two reviewers (e.g., a value of 1.5 represents the mean of scores of 1 and 2).

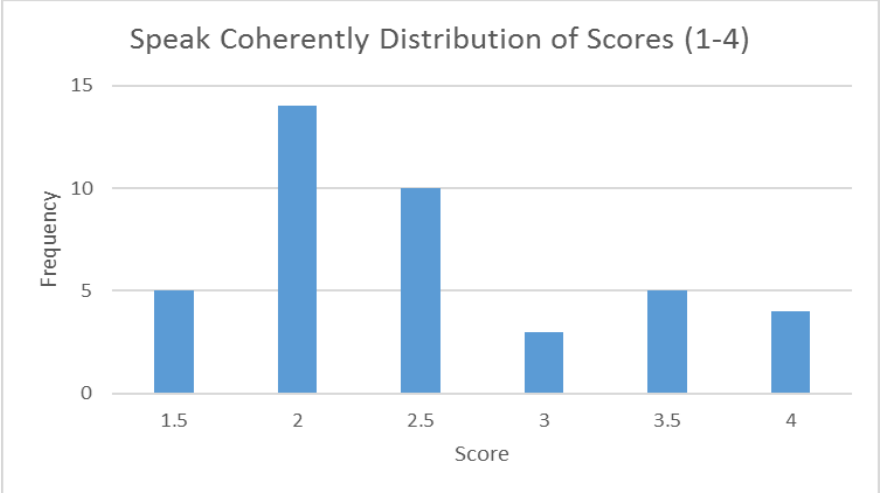
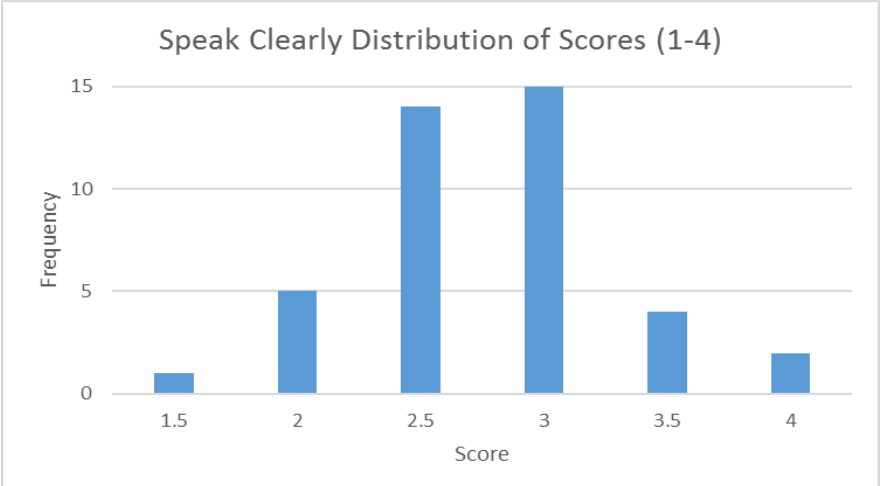
**Table 1. Liberal Studies SLO 3C (Oral Communication) Descriptive Statistics Following Rescoring (2016)**

