Assessment of General Education

Segment I: Basic Subjects

College of Humanities
San Francisco State University

Spring 2004
# Table of Contents

**Assessment of General Education**  
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Basic Subjects Assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Philosophy 110, Spring 2000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE Segment I, Philosophy 110, August 2002</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Oral Communication, June 1999</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Report in SPCH 150, June 2000</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE Segment I, Speech 150, June 2002</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Activities for English 214, June 2000</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of English 214, June 2002</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Results for English 210 and English 310</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of English 310, Spring 2000</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of English 310, June 2002</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Pilot Project, June 1998</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing Communication Skills in Graduating Seniors, June 1999</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Basic Subjects
Assessment in the College of Humanities

The College of Humanities at San Francisco State University has engaged in several assessment projects regarding three areas of study required in General Education: Segment I: critical thinking, oral communication, and written communication. Below summaries of those projects are provided, followed by the original assessment reports.

Critical Thinking

In 2000, individual instructors in Philosophy utilized different assessment methods to determine if students were capable of

1. Recognizing, articulating, and questioning assumptions and presuppositions underlying discourse, including one's own.
2. Acquiring basic skills necessary for logical analysis and critical assessment of reasoning.
3. Reaching conclusions based on cogent inferences.
4. Identifying formal and informal fallacies of language and thought.
5. Employing critical thinking abilities in well-organized critical writing.
6. Recognizing and contextualizing an argument (e.g., theoretical, practical, productive, historical, political, interpersonal, etc.).
7. Distinguishing arguments from other forms of discourse, and premises from conclusions.
8. Distinguishing between deductive and non-deductive forms of reasoning with appropriate applications.
9. Understanding formal and informal fallacies in reasoning or in the way language is used.
10. Using language critically and precisely.
11. Choosing appropriate criteria for assessing the cogency of reasoning with some understanding of debates about these criteria.
12. Stating reasons for doubting, believing, or suspending judgment on premises in the context of reasoned dialogue.
13. Specifying research needed for inquiry into the truth or falsity of a premise.
14. Discovering "hidden" or unstated premises and making clear the lines of reasoning in complex or elliptical arguments.
15. Identifying suppressed and overlooked evidence.
16. Formulating alternative arguments for or against a conclusion.
17. Determining whether an argument should be improved, saved, or abandoned in light of criticism.
18. Writing reasoned discourse that provides a detailed critique of a complex argument.
These eighteen learning outcomes were measured using examinations, survey data, evaluations of essays, and comparisons of entry and exit skills (see specific reports for more details). Across the various methods, faculty concluded that students acquired the above skills, on average, at about the B- level. Faculty were concerned that the language skills of both native and nonnative students interfered with students’ ability to achieve the specified learning outcomes for critical thinking.

In Fall 2001, a committee of three faculty members who regularly teach PHIL 110 met to design an in-class assignment to measure two of the critical thinking learning outcomes: (1) distinguishing arguments from other forms of discourse, and premises from conclusions and (2) identifying suppressed and overlooked evidence. One hundred and four students read a short editorial and answered a series of questions designed to require these two skills. These answers were evaluated against an agreed-upon rubric. In general, students were reasonably adept at identifying the main conclusion of the argument. Students were less sure-footed in tracing the support structure of the argument, with some having difficulty identifying even the simple inferences. Students seem to understand the concept of implied premises, but the ability to distinguish trivial from critical assumptions varied from student to student. Students were generally successful in their attempts to distinguish exposition from argument. Few students attempted to subdivide the functions into topics, questions, or problem statements and to proposed answers or thesis statements.

Two pilot projects were conducted evaluating the critical thinking skills of seniors as demonstrated in work related to their majors (see individual reports). In both of these assessment projects, the researchers noted that the following qualities were often absent from the writing and speaking of seniors: “accurately draws upon a range of credible evidence” and “provides a critical analysis or application of theory.” The authors of these studies concluded that “This failure to show competence in information gathering and analysis occurred across the disciplines, suggesting to us [writing and speaking faculty] and to the subject matter faculty that students may need more guided opportunities to develop such competencies in their major coursework” (Chaney & Swanson, 1999, p. 7)

The assessments suggest that PHIL 110 is meeting the General Education, critical thinking, objectives overall. We offer the following summary recommendations:

1. Students should receive additional instruction on what constitutes credible evidence, how to locate it, and how to integrate it effectively in the development of their own arguments.

2. Students should receive additional practice in conducting critical analyses with particular attention to assessing the support structures of arguments.
Oral Communication

At San Francisco State University, students take SPCH 150: Fundamentals in the Oral Communication to fulfill the general education oral communication requirement. Upon completing this course, we expect students to be capable of

1. Demonstrating awareness of the complexity of communication in terms of its psychological, social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions.
2. Demonstrating knowledge about verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural).
3. Reducing their own speech anxiety and projecting greater confidence as a speaker.
4. Listening actively and providing constructive feedback.
5. Considering an audience's knowledge, background and attitudes when constructing a message.
6. Recognizing and articulating issues from one's own perspective, while acknowledging the perspectives of others.
7. Locating, evaluating and reporting information in support of a point of view.
8. Assessing claims or arguments as a speaker and listener.
9. Organizing, constructing, and delivering prepared and spontaneous presentations.
10. Demonstrating effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.

Our assessment of these learning objectives took place across three different academic years and involved more than 1,500 students and multiple assessment tools: pre-post tests of communication apprehension, pre-post tests of communication competence, survey data from students and faculty, comparisons of first and last speeches, faculty assessments of final speeches, and expert evaluations of speeches, including inter rater reliability data (see individual reports for details). The results show a consistent decrease in communication apprehension and an increase in communication competence after taking SPCH 150.

On average, 89% of students and 90% of faculty reported that the ten learning objectives specified above were achieved. Particularly high marks were given to the acquisition of knowledge about verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural); reducing speech anxiety and projecting greater confidence as a speaker; and organizing, constructing, and delivering prepared and spontaneous presentations. Although still positive, students and faculty reported lower ratings for the achievement of assessing arguments and providing support for a point of view. Interestingly, in two studies of SFSU graduating seniors, faculty found that credible evidence and critical analyses were often absent in the speaking and writing of students assessed in those studies (Chaney, Mutti, & Swanson, 1998; Chaney & Swanson, 1999).

Final speeches were rated by faculty as especially strong in topic selection and organization, and in need of greater attention to reasoning clearly, citing sources, and
using transitions. In a comparison of first speeches to last speeches, students showed improvement in 21 out of 24 criteria. Greatest gains were found in such areas as reinforcing a central idea, previewing organizational patterns for the speech, and providing an effective summary. The least improvement was found in using credible evidence and the effective use of visual aids.

Teachers tended to rate apprehension lower than students and expert coders. Students felt more confident in their ability to deliver effective prepared speeches than spontaneous ones. Students and faculty evaluated the visual aspects of delivery (i.e., eye contact, facial expressions, gestures and movement) as stronger than the vocal aspects (i.e., volume, rate, tonal variety, and pausing) or the word choices.

In 2000, the oral communication objectives were also assessed in the English as a Second Language (ESL) equivalent of SPCH 150, ENG 210: English as a Second Language: Oral Communication. In this assessment, first and last speeches were compared and students indicated whether the objectives had been achieved. Approximately 90 students and 4 teachers participated in this assessment. Teachers rated first and last speeches on a five-point scale where a score of 1 equaled "needs substantial improvement" and 5 represented "very good." Students’ first speeches received evaluations from 2-4, while students final speeches were evaluated in the 4-5 categories. Students either strongly agreed or agreed that all 10 of the learning objectives were being achieved in ENG 210.

The results of our assessments lead us to conclude that SPCH 150 and ENG 210 are meeting our general education learning outcomes very well. The following recommendations are offered as suggestions for how to further strengthen our fine program:

1. Faculty should be aware that they tend to view students’ apprehension as lower than students and experts do. They may need to be more attentive to students’ needs in this area.

2. Faculty should consider adding material to their classes that will strengthen students’ confidence in their spontaneous speaking abilities.

3. Additional attention should be given increasing students’ skills in using credible evidence, citing sources, supporting points of view, using visual aids effectively, and vocal delivery.

Written Communication

At San Francisco State University, students take ENG 214: Second-Year Composition, or ENG 310: English as a Second Language: Composition 2, to fulfill the General Education Written Communication requirement. Upon completing this requirement, we expect students to be capable of
1. Understanding discipline-specific texts (in this case, literary texts) thoroughly and using them as a basis for their writing assignments.
2. Formulating a thesis based on their readings.
3. Substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts, and through personal insights.
4. Distinguishing between adequate and inadequate substantiation of a thesis or topic, both of the essay and the paragraph levels.
5. Writing essays and paragraphs that are well focused and relevant to the subject identified in their theses and topics.
6. Demonstrating knowledge of the principles of coordination and subordination and of the ability to develop ideas at the level of the sentence, rather than by the mere accretion of sentences.
7. Writing compositions that are mainly free of significant errors in usage, writing mechanics and spelling.

In Spring of 2000, we assessed 632 students in 33 sections of ENG 214 by giving a two-hour, in-class writing assignment. Instructors scored each essay on each of the seven objectives, gave the essay a summary grade, reported the student’s grade for the semester, and completed a survey about the assessment process.

On a scale of 1 (well done) to 4 (poorly done), the mean score was 2 or lower on each of the seven objectives, with text use the highest (1.73) and development the lowest (2.03), suggesting that overall ENG 214 is accomplishing the G.E. prescribed objectives. We also determined that there was no significant difference (p = .005) between the grade students received on the final essay and the grade they achieved for ENG 214, which suggests that the in-class final was a valid measure of students’ achievement in the class.

Of equal interest were the instructors’ responses to the survey on the assessment process. Although they felt that in general the G.E. outcomes reflected their own goals for the course, many suggested a rewriting of the objectives to eliminate a certain amount of overlap. For the future, they requested a 5-point rather than 4-point scoring guide, and several felt a norming session would have been helpful. The instructors responded positively to the question of whether students did as well as they expected on the essay: 74% said “as well as expected,” 26% said “better than expected,” and no one’s students did worse than they expected.

A number of instructors requested that the final essays be graded at a group holistic reading; however, without appropriate compensation, this would place an extra burden on instructors. They also raised the question of whether a one-shot in-class essay really measures what their students learned, although the strong connection between their essay grade and final class grade suggests that the in-class essay is a valid measure.
Although a pre-/post-test design would yield the most information, without appropriate support we would be adding yet another task to already overburdened composition instructors' “to do” lists.

In Spring 2002, we assessed 100 students across five sections of ENG 214 on two of the GE criteria: 3) substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts, and through personal insights, and 4) distinguishing between adequate and inadequate substantiation of a thesis or topic, both of the essay and the paragraph levels. Late in the semester, students wrote on a topic designed to ask them to quote from text in order to support their thesis. The five instructors met and evaluated the essays, with each essay read twice. On the whole, the large majority of students achieved a score of “adequate,” “successful,” or “very successful.” But 20% of students could have been more successful in meeting the objectives. Results were shared with ENG 214 teachers.

In Spring 2000, 25% of students in ENG 310 were assessed for their ability to meet the GE objectives for Written Communication, by having them write an essay in response to one of two readings. Essays were scored with a common rubric.

While instructors experienced some difficulty in using the learning objectives as scoring criteria, on average, the students performed adequately or better in all the skills covered in the objectives. Students scored highest on using the text as a basis for the writing (1.61), and lowest on providing evidence to support their thesis (2.04), and received an average summary grade of “B” on their in-class essays.

In Spring 2002, ENG 310 instructors focused on assessing objectives 1 and 2, which were further broken down into nine learner outcomes. Students wrote two essays, early and late in the semester; in addition, students completed a self-assessment. All students in 310 completed the essays as part of their course work, but the essays of 10 students from four sections were randomly chosen for analysis as part of the assessment.

Overall, students made significant improvement “using discipline-specific texts as a basis for their writing,” and in “substantiating their thesis through appropriate references,” but they did not make much improvement in understanding the texts themselves. Generally, students assessed themselves as being at a higher level of achievement than their teachers did.

The assessments suggest that ENG 214 and 310 are meeting the General Education objectives overall. We offer the following summary recommendations:

1. A pre-post design with a group holistic reading at the end of the semester will yield the most useful information; however, such an ambitious plan requires coordination, planning, and resources in order to be effective.
2. The findings of the two ENG 310 assessments with respect to students' ability to understand the text appear to be somewhat contradictory; an analysis across the two studies might shed some light on the sources of difference.

3. An interesting conversational exchange could occur among faculty teaching 214 and 310 regarding teaching students to support and develop of ideas in their writing.

Conclusion

The assessment activities indicate that across various measures we are achieving the learning outcomes specified for critical thinking, oral communication, and written communication. We also note with interest that across all three subjects, faculty are concerned about students' ability to use evidence and support to develop their ideas. Given this concern, we might productively bring faculty from Speech, English, and Philosophy together to discuss ways to reinforce the instruction students receive in all three G.E. classes.

While we believe in the value of assessment as a means to improve our teaching, we find it difficult to undertake worthwhile projects without regular support in the form of assigned time for faculty heading up such projects and money to pay readers, evaluators, camera operators, and so on. Department chairs and coordinators are understandably reluctant to add the design and execution of assessment studies to an already heavy workload, and they have a great deal of difficulty convincing faculty to devote their time, in and out of class, to participate in such studies without adequate compensation.
Assessment of Philosophy 110: Introduction to Critical Thinking
By Anatole Anton, Chair, Philosophy

PROCESS:

The Department of Philosophy regularly offers at least twenty Introduction to Critical Thinking (Philosophy 110) classes every semester. Since Introduction to Critical Thinking is a graduation requirement for all undergraduate students at San Francisco State University, it is a course that has become something of a departmental preoccupation. "How best to teach it? How best to staff it?" are perennial questions among members of the Department of Philosophy. The rival answers to these questions have been the subject of a number of lively department meetings as well as having spawned countless informal discussions and debates. Our Certificate Program in Critical Thinking has likewise contributed to the intensity of these debates, since that program is expressly concerned with developing teachers of critical thinking in a variety of different contexts.

Given this background of intense, long standing discussion and debate about the nature of critical thinking, it would have been unrealistic to expect the department as a whole or even that subclass of the department who regularly teach critical thinking to come to an easy consensus about how best to evaluate our success as a department in attaining the goals or learning objectives in place for this university wide requirement. Since there are a wide range of contemporary pedagogical approaches to critical thinking current among textbook publishers and those who write in journals on this topic, wisdom and prudence dictated, rather, that we use the imperative for assessing the success of our teaching of critical thinking as an opportunity to learn from our differences and to try to narrow and clarify those differences in a sustained dialogue devoted to critical thinking assessment.

Accordingly, we devoted two meetings of the critical thinking teaching staff, including our three GTAs, to a discussion of how we, as a department, would take up the task of assessment in that subject. At the first such meeting, we decided to share with one another our distinctive approaches to the question of how to assess the results of Philosophy 110. We each described our course outlines and our approach to realizing the thirteen learning objectives for critical thinking as a General Education requirement. We also explored the many different ways in which we each might try to assess the subject. Although the meeting never even came close to finding a consensus, we did learn from one another in significant ways, and we did agree to meet for a second time to describe, in a more developed way, exactly how we proposed to assess the success of our respective Philosophy 110 sections, to submit our plans for assessment to the critical scrutiny of our colleagues and to take full advantage of the cross fertilization that inevitably occurs in any serious, practical discussion among teachers about teaching methods.
The purpose of this report is to describe the results of the different assessment reports developed for each of the different sections of Philosophy 110 that we taught. We want to give equal attention to both the convergences and divergences among these different reports. When reports written by so many different hands and offering an assessment in so many different ways actually converge in their description and evaluation of outcomes, then the entire complex of reports has considerably more weight than any one or two of these reports taken in isolation. The divergences among these reports are also valuable, if in another way. To the extent that the outcomes described in different classes are different, then it forces more careful attention to the source of these divergences and hence a deeper understanding of the definition of our goals or learning objectives in teaching critical thinking. Are the divergences in outcome an artifact of different assessment procedures or do they reflect genuine differences among the students in different classes? Alternatively, are they the result of different teaching techniques that are especially effective in the attainment of one or more of the learning objectives? If so, then typical members of our critical thinking staff have much to learn from one another and a period of healthy experimentation will have been ushered into being in the teaching and evaluation of Philosophy 110. Moreover, the goals of the course as described in the learning objectives will be able to be formulated in a way that is more clear and precise while, equally important, individual instructors will learn from one another about different ways to improve their teaching of Philosophy 110. In fact, as we shall see below, there are both significant convergences and divergences evident in the various reports.