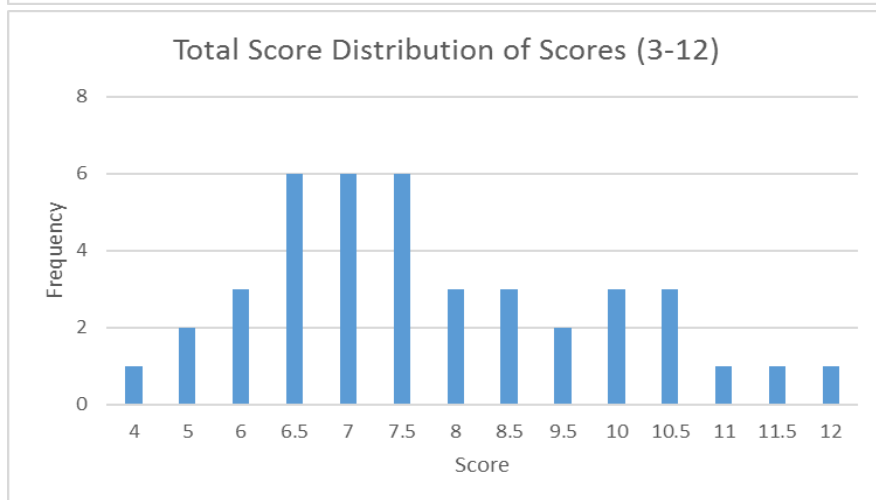
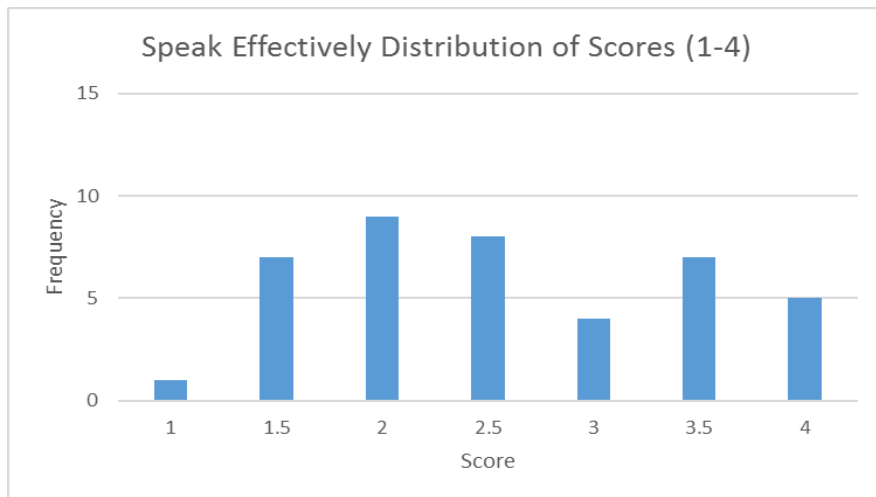
Statistic	Criterion			Total Score
	Speak Clearly	Speak Coherently	Speak Effectively	
N =	41	41	41	41
Minimum =	1.5	1.5	1	4
Maximum =	4	4	4	12
Range =	2.5	2.5	3	8
Standard Dev =	0.53	0.75	0.86	1.84
Mean =	2.77	2.51	2.59	7.87
Median =	3.0	2.5	2.5	7.5
Mode =	3.0	2.0	2.0	7.0

**Table 2. Liberal Studies SLO 3C (Oral Communication) Reliability Estimates Following Rescoring (2016)**

Component	Criterion			Overall
	Speak Clearly	Speak Coherently	Speak Effectively	
Agreements	19	19	17	55
Agreements (+/-1)	22	22	24	68
Disagreements (>1)	0	0	0	0
Total	41	41	41	123
$r_{(+/-0)} =$	0.46	0.46	0.41	0.45
$r_{(+/-1)} =$	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

*Note.*  $r = (\text{Agreements}/(\text{Agreements} + \text{Disagreements}))$ ; an estimate of Percent Agreement





## B. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Based upon the assessment team’s reading, Western Carolina University’s students in COMM 201, on average, **demonstrate proficiency in oral communication skills**, as viewed through the lens of the student learning outcomes of the Liberal Studies Program.

### LEARNING OUTCOME 3C, A: DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO SPEAK CLEARLY.

The 41 presentations sampled from COMM 201 for this category indicate that Western Carolina University students are performing at all four levels, from “Emerging” through “Exemplary,” with 29/41 students (71%) scoring a mean of 2.5 or 3. The total mean score for the category was 2.77, between “Developing-2” and “Achieving-3.” Most students in the sample were able to stand in front of a class and speak without appearing overly nervous, and all seemed reasonably prepared.

### LEARNING OUTCOME 3C, B: DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO SPEAK COHERENTLY

The 41 presentations sampled from COMM 201 for this category indicate that Western Carolina University students are performing at all four levels, from “Emerging” through “Exemplary,” with 24/41

students (59%) scoring a mean of 2 or 2.5. The total mean score for the category was 2.51, between "Developing-2" and "Achieving-3."

#### LEARNING OUTCOME 3C, C: DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO SPEAK EFFECTIVELY

The 41 presentations sampled from COMM 201 for this category indicate that Western Carolina University students are performing at all four levels, from "Emerging" through "Exemplary," with an almost even distribution ranging from 1.5 to 4. The most common score was 2, with 9/41 students (22%) scoring a mean of 2 ("Developing") for this category. The total mean score for the category was 2.59, between "Developing-2" and "Achieving-3."

#### LEARNING OUTCOME 3C, D: DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO ADAPT MODES OF COMMUNICATION APPROPRIATE TO AN AUDIENCE

The assessment committee determined that this category was not relevant to the supplied artifacts. The mode of communication was fixed, and the only choice the students were able to make with regards to the mode of communication, was whether or not to have a Power Point presentation to accompany their talk.

#### IV. FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL DELIVERY: A REVIEW OF SYLLABI

The C3 (Oral Communication) Core category of the Liberal Studies Program consists of one semester of Foundations of Communication, COMM 201. The course description states:

*This course is designed to build the student's communication skills in a variety of settings. Students will be introduced to the basic principles of public, small group, and interpersonal communication. Students will be expected to apply the information learned from the texts and the lectures in several communication exercises.*

As a part of the assessment, nine syllabi from COMM 201 sections taught during the Spring 2016 semester were submitted for review. The assessment team used the syllabi to confirm the inclusion of:

1. The explicit statement of Course Description
2. General Liberal Studies Outcomes
3. Course Objectives for Foundations of Communication, COMM 201
4. Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes

The majority of the Foundations of Communication, COMM 201 course syllabi had the explicit statement of course description (6 = 66.6%) with the same descriptive heading: *Course Description* (7 = 77.7%). One of the syllabi had the explicit statement of course description but the instructor had added a personal statement to the course description (1 = 11.1%). Two of the syllabi had the same course description, but the statement was different from the explicit statement of course description (2 = 22.2%). We speculate this statement may be an older course description. Both of these syllabi used a different descriptive heading: *Overall Course Goal/Purpose* (1 = 11.1%) and *Overall Course Goal* (1 = 11.1%). **See Tables 3 & 4**

Review of the COMM 201 syllabi revealed that eight of the nine syllabi documented the general Liberal Studies Outcomes (88.8%). Three similar but different descriptive headings were used to indicate the general Liberal Studies Outcomes: *Liberal Studies Learning Goals* (6 syllabi = 66.6%), *Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes* (1 = 11.1%) and *College of Arts and Sciences Liberal Studies Learning Goals* (1 = 11.1%). **See Tables 3 & 4**

All of the syllabi had Course Objectives but they had different descriptive headings: *Comm 201 Learning Outcomes* (3 syllabi = 33.3%), *Course Objectives* (3 syllabi = 33.3%), *Specific Learning Objectives for COMM 201* (1 syllabi = 11.1%), *Specific Learning objectives* (1 syllabi = 11.1%), *Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes* (1 syllabi = 11.1%). The Course Objectives generally reflect the Liberal Studies Outcomes for the C3 category as outlined in the Liberal Studies Document and as reflected in Table 3 and Table 4. However, none of the syllabi documented the Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes as outlined in the Liberal Studies Document (original Liberal Studies Document). Quantitative results of Spring 2016 Syllabi review for COMM 201 are presented in: Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6 respectively.

#### **Points for Discussion:**

- There is consensus that the course description and the course objectives for COMM 201 should be included in the course syllabi.
  - Who develops the course outcomes?
  - How often are they reviewed?
  - What oversight is in place?
- COMM 201 is evaluated based on the Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes.
  - Should these outcomes be included in the course syllabi?
    - The Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes were not documented in any of the COMM 201 Spring 2016 course syllabi.
  - Do the Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes need to be documented if they are reflected in the Course Objectives for COMM 201? **See Tables 5 & 6**
    - Are the Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes reflected in the Course Objectives for COMM 201?
  - Should the descriptive headings for COMM 201: Course Description, Liberal Studies Outcomes and Course Objectives be standardized across all syllabi for this course? **See Table 4**
    - Three different descriptive headings for Course Description.
    - Three different descriptive headings for General Liberal Studies Outcomes
    - Five different descriptive headings for Course Outcomes.

#### **Course Objectives: Foundations of Communication: COMM 201**

1. Students are able to articulate the importance of perception and self-concept to the communicative self.
1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of effective verbal and nonverbal communication as well as barriers to listening.