The Reports Themselves:

Since a number of our critical thinking teachers taught multiple sections of critical thinking, I have included reports from ten different instructors that cover virtually all of the twenty section of Philosophy 110 that we offered in the Spring, 2000. Some instructors having multiple sections of Philosophy 110 have written different, if similar, reports for each individual section, while some have chosen to cover their multiple sections in one comprehensive report. Moreover, some of the reports are comprehensive, addressing each of the thirteen learning objectives separately (Mutti, Anton, Heise, Bridges, Brown); some are selective, reporting results for most but all of the thirteen learning objectives (Royse, Heinlein, Robertson), and some of the reports treat sets of learning objectives together while testing for all thirteen objectives (Assali, Kay). Along a different axis, six instructors propose quantitative measures of success in meeting learning objectives (Mutti, Anton, Robertson, Royse, Assali, Kay) while the remaining four instructors (Heinlein, Brown, Bridges, Heise) employ carefully crafted qualitative descriptions of learning outcomes with respect to the learning objectives. Most of the reports exclusively addressed measures of student skill levels upon completion of the course (Anton, Mutti, Robertson, Royse, Heinlein, Brown, Bridges, Heise) but some of the reports also sought to measure the progress in the attainment of skills as a result of having taken the course by comparing pre-course and post-course skill levels with respect to the learning objectives (Kay, Assali). Finally, one instructor (Assali) measured student perceptions of the success of their
course in the attainment of learning objectives as well as more objective measures of
the attainment of the requisite critical thinking skills themselves.

Convergences Among the Reports:

One advantage of the use of many different methods of evaluation is that convergent
results from these different measures are thereby rendered more probable. Thus, the
Philosophy Department can only be pleased that, without exception, these many
different measures of success in critical thinking resulted in the conclusion that our
classes had attained a high level of success at meeting the learning objectives of the
course. Though this success is described in a number of different ways, the
convergence of each of these different reports to the same result is both telling and
reassuring. The pattern which emerges is that, give or take a little bit, if we were to
grade ourselves on the extent to which students mastered the thirteen learning
objectives, we would give our collective self a grade of about “B-”. Given that this is
an average for a great number of students in a required GE course, the result is
impressive. In order to bring out the convergences among these different reports, I
will survey these results alphabetically by author of each of the reports. Since this
order is arbitrary, it makes the convergence of results in our assessment, for being
unforced, all the more significant.

1. Anton: “For the sake of getting numerical results which were easy to work with I
adopted a simple system of grading. Students were given a “1” for each question
for which their answers were wholly correct; students were given a “1/2” for each
question for which their answers were partially correct; and, finally, students were
given a “0” for each question for which their answers were entirely wrong. Since
the examination consisted of thirteen questions, a grade of thirteen would count as
a perfect score. Letter grades were associated with number grades by the
following scheme: ... As it turned out, the average grade on this examination was
slightly higher than a “B” which, I interpret to indicate general success at meeting
learning objectives.”

2. Assali: “Student in both sections were asked to fill out the questionnaire attached
in the results found in (A4) [Student Course Assessment Questionnaire]. This
questionnaire is substantively the same as the one distributed by the Segment I
Committee in its previous assessment of course conformance to the CT guidelines.
The questions are specifically directed to the G1-G13 guidelines. The student
responses in Questions 15-37 indicated that most students believed they were
learning the CT skills listed in the guidelines.” As far as objectively measurable
outcomes of student achievement, Professor Assali’s basic conclusion is also
guardedly favorable. “The 4 inclass exams are all 50 questions, 55 minute exams.
The first of these exams was used as the pretest for this assessment (A6) [Logical
Reasoning Self-Assessment Test] and the last was used as the post-test (A7)
(Inclass Examination 3]. The tests are slightly simpler versions of what you will
find in GRE or LSAT logical reasoning exams. They provide a rough assessment of
how well a student is able to utilize the skills associated with guidelines G1-
G10. As seen in A5 [Pre/Post Test Results], this semester the average for both
sections on the pretest was 21/50 (42%) and the average on the post test was 34/50 (68%).” Though Professor Assali goes on to note that this past Spring’s results were somewhat weaker than in previous semesters, it is still noteworthy that, on average, his classes displayed an impressive mastery of the skills described by the learning objectives.

3. Bridges: “Overall I was very happy with how the class went. Students would bring me things from the paper or ask me questions on current events from race and discrimination to Dr. Laura. Most of my students began to understand what it takes to think about things critically and not just voice an uneducated opinion. One assignment was to just ask questions about a position someone holds, for instance anti-abortion. The idea was to show that within peoples’ opinions are inconsistencies and vague definitions. Once they had the information, we went over the ideas in class and discussed how one would argue against that position. Many, at first, had a hard time with this because they agreed with the position so they weren’t critical, or they wanted to argue against the position. I taught them to first know what the other person is talking about so they would understand how to find the inconsistencies within positions, even their own.” In an attachment to his report, Mr. Bridges notes that “the average final grade [in the class] is a B-.”

4. Brown: “Most of the objectives set forth by the Critical thinking guidelines...were met or introduced to a significant degree in the course.”

5. Heise: “Along with developing a logical sense that can quite reliably judge relevance of premises to conclusion (#11 above [i.e. learning objective #11]), virtually all students show the greatest improvement in writing reasoned discourse supporting a view of their own or critiquing another thinker’s complex argument.”

6. Heinlein: “From where the class came from, confused thinking, poor writing, and no real training in critical thinking, it is my opinion that they came very far in a short period of time and were very successful in making great strides toward being able to reach the critical thinking standards...”

7. Kay: “the post-course comparison uses the final argument-synopsis assignment, which is assessed by two criteria: Did the student present the argument accurately, or were there fatal gaps? And what is the level of composition for purposes of this assignment. The results of that assessment are also expressed in percentages: (1) What percent met the first criteria, and (2) what percent displayed a comfortable level of English composition.

Section 01
- Pre-course: (1) 43% and (2) 57%
- Post-course: (1) 56% and (2) 61%

Section 04
- Pre-course: (1) 26% and (2) 26%
- Post-course: (1) 33% and (2) 29%

Section 08
- Pre-course: (1) 40% and (2) 60%
- Post-course: (1) 39% and (2) 78%”

8. Mutti: Although Professor Mutti’s assessments were confined to an assessment of each of the 13 learning objectives taken individually, I will quote one of his typical
assessments for one of the key skills involved in critical thinking for one of his sections.

“Skill 7: Stating reasons for doubting, believing or suspending judgement about premises.

- Minimal score for this skill: 40%
- Average score for all sections: 85%
- Average score for this section: 85%

Conclusions: the emphasis here is on being able to tell which issues are relevant in discussing a given topic. There are two sides to the Skill, one more technical and one more intuitive. I have moderate success in teaching the more technical side of the Skill. Teaching the more intuitive side is pretty much a matter of pointing in the right direction and getting out of the way, and the success here is entirely satisfactory.”

9. Robertson: Like Professor Mutti’s assessments, Professor Robertson assessed student’s attainment of the learning objectives on a skill by skill basis. I have selected her assessment of one crucial skill.

“Writing reasoned discourse that provides a detailed critique of a complex argument.

Each student in the class was required to critique the argument of another student.

- Number of students above 90%: 14
- Number of students between 80% and 89%: 13
- Number of students between 60% and 69%: 0
- Number of students between 60% and 69%: 0
- Number of students below 60%: 0”

10. Royse: “On the third exam, problems #2 through #9 tested the students’ ability to identify various fallacies, and to provide some discussion of the weaknesses (or strengths) of inferences. Of the 27 students taking the third exam, 4 got all 8 answers perfectly. The overall average on these problems was 44.37, which for 64 possible points is equivalent to 69%. Here again the overall average was impacted by a few students: 7 students missed half or more of the possible points. Most of the students clearly made progress towards this aspect of argument evaluation.”

Divergences Among the Reports:

The most significant divergence among these reports concerns learning objective #13: “Writing reasoned discourse that provides a detailed critique of a complex argument.” Some instructors de-emphasize this learning objective for reasons of fairness and also of doing justice to the entire set of learning objectives. Thus, for example, Professor Royse notes in his reports that: “…I [Royse] emphasize some of these [learning objectives] more than others. Partly this is due simply to constraints on how much material can be covered in one semester, but it is also due to the fact that many of our students are sadly lacking in basic linguistic skills. (This is true of some foreign students, but true of quite a few non-foreign students as well.)”

Some instructors refer to the difficulty of evaluating success in the attainment of this learning objective. Thus, for example, Professor Assal notes both time limitations
and the difficulty of finding an adequate instrument for this sort of evaluation. “There
was no readily available and inexpensive way to provide a pre/post assessment of
improvement in writing skills as shown by student essays. My opinion is that most
students learned a great deal about doing research, organizing their thoughts and
materials, and criticizing a reasoned position in a detailed and rigorous essay. But
they need to learn a lot more than what can be provided in a one semester course in
critical thinking. These skills should be more pronouncedly promoted and taught
throughout the curriculum.” Similarly, Professor Mutti recognizes the difficulty of
getting firm results for this important learning objective. “…all I am doing here is
showing the percentage of students who improved their written assignment score from
their first draft to their second. The nature and degree of improvement is not being
given. I don’t consider this data to be highly significant, but it’s the best I could do
under the circumstances.”

In sharp contrast to these findings, Professor Heise reports a good measure of success
in realizing learning objective #13. “Along with developing a logical sense that can
quite reliably judge relevance of premises to conclusion (#11 above), virtually all
students show the greatest improvement in writing reasoned discourse supporting a
view of their own or critiquing another thinker’s complex argument.” Similarly, as
mentioned above, Professor Robertson reported a very high success rate for learning
objective #13. She measured this objective by having each student in the class critique
the argument of another student and found that 27 of 29 students scored 80% or higher
on this exercise. Finally, Professor Anton reports a reasonable success rate in the
attainment of this learning objective with a score that is about in the middle of his
highest and lowest rate of success for learning objectives.

The only clear conclusion that I can draw from the reported divergence among
different reports for the attainment of learning objective #13 is that the department
should devote time in the coming semester to review what is at stake in this reported
divergence of results. Careful attention to this crucially important learning objective is
now in order.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES ASSESSED | ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES | SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RE: STUDENT LEARNING | USE OF FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT
--- | --- | --- | ---
1. Objective 2: Distinguishing arguments from other forms of discourse, and premises from conclusions | In Fall 2001, a committee of three faculty who regularly teach PHIL 110 met to design an in-class assessment of these two objectives. A task was designed that asked students to read a short editorial and answer a series of questions (editorial and questions attached). The participants tentatively agreed on acceptable answers to the questions (scoring rubric). In Spring 2002, the task was administered in five sections of PHIL 110 (22% of sections being offered); a total of 104 students completed the task. The instructors met, traded a subset of 15 randomly selected exams, graded them, and discussed the results, in order to finalize the scoring rubric. They then scored all the exams, using the guidelines agreed upon in the initial grading process. | 62% of students completing the assessment received a score of 80 or higher (highest possible score = 100). 34% of students scored in the 40-60 range. 4% of students received a score of less than 25. Mean score: 72.2 | Results of the assessment will be discussed at a department meeting, with particular attention to how we can assist the lower-scoring group in gaining greater mastery over the material. Initial testing suggests that such an exercise will provide a means of measuring an important component of critical thinking skills, namely, the ability to identify, reconstruct, and analyze relatively complex arguments. If so, then instructors offering courses which meet the critical thinking requirement may use the results of such a test to provide guidance in their selection and presentation of course material. We suggest that if the exercise is used again, it be used in conjunction with a pretest, or with a logical reasoning exam.
critical assumptions varied from student to student.

Students were generally successful in their attempts to distinguish exposition from argument but were satisfied to label the alternate functions as "background." Few students attempted to subdivide the functions into topics, questions, or problem statements and proposed answers or thesis statements.

The distribution of scores across the sections showed a similar pattern, with the majority of students doing well, but a significant number of students scoring less well than instructors would have liked.

One instructor expressed reservations about the grading rubric, believing that the test should be more objective, with "one best answer that is acceptable," and a larger number of questions, so that students will be better able to prove their understanding.

The task itself will now be available for PHIL 110 instructors who wish to make use of it; they will be provided with 1) a copy of the editorial; 2) an analysis of the argument; 3) a corresponding answer key; and 4) description of "minimal," "good," "better," and "best/excellent" answers.
Critical Thinking Assessment Task

This exercise is designed to test your ability to 1) distinguish arguments from other forms of discourse and premises from conclusions, 2) discover "hidden" or unstated premises, and 3) make clear the lines of reasoning in a complex argument. Please read the attached text and answer the following questions. The sentences are numbered to facilitate your references to the text.

An excellent response will:

1) correctly identify the author's main conclusion.
2) correctly identify at least one step in reasoning and properly describe the inference from that sentence to at least one other step in reasoning or to the conclusion.
3) correctly identify at least one part of the text that does not function as part of the argument and say what other purpose it serves.
4) correctly identify one important implicit premise.

(Editorial, "How to Try a Terrorist," attached)

1. What sentence states the author's main conclusion?

2. Identify the steps in reasoning that lead to that conclusion, by indicating which sentences are involved in each step. Make sure to identify intermediate conclusions leading to the main conclusion.

3. Are there parts of the text that are not part of the argument that leads to the author's main conclusion? If so, what purposes do these parts serve?

4. Identify at least one important implicit (unstated) premise used to reach the author's conclusion.
How to Try a Terrorist

The Bush administration is about to release procedural rules for its proposed military tribunals that are much fairer than originally feared (1). Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is considering dropping some of the disturbing provisions contemplated in the White House’s November order, such as the ability of the tribunals to operate largely in secret, and to have a two-thirds majority of presiding officers sentence defendants to death (2). The Pentagon deserves credit for responding to some of the serious concerns of civil libertarians, legal scholars and the military’s own jurists (3). But a better response would be to try suspected terrorists under the normal American criminal justice system (4).

Top Al Qaeda leaders, wherever captured, and others directly implicated in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, should stand trial in a federal courtroom, prosecuted by the people of the United States for the most serious crimes ever committed on American soil (5). No other type of judicial proceeding could offer Americans and the rest of the world as satisfying a verdict, or a more resounding vindication of American justice and freedoms (6).

The administration has rightly decided to try Zacarias Moussaoui, whom it believes to be a member of Al Qaeda who trained to participate in the Sept. 11 attack, in federal court (7). Hundreds of Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters are now in custody in Afghanistan, and some of them may soon be detained at the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba (8). The administration and its coalition partners are deciding who should face criminal charges, and where (9). Possible venues include America’s court system, new U.N.-backed Afghan courts, the home judicial systems of repatriated Arab Qaeda fighters, an ad hoc international tribunal and, of course, the proposed military tribunals (10).

Under the rules being reviewed by Mr. Rumsfeld, the tribunals would mostly operate in public (11). No death sentence could be imposed without the unanimous vote of the presiding officers (12). Guilt would have to be shown beyond a reasonable doubt (13). Some appeals process would be provided (14). Defendants would be presumed innocent and could not be forced to testify (15). They could hire lawyers in addition to the one provided them (16).
Assessment Report for
GE Oral Communication Classes at SFSU
June 30, 1999

Report Written By
Susan B. Shimanoff

Acknowledgements: The author of this report wishes to thank San Francisco State University and Dean Nancy McDermid for financial support of this project; faculty in Speech and Communication Studies for developing, testing, and refining the speech evaluation form; SPCH 150 faculty for collecting and providing data; the students in SPCH 150 for participating in the assessment; Donna Smith for coordinating the data collection process; Autumn Boylan, Heather Kyi, Syndee Nguy, and Jovy Reyes for instrument duplication and distribution; Nancy Hansen and Autumn Boylan for data entry, statistical analysis, and the production of tables; and Geri Merrigan for statistical and computer programming advice.
Executive Summary. Five assessment tools were used to evaluate the achievement of the general education learning objectives for oral communication at San Francisco State University in Speech 150: Fundamentals of Oral Communication. Pre- and post-measures of communication competence and communication apprehension were completed by 351 students. The achievement of the 10 learning objectives were assessed by 698 students and faculty from 29 sections. Faculty used evaluations from the first and last speeches of individual students to make judgments about changes in skill levels across students and about the skill level of students upon the completion of the oral communication requirement. These assessment measures indicated that the learning objectives are being achieved. Students increased their perceived communication competence and reduced their communication apprehension in multiple contexts. Students and faculty reported that the GE learning objectives are being achieved, and faculty rate the public speaking skills of students as being adequate to good. Although all of the measures are positive, they are lowest in areas related to assessing claims and supporting a point of view. Students may benefit from even more instruction in these areas.

I. Purpose and Description of Assessment Project

SPCH 150: Fundamentals of Oral Communication fulfills the general education requirement in oral communication. At the start of this project the General Education Council (GEC) of SFSU had approved 10 learning objectives for the oral communication requirement (a copy of these objectives is in the Appendix). The assessment tools used for this project were designed to measure the fulfillment of these objectives. This report summarizes results of several assessment measures for SPCH 150:

1. pre-post measurements of communication competence by each student
2. pre-post measurements of communication apprehension by each student
3. students’ evaluation of the achievement of general education objectives
4. faculty’s evaluation of the achievement of general education objectives
5. faculty’s evaluation of students’ public speaking skills after taking SPCH 150

Pre- Post Measurements of Communication Competence and Apprehension. Previous research has established the reliability and validity of two paper and pencil
assessment instruments directly relevant to the goals of our GE Oral Communication Requirement. One assesses a person's self-perception of his or her communication competence (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988) and the other is a self-assessment of communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1982). Copies of these questionnaires are included in the Appendix. These instruments are directly related to learning objective #3 and indirectly to all those objectives concerned with communication competence.

Students' Evaluation of General Education Objectives. In Fall 1995, GEC and the Segment I Committee asked students to indicate the degree to which they thought the classes they were taking were meeting GE goals. We followed a similar format in the questionnaire we used during the Spring 1999 semester. The two questionnaires differed in the number and wording of objectives assessed. The Fall 1995 survey represented GEC's and Segment I's best attempts to infer objectives from various documents as none were specified in official policies. The objectives used in the Spring 1999 survey were those formally approved by GEC in Spring 1998. These objectives were officially approved by the Academic Senate at the end of Spring 1999. A copy of the questionnaire asking about these objectives can be found in the Appendix. All ten of the learning objectives were assessed with this instrument. Students were asked to indicate whether their knowledge or skills had increased for each of the 10 objectives as a result of taking Speech 150.

Faculty's Evaluation of General Education Objectives. The same questionnaire that was administered to students was given to faculty members; faculty, however, were asked about their students' achievement of the objectives. A copy of this questionnaire and the letter sent to faculty requesting their assistance with assessment are in the Appendix. All ten of the learning objectives were assessed with this instrument. Faculty were asked to indicate whether students' knowledge or skills had increased for each of the 10 objectives as a result of taking Speech 150.

Faculty Evaluation of Public Speaking Skills. Faculty members provided feedback to students on their first and last speech in SPCH 150 using speech evaluation forms printed on NCR paper so the faculty member could give the student immediate feedback and keep a copy for later analysis. The content of this form was developed by the Department of Speech and Communication Studies after reviewing about 200 pages of evaluation forms. The form had already been pre-tested and refined. Faculty compared their feedback on the first and last speech before completing the survey regarding increases in knowledge or skills described above. Based on their feedback to students on the last speech, faculty members completed a report describing the skills of their students as a group (e.g., content, organization, delivery, comfort). A copy of this reporting form is attached. This assessment instrument was used to assess learning objectives #3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10.
II. Results

Pre- Post Communication Competence. The vast majority of SPCH 150 instructors had students complete the pre-test, but many did not have their students complete the post-test. The data reported here are for all those students who completed both the pre and post test. This included 351 students across 16 sections of the course. This sample constitutes about 33% of the students enrolled and about 45% of the sections. The communication competence scale is a self-report assessment of perceived competence in 7 areas of communication competence: public speaking, communication in meetings, communication in groups, communication in dyads, communication with strangers, communication with acquaintances, and communication with friends. Table 1 lists the statistical comparisons of the results of the pre-post communication competence data for all students completing these instruments. The highest score possible in all of the categories and for the overall score is 100%. The higher the score the more competent the student feels. The mean scores on all measures were compared by paired t-tests. The results showed that students consider themselves to be more competent communicators overall and in each of the seven areas after taking SPCH 150.

Table 1 also reports the average % increase in each of the 7 areas and for the overall measure of communication competence. The average overall increase was 9.26%; the increase for each of the seven areas was as follows: public speaking (11.90%), communication in meetings (10.42%), communication in groups (8.01%), communication in dyads (6.73%), communication with strangers (15.64%), communication with acquaintances (9.52%), and communication with friends (2.62%). These increases seem quite good given students came to the class with 12+ years of educational experience and this change occurred after only one course in oral communication.

Pre- Post Communication Apprehension. The sample for the pre-post communication apprehension measures was the same as the sample for the communication competence measures. The communication apprehension scale is a self-report assessment of perceived anxiety in 4 communication contexts: public speaking, communication in meetings, communication in groups, and dyads. Table 2 lists the statistical comparisons of the results of the pre-post communication competence data for all students completing these instruments. Possible scores range from a low of 24 to a high of 120 for the overall measure of communication apprehension, and from 6 to 30 for specific types of communication apprehension. The higher the score the more anxious the student feels; the lower the score the greater the reduction in anxiety. The mean scores on all measures were compared by paired t-tests. The results showed that students reduced their communication apprehension overall and in each of the four areas after taking SPCH 150.
Table 2 also reports the average reduction in communication apprehension in each of the 4 areas and for the overall measure of communication apprehension. The average overall decrease was -9.54; the decrease for each of the four contexts was as follows: public speaking (-3.30), communication in meetings (-2.31), communication in groups (-2.27), and communication in dyads (-1.7). These decreases were statistically significant which we find pleasing given students came to the class with 12+ years of educational experience and this change occurred after only one course in oral communication.

Students' Evaluation of General Education Objectives. A total of 698 students completed the survey on general education objectives. Table 3 reports the percentage of students who agreed that their knowledge or skills had been improved. These percentages ranged from 87% to 93% for individual objectives with an overall 90% across all objectives. This compares favorably to the 89% of students who agreed objectives were achieved in the 1995 study. In the 1995 study the percentage agreement for the other areas in GE Segment I were as follows: written communication (84%), critical thinking (86%), and quantitative reasoning (74%) (Jacobsen, 1996).

As for specific objectives, students reported the greatest increases in understanding verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (93%), considering the audience's background (91%), demonstrating effective delivery skills (91%), and reducing speech anxiety (91%). The lowest levels of improvement were reported for assessing claims (88%) and in supporting a point of view (87%), although the high percentages in these areas still indicate the vast majority of students experience improvement in these areas as well.

Faculty's Evaluation of General Education Objectives. Instructors for 29 out of the 35 sections offered (83%) completed the survey on general education objectives. Table 3 reports the percentage of faculty who agreed that their students' knowledge or skills improved. These percentages ranged from 83% to 97% for individual objectives with an overall 89% across all objectives.

As for specific objectives, faculty reported the greatest increases in understanding verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (97%), reducing speech anxiety (97%), organizing and delivering speeches (93%), and understanding the complexity of communication (93%). The lowest levels of improvement were reported for assessing claims (83%), supporting a point of view (83%), and listening effectively (83%), although the high percentages in these areas still indicate the vast majority of students experience improvement in these areas as well.

Faculty Evaluation of Public Speaking Skills. Table 4 reports faculty assessments of the public speaking skills of students completing SPCH 150. Faculty were asked to rate their students' skill level using the following scale: 5 (very good), 4 (good), 3 (adequate), 2 (needs some improvement) and 1 (needs substantial improvement). The overall mean was 3.86 which indicates that faculty generally rate students skills as a little below a good rating (4); none of the ratings fell below 3 (adequate). Twenty-one specific
skills were assessed and grouped into 5 categories. The 5 categories were introduction, body, conclusion, delivery, and overall impact. For these 5 categories, faculty rated students most skilled in introductions and least skilled in the body of their speeches. Among the twenty-one skills, faculty rated students as most skilled in selecting a topic (4.59), focusing attention on topic (4.48), providing a thesis (4.14), and organizing their ideas (4.10). They rated students as least skilled in citing sources properly (3.31), using transitions effectively (3.48), summarizing effectively (3.54), and reasoning clearly (3.66).

III. Maintenance of the Project

The assessment activities reported here, although quite fruitful, were very time consuming. Further, a substantial amount of data was lost due to a significant drop in the number of participants from the pre- to post-test measures. When the department discusses the results, faculty will undoubtedly seek ways to simplify the process. The supplies and labor for this project were largely consumables. What can be done in the future will depend in part on the level of institutional support. The data collected through the project reported here will serve as useful base-line data for assessments in the future and the instruments that were developed can be used again.

IV. Budget

The funds were used for supplies (instrument duplication) and for student assistants to enter statistical data and analyze it.

V. Feedback

Each of the assessment measures provided a positive evaluation of the learning taking place in SPCH 150. Students increased their perceived communication competence and reduced their communication apprehension in multiple contexts. Students and faculty report that the GE learning objectives were achieved, and faculty rated the public speaking skills of students as being adequate to good. Given this data, the primary recommendation is that faculty continue to do the things they have been doing to bring about these positive results. This should be our emphasis.

As a secondary area for improvement, we should consider the areas in which positive, and yet lower scores appeared. Both students and faculty rating students' skills in assessing claims and supporting points of view lower than the achievement of other objectives. Further, faculty rated citing sources and reasoning clearly lower than other
public speaking skills. Similarly, in two studies of SFSU graduating seniors, faculty found that credible evidence and critical analyses were often absent in the speaking and writing of students assessed in those studies (Chaney, Mutti, & Swanson, 1998; Chaney & Swanson, 1999). In combination, these data from both beginning students and students about to graduate indicate that students may benefit from additional instruction on constructing and assessing claims, including the use of relevant supporting materials and citations. This instruction would be most effective if it occurred not only in Segment I oral communication classes, but if it was also reinforced across a student’s college experience in multiple classes.

A copy of this report will be given to all faculty members in the Speech and Communication Studies Department and the results will be discussed in a SPCH 150 meeting. In that meeting, we will discuss how to continue the practices that seem especially effective and consider ways in which we might further strengthen students’ skills in critical analysis and the use of relevant supporting materials and citations.

A copy of this report will also be given to General Education Council who may wish to consider whether the skills taught in Segment I Oral Communication classes ought to be reinforced in other GE classes, and if so how.

References


cc	Faculty in Speech and Communication Studies
Thomas La Belle, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Susan Taylor, Dean, Undergraduate Studies
Nancy G. McDermid, Dean, College of Humanities
Jonathon Middlebrook, Chair, General Education Council
Tables
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Communication Competence</th>
<th>Pre Score</th>
<th>Post Score</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>75.16</td>
<td>84.42</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>-13.235</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Speaking</td>
<td>70.47</td>
<td>82.37</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>-12.943</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>69.90</td>
<td>80.32</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>-11.407</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>77.91</td>
<td>85.92</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>-9.428</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dyad</td>
<td>82.35</td>
<td>89.08</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>-9.684</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>57.03</td>
<td>72.67</td>
<td>15.64</td>
<td>-13.756</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>77.13</td>
<td>86.65</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>-10.66</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>91.32</td>
<td>93.94</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>-4.577</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2
Pre-Post Scores for Communication Apprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Communication Apprehension</th>
<th>Pre Score</th>
<th>Post Score</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>68.56</td>
<td>59.02</td>
<td>-9.54</td>
<td>13.987</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Speaking</td>
<td>20.83</td>
<td>17.53</td>
<td>-3.3</td>
<td>13.213</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>17.24</td>
<td>14.93</td>
<td>-2.31</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>15.26</td>
<td>12.99</td>
<td>-2.27</td>
<td>9.903</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dyad</td>
<td>15.21</td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>7.957</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
Speech 150
Evaluation of General Education Objectives
Percentages of Agreement

Did the students increase their knowledge or skills regarding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Faculty %**</th>
<th>Student %**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessing claims or arguments as a speaker and listener.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering an audience's knowledge, background and attitudes when constructing a message.</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening actively and providing constructive feedback.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating, evaluating, and reporting information in support of a point of view.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing, constructing, and delivering prepared and spontaneous presentations.</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing and articulating issues from one's own perspective, while acknowledging the perspectives of others.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing speech anxiety and projecting greater confidence as a speaker.</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The complexity of communication in terms of its psychological, social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural).</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Percentage</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Percentages based on those who Strongly Agreed and/or Agree that the objective had been furthered.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Mean</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of Speech</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body of Speech</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall impact of Speech</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Introduction of Speech
- Focused attention on topic: 4.48
- Connected topic, speaker & audience: 3.76
- Provided thesis or purpose statement: 4.14
- Previewed organization: 3.64

### Body of Speech
- Organized ideas clearly: 4.10
- Used credible evidence & examples to support ideas: 3.86
- Cited sources appropriately: 3.31
- Used effective transitions between ideas: 3.48

### Conclusion
- Provided effective summary: 3.54
- Reinforced central idea: 4.00
- Provided clear closure: 3.83

### Delivery
- Used vivid language: 3.72
- Used effective speaking style (clarity, volume, rate, variety, etc.): 3.95
- Used effective nonverbal styles: 3.88
- Appeared comfortable & confident: 3.97

### Overall Impact of Speech
- Selected topic appropriate for assignment: 4.59
- Demonstrated good audience awareness: 3.97
- Showed thorough research: 3.69
- Demonstrated clear reasoning: 3.66
- Accomplished purpose: 3.86
- Adhered to time limit: 3.66

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*Instructors were asked to evaluate each category based on the following scale: 5= Very Good  4= Good  3= Adequate  2= Needs Some Improvement  1= Needs Substantial Improvement.*
Appendix
Learning Objectives
for
Oral Communication

Courses in oral communication should emphasize the content of speech as well as its form. Students should gain an understanding of how an individual’s background, identity or perceptions influence communication. They should also gain knowledge of the social significance of communication, including how it operates in various situations. Courses should take a rhetorical perspective, emphasizing reasoning and advocacy, organization and accuracy as well as the discovery, critical evaluation and reporting of information. Students should also learn to be effective listeners. Courses should require active participation in oral communication. By the end of this course, students should be capable of:

1. Demonstrating awareness of the complexity of communication in terms of its psychological, social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions.
2. Demonstrating knowledge about verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural).
3. Reducing their own speech anxiety and projecting greater confidence as a speaker.
4. Listening actively and providing constructive feedback.
5. Considering an audience’s knowledge, background and attitudes when constructing a message.
6. Recognizing and articulating issues from one’s own perspective, while acknowledging the perspectives of others.
7. Locating, evaluating and reporting information in support of a point of view.
8. Assessing claims or arguments as a speaker and listener.
9. Organizing, constructing, and delivering prepared and spontaneous presentations.
10. Demonstrating effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.
Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale

Directions: Below are 12 situations in which you might need to communicate. People's abilities to communicate effectively vary a lot and sometimes the same person is more competent to communicate in one situation than in another. Please indicate how competent you believe you are to communicate in each of the situations described below. Indicate in the space provided at the left of each item your estimate of your competence. Presume 0 = completely incompetent and 100 = completely competent.

1. Present a talk to a group of strangers.
2. Talk with an acquaintance.
3. Talk in a large meeting of friends.
4. Talk in a small group of strangers.
5. Talk with a friend.
6. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
7. Talk with a stranger.
8. Present a talk to a group of friends.
9. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
10. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
11. Talk in a small group of friends.
12. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

Speech 150

Section No. _____  Student Identification No. ______  ______  ______  ______

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA - 24)

Directions: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. Please record your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by placing the appropriate number in the blanks to indicate whether you:

(1) strongly agree
(2) agree
(3) are undecided
(4) disagree
(5) strongly disagree

1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
5. Engaging in group discussions with new people makes me tense and nervous.
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
9. I am very calm and relaxed when called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

Speech 150 Student Evaluation of 
the Achievement of Learning Objectives

Speech 150 fulfills SFSU’s general education requirement in oral communication. The General Education Council of SFSU has approved 10 learning objectives for the oral communication requirement. We would like to know the degree to which you feel your Speech 150 has met those objectives for you. These objectives may have been met in lectures, readings, assignments, class discussions or other assignments.

For each of the objectives listed below, please indicate the degree to which you agree your Speech 150 has increased or enhanced your knowledge or skills by filling in the bubble corresponding to your response on the Scantron form according to the following scale:

A. Strongly Agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly Disagree

As a result of taking Speech 150, my knowledge or skills have increased regarding:

1. The complexity of communication in terms of its psychological, social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions.

2. Verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural).

3. Reducing speech anxiety and projecting greater confidence as a speaker.

4. Listening actively and providing constructive feedback.

5. Considering an audience’s knowledge, background and attitudes when constructing a message.

6. Recognizing and articulating issues from my own perspective, while acknowledging the perspectives of others.

7. Locating, evaluating and reporting information in support of a point of view.

8. Assessing claims or arguments as a speaker and listener.

9. Organizing, constructing, and delivering prepared and spontaneous presentations.

10. Demonstrating effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.
April 15, 1999

Dear Speech 150 Instructor,

Thank you for the very significant role you play in the education the Department of Speech and Communication Studies provides. We have asked you to take on the responsibility of helping students acquire or enhance knowledge and skills San Francisco State University considers essential for all students. SFSU would like to know that we are meeting the learning objectives for the General Education Oral Communication Requirement, and that as instructors we are aware of the strengths of our program as well as areas in which we might improve. With those objectives in mind, I am requesting your assistance in several ways:

1. Please have your students complete Scantron forms in response to the questionnaire, “Speech 150 Student Evaluation of the Achievement of Learning Objectives.”

2. Please complete your own Scantron form for each section you taught in response to the questionnaire, “Speech 150 Faculty Evaluation of the Achievement of Learning Objectives.” Because this questionnaire asks you to report whether students have increased or enhanced certain skills, please consult your copy of both the first and last time you evaluated speeches using the Departmental assessment form before completing your Scantron form. Please keep your Scantron sheet separate from those of students.

3. Based on the last set of Departmental Speech 150 Assessment of Oral Presentation forms you completed; please provide an overall description of the public speaking skills of the students on this last speech. Provide a separate evaluation for each Speech 150 section you teach using the form labeled, “Collective Evaluation of Students’ Last Speech.”

4. Please turn in all of the above, as well as your copy of the evaluation forms for individual speeches, to Donna Smith by the time you turn in grades. Please do not put your name or your section number on any of the forms so that the data can remain anonymous. But please do have Donna check-off your section(s) when you turned in materials, so that we won’t keep asking for yours if you have already turned it in.
The responses of all Speech 150 instructors and students will be aggregated in a report given to speech faculty, the Dean of the College of Humanities, the General Education Council, and the University Assessment Office. (These entities may in turn give a copy of the report to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Provost, WASC, or others). The aggregated report will not identify individual faculty members or data from particular sections. In the Department, we will use the collective data to make decisions about what is going well in our program in general and how we would like to strengthen our program further.

I know that your workload is already substantial. Even so, I request that you complete these evaluations as I believe they will strengthen our program and enhance how our program is viewed by the university and others.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Susan B. Shimanoff, Chair

cc Pat Hunt, Director of the Basic Course
Nancy G. McDermid, Dean, College of Humanities
Speech 150 Faculty Evaluation of the Achievement of Learning Objectives

Speech 150 fulfills SFSU’s general education requirement in oral communication. The General Education Council of SFSU has approved 10 learning objectives for the oral communication requirement. For each of the 10 objectives listed below, please indicate the degree to which you agree the students in your Speech 150 increased or enhanced their knowledge or skills by filling in the bubble corresponding to your response on the Scantron form according to the following scale:

A. Strongly Agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly Disagree

The students in my Speech 150 section increased their knowledge or skills regarding:

1. The complexity of communication in terms of its psychological, social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions.

2. Verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural).

3. Reducing speech anxiety and projecting greater confidence as a speaker.

4. Listening actively and providing constructive feedback.

5. Considering an audience’s knowledge, background and attitudes when constructing a message.

6. Recognizing and articulating issues from one’s own perspective, while acknowledging the perspectives of others.

7. Locating, evaluating and reporting information in support of a point of view.

8. Assessing claims or arguments as a speaker and listener.

9. Organizing, constructing, and delivering prepared and spontaneous presentations.

10. Demonstrating effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.
Speech 150: Assessment of Oral Presentations

Speaker___________________ Evaluator__________________

Assessment Scale: Very Good = (+); Adequate = (v); Needs Improvement = (-);
Does not apply for this Assignment = (x)

Written Comments:

I. Introduction of Speech
( ) Focused attention on topic
( ) Connected topic, speaker & audience
( ) Provided thesis or purpose statement
( ) Previewed organization

II. Body of Speech:
( ) Organized ideas clearly
( ) Used credible evidence & examples to support ideas
( ) Cited sources appropriately
( ) Used effective transitions between ideas

III. Conclusion:
( ) Provided effective summary
( ) Reinforced central idea
( ) Provided clear closure

IV. Delivery:
( ) Used vivid language
( ) Used effective speaking style
   (clarity, volume, rate, variety, etc.)
( ) Used effective nonverbal style
   (posture, eye contact, gestures, etc.)
( ) Appeared comfortable & confident

V. Overall Impact of Speech:
( ) Selected topic appropriate for assignment
( ) Demonstrated good audience awareness
( ) Showed thorough research
( ) Demonstrated clear reasoning
( ) Accomplished purpose
( ) Adhered to time limit
Collective Evaluation of Students’ Last Speech

In each of the parentheses below, please place a number that reflects your evaluation of the overall skill level of students in your section of Speech 150 on the last speech in which you used the Department’s evaluation form, using the following scale: 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = adequate, 2 = needs some improvement, 1 = needs substantial improvement, X = did not apply for this assignment. Please write any comments in the open space that you think would be helpful to us in reinforcing successes or strengthening our program.

I. Introduction of Speech
   ( ) Focused attention on topic
   ( ) Connected topic, speaker & audience
   ( ) Provided thesis or purpose statement
   ( ) Previewed organization

II. Body of Speech:
   ( ) Organized ideas clearly
   ( ) Used credible evidence & examples to support ideas
   ( ) Cited sources appropriately
   ( ) Used effective transitions between ideas

III. Conclusion:
   ( ) Provided effective summary
   ( ) Reinforced central idea
   ( ) Provided clear closure

IV. Delivery:
   ( ) Used vivid language
   ( ) Used effective speaking style
   (clarity, volume, rate, variety, etc.)
   ( ) Used effective nonverbal style
   (posture, eye contact, gestures, etc.)
   ( ) Appeared comfortable & confident

V. Overall Impact of Speech:
   ( ) Selected topic appropriate for assignment
   ( ) Demonstrated good audience awareness
   ( ) Showed thorough research
   ( ) Demonstrated clear reasoning
   ( ) Accomplished purpose
   ( ) Adhered to time limit

Written Comments:
ASSESSMENT REPORT IN SPCH-150:
"FUNDAMENTALS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION"

June 30, 2000

Prepared by:
Rudolph E. Busby

PROGRAM

The Department of Speech and Communication Studies completed in the Spring 2000 semester an assessment of the learning objectives in SPCH-150, the basic speech course the Department offers to satisfy the Oral Communication Requirement in Segment I of the General Education Program. This course introduces basic theory in interpersonal communication, small group communication, and public address, and it applies theories to critically evaluated oral presentations in which students develop oral communication and critical listening skills.

The Department offers, each semester, 35 sections of SPCH-150 with target enrollments of 30 students in each section (i.e., a course enrollment that approaches 1,050 students each semester). In Fall 2000, the Department will offer 40 sections of SPCH-150 to a potential cohort of 1,200 students who will again bring to the course their diversity of majors in the University, their reticence and their readiness, their questions and their resolves, their experiences and the lack thereof. Faculty who staff sections of SPCH-150 include a combination of trained Graduate Teaching Associates in Speech Communication, Lecturers with M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Communication, and Tenured/Tenure-Track Professors in residence in the Department.

The SPCH-150 course assessment report generated at the end of the Spring 1999 semester states that "the learning objectives are being achieved"; that "students increased their perceived communication competence and reduced their communication apprehension in multiple contexts" (Shimanoff, 1999). The purpose of the present report is to assess SPCH-150, once again, in an independent study of the degree to which SPCH-150 meets its stated objectives. Presented first are the ten objectives the course seeks to achieve, followed by sections on assessment strategies, a summary of the findings, and the ways the findings are used for program improvements.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

General course objectives of SPCH-150 include the acquisition of skills required for matriculation in other courses in the university, for successful and gainful employment beyond the university, and for participation as informed and capable citizens. Upon the completion of SPCH-150, the specific course objectives include the ability of students to:

1. demonstrate awareness of the complexity of communication in terms of its psychological, social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions,
2. demonstrate knowledge about verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural),
3. reduce speech anxiety and project greater confidence as a speaker,
4. listen actively to provide constructive feedback,
5. consider an audience's knowledge, background, and attitudes when constructing a message,
6. recognize and articulate issues from one's own perspective, while acknowledging the perspectives of others,
7. locate, evaluate, and report information in support of a point of view,
8. assess claims or arguments as a speaker and as a listener,
9. organize, construct, and deliver prepared and spontaneous presentations, and
10. demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Funding made available through the University and the College of Humanities allowed the Department to rely on three independent measurements (i.e., a triangulated strategy) for assessing achievement of the learning objectives in SPCH-150. This strategy includes the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Instrument (PRCA-24) (Appendix I), the Speech 150: Assessment of Oral Presentations Instrument (Appendix II), and the Speech 150 Student Evaluation of the Achievement of Learning Objectives (Appendix III) (Hay, 1992).

The PRCA-24 Instrument

McCroskey (1982) developed the PRCA-24 instrument for the detection and comparison of self-reported levels of communication apprehension (i.e., personal reports about communication with other people) at any given time. As in the 1999 assessment of SPCH-150, students enrolled in SPCH-150 during the Spring 2000
semester also completed the PRCA-24 Instrument near the beginning of the semester to determine their entry levels of communication apprehension (a pre-test) and again at the end of the course as a post-test measure of their apprehension levels. This pre-test/post-test strategy allows the Department to assess achievement of objective #3.

PRCA-24 contains 24 statements about personal levels of comfort and discomfort while communicating in interpersonal, group, and public situations. Respondents enrolled in 35 sections of SPCH-150 (i.e., 992 students) during the Spring 2000 semester were asked in the pre-test to rate each of the 24 statements using a scale on which 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree. All student ratings were recorded on SCANTRON forms which were machine read and subsequently analyzed using Microsoft Excel to arrive at weighted averages (i.e., means) that took into account variations in the numbers of students enrolled in the different sections of the course (Wagner, 1992).

Faculty Evaluations of Communication Competence

Twenty faculty assigned to teach SPCH-150 in Spring 2000 also completed pre-test and post-test measurements of oral presentation skills during the first and last presentations students made in the course. The assessment instrument used for this purpose was developed in the Department as a standardized form for evaluating the content, structure, style, and impact of oral presentations and for assessing items 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the learning objectives. Faculty measured 24 performance criteria using a scale on which 1 = very good, 2 = good, 3 = adequate, 4 = needs some improvement, and 5 = needs substantial improvement.

Pre-test measurements using the departmental instrument were completed in 31 sections of SPCH-150 (i.e., 869 students). Post-test assessments of exit skills using the last oral presentations were completed in 24 sections of the course (i.e., 624 students). The top copy of this two-ply evaluation form was given to the presenter; the bottom copy was retained for this assessment activity.
Student Evaluation of Achievement of Learning Objectives

SPCH-150 students completed at the end of the Spring 2000 semester self-report measurements of the degree to which they individually perceived the course as having achieved its stated objectives. The instrument used for this measurement contains the 10 learning objectives identified on page 2 of this report. Each objective is placed after the stem: "As a result of taking Speech 150, my knowledge or skills have increased regarding [the 10 learning objectives]." Student respondents rated each objective using a four-point scale on which 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, and 4 = Strongly Disagree. All responses were recorded on SCANTRON forms which were machine read and subsequently analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Results of the PRCA-24 Instrument

A comparison of pre-test and post-test ratings in Table 1 reveals improvement in the levels of communication apprehension reported for all 24 items measured. PRCA-24 data indicate that, at the end of SPCH-150, students reported greater confidence while communicating in group discussions, interpersonal interactions, and in public speaking settings. This finding in the PRCA-24 data further indicates that SPCH-150 continues to meet learning objective #3.

Results of Faculty Evaluations

Following the PRCA-24 pre-test administration, faculty completed critiques of two oral presentations to determine student entry- and exit-level skills in the course. As shown in Table 2, the instruction in SPCH-150 generated improvement in all performance criteria, except for two (#7 and #24) that pertain to the use of "credible evidence and examples" and "effective use of visual aids." Faculty evaluations also found marginal improvement in criteria #22 which pertains to perceptions of the degree to which students "accomplished the purpose" of the presentation.

As indicated in Table 2, performance criteria for which the course had the greatest impact include the ability of students to provide a thesis or purpose statement, preview the organization of the presentation, provide an effective summary, reinforce the central idea, and adhere to the time limit. Table 2 further shows that students also made improvements in their ability to focus attention on the topic; connect the topic, speaker, and audience; organize ideas clearly; use effective transitions; provide clear closure; use effective speaking style and an
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>I dislike participating in group discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>I like to get involved in group discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>Engaging in group discussions with new people makes me tense and nervous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>I am very calm and relaxed when called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>I am afraid to express myself at meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>I have no fear of giving a speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>I feel relaxed while giving a speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>My thoughts become confused and jumbled when giving a speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Pre-Test/Post-Test Averages of Faculty Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>Performance Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.39 1.6</td>
<td>Focused attention on topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.78 1.69</td>
<td>Connected topic, speaker, &amp; audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.98 1.66</td>
<td>Established credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.68 1.02</td>
<td>Provided thesis or purpose statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.05 1.45</td>
<td>Previewed organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.86 1.58</td>
<td>Organized ideas clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.69 1.3</td>
<td>Used credible evidence &amp; examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.39 1.50</td>
<td>Cited sources appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.09 1.64</td>
<td>Used effective transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.08 1.10</td>
<td>Provided effective summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.61 1.32</td>
<td>Reinforced central idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.62 1.35</td>
<td>Provided clear closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.91 1.55</td>
<td>Used vivid language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.96 1.49</td>
<td>Used effective speaking style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.05 1.61</td>
<td>Used effective nonverbal style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.81 1.73</td>
<td>Appeared comfortable &amp; confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.84 1.72</td>
<td>Free of distracting mannerisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.35 1.45</td>
<td>Topic appropriate for assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.83 1.53</td>
<td>Demonstrated good audience awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.96 1.50</td>
<td>Showed thorough research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.85 1.50</td>
<td>Demonstrated clear reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.82 1.64</td>
<td>Accomplished purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.86 1.47</td>
<td>Adhered to time limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.17 1.64</td>
<td>Effective visual aid (if used)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
effective nonverbal style; remain comfortable and confident; and eliminate distracting mannerisms. Improvements in these and other performance criteria relied on during the evaluations indicate that SPCH-150 continues to meet items 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the learning objectives.

Results of Self-Report Data

Results of student evaluations of the degree to which SPCH-150 achieved its learning objectives are shown in Table 3. These

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avg Rating</th>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>Complexity of communication in terms of psychological, social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>Verbal/nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>Reducing speech anxiety and projecting greater confidence as a speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>Listening actively and providing constructive feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>Considering an audience's knowledge, background, and attitudes when constructing a message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>Recognizing/articulating issues from my own perspective, while acknowledging the perspectives of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>Locating, evaluating, and reporting information in support of a point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Assessing claims or arguments as a speaker and listener.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>Organizing, constructing, and delivering prepared and spontaneous presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>Demonstrating effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

data indicate "agreement" that instruction in SPCH-150 enhanced knowledge and increased skills. Students reported ratings of 2.00 (Agree) or less, indicating that all learning objectives were achieved in the course.
FINDINGS AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Findings ensuing from this course assessment mean several things to the Department. First, an emphasis during this assessment activity was placed on course outcome and student achievement. The Department, consequently, is in a better position to articulate specific ways students will benefit from SPCH-150, specific ways the course relates to the mission and to other programs of study in the University, and specific ways the course relates to post-graduate needs and demands.

Second, rater variation in faculty evaluations of student presentations indicate that all faculty do not judge student speeches with equal severity. Although the faculty have valid personal and professional frames of reference that influence their individual evaluations, variations in the ratings suggest the need for more frequent rater training to ensure a common understanding of the evaluation form.