2. Students are able to identify the different relational stages they go through, how to maintain healthy relationships, manage conflict, and the importance of self-disclosure to relationships.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of communicating effectively in small groups by studying group roles, norms, decision making, and leadership.
4. Students will demonstrate informative and persuasive speaking skills by delivering a well-organized, clearly supported, effective public presentation.

### **Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes**

1. Students will develop basic competency in interpersonal communication.
2. Students will develop basic competency in small group communication.
3. Students will develop basic competency in public speaking.

### **Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes (Approved 27 January 2016)**

- a. Demonstrate competency in small group communication.
- b. Demonstrate understanding of critical and literal listening.
- c. Recognize discrepancies between the speaker's verbal and non-verbal messages.
- d. Demonstrate competency in public speaking.
- e. Demonstrate competency in interpersonal communication.

### **(General) Liberal Studies Outcomes**

1. Demonstrate the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information;
2. Demonstrate the ability to interpret and use numerical, written, oral, and visual data;
3. Demonstrate the ability to read with comprehension, and to write and speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience;
4. Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze arguments;
5. Demonstrate the ability to recognize behaviors and define choices that affect lifelong well-being;
6. Demonstrate an understanding of
  1. Past human experiences and ability to relate them to the present;
  2. Different contemporary cultures and their interrelationships;
  3. Issues involving social institutions, interpersonal and group dynamics, human development and behavior, and cultural diversity;
  4. Scientific concepts and methods as well as contemporary issues in science and technology;
  5. Cultural heritage through its expressions of wisdom, literature and art and their roles in the process of self and social understanding.
7. Demonstrate an excitement for and love of learning

Course	Explicit C3 Course Description			Liberal Studies Outcomes C3		General Liberal Studies Outcomes		Course Objectives /Learning Outcomes / Other Title	
	Present	Different	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
Comm 201									
<b>Totals</b>	7 (77.7%)	2 (22.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (100%)	8 (88.8%)	1 (11.1%)	9 (100%)	0 (0%)

**Table 3.** Summary of Spring 2016 Syllabi (9 Syllabi Submitted)

Reviewed	Descriptive Heading	Percentage
C3 Course Description	Course Description	77.8%
	Overall Course Goal	11.1%
	Overall Course Goal /Purpose	11.1%
Liberal Studies Outcomes	Liberal Studies Learning Goals	66.7%
	Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes	11.1%
	College of Arts and Sciences Liberal Studies Learning Goals	11.1%
Course Objectives	Course Objectives	33.3%
	Com 201 Learning Outcomes	33.3%
	Specific Learning Objectives for Comm 201	11.1%
	Specific Learning Objectives	11.1%
	Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes	11.1%
Liberal Studies Program Outcomes for C3	None	0%

**Table 4.** Summary of Spring 2016 Syllabi (9 Syllabi Submitted)

Course Objectives						
Liberal Studies C3: Oral Communication Outcomes		Students are able to articulate the importance of perception and self-concept to the communicative self.	Students will demonstrate knowledge of effective verbal and nonverbal communication as well as barriers to listening.	Students are able to identify the different relational stages they go through, how to maintain healthy relationships, manage conflict, & the importance of self-disclosure to relationships.	Students will demonstrate knowledge of communicating effectively in small groups by studying group roles, norms, decision making, and leadership.	Students will demonstrate informative and persuasive speaking skills by delivering a well-organized, clearly supported, effective public presentation.
	Students will develop basic competency in interpersonal communication.	X		X		
	Students will develop basic competency in small group communication.		X		X	
	Students will develop basic competency in public speaking.					X

**Table 5.** Correlation between Course Objectives for COMM 201 & Liberal Studies C3 Oral Communication Outcomes (Spring 2016 Syllabi - 9 Syllabi Submitted)

Course Objectives						
Liberal Studies Outcomes: C3 - Oral Communication (Approved 27 January 2016)		Students are able to articulate the importance of perception and self-concept to the communicative self.	Students will demonstrate knowledge of effective verbal and nonverbal communication as well as barriers to listening.	Students are able to identify the different relational stages they go through, how to maintain healthy relationships, manage conflict, & the importance of self-disclosure to relationships.	Students will demonstrate knowledge of communicating effectively in small groups by studying group roles, norms, decision making, and leadership.	Students will demonstrate informative and persuasive speaking skills by delivering a well-organized, clearly supported, effective public presentation.
	Demonstrate competency in small group communication.				X	
	Demonstrate understanding of critical and literal listening		X			
	Recognize discrepancies between the speaker's verbal and non-verbal messages		X			
	Demonstrate competency in public speaking					X

	Demonstrate competency in interpersonal communication	X		X		
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**Table 6.** Correlation between Course Objectives of COMM 201 & Liberal Studies Outcomes C3 categories as outlined in the Liberal Studies Document approved 27 January 2016. (Spring 2016 Syllabi - 9 Syllabi Submitted).