Further testing of the reliability and validity of the rater evaluation form seems equally warranted. Although several assessment instruments are available for evaluating oral presentations, none has a clearly established basis in theory (i.e., the theory included as instructional content in SPCH-150). Most other instruments already tested for their validity and reliability are designed for use outside of classroom settings, and they provide a more comprehensive assessment of communication competence of which oral presentations are only a part (Morreale, Moore, Taylor, et al., 1993). Department objectives, consequently, include continued testing of the evaluation instrument used for this assessment activity and to discover and compare the merits of theory-based instruments for which reliability and validity already are established.

Finally, data generated during this assessment activity will facilitate identification of modules and other instructional components in SPCH-150 which should receive greater emphasis. Data from faculty evaluations of student presentations indicate, for example, a need to revisit instructional components on the preparation and the use of effective visual aids. The findings further indicate a need to investigate further the impact of innovations in high technology on perceptions of effective uses of visual aids and a need to consider resource implications for incorporating high technology in SPCH-150 classroom instruction.
REFERENCES


Speech 150

Section No. ____  Student Identification No. ________  ______  ______

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA - 24)

Directions: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. Please record your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by placing the appropriate number in the blanks to indicate whether you:

(1) strongly agree
(2) agree
(3) are undecided
(4) disagree
(5) strongly disagree

1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
5. Engaging in group discussions with new people makes me tense and nervous.
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
9. I am very calm and relaxed when called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
18. I’m afraid to speak up in conversations.
19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

Speech 150: Assessment of Oral Presentations

Speaker ___________________________ Respondent ___________________________ Date ______

Please use the following Assessment Scale:  Very Good = (1);  Good = (2);
Adequate = (3);  Needs Some Improvement = (4);  Needs Substantial Improvement = (5).
Write the number for your responses within the parentheses below.

Written Comments:

I. Introduction of Speech
( ) Focused attention on topic
( ) Connected topic, speaker & audience
( ) Established credibility
( ) Provided thesis or purpose statement
( ) Previewed organization

II. Body of Speech:
( ) Organized ideas clearly
( ) Used credible evidence & examples to support ideas
( ) Cited sources appropriately
( ) Used effective transitions between ideas

III. Conclusion:
( ) Provided effective summary
( ) Reinforced central idea
( ) Provided clear closure

IV. Delivery:
( ) Used vivid language
( ) Used effective speaking style
  (clarity, volume, rate, variety, etc.)
( ) Used effective nonverbal style
  (posture, eye contact, gestures, etc.)
( ) Appeared comfortable & confident
( ) Free of distracting mannerisms

V. Overall Impact of Speech:
( ) Selected topic appropriate for assignment
( ) Demonstrated good audience awareness
( ) Showed thorough research
( ) Demonstrated clear reasoning
( ) Accomplished purpose
( ) Adhered to time limit
( ) Effective visual aid (if used)
Speech 150 Student Evaluation of
the Achievement of Learning Objectives

Speech 150 fulfills SFSU’s general education requirement in oral communication. The General Education Council of SFSU has approved 10 learning objectives for the oral communication requirement. We would like to know the degree to which you feel your Speech 150 has met those objectives for you. These objectives may have been met in lectures, readings, assignments, class discussions or other assignments.

For each of the objectives listed below, please indicate the degree to which you agree your Speech 150 has increased or enhanced your knowledge or skills by filling in the bubble corresponding to your response on the Scantron form according to the following scale:

A. Strongly Agree     B. Agree        C. Disagree       D. Strongly Disagree

As a result of taking Speech 150, my knowledge or skills have increased regarding:

1. The complexity of communication in terms of its psychological, social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions.

2. Verbal and nonverbal communication in various contexts (e.g., interpersonal, small group, public speaking, intercultural).

3. Reducing speech anxiety and projecting greater confidence as a speaker.

4. Listening actively and providing constructive feedback.

5. Considering an audience’s knowledge, background and attitudes when constructing a message.

6. Recognizing and articulating issues from my own perspective, while acknowledging the perspectives of others.

7. Locating, evaluating and reporting information in support of a point of view.

8. Assessing claims or arguments as a speaker and listener.

9. Organizing, constructing, and delivering prepared and spontaneous presentations.

10. Demonstrating effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.
"The Competent Speaker"
Speech Evaluation Form

Edited by Sherwyn P. Morreale
Michael R. Moore
K. Phillip Taylor
Donna Surges-Tatum
Ruth Hulbert-Johnson
### IV. THE COMPETENT SPEAKER

**SPEECH EVALUATION FORM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEAKER'S NAME:</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator's Name:</td>
<td>DATE: <em><strong>/</strong></em>/___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### EIGHT PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETENCIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency One: CHOOSES AND NARROWS A TOPIC APPROPRIATELY FOR THE AUDIENCE AND OCCASION Comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competency Two: COMMUNICATES THE THESIS/SPECIFIC PURPOSE IN A MANNER APPROPRIATE FOR AUDIENCE AND OCCASION Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Three: PROVIDES APPROPRIATE SUPPORTING MATERIAL BASED ON THE AUDIENCE AND OCCASION Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Four: USES AN ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN APPROPRIATE TO TOPIC, AUDIENCE, OCCASION, &amp; PURPOSE Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Five: USES LANGUAGE THAT IS APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE, OCCASION, &amp; PURPOSE Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Six: USES VOCAL VARIETY IN RATE, PITCH, &amp; INTENSITY TO HEIGHTEN AND MAINTAIN INTEREST Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Seven: USES PRONUNCIATION, GRAMMAR, &amp; ARTICULATION APPROPRIATE TO THE DESIGNATED AUDIENCE Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency Eight: USES PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT THE VERBAL MESSAGE Comments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### SPEAKING PERFORMANCE RATINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Assign Scoring Ranges:

**General Comments:**

**Summative Scores of Competencies:** _
RELIABILITY, VALIDITY, AND BIAS TESTING

Traditional Analysis*

Development of a Testing Videotape

In order to test the reliability and validity of The Competent Speaker evaluation form and criteria, a videotape was developed with student speeches in an actual classroom environment at a midwestern university. The student speeches were informative presentations lasting approximately five minutes in duration. A group of six Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) selected approximately 40 videotaped classroom speeches from the previous semester's presentations. Utilizing the form and criteria, the GTAs rated these speeches as either unsatisfactory, satisfactory, or excellent. From this initial pool of 40, the public speaking course director and one of the GTAs selected 12 student speeches, four at each level of competency. These 12 speeches were transferred to one master tape for training and rating purposes. The student sample represented on the rating video was mixed by gender (five females and seven males) and by ethnicity (nine Whites, one Black, one Hispanic, and one Filipino). The 12 speeches then were randomly ordered 12 different times, utilizing a table of random numbers, and placed on tapes that were sent to 12 speech communication professionals at 12 different universities. Additionally, one speech exemplary of each level of competency was selected as an anchor by which raters could become familiar with performance at each level of competency before rating the sample of 12 speeches. The three anchor speeches were placed at the beginning of the master tape and were identified as to the level of competency each represented.

Raters

The 12 raters were speech communication professionals teaching at colleges and universities in the U.S. Nine of the raters held a Ph.D. or equivalent, while three of the raters held master's degrees. The raters' experience in teaching ranged from 4 years to 25 years as estimated by the date of receipt of the raters' terminal degrees. Raters were eight females and four males, eleven of which were Anglo and one Hispanic.

Raters received a packet containing instructions for self-training on the use of the speech evaluation form and criteria and the tape with the 12 student presentations. Specifically, the raters were instructed to: (a) review the standards and criteria for the competencies before viewing any speeches; (b) view the three exemplary speeches while simultaneously reviewing the standards and criteria; and (c) view each of the 12 speeches without making any formal evaluation, review the standards and
criteria as they pertained to that speech, and finally, view the speech one more time and enter the evaluation on the rating form.

Reliability

Overall inter-rater reliability for the students' total score on the instrument was high for the 12 raters with Ebel's (1951) coefficient reading .92. Inter-rater reliability was also examined for each of the eight competencies. The 12 raters achieved a high degree of reliability on the eight competencies with Ebel's coefficient ranging from .90 to .94.

In addition to using 12 speech communication professionals to test reliability, other reliability testing was conducted utilizing 10 GTAs as raters. The raters were from two midwestern universities. Half of the GTAs had utilized the speech evaluation form for one semester and the other half were given a brief training in the instrument's use. An inter-rater reliability test for the GTAs generated a Cronbach coefficient of .76.

In addition to the GTAs, inter-rater reliability testing was conducted with a small pool of community college speech instructors (N=3). They received a brief training with the instrument before evaluating the 12 videotaped speeches. This inter-rater reliability test generated a Cronbach coefficient of .84.

Validity

In addition to reliability testing of The Competent Speaker form, the instrument and its criteria currently meet content or face validity. That validity can be argued based on the extensive literature review conducted during the process of development of the instrument by the 11 member subcommittee of the SCA Committee on Assessment and Testing (see Appendices A and B of this manual).

Also regarding the validity of the instrument, two studies testing for convergent validity have been conducted. First, a correlation of scores on the public speaking portion of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (McCroskey, 1970) and scores derived using The Competent Speaker form in an introductory speech class indicated inverse directional convergent validity. That is, as speech scores using The Competent Speaker form increased, scores on the public speaking items of the PRCA decreased. Second, a correlation of scores on the seven public speaking items of the Communication Competency Assessment Instrument (Rubin, 1982), derived from entrance and exit interviews with students in an introductory speech class, were correlated with The Competent Speaker scores from the same class. Positive directional convergent validity for the two instruments was indicated; scores on speeches, rated using The Competent Speaker and scores on the public speaking items of the CCAI both increased.
Cultural Diversity

In addition to The Competent Speaker evaluation form and criteria undergoing reliability and validity scrutiny, several other tests evaluated the form in regard to ethnic and gender bias. One study compared the 12 speech communication professionals' ratings of 12 speeches to the ratings of the same speeches by a sample of 28 minority students using the speech evaluation form. An inter-rater reliability test of the minority students as a group generated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .76. When combined with the 12 speech communication professionals, the coefficient remained .76. In another two-pronged diversity study, actual speech evaluations in the classroom (N=260) were examined both by ethnicity and by gender. In an analysis of variance, no significant difference was found in the ratings of speeches of White (m=86.46), Black (m=82.92), Hispanic (m=85.25), or Asian (82.33) students (F=.16). Additionally, there was no significant difference in speech scores of female (m=86.47) or male (m=85.70) students using the speech evaluation form (F=.41).

Normative Data

Although normative data are provided for training purposes with the videotaped anchor speeches, The Competent Speaker evaluation form and standards are criterion referenced. The competencies and criteria were developed based upon the literature investigated.

Conclusions of Traditional Analysis

Initial testing of The Competent Speaker evaluation form indicated that the instrument is psychometrically sound in terms of reliability and validity. Future testing might include additional content and convergent validity studies. Other reliability and validity tests might use larger and more diverse pools of raters and greater diversity of student populations being evaluated.

Rasch Analysis**

After researchers develop an instrument expected to measure a phenomenon, they test it in the field. Data analysis of the collected sample(s) determines whether or not the instrument is deemed a valid mode of measurement.

In 1953 Georg Rasch, a Danish mathematician, developed a unique model for item analysis. This method produces results that are distinctly different from traditional statistical analysis. A statistical analysis describes a one-time event. The elements of the event are inextricably bound together into one observation. Those elements are, in this case, the items on the evaluation form, the raters using it, and the speeches they are judging.
The results are not generalizable or comparable across samples or time. However, the unique feature of the Rasch model is that it allows the researcher to separate the elements under investigation and focus on one at a time. They are independent of each other and are all measured in common units, "logits." Instead of using the "rubber ruler" of statistics, we can now use the Rasch model to condition those raw scores into meaningful measures that are calibrated upon a line of inquiry.

Data Analysis

The FACETS computer program, written by John Michael Linacre of the MESA Psychometric Laboratory at the University of Chicago, provides the means of performing a Rasch analysis. The eight-item instrument created by the CAT Subcommittee on Public Speaking Competency is used by 12 speech teachers to rate 12 speeches. A nine-point rating scale is used to judge the level of ability for each competency. This comprises the data for the initial analysis. In subsequent analyses, graduate assistants, community college teachers and minority students were added and judged all 12 speeches using a three-point rating scale.

The Evaluation Form

The first step is to determine if the evaluation form defines the variable "public speaking competence." Is it a valid instrument for raters to use when judging speeches?

All items are not created equal. That is, a range of difficulty must be covered if a test is to be useful in measuring any variable. The "ruler" that measures the variable must be calibrated in equal units, or "logits." The items that comprise this ruler lie upon a line of inquiry. They are centered on zero. Negative numbers are easy to do; positive numbers are harder.

If the hierarchical arrangement of the items along the line of inquiry defines the variable and corresponds with the intention of the study, then construct validity is established. Examining each item's content in relation to its calibration and its fit statistic reveals content validity.

The Competent Speaker speech evaluation form is demonstrated as a valid, useful instrument with which to judge speeches. "Measure" is the item's calibration--its placement upon the line of inquiry--expressed in logits. "Error" is how accurately the item is measured. The items cover a reasonable range, which shows the form does a good job of defining public speaking competency. The following map is a visual representation of the items defining the variable. The items are listed in order of difficulty, from easiest to hardest.

Mean square (MNSQ) represents the expected response to the item and its fit along the line of inquiry. If any item has a high
mean square, then there is a question of whether it fits upon the line of inquiry and is helpful in defining the variable. A mean square of 1.0 is expected; .7 to 1.3 is normal. If the mean square is outside the range, the item is behaving erratically and needs to be examined more closely. For example, an item's mean square of 1.6 means there is 60% more noise than what is expected; 2.4 is 140% more than expected. The standardized fit statistic is the sureness of the item's fit. A rule of thumb is to look closely at anything over a mean square of 1.4 and a fit of 3 to determine the usefulness of the item. It may need to be rewritten, dropped from the analysis, or left in the analysis with an understanding of why it misfits. Rasch analysis thus allows us to have "conversation with the data." A frame of reference is constructed, producing measures that are objective and meaningful. The items on this evaluation form fit the pattern of expected responses. This means all the items are on the line of inquiry and contribute to the definition of the variable.

**Item Map**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Error</th>
<th>MNSQ</th>
<th>Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easiest Thesis</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate topic</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate language</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate organizational pattern</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal variety</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting material</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardest Physical behavior</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Scale Structure**

The rating scale is divided into three classes: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, and excellent. The criteria are defined for each class, and the raters assign a number to each speaker's competencies. Raters often have a tendency to group scores around the middle of the scale values. McCroskey, Arnold and Pritchard (1967) established that the end points on a semantic differential were further from the points next to them than the other points were from each other. Some raters do not like to make extreme judgements. The Rasch model calibrates the nonlinearity of the rating scale, thus eliminating this concern.
The scale structure line shows that the rating scale itself is appropriately structured—the categories are in pronounced locations and define different levels. (One could conceive of them as definite steps on a ladder.) The nine-point scale provides more information than the three-point scale. There is a more precise measurement and a greater ability to discriminate a speaker’s competencies. However, a nine-point scale may be cumbersome and provide too many choices for the novice. Perhaps the optimum rating scale would be six points, with a low and high category for each of the classes: unsatisfactory, satisfactory and excellent.

Speakers

It is possible to examine the differences in speakers’ competence if the speakers spread out along the line of inquiry. This evaluation form is a reliable test of separating speakers into strata of ability, and it provides quite accurate measurement. Because competence is reported in common units of measurement, comparisons of more or less ability among speakers is feasible.

In the present analyses, all speakers performed as expected. That is, the fit statistics do not indicate any speaker who has an unexpected pattern of competency.

Raters

Research conducted by members of the MESA Psychometric Laboratory at the University of Chicago over the past 10 years reveals that judges, no matter how well trained, do not rate alike. In fact, it is not even desirable to attempt to force judges into one common mode. As we know from communication theory, every person has his or her own perceptual world and attends to different details. Bock and Bock (1981) discuss four general types of speech raters. In a Rasch analysis we assume each rater’s individuality and are not concerned with inter-rater reliability as an end to itself, which is only one of many indicators. Rather, it is the consistency with which the judge uses the evaluation form that is important. A Rasch analysis will adjust for the difference in type and severity of raters as long as they share a common understanding of the evaluation form and are individually consistent in their use of the rating scale.