V. STRENGTHENING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT LEARNING AND FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL DELIVERY

A. REFLECTION ON CHANGES SINCE 2007 CATEGORY C3 ASSESSMENT

The previous assessment of Core C3 Liberal Studies Category was completed in 2007, and the [report of the assessment](#) findings can be found among those listed on the Liberal Studies Program Assessment web site.

It is important to note that since the assessment took place 10 years ago there have been technology and leadership changes within the Communication (COMM) 201 program as would be expected in any program over 10 years' time. These changes have had a demonstrated impact on the ability of the program to implement the earlier recommended changes in the 2007 report.

The individual in the program coordinator's position in 2007 left the university fall 2009. Due to the financial collapse of 2008, the university did not fill the vacant position. The position remained vacant until a search to fill the position was approved in the spring of 2013. The replacement program coordinator started in the fall of 2013.

In 2011, the faculty revised the program under the guidance of two faculty members serving in instructor level positions. The class was brought into alignment with National Communication Association standards. In addition to meeting established national standards, a course of study was standardized based on weekly modules. The course included public speaking, group communication, and interpersonal communication. However, lacking a program coordinator, the implementation of standardization among all faculty was not as effective as it could have been. Some faculty members (no longer with the program) resisted the curriculum changes. The problem of standardization was recognized and is being addressed.

In 2012 the department changed the course name from Introduction to Speech Communication to Foundations of Communication to more clearly reflect the then "new" NCA based course structure. Even though the course name and content changed, the assessment methods within the course continued to

focus on public speaking. Without a program coordinator in place and the faculty consistently working overloads, the assessment was out of sync with the revised and updated curriculum.

Although a program coordinator was in place from Fall 2013 to Fall 2016, as of Spring 2017, this position is once again vacant. With guidance from senior department faculty, the COMM 201 faculty is presently undertaking a curriculum update and addressing the assessment issues. The faculty is seeking the guidance of Steve Wallace, the Director of Assessment, to develop an effective and comprehensive assessment plan. The course update has been a yearlong process with plans to launch the updated course and ongoing assessment in the fall 2017 semester. The adoption of a new textbook slowed the process. However, the COMM 201 faculty are confident that the collaborative process involving the entire faculty will result in a program that clearly addresses all of the lingering issues they have identified with regard to curriculum and assessment.

The recommendations from the 2007 Report on C3 Oral Communication Course Assessment, the actions taken in response to these recommendations, and the associated outcomes are summarized in Table 7, presented below.

Recommendation from 2007	Actions	Outcome
<p>Establish a standardized number of sections that allocated resources will support. Assuming all open faculty positions are filled, a standard supportable section count is 30 sections each semester.</p>	<p>Historically, the department has been at or slightly over 30 sections per semester with a constant backlog of students waiting to take the class. However, this has been done with an inordinate number of faculty overloads. The situation was cited in the 2012 Communication Program Review: "Additionally, course overloads for contract faculty continues to be an inadequate means to supplement historically low salaries. The consultant report emphasized five years ago (2007) that the department should avoid utilizing overloads as a means to cover unfunded needs. In the long-term, this strategy is detrimental to faculty and students." The National Communication Association class size standard is not to exceed 25</p>	<p>The 2007 goal has been attained; however, with the present record university enrollments and retention of students the original 2007 recommendation is no longer relevant. The goal was attained through a means of low salary contract faculty teaching overloads. The 2012 departmental program review was very clear. "In the long-term, this strategy is detrimental to faculty and students." The issue has again been cited by the faculty in its 2017 program review as a university/department deficiency that requires attention.</p>

	<p>students. Western set the class size at 27 students. Spread over 30 sections, that is 60 extra students or the equivalent of two additional classes for which there are no instructors.</p> <p>Despite two program reviews recommendations, and annual requests for positions to support the C3 Liberal Studies course, the department is still using overloads to meet the university needs.</p> <p>Fall 2016: six faculty taught 32 sections with <u>eight</u> overloads. An adjunct and a tenure-track faculty member taught sections 33 and 34.</p> <p>Spring 2017: five faculty (one retired Dec. 2016) are teaching 28 sections with <u>seven</u> overloads. An adjunct and a tenure-track faculty member are teaching sections 29 and 30.</p> <p>Total: 15 overloads 2016-17. Some faculty members have been teaching as many as 2 overloads a semester.</p> <p>To date, the department's annual requests for more COMM 201 faculty have gone unanswered.</p>	
<p>Develop a reliable pretest/posttest data collection instrument that provides valid data.</p> <p>Areas recommended to assess include: value placed on oral communication, communication apprehension, communication reticence, &amp; willingness to communicate.</p>	<p>While a pre-test and post-test were developed and implemented, that data sat un-analyzed from fall 2009 until fall 2013 due to the lack of a program coordinator. Upon the arrival of the new coordinator in fall 2013 it was determined that the previously developed assessment methods had a number of flaws and were</p>	<p>Initially unsuccessful. Now implemented with a review planned with the University Director of Assessment so that the assessment is in sync with university assessment protocol.</p>

	thus unusable. A new pre and post-test have now been developed and are in use.	
<p>Recommendation for program-wide assessment.</p> <p>Included among those recommendations were focusing on one speech per year, having instructors record and retain copies of student speeches, and have instructors select sample copies of average, below average, and above average work.</p>	<p>As specified by Information Technology Services (ITS), three video cameras and three computers were purchased by the Communication department to record and upload student speeches and were placed in Stillwell 253, 254 and McKee 115.</p> <p>Although installed, the ITS system never functioned through multiple ITS redesigns over a nearly four-year period.</p> <p>With the university adoption of Panopto, one classroom finally had functioning video recording equipment in 2014/2015 and a proper program assessment was then completed in 2015. Working video equipment is now in three classrooms.</p>	<p>Successfully completed once the university adopted a system to record and upload video content to a cloud storage system.</p>
<p>Standardize instructor evaluation methods program-wide</p>	<p>While the curriculum was revised in 2011, there was not a 100 percent buy in from the faculty with regard to student evaluation. As previously stated, through attrition that issue has been resolved.</p> <p>The current COMM 201 faculty is collaborating on a standardized evaluation method for fall 2017.</p>	<p>Initially unsuccessful. Issue recognized and currently being addressed for fall 2017.</p>
<p>Funding should be allocated to procure at least four additional cameras</p>	<p>The larger issue is that it is not reasonable for an individual department to be asked to expend funds to equip a general use classroom into which their classes may not be scheduled.</p> <p>This is presently an issue the</p>	<p>Successfully completed in three classrooms once the university adopted a system to record and upload video content to a cloud storage system.</p>



	department has to deal with every semester.	
Funding should also be provided to purchase DVDr discs	DVR discs were purchased.	With the advent of cloud computing, this type of recording technology is now irrelevant.
<p>Current resources allocated to the program seem to be insufficient to adequately support the program. The new director is responsible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scheduling, in-class instructor evaluations, program management, instructor/student arbitration, AFE reports, cover classes for absent faculty, faculty search committees, program assessment, higher administration duties. There currently is no funding during the summer semester for a director.</li> </ul>	<p>Like many departments on campus, the Communication department has not been allocated a substantial increase in state funds in many years. The department has requested a 20 percent budget increase for the 2017-18 year. Although the department has annually asked for additional COMM 201 instructor/lecturer positions no new positions have been allocated. The department has requested the promotion of two present lecturer positions to instructor and has requested an additional COMM 201 lecturer position for the 2017-18 year. Issue is presently documented in the department's program review scheduled for March, 2017.</p>	<p>University and college budget hearings are in progress.</p>

**B. ASSESSMENT OF C3 ORAL COMMUNICATION CATEGORY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LIBERAL STUDIES DOCUMENT AND OF BROADER UNIVERSITY-LEVEL ASSESSMENTS**

One of the goals of the Liberal Studies Program is to enhance WCU's aspirations for students to attain "the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of an educated person, including the ability to think critically, to communicate effectively, to identify and resolve problems reflectively, and to use information and technology responsibly; an appreciation for the creative and performing arts; and a basis for continued personal development and lifelong learning." As a part of the Core, the C3 category is to provide students with academic skills and intellectual habits needed throughout the undergraduate experience.