The raters spread out from very easy to very tough. A comparison of minority student raters to speech teachers shows there is no apparent bias to the instrument. All the items maintain their placement and still fit on the line of inquiry, which means the items are not being used differently by different groups. The speakers also maintained their order and fit. Thus, use of the instrument is consistent. Only a couple of student judges misfit, which means they were unpredictable in their evaluations. All the rest of the raters were internally consistent.
Conclusions of Rasch Analysis

The Competent Speaker speech performance evaluation form is a viable instrument for assessing public speaking competence. The items cover the range of the variable and are all along the line of inquiry. The raters use the form effectively, and the speakers demonstrate various levels of ability. The instrument appears appropriate for general use. Professors, community college instructors, graduate assistants, and minority students successfully used the evaluation form. Based on these Rasch analyses, the instrument is recommended for national distribution and use.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES ASSESSED</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RE: STUDENT LEARNING</th>
<th>USE OF FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reduce speech anxiety and project greater confidence as a speaker.</td>
<td>1a. Students’ perceptions of the degree to which they have gained confidence as speakers (in 6 sections).</td>
<td>1a. Students rated 2 items on 5-point scales (1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree)</td>
<td>1. Convey findings to all Speech 150 instructors, especially noting that these (6) instructors’ assessment of reduced fear &amp; increased confidence were slightly higher than were the students’ own, or the expert raters’ assessments of those improvements. Despite this slight difference in degree, this learning objective is being met; so current procedures for meeting this objective will remain unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1b. Instructors’ perceptions of the degree to which students have gained confidence as speakers (in 6 sections).</td>
<td>1b. Instructors rated the same two items using a 5-pt. scale:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1c. Two expert raters’ perceptions of the degree to which students project confidence as a speaker (for 25 presentations).</td>
<td>1c. Two experts rated the degree to which students projected confidence in 25 videotaped presentations using the same scale:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Expert 1 (mean) = 3.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Expert 2 (mean) = 3.98 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Organize, construct, and deliver prepared and spontaneous presentations.</td>
<td>2a. Students’ perceptions of the degree to which they can effectively organize, construct, &amp; deliver prepared &amp; spontaneous presentations (in 6 sections).</td>
<td>2a. Students rated 2 items on 5-point scales (1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Item Mean score:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spontaneous presentations = 3.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Convey findings to all Speech 150 instructors, especially noting the following: 
   a. Our students more strongly agreed that they could effectively construct, organize, and deliver prepared (versus spontaneous) presentations.
### LEARNING OBJECTIVES ASSESSED

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

2b. Instructors' perceptions of the degree to which students effectively organized, constructed, and delivered prepared & spontaneous presentations (in 6 sections).

2c. Two expert raters' perceptions of the degree to which students effectively constructed and delivered prepared presentations (for 25 presentations).

3. Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RE: STUDENT LEARNING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepared presentations = 4.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous presentations = 4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared presentations = 4.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Expert 1 (mean) = 3.74
- Expert 2 (mean) = 3.78

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual delivery = 4.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal delivery = 3.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word usage = 3.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### USE OF FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

b. As our discipline's literature would support, expert raters rated the videotaped speeches more harshly than either the instructors or students rated the speeches as performed live and in person. These differences are in part related to point of view (self, instructor, expert) as well as channel (in person v. mediated).

c. These six instructors rated their students' as being more effective in constructing & organizing presentations than either the students or the experts.

Continue to use the current procedures for meeting this objective. In a fall 2002 department meeting, discuss ways to emphasize the development of spontaneous speaking abilities in Speech 150.

3. Convey findings to all Speech 150 instructors, especially noting the following:

a. Students, instructors, and experts were in greatest agreement about word choice & pronunciation;

b. Students' & instructors' assessments of visual delivery aspects were higher than
**LEARNING OBJECTIVES ASSESSED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RE: STUDENT LEARNING</th>
<th>USE OF FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3b. Instructors’ perceptions of the degree to which students demonstrated effective verbal & nonverbal delivery skills (in 6 sections). | 3b. Instructors rated the same three items with a 5-pt. scale:  
Item | Mean score |  
Visual delivery | 4.33 |  
Vocal delivery | 3.67 |  
Word usage | 3.67 |  
3c. Two expert raters’ perceptions of the degree to which students demonstrated effective verbal & nonverbal delivery skills (in 25 presentations). | 3c. Experts rated the speakers’ visual & vocal delivery and word usage:  
Item | Mean score |  
Visual delivery | 1. = 3.65 **  
2. = 3.61 |  
Vocal delivery | 1. = 4.09 ***  
2. = 3.85 |  
Word choice & pronunciation | 1. = 4.17  
2. = 3.87 |  
** Expert raters’ assessments, which may be due to live v. videotaped viewing.  
Continue to use the same procedures for meeting this learning objective. Emphasize rehearsal (out loud, prior to delivering the speech) in order to improve these scores from all three perspectives. |

* Inter-rater reliabilities for the two expert raters ranged from .68-.83 across five survey items.

** Visual delivery = Eye contact, facial expression, gestures, movement.

*** Vocal delivery = Volume, rate, tonal variety & pausing.
General Education Segment I: Fundamentals of Oral Communication
Basic Skills Assessment at San Francisco State University

Dr. Gerianne Merrigan (merrigan@sfsu.edu)
Dr. Karen Lovaas (klovaas@sfsu.edu)

Spring 2002 Assessment Project Summary

- The Speech & Communication Studies Department at SFSU offers a hybrid communication course that combines introductory instruction in interpersonal, intercultural, and group communication processes with instruction in public speaking. Speech 150, “Fundamental Oral Communication,” meets the CSU’s General Education Segment I requirement for Oral Communication.
- We wanted to assess the degree to which our Speech 150 students were meeting three of our ten identified learning objectives;
- We randomly selected six (out of ~35) sections of Speech 150, and we collected instructor, student, and expert rater’s perceptions about each objective using written surveys and coding videotaped speeches;
- We identified recommendations for improving our instruction in Speech 150 based on our findings.
- The specific learning objectives we assessed, our measures, findings, and recommendations are summarized below.

Objective #1: Students will reduce speech anxiety and learn to project greater confidence as a speaker.

Measurement: 125 students and 6 instructors responded to two items, using five-point Likert scales (i.e., 1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree). Two expert raters evaluated 24 speeches on videotape, and responded to item, “projects confidence”, using the same scale.¹

Results (mean scores):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
<th>Expert Raters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Less fearful now</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Project confidence</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendation: Instructors’ assessment of reduced fear & increased confidence were more optimistic than either students’ own assessments, or expert raters’ assessments of those improvements. Despite this, the learning objective is being met. Continue current procedures for meeting this objective.

¹ Inter-rater reliabilities for the two expert raters ranged from .68-.83 across 5 items.
Objective #2: Students will organize, construct, and deliver prepared and spontaneous presentations.

Measurement: 125 students and 6 instructors responded to two items, using five-point Likert scales (i.e., 1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree). Two expert raters evaluated 24 speeches on videotape for the speaker’s ability to organize a prepared presentation using the same scale.

Results (mean scores):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
<th>Expert Raters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Spontaneous presentations</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Prepared presentations</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendation: As our discipline’s literature would support, expert raters rated the videotaped speeches more harshly than either the instructors or students rated the speeches as performed live and in person. These differences are in part related to point of view (self, instructor, expert) as well as channel (in person v. mediated). Discuss ways to emphasize the development of spontaneous speaking abilities in Speech 150.

Objective #3: Students will demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal delivery skills.

Measurement: 125 students and 6 instructors responded to two items, using five-point Likert scales (i.e., 1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree). Two expert raters evaluated 24 speeches on videotape for the speaker’s ability to organize a prepared presentation using the same scale.

Results (mean scores):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
<th>Expert Raters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Visual delivery</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Vocal delivery</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Word usage</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Visual delivery included eye contact, facial expression, gestures and movement. Vocal delivery included volume, rate, tonal variety, and pausing.

Recommendation: Students, instructors, and experts were in greatest agreement about word choice & pronunciation. Students’ & instructors’ assessments of visual delivery aspects were higher than expert raters’ assessments, which may be due to live v. videotaped viewing. Continue to use the same procedures for meeting this learning objective, and emphasize rehearsal (out loud, prior to delivering the speech) in order to improve these scores from all three perspectives.

GE Assessment Conference 2003 (CSU Fullerton)
Campus presentation: Merrigan & Lovaas, San Francisco State University, Oral Communication
June 29, 2000

To: Nancy McDermid  
Dean, College of Humanities

From: Elise Ann Earthman  
Professor of English; Coordinator, Composition Program

Re: 1999-2000 Assessment Activities for English 214

Learning Objectives Assessed

Because it is a general education course, the learning objectives for English 214 are specified by the university-level Segment I Committee. The Segment I objectives for Written Communication follow. By the end of English 214, students should be capable of:

1. Understanding discipline-specific texts (in this case, literary texts) thoroughly and using them as a basis for their writing assignments.

2. Formulating a thesis based on their readings.

3. Substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts, and through personal insights.

4. Distinguishing between adequate and inadequate substantiation of a thesis or topic, both of the essay and the paragraph levels.

5. Writing essays and paragraphs that are well focused and relevant to the subject identified in their theses and topics.

6. Demonstrating knowledge of the principles of coordination and subordination and of the ability to develop ideas at the level of the sentence, rather than by the mere accretion of sentences.

7. Writing compositions that are mainly free of significant errors in usage, writing mechanics and spelling.
Strategies Used to Collect Information

Fall, 1999

In Fall 1999, the following activities took place in the area of 214 assessment:

1. English faculty were advised that those teaching Eng. 214 in Spring 2000 would be required to participate in assessment of the learning objectives.

2. Approaches to assessment were discussed, and a procedure planned: all sections of 214 in Spring, 2000 would participate in a common final; the essays would be evaluated by each instructor, who would report results for each student in terms of how well s/he had met the outcomes, and how well the student did on the final, as compared to his or her overall grade in 214.

3. A small number of teachers volunteered to participate in pilot testing of the writing topic that was to be used in Spring (Attachment A). Because in early discussions, 214 instructors felt that a number of the objectives, as written, overlapped, the outcomes were reduced from 7 to 4, and the pilot teachers evaluated their students on 4 objectives.

5. Pilot testing suggested that the topic as written was valid; with very few exceptions, students wrote in a way that generally reflected their ability in the course (that is, students wrote neither significantly better nor worse than usual). In addition, the instructors in the pilot project found the 4-outcome scoring guide easy to use.

Spring, 2000

1. In Spring, 2000, 30 instructors of 37 sections of 214 were given a detailed description of the end-of-semester assessment procedures. One instructor, who was new to SFSU and teaching 214, was excused from participation.

2. In Spring we were informed that, despite the dissatisfaction of those teaching the course with the outcomes, we would be required to use the 7 outcomes as written by the Segment I committee, rather than 4 outcomes as revised by the department. A Scoring Guide (Attachment B) was developed, with descriptors for the various levels of achievement for each of the 7 outcomes.

3. Instructors administered the 2-hour exam during finals week, scored the essays on scantron forms, and completed a questionnaire about the assessment process (see Attachment C). For various reasons, 4 instructors were unable to complete the assessment; our final total was 33 packets from 26 instructors of the course.
4. Both numerical data from the outcomes assessment and qualitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed; results and recommendations follow.

Findings from the Assessment Process

Quantitative Data

During Spring, 2000, faculty teaching English 214 reported results for 33 sections of the course; for various reasons, 4 teachers were unable to participate in the assessment process. Teachers submitted scantron forms indicating how a total of 632 students performed on the final essay assignment.

Table I reports by section and overall for each of the seven outcomes; in addition, teachers reported a summary grade for the essay, and the overall grade that the student would receive in 214. These figures are summarized below (following the scoring guide, instructors gave students a score for each outcome that ranged from 1 = well done to 4 = poorly done):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Text Use</td>
<td>1.73 (0.39)</td>
<td>1.09-2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Thesis</td>
<td>1.84 (0.30)</td>
<td>1.09-2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Support</td>
<td>1.91 (0.30)</td>
<td>1.22-2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Development</td>
<td>2.03 (0.34)</td>
<td>1.48-2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Focus</td>
<td>1.94 (0.34)</td>
<td>1.30-2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Sentence Dev.</td>
<td>1.96 (0.38)</td>
<td>1.11-2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Proofreading</td>
<td>1.99 (0.34)</td>
<td>1.19-2.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, students did well on this essay, performing at least at the "adequate" level (2 = adequate) on each outcome, and doing somewhat better than that on their "use of text" (in this case, their understanding of two poems as literary texts) and thesis development. Since one of the original intentions of offering 214 in different departments across campus was to teach students how to read texts in a particular discipline and formulate arguments on those texts, the students in Eng. 214 are doing very well.

We ran a correlation to see whether any of the outcomes was more predictive of the student's final grade than another; results are summarized below.
Correlation between Individual Outcomes and Grade on Final Essay
(n=632)

Text Use .64
Sentence Devel.
Proofreading .60
Support
Development .59
Thesis .54
Focus .51

Finally, we looked to see whether there was a significant difference between scores students achieved on the final essay and their ultimate grade in 214; by a t-test of essay grade vs. final grade, we found no significant difference (p = .005). This suggests that an in-class final essay test, given over a 2-hour period, is a valid measure of students' achievement in the class, and allows us to confidently use such a measure again in future assessments.

Qualitative Data

One of our goals in this round of 214 assessment was to familiarize all faculty with the outcomes and with the assessment procedure; to that end, we wanted individual faculty to work on their own students' essays and then to report not only their numerical findings, but their thoughts on the process and experience as well. To that end, we asked all participating instructors to complete a six-point questionnaire. Summarized results follow by question:

1. Approximately how long did it take you to complete the assessment process?
   
   Average: 3 hours
   Range: 1.5-6 hours

2. What are your thoughts on the learning outcomes?

   - Many instructors had trouble distinguishing between Outcomes 3 (Support) and 4 (Development) on the scoring guide; this reflected the difficulty that the creators of the scoring guide had in separating those two outcomes, because they overlapped quite a bit. While some faculty felt they could be combined, others suggested a way to make the two outcomes more clearly defined: make 3 focus on textual
support and use of quotes, while 4 should focus on development through analysis and explanation of examples/quotes.

- Many instructors suggested a 5-point grading scheme rather than the 4-point one that they used; they felt that there was "too much of a gap between B (2) and C (3)" on the rubric.

- Overall, many instructors felt the outcomes (with the suggested adjustments) reflected what they had been working on throughout the semester.

3. How useful was the scoring guide? How could it be improved?

- Again, many instructors mentioned the need for a "true C" on the scoring guide. Others asked for more latitude in reporting the scores, so that they would be able to reflect a "B+" or "C-" grade.

- Other than that, most found the scoring guide helpful, though several requested a "norming session" such as those we do at JEPET readings, to familiarize readers with the scoring process.

4. Do you have comments on the topic?

- Respondents disagreed about whether poetry should be used as a topic; while many liked the poetry used and felt their students did well with it (even if they had not studied poetry during the semester), other instructors felt their students were at a disadvantage because they had not studied poetry. A number argued for the use of short prose in the next assessment.

- Instructors generally praised the use of a compare/contrast essay.

5. In general, did students do as well as you expected on this essay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As well as expected:</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better than expected:</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No one's students did worse than expected, and a number of instructors reported that they were very impressed with the way their students did on the test.

6. Please give us any general comments on the assessment process.

- A number of respondents suggested that in the future, essays be graded at a common reading, and that teachers not read their own students' papers.
• Instructors complained that this is an additional burden at the end of the semester, since this kind of in-class final is not what they would typically do (for example, some instructors review portfolios of students' work before assigning a final grade; this essay evaluation came on top of/in addition to that end-of-semester work). A number of instructors asked that in the future, they be compensated for this kind of program assessment activity.

• One instructor remarked that looking at "outcomes" in this way does not take "incomes" into account, the skill level at which students arrived in the class.

• One instructor expressed concern that the 2-hour in-class essay only tests writing in a particular situation; in class, we are reinforcing a much more involved, recursive process. Another instructor echoed this sentiment, noting that a test such as this only measures "a portion of what my students learned this semester."

Use of the Findings for Program Improvement

We intend to use the findings of this assessment project in several ways:

• to open dialogue among 214 instructors about objectives, grading criteria, and grading standards, a process that has already begun through the responses on the questionnaire.

• to help us to conceive of and plan future assessment activities for English 214.

• to open discussion with the Segment I Committee about revision of the outcomes for 214.