Based upon the samples of student work considered in this assessment, as well as the syllabi submitted for the 2015-2016 academic year, the C3 category is challenging WCU's students to speak clearly, coherently, and effectively. What was not clear was whether or not the C3 category is challenging students to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience. This section of the C3 category was poorly defined and confusing which led to the Assessment team struggling to understand and evaluate the COMM 201 program properly in this area.

This Liberal Studies Assessment Team has been charged with assessing how the Liberal Studies Program, with particular focus on the C3 Category, can help to achieve Goal 1.2 and Initiative 1.2.4 of the 2020 Vision. Goal 1.2 provides a mandate for the education experience at WCU: "Fully integrate into the general education program and into each major and minor at both undergraduate and graduate levels an emphasis on those core abilities expected of all WCU students: to integrate information from a variety of contexts; to solve complex problems; **to communicate effectively and responsibly**; to practice civic engagement; and to clarify and act on purpose and values" (p.20). [bold emphasis added]

No one course or sequence of courses in the Liberal Studies Program is expected to encompass and satisfy all of the goals of the program, including the seven comprehensive student learning outcomes, or the core abilities referenced above.

From the Liberal Studies Document (p. 8), "The Oral Communication requirement will address the basic competencies in the contexts of **interpersonal, small group, and public speaking**....Students who complete the Oral Communication requirement will have met the following criteria: a. Demonstrate competency in small group communication. b. Demonstrate understanding of critical and literal listening. c. Recognize discrepancies between the speaker's verbal and non verbal messages. d. Demonstrate competency in public speaking. e. Demonstrate competency in interpersonal communication." [bold emphasis added]

The COMM 201 program does a satisfactory job of teaching students to speak clearly, coherently, and effectively. Most students enrolled in COMM 201 are well on their way to developing the needed skills to meet the Liberal Studies objectives for the C3 category along with the part of Goal 1.2 that was assessed. However, the assessment team did not analyze students' work beyond a persuasive speech in COMM 201. Because of this, the assessment team cannot properly gauge student improvement in C3 components from the start of the course to the end of the course. Also, because there is no analysis beyond the persuasive speech, no evaluation can be made to determine if the C3 component of the Liberal Studies program is being integrated into each major and minor at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

With regards to Initiative 1.2.4, which states that WCU is to "ensure all academic programs incorporate the core abilities detailed in Goal 1.2" (p.20), no evaluation can be made regarding this initiative in this assessment, since the team's work was restricted to consideration of syllabi of COMM 201 and student work from COMM 201 alone.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE C3 ASSESSMENT TEAM

The recommendations of the C3 assessment team are given below in response to the Guiding Principles stated in the charge and based on the results presented above.

### A. Are we delivering what we say we do?

The C3 Oral Communication Program has very much improved since the recommendations of the 2007 Report in terms of standardization of course syllabi and the ability to conduct assessment via video recording and cloud storage of student speeches. That said, there remain several areas in which changes that would facilitate LS goals, student learning, and future assessments.

In particular, syllabi still vary among instructors, and no syllabi contain an explicit statement of the LS C3 Oral Communication Outcomes, although these outcomes are basically expressed in the Course Objectives. This makes it difficult to determine what is being delivered in common across the sections of COMM 201 and to assess whether the desired outcomes are being met. Also, assignment design varies among instructors. This, in turn, influences the student product the committee evaluated. A more standardized assignment should produce a more unified set of student outcomes.

Finally, assessment data are collected by the Communication Department, and if relevant should be part of the Liberal Studies assessment process, so that there is a feedback loop of delivery, learning, and assessment at all levels.

Recommendations:

1. **Include an explicit statement of the Liberal Studies C3 Oral Communication Outcomes on all COMM 201 syllabi.** We also recommend standardization of titles/headings on the syllabi related to the course objectives and learning outcomes on the syllabi to improve clarity of what is being assessed for the benefit of students and the LS Assessment Team.
2. **Provide the course assignment that generated the artifacts to the Assessment Team so that we know what the learning goals and expected outcomes are.** It would also be useful to know at what point in the semester the assignment took place, and whether the instructor's expectations were for novice, intermediate, or advanced skills in order to gauge the students' learning achievements.
3. **Provide the pre- and post-test assessments conducted by the Communication Department to the LS assessment team.** It would be helpful to know whether the department is measuring the same SLOs as the LS committee.