One very useful outcome of this 214 assessment is that instructors have begun a dialogue about what we are doing in the course and how we can work together effectively to assure consistency in a many-sectioned course that all students must take. The numerical data revealed that we have already achieved a great deal of consistency in this area, but the questionnaires indicate that instructors would like the opportunity to work more closely together, to share papers with one another, to discuss grading criteria, and so on. This is a very positive result of the assessment process.

Having done one round of assessment in this way (including all instructors teaching 214 in Spring 2000), we are now ready to sit down together and, with some experience in this type of evaluation and in using the scoring guide, talk with one another about where we go from here in terms of assessment procedures. Clearly, the ideal situation would be to have pre- and post-test data on each student; without a pretest sample, we are unable to address the concern of instructors that we may in fact be helping some students to greatly
improve their writing, even while they still do not come up to the highest standards.

Here is a "first-draft" proposal for future evaluation of 214, one that will be a starting point for further discussion in the English department in Fall 2000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of assessment:</th>
<th>Once a year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Number of sections:     | 8 section sample (approx. 20%)  
                         | (sections selected so that each instructor participates once every couple of years) |
| Type of assessment:     | Pre- and post-test |
| Grading method:         | Joint holistic reading of essays, including norming session |
| Compensation for readers: | $22/hour (JEPEP rate)  
                        | Total for readers: $528  
                        | (8 x $22 x 3 hours) |
| Assessment leadership:  | Rotating assignment, with a stipend/assigned time for the coordination of assessment activities |

Since the data from this year's assessment suggest that the English department 1) has developed a valid instrument for assessment, and 2) has already achieved a high level of success and consistency in its teaching of English 214, the assessment procedure proposed above will serve as a check to see that we continue to meet our goals in the course.
June 24, 2002

To: Nancy McDermid, Dean of Humanities and Colleagues
From: Loretta Stec, Associate Professor of English and Literature Program Coordinator
Re: Assessment of English 214 in Spring of 2002

Learning Objectives Assessed

English 214, Second-Year Composition, strives to teach students how to interpret literary and other cultural texts and to write complex analytical essays about these texts. The English Department designed and completed an assessment project in the Spring of 2002 to evaluate how well the course achieves two of the “learning objectives” established by the General Education Segment I Committee for this course. Those two objectives are:

- “Substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts, and through personal insights” and
- “Distinguishing between adequate and inadequate substantiation of a thesis or topic, both of the essay and the paragraph levels.”

We chose these outcomes to assess because in the largest sense English 214 aims to teach students ways to engage with ideas other than their own, a skill crucial for educated persons. In addition, our campus is increasingly concerned with the challenges of plagiarism, and English 214 is one of the courses in which students learn about the ethics and mechanics of quoting sources.

The Design of the Assessment Project

Five instructors of English 214 participated in this assessment project. Each instructor collected a set of ungraded essays from his or her class turned in late in the semester, in mid-April. Each instructor had designed an assignment that explicitly required students to quote from a text or texts in order to provide evidence for a thesis and to persuade a reader of an argument. [Assignments are appended to this document.] These five instructors served as readers/scorers for the assessment project. Each of the five sets of essays was read and scored twice, once by two different instructors, in an effort to create a more balanced appraisal of how well the essays met the objectives listed above.
In consultation with English as a Second Language (ESL) faculty, who were designing a similar assessment project for English 310, our committee of instructors drafted a set of ten criteria to judge when reading and scoring the essays. The instrument is below:

San Francisco State University
Assessment of English 214, Second-Year Composition
Spring 2002

The university-level General Education Segment I Committee has included the following two objectives among those for Written Communication courses. By the end of English 214 students should be capable of:

- "Substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts, and through personal insights” and
- "Distinguishing between adequate and inadequate substantiation of a thesis or topic, both of the essay and the paragraph levels."

In order to assess how well our English 214 students are achieving these objectives, we will read sets of essays from five English 214 sections and score them with the following criteria, on a scale from A through F:

1) Does this essay have a thesis?

2) Does this essay as a whole provide sufficient evidence to persuade the reader of the thesis?

3) Do the paragraphs in this essay provide sufficient evidence to persuade the reader of the thesis/topic statements of the paragraphs?

4) Are quotations from primary or secondary texts introduced with sufficient context so that the reader can understand the reference?

5) Does the student provide adequate analysis of quotations?

6) Does the student paraphrase quotations justly and sufficiently?

7) Does the student detect and discuss the tone and style of the language in quotations, i.e. does the student comment adequately on “how” the quotations present their information?

8) Does the student integrate quotations smoothly into his or her own sentences?

9) Is there variation in the way the student embeds quotations in his or her own sentences?

10) Does the student use punctuation (quotation marks, ellipses, brackets, etc.) appropriately and correctly for quoting?

---

**SCALE:**

A: very successful  B: successful  C: adequate  D: less than adequate  E: inadequate  F: not applicable
The five instructors met to discuss further these criteria and "norm" our scoring by reading and assessing two essays as a group. From this meeting we clarified the criteria, added letter "F—not applicable" as a choice on the scale, and gained confidence that we were working with the same set of assumptions when scoring student essays.

**Findings from the Assessment Project**

The Testing Center collated and summarized responses on 199 tally sheets from five sets of student essays read twice. We therefore analyzed 100 essays. (One instructor did not score an essay that was missing a page, hence the total of 199 rather than 200.) The Testing Center scanned the results twice, once with the category "F—not applicable" included and once without it. The category "F—not applicable" was used most frequently for questions six and seven on the scoring instrument.

6) Does the student paraphrase quotations justly and sufficiently?
7) Does the student detect and discuss the tone and style of the language in quotations, i.e. does the student comment adequately on "how" the quotations present their information?

These questions seemed relevant to the scorers for some of the essays and not for others, with "not applicable" appearing 37 times for question 6 and 56 times for question 7.

**Question #1: Does this essay have a thesis?**

The scoring indicates that by April of a spring semester English 214, most of our students structure their essays with at least an adequate thesis. 86% of the responses fell in categories A through C, "very successful," "successful" or "adequate." While 29% were in category C, "adequate," and we would like our students to produce more than "adequate" work, these numbers indicate that students about to leave English 214 effectively use a thesis for analytical essays.

**Question #2: Does this essay as a whole provide sufficient evidence to persuade the reader of the thesis?**

Most students seem also to understand and use evidence well to persuade a reader of their thesis. The highest score received was in category B, "successful," at 35.68%. A total of 80.91% of responses fell in categories A through C. Therefore approximately 19% of this sample of students did not provide sufficient evidence for the thesis in their essay.
Question #3: Do the paragraphs in this essay provide sufficient evidence to persuade the reader of the thesis/topic statements of the paragraphs?

Students seemed to do slightly better at presenting evidence sufficient to the essay as a whole than they did in individual paragraphs, but 77.89% of responses for question 3 fell in categories A through C. Therefore 22.11% of this sample of students could be better trained in using evidence within paragraphs.

Questions 1 through 3 assessed the success of the essays in providing a thesis and evidence to persuade a reader. Most of our students seem to be achieving these objectives in at least an adequate fashion. Questions 4 through 7 address how well students employ quotations in their own arguments. The students in this sample seem to achieve a certain amount of success in presenting others' ideas and quotations from texts in their own arguments, but the scores appear more consistently in category C, "adequate" than in the higher categories we saw used for Questions 1 through 3.

Question #4: Are quotations from primary or secondary texts introduced with sufficient context so that the reader can understand the reference?

32% of the essays introduced quotations in an adequate manner; 39% did so in a manner either "successful" or "very successful"; 21% were "less than adequate" or "inadequate," with 7% of respondents finding this question "not applicable." These numbers indicate that approximately half of the students in this sample could use more instruction on how to introduce quotations more successfully in their own arguments.

Question #5: Does the student provide adequate analysis of quotations?

Responses to question #5 are nearly identical to those to question #4. Our students seem to know that they need to use quotations for evidence in an essay, but approximately half of them had yet to achieve a "successful" or "very successful" analysis of the quotations they provide the reader.

Question #6: Does the student paraphrase quotations justly and sufficiently?

The number of responses "F—not applicable" which total 18% indicate that this question was perhaps less pertinent than others for this group of essays. Often in responding to a passage that a student has quoted, he or she must paraphrase the passage in order to analyze it. The scorers indicated that 34% of students achieve adequate paraphrasing and 33% do so "successfully" or "very successfully." This skill does not seem to present much of a problem for our students.

Question #7: Does the student detect and discuss the tone and style of the language in quotations, i.e. does the student comment adequately on "how" the quotations present their information?
Again, the scorers found this question less relevant than others, finding that it was "F— not applicable" 28% of the time. This perhaps speaks to the differences in assignments we were assessing, and also differences in goals for 214 sections. Some instructors emphasize literary style and form while others find this less important than getting students to analyze the implicit argument or philosophy of an author. On the whole, this question received the weakest score, with 25% of responses falling in the D "less than adequate" category and 13% in the E "inadequate" category. Only 30% of the essays were deemed "adequate" or better in responding to the tone and style of quotations used. This may indicate an area for further instruction in English 214.

Questions 8 through 10 address the mechanics of quoting: how well students integrate quotations from others into their material texts, through punctuation, embedding, and integration.

Question #8: Does the student integrate quotations smoothly into his or her own sentences?

The scorers found that 23% of students do not adequately integrate quotations into their own sentences. It takes a long time for students to learn this skill, but these responses indicate that approximately 71% of the students in this sample are at least adequately integrating quotations into their own sentences.

Question #9: Is there variation in the way the student embeds quotations in his or her own sentences?

The answers to question 9 are very similar to those for question 8. Approximately 75% of students in this sample vary the way they embed quotations and approximately 17% are less than adequate in doing so.

Question #10: Does the student use punctuation (quotation marks, ellipses, brackets, etc.) appropriately and correctly for quoting?

Most of the students in this sample know and use the basic punctuation marks to distinguish their writing and thoughts from those of others. 44% were found to have done so "successfully" or "very successfully" and 28% "adequately." 18%, however, were not using punctuation well in April of a 214 course to quote sources.
Use of the Findings for Program Improvement

The findings outlined above for this assessment project indicate that on the whole, by April of a spring semester English 214 class, most students were achieving the two objectives set for this course by the General Education Segment I Committee:

- "Substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts, and through personal insights" and
- "Distinguishing between adequate and inadequate substantiation of a thesis or topic, both of the essay and the paragraph levels."

Most of our students organize their essays with a thesis and provide sufficient evidence to persuade a reader of that thesis. At least 20% of our students, however, could be doing better at these tasks, and particularly at providing sufficient evidence on the paragraph level, introducing and analyzing quotations, and integrating and punctuating quotations in their own sentences and paragraphs.

This report will be shared with all 214 teachers; this will initiate a dialogue about what kinds of pedagogical changes we could make to improve the ability of approximately 20% of our students in quoting from sources. We will discuss particularly the question of whether an analysis of literary style and form is a necessary component of a sophomore-level composition course. If so, teaching students how to be sensitive to the language in quotations as well as the fact that they must use them to persuade their readers of their point of view will provide the biggest challenge to our program.

In addition, these findings will be shared with College of Humanities committees on plagiarism, as these committees might have further recommendations for improving our students' understanding of the use of quotations in university-level writing.
Essay #3: The Short Story

_The Yellow Wallpaper, What We Talk About When We Talk About Love, Seventeen Syllables, The Birthmark, How the Dead Live, Patriotism, Everything That Rises Must Converge_

**Assignment:** Using one of the above stories, analyze in a 3 1/2 — 5 page essay, how the author is using either the setting, a recurring symbol, the point of view, diction, tone, (less so character and theme), to illuminate the plot, to affect and reflect the meaning and narrative of the story. Choose only one of the above aspects of the story on which to focus your analysis so that you will be able to go deeply into both the possible causes and effects of that literary craft.

**Hints:** You'll need to go beyond, for example, simply observing and describing the setting. Rather, you'll need to explore the setting's role, how the setting functions in the story, what effect the setting has upon the other characters, the plot, and the reader, etc. If you're exploring Raymond Carver's story, you might discuss his minimalist style and how that connects to your focus, be it setting, symbol, etc. If you are writing about "The Yellow Wallpaper," you might examine the symbol of the wallpaper.

**Goals:** In order to understand how short stories are organized and developed, you will concentrate on one particular aspect of one of the stories from the list above. Your introduction/thesis must pinpoint your focus by naming it explicitly and analyzing WHY and TO WHAT EFFECT the particular craft is being used. Your topic sentences must act as mini-thesis statements, including a point but also beginning to examine that point in general terms. Your examples must depict your main point in a way that is clearly analyzed somewhere close to your illustration. And, most importantly, you must NOT give me a plot summary because I have already read the story many, many times.

**Include:** Use noun phrase appositives, adjective clauses, verbals, absolutes, whenever necessary, and they will be necessary. Put your thesis in brackets. Use quotes that are embedded within your own sentences and cite the page numbers. Turn in one copy of your rough draft with the final draft.

**Schedule of Discussions:**

3/13    "What We Talk about When We Talk about Love" Carver
3/15    "Everything That Rises Must Converge" O'Connor
3/18    "The Yellow Wallpaper" Gilman; Question paper due (2 pages typed)
3/20    "Patriotism" Mishima; Choose important passage and answer why (1 page typed)
4/3     "How-the-Dead-Live" Self (The North London Book of the Dead)
4/5     "The Birthmark" Hawthorne
4/8     Peer Response (2 pages typed + 3 copies)
4/10    Final Draft due
Writing Assignment
English 214

Analyzing a Novel

Tim O'Brien's book, The Things They Carried, is difficult to categorize; while it resembles an autobiography, a novel, and a short-story collection, it is not precisely any of these things. Rather, as the book's cover tells us, it presents the author's "unique vision of the horror that was Vietnam" in a series of related anecdotes and musings which focus on the war. However, even that description falls short, according to the text. O'Brien states the complexity clearly, saying:

War is hell, but that's not the half of it, because war is also mystery and terror and adventure and courage and discovery and holiness and pity and despair and longing and love. War is nasty; war is fun. War is thrilling; war is drudgery. War makes you a man; war makes you dead (86-87).

For this essay, choose some specific aspect of The Things They Carried which interests you, and write an organized, well-developed essay discussing it and explaining its importance to your understanding of the entire book. Here are some possibilities:

- Choose a particular scene or chapter which seems especially significant, and explain why it is important and how it illuminates the book's overall meaning.
- Identify and examine in detail a recurring theme—the loss of innocence or the waste of human potential, for example.
- Discuss the importance of some area of contrast—love/hate, fear/courage, reality/fantasy, to name a few.
- Focus on a particular character and provide a detailed discussion of his/her significance to your understanding of the overall story.
- Explain the significance of the book's title throughout the narrative.
- Suggest and support your ideas about the author's purpose in writing the book.

Or, as always, you are welcome to choose another topic of your own creation. Just be sure, when you write your essay, to focus on a central point to support, and provide plenty of information (especially quotations) and analysis (explanation) to "prove" your perspective is a valid one.

Your essay should be 3–4 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, in 10- or 12-point font, with one-inch margins, on standard, letter-size white paper, using a dark ribbon, please. You should also indicate, in the upper right-hand corner of the first page, your name, the course name and number, and the date.
SECOND YEAR COMPOSITION  English 214-12

Analysis of Fiction or of the Literary Essay  due April 17, 2002

Analyze or imitate a short essay from the Moves Writers Make textbook.
Or, analyze an example of the short story. Choose one of the stories
which the class has previously discussed.

Length:  three - four computer printed, double-spaced pages

Subject:  Each essay must have a thesis which reflects your assessment of the
main ideas and the literary style of a prose selection which the
class has studied. Demonstrate your ability to use appropriate terms
to describe the rhetorical and imaginative effects of language. Show
your familiarity with literary terminology.

In writing about short fiction, you may identify and critique how the
author uses one or two of the following devices: characterization,
plot structure, point of view, setting, symbolism, allegory, tone,
and style.

In analyzing an essay, you may write about one or two of the following:
point of view, logic, structure of argument, tools of persuasion, use
of illustration / example / anecdote, quality of description, level of
fiction, use of metaphor, use of analogy, figurative language, imagery,
and tone.

Whichever literary work you choose to analyze, be sure to discuss how the
major themes of the literary work are supported by the author's choices
of stylistic devices (including, for example, distinctive syntax,
grammar, and vocabulary).

Suggested Procedure for a Straightforward Critique (in Contrast to a Parody or
an Imitation) of a Literary Essay or Narrative

1) Identify the title, author, and basic subject of the work.
   Suggest the thesis of the essay or story with a brief direct
   quote (phrase, clause, or single sentence) from the work.
   Briefly explain the significance of the direct quote to the
   major situations of the work itself and to your essay thesis.
   State your essay thesis.