### B. Are students learning what we want them to?

As stated in the Qualitative Analysis section above, WCU's students in COMM 201, on average, demonstrate proficiency in oral communication skills, as viewed through the lens of the student learning outcomes of the Liberal Studies Program. However, to provide better evidence that improvement in student's oral communication skills during the semester arises from the course, there should be one set of student product from the beginning of the semester and another set at the end. Furthermore, there

is a disconnect between the current assessment rubric and the C3 Oral Communication Learning Outcomes, and the current assessment rubric is dissatisfactory in other ways.

Recommendations:

1. **Change the assessment rubric and artifacts so that all three elements of the C3 learning outcomes are assessed.** The assessment rubric only assesses public speaking, which is just one of the three main elements of the COMM 201 course, as seen on the syllabi and as outlined in the LS Document (p. 8).
2. **Provide alternative artifacts in other formats so that the other two competencies (interpersonal communication and small group communication) can be assessed and so sample sizes can be increased.** Student videos gauge only one aspect of the Oral Communication competencies (public speaking) and result in a relatively small sample size due to the length of the videos (up to 11 minutes) and time to score.
3. **Remove competency (d) “to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience” from the rubric, unless it is relevant to the artifacts given.** This competency is irrelevant to the video artifacts.
4. **Reword the vague and nonparallel descriptions on the rubric of what it means to “demonstrate the ability to speak effectively” at each competency level – emerging through exemplary – to clarify scorer confusion about the meaning of this competency.** The reliability scores of the quantitative analysis (Table 2), a measure of disagreement between scorers for each competency on the rubric indicate that competency c. was the least reliable (score of 65%, with 70% considered to be the minimum acceptable score per the Director of Assessment).
5. **Provide artifacts comprising paired videos or other assignments from early and later in the semester, so that the reviewers may better assess student learning arising from the course.**

C. **What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?**

Recommendations:

1. **COMM 201 course objectives should integrate the Liberal Studies SLOs so that any assessment data collected by the department can also be used by the LS assessment team.**
2. **COMM 201 instructors should be given the LS rubric and a chance to provide feedback so that the actual course objectives can be used to improve the rubric.**
3. **The university should provide necessary resources to enable the Program Director to lead these charges (e.g., summer salary), as well as resources for adequate faculty coverage of COMM 201.** Discontinuity in the Communication Department C3 Program leadership has hampered the department’s ability to implement previously recommended changes to the program.

D. **Recommendations for Improvement of Assessment Processes in General**

In general, the norming and scoring processes worked well. We recommend continued use of Blackboard, Panopto and Qualtrics for content delivery and scoring. We recommend adding a Discussion Board to the Blackboard shell for members of the assessment team to use, as well as a place to upload and share working drafts of the report, as opposed to using email and Dropbox for these purposes. This will streamline the assessment processes.

The Director of Assessment was very helpful throughout the process, but may have been overwhelmed by his multifaceted work responsibilities in terms of his ability to generate the quantitative analyses on the timeline desired by the Liberal Studies committee. We recommend additional resources be provided to the Assessment Director to assist him in completion of the LS assessment tasks.

**APPENDIX A: LIBERAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT RUBRIC USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT**

<b>3c</b>				
<b>Demonstrate the ability to speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience</b>				
<b>No Score</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Achieving</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
A score of X designates irrelevancy of the category to the assignment, or folders and/or content cannot be viewed or assessed.	Student demonstrates inability to speak clearly, coherently, and effectively and, therefore, does not communicate effectively to an appropriate audience.	Student demonstrates some ability to speak clearly, coherently, and/or effectively, but inability on one or two of the skills causes the student not to communicate effectively to an appropriate audience.	Student demonstrates the ability to speak clearly, coherently, and effectively and, therefore, communicates effectively to an appropriate audience.	Student demonstrates a refined ability to speak clearly, coherently, and effectively and, therefore communicates effectively to a particularly appropriate audience in clear, thoughtful, and precise ways that exceed expectations.
<b>X</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>