2) Expand upon your introductory paragraph by briefly giving your reader
   a sense of your essay's direction. For example, if your essay is
   mainly a comparison of your experiences on the theme of how people
   use English as a second language with Tan's experiences (as
   described in the Amy Tan essay, "Mother Tongue"), summarize the
   ideas of Tan which interest you. Then, briefly parallel Tan's
   concepts to your views, and/or contrast Tan's ideas to your own
   ideas about second language acquisition. Furthermore, identify
   an aspect of Tan's style which you considered impressive.
   Explain what made her figurative language, irony, or some other
   device meaningful to you.

3) Give your response to the essay or story in light of your own
   experiences. Identify a few experiences of your own which parallel
   or evoke the experiences described in the literary work. Discuss
Suggested Procedures for a Critique (continued)

4) how your interpretation of the literary work is colored by the ideas and feelings generated by your own experiences. What associations does the literary work have for you, in consequence of your life or of the lives of people whom you know well?

5) Analyze the essayist's or fictionist's style. (Limit yourself to a few points of style, at most.) Cite illustrations and examples of the rhetorical devices which you identify. Discuss the apparent purposes and effects of a certain style. Use at least a few brief direct quotes in support of your analysis of literary style.

6) In your conclusion, sum up your critical observations. Be sure to include a statement or a re-statement of the author's main themes, and your opinion of their significance.
Assignment #3

On the first page of *Nervous Conditions*, the narrator tells us that this story is “not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia’s; about my mother’s and Maiguru’s entrapment; and about Nyasha’s rebellion—Nyasha, far-minded and isolated, my uncle’s daughter, whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful” (1). For this essay, pretend you are a member of the community living at the mission who is also familiar with the conditions at the homestead. You are a neighbor who knows each of the figures in the sentence above quite well and has witnessed the events of the novel from close range. You see that Babamukuru will not let anyone speak with him about what is happening in his family and community and remains a remote figure even as he is the cause of much difficulty and some joy among these characters. As Tambu the narrator says at the end of the novel, “Babamukuru’s age alone merited the respect of silence. His education made him almost an elder. You simply could not talk” (202). At the risk of being disrespectful, you decide out of concern for him and his family to write Babamukuru a letter explaining some of what has been happening to one of the figures in the story from your point of view. You may refer to more than one figure, but focus your letter on the plight of either Tambu, Lucia, Tambu’s mother, Maiguru or Nyasha. Try to give Babamukuru an understanding of the struggles this character is enduring, and what role he has been playing in her life. What does Tambu mean by “escape,” “entrapment,” and/or “rebellion”? What are the issues of colonialism, education, class, gender, assimilation (179); tradition and modernity that mark the life of the character you choose to elucidate? What does Babamukuru need to understand about this character (and her attitude toward him) in order to be a more sensitive family member and perhaps help to resolve some of the character’s conflicts? What remains beyond the power of Babamukuru to solve, and therefore that over which he should not exert his authority? You may also include your knowledge of Tambu’s perspective (since she is the narrator) in your explanation of this character’s life.

Be sure to use MANY QUOTATIONS from the novel to explain your character’s struggle. (Use parenthetical citation style). Try to appeal to Babamukuru’s emotions as Harriet Jacobs tried to appeal to the women of the North to become abolitionists. Use any of Pratt’s terms of analysis from “Arts of the Contact Zone” if they are useful to you in explaining to Babamukuru what is happening in his family and his community.

5 typed pages
Rough Draft workshop Friday March 22.
Final Draft due in class Wednesday April 3.
Assessment Results for English 210 and English 310

English 210

Summary of findings re: student learning

English 210 is a course that is achieving its objectives, both with students and with teachers, according to the results of our surveys of 4 sections (approximately 90 students and 4 teachers). In terms of the progress students made from the first to the last speech, there was marked improvement noted by teachers. Students' speeches were evaluated on a 5-point scale; 1 being 'needs substantial improvement' and 5 being 'very good'. Students' first speeches received evaluations from 2--4; students' final speeches were evaluated in the 4--5 categories. In terms of student evaluations of learning objectives, the course also received very satisfactory ratings. There were 10 learning objectives, each carefully gone over at the beginning of the semester and again at mid-semester. Students responded on a scale of 'A' (strongly agree) to 'D' (strongly disagree). An 'A' response represented the most positive response to any question. For all 10 learning objectives, students responded with 'A's' or 'B's' (generally a 50/50% spread between the two), indicating that the course was meeting its objectives in the eyes of students.

Use of findings for program improvement

English 210 is clearly doing a good job of teaching oral communication skills. As coordinator, the only area of the course I see that needs work in an updating of our textbook, Communicating Effectively in English. This is an excellent book, and is the foundation of the course, but information on research methods in particular has become dated. I am urging the authors, Pat Porter and Margaret Grant, to work on a revision.

English 310

Summary of findings re: student learning

Our focus, based on the 1999-2000 assessment project, has been on improving student interaction with discipline-specific readings as the basis for their writing. This has included more extensive use of modeling of academic writing at both the global and sentence levels. We have introduced a diagnostic reading that is used throughout the semester as a model and as the basis of activities which help students learn: to respond in a substantive way to another writer's ideas and to decide when to paraphrase and when to quote another writer; and, at the sentence level, to paraphrase, attribute and cite another writer's ideas.
Use of findings for program improvement

While students made only minimal and often perfunctory use of the diagnostic reading in their first in-class essay, they showed generally good improvement in the final in-class essay in all of the areas mentioned above. Our primary concern at this point is with the 5% or so that enter English 310 with poor reading comprehension, having barely passed the prerequisite courses. The shrinking demand on students to write and read critically in the disciplines, and their general lack of exposure to academic writing, makes it very difficult for these students to pass English 310 in one semester.
ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH 310
SPRING 2000

Dorothy Lindsay, English 310 Coordinator

The following report, which is being submitted in accordance with Academic Senate Policy #S99-64 on the evaluation of Segment I Courses, explains the evaluation process and discusses what we learned from assessment activities for English 310, the course that fulfills the Written Communication Requirement in Segment I of the General Education Program for non-native speakers of English who have been in the U.S. for six years or less.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Background: In the Spring 2000 semester, English 310 instructors designed an assessment procedure and conducted an evaluation of one-quarter of the students (97 students were evaluated) enrolled for the semester in English 310. The ESL Program regularly offers twelve sections of English 310 each semester (with an average enrollment of 25 students) and two or three sections of this course in the summer, providing instruction to about 675 students per year. In English 310, students read, critically evaluate and elaborate on a variety of expository texts as the basis for their own writing. Students develop ideas and arguments through clear reasoning, personal insight and appropriate references to readings which have been drawn from different academic disciplines. (see English 310 Course Description and Table of Contents of Course Reader)

The goal of this project was to assess the extent to which English 310 meets the Segment I learning outcomes. The assessment procedure was designed with this in mind.

Procedure: An in-class, timed essay based on readings constituted the core of the assessment procedure. During the Spring 2000 final examination periods, students in four sections of English 310 had 90 minutes in which to write an essay on a prompt that asked them to write a well-developed and organized expository essay in response to ideas raised in one of two readings. (see Assessment Essay Prompts) These particular texts were chosen because they raise compelling and novel arguments on topics about which the students had read and written earlier in the semester. (see Assessment Readings) In this way, students were able to draw on ideas and details from a variety of sources, including from the reading used as the essay prompt. Because this was a test of reading comprehension and writing and not of reading speed, students were given the text during the last class of the semester, and were given an opportunity to discuss ideas in the reading with their classmates. Although they were not given the essay prompt before the final exam period, in the intervening time, students were allowed, as they might have been for an in-class essay in other disciplines, to re-read and elaborate on ideas raised in the article.

Each of the four instructors involved in the assessment project evaluated the essays in her class based on a Scoring Guide (see Scoring Guide) developed during the Spring semester.
When the assessment project was originally proposed, a scoring guide was developed based on wording of the grading criteria used by all English 310 instructors, criteria that reflect the Segment I Learning Objectives for Written Communication. (See 310 Grading Rubric) The original scoring guide, however, was reworked during the semester to more closely parallel the exact language of GE Segment I Policy's seven Learning Objectives. (See discussion below.) Instructors graded each student's essay on the basis of four descriptors for each of the seven learning objectives, and, in addition, gave the essay a summary letter grade of A, B, C or D. While the 28 descriptors were written to closely parallel those being used in the English 214 assessment project, there are differences which reflect: a) the difference in the task (English 214 students write textual analyses of literary pieces while English 310 students write informative or argumentative essays based on expository texts); and b) differences in teaching objectives (English 214 students must demonstrate a greater variety of syntactic structures and control over language than their ESL counterparts in English 310.)

All data collected during the assessment procedures was reported without identification of individual faculty or students. Each instructor was assigned a code for her section, and the results were tabulated and analyzed by the School of Humanities. (see Table of Results) The following discussion of the procedure and results is based primarily on the analysis of the English 310 coordinator, who also coordinated this project.

Discussion of Procedure: With the exception of the one area discussed below, the assessment procedure was relatively easy to develop and carry out. Instructors volunteered to assess their students based on the understanding that they would use the existing final exam--and not a separate assessment mechanism-- and a scoring guide adapted from our own English 310 scoring guide. This meant that instructors would not have to duplicate effort at the end of the semester. Using a single scoring guide, an instructor could both evaluate and grade each essay for the student AND fill out the Scantron card for the assessment project.

However, rewriting the descriptors based on the language of the seven Learning Objectives for Written Communication was difficult and made the scoring process confusing for the instructors. In addition, using the learning objectives as scoring criteria has made it more difficult for us to analyze learning outcomes based on what we actually teach and what we consider to be effective and compelling writing.

While four of the learning objectives--1, 5, 6, and 7--closely parallel our own scoring criteria, we found three of the objectives either wanting or confusing. For instance, the second learning objective of the Segment I Policy states that "students should be capable of formulating a thesis based on their readings." Based on this objective, we used the wording developed by the English 214 assessment project which evaluates the student's thesis based on how complete it is. However, throughout the semester English 310 students are evaluated not only on whether or not they have a thesis which suggests the argument or discussion that follows, but on whether the thesis is compelling, or good, or simply perfunctory. In timed, in-class essay writing, a thesis rarely gives more than a hint of the argument or discussion that follows. What we look for--and what we stress in our teaching and evaluation--is whether the thesis expresses an understanding of ideas raised in the text (already covered in criteria #1) and whether the thesis sets forth a compelling argument/analysis or simply tells the reader something she already knows, or repeats
an idea raised in the reading. "Formulating a thesis based on readings" is, as written, an element of organization more closely related to learning objective #5 having to do with "focus."

The third and fourth learning objectives—regarding substantiation of the thesis and development—created the greatest confusion. Instructors wanted to know, for instance, how a point can be substantiated without development. While we make a distinction for the purposes of teaching between general reasoning and analysis and specific development, both of these are necessary to "substantiate" a thesis. Therefore, for the purposes of evaluating student essays for the assessment, we had to make what we consider to be an artificial distinction between these two learning objectives. For the purposes of this assessment, we understand learning objective #3—regarding substantiation—to address general reasoning and analysis while learning objective #4—regarding development—addresses the further development of these ideas with specific details. The analysis of the results of the assessment that follow reflect this interpretation of the learning objectives.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

For each student essay, the descriptors were translated into scores of 1(highest)-4. For the purposes of analysis, the scores of the 97 students were averaged, and the results are presented here on the attached chart. Included are the scores for each of the criteria and the final grade, as assigned by each of the teachers, as well as an overall average for each line.

In analyzing the average scores, there are significant variations between the scores for the different criteria. The following is a discussion of the data, taking into consideration these variations and what they suggest about student learning outcomes in English 310. (Note: The scores assigned by Teacher 4 were, for nearly every criterion, substantially out of the range of the other teachers' scores; for criteria 1-5, her scores average more than ¾ of a grade level higher than the average of the other teachers' scores. However, the relationship between the overall average scores for the different criteria remains essentially the same whether we look at the scores assigned by Teachers 1-3, or by all four. This analysis uses the complete set.)

1. Do English 310 students demonstrate an understanding of the text and use it as a basis for the writing?

At 1.61, English 310 students demonstrate better than a basic understanding of the text.

Discussion: This is the criterion that students, interestingly enough, scored the highest on. I say interestingly because in a 1999 articulation project conducted of our two core composition courses—English 209 and 310— instructors identified reading comprehension as the single greatest weakness of our students. While it might be argued that the readings we selected were too easy for the students, the student performance based on this criterion more likely demonstrates that ESL and EFL students, when provided with sufficient cultural, political and historical schema, do have a better-than-basic understanding of the kinds of readings that they encounter in the disciplines. English 310 teachers devote a substantial amount of time to reading comprehension and to a discussion of the rhetorical strategies used by the writers. This emphasis
on reading has raised some concern among instructors in the ESL program as to whether we are devoting too much time to comprehension and discussion of the readings at the expense of time devoted to writing instruction. However, given the fact that a “thorough... understanding of discipline-specific texts” is the first and a key Segment I learning objective, the current choice of texts seems appropriate, as does our emphasis on understanding and elaborating on such readings.

2. Do English 310 students establish theses which addresses the writing task?
At 1.72, English 310 students are able to formulate theses that at least partially suggest the argument or discussion that follow.

Evaluating these results in terms of learner outcomes is difficult because of problems that instructors had in interpreting this descriptor (see “Discussion of Procedure” above). It seems safe to say that 310 students are able, by the end of the semester, to formulate theses that reflect ideas developed in their essays, and which may give some hint as to the essays’ organization. Whether instructors—consciously or unconsciously—also read into the descriptor an estimation of how compelling a thesis is, and, therefore, evaluated individual essays on this basis, I cannot say.

3. Do 310 writers substantiate their theses through appropriate references to the text(s) and, where, appropriate, through personal insights?
At 2.04, English 310 writers are able to partially support their theses with appropriate references to the text(s). The students include, where appropriate, personal insights, though the connections to their theses may not always be clear.

While English 310 students’ ability to substantiate and develop their ideas (see Descriptor 4) is certainly adequate, their performance shows that they still need work in these two areas. There are many possible explanations for this. Substantiating a thesis requires critical thinking skills that come from some combination of life experience and formal or informal education. English 310 students, for the most part, are young and lack maturity. In addition, many of our students read few expository texts outside of their major subjects, and, as a result, lack exposure to a variety of rhetorical styles, especially argumentation and exposition in the social sciences and humanities. Finally, EFL/international students are often unfamiliar with American academic rhetorical styles, and—even though they generally make great strides in our Program in adjusting their writing styles—they still have difficulty in arguing or discussing ideas using the conventions, including the direct style of setting forth an argument, typical of American academic discourse. In order to help students explain ideas and reason effectively, English 3:0 instructors explicitly examine how other writers—including ourselves—substantiate positions on a given topic. Other than continuing this kind of modeling, we can only wish that students were required to take more classes outside of English in which they had to write expository essays both at home and in class.

4. Do 310 students provide appropriate and sufficient evidence to support their theses both at the essay and paragraph levels?
At 2.18, English 310 students just adequately develop ideas with evidence (of various kinds). 310 writers offer some, though not always consistent, explanation of how support is related to the points they are making. As explained in “Discussion of Procedure,” this descriptor is very much connected--at least in our minds--to the previous one. As a result, much of the explanation given in the analysis of Description #4 above applies to an analysis of the learning outcome addressed in this descriptor. The lack of life experiences is one reason why students have difficulty in finding support that is representative, convincing, and/or illustrative. Lack of familiarity with American academic discourse might also help explain why some students fail to support ideas with the variety and amount of detail that we expect. Many students--especially those who learned to write essays in American high schools and/or junior colleges--have a difficult time “breaking free” of the personal essay with its personal, narrative examples. These students, as a result, find it difficult to draw on details--ranging from anecdotes to research findings--from written sources, or on personal observations or logical reasoning to support their argument. Once again, 310 instructors help students examine how other writers use a variety of kinds of support to develop their ideas.

A final explanation, not related to the issue of substantiation, is that--in a timed-writing situation--ESL students are simply unable to compose fast enough to effectively develop their ideas. Given the competing demands of staying focused, substantiating an argument, writing clearly at the sentence level, and proofreading, students may simply chose not to include or develop details.

6. Do English 310 writers demonstrate syntactic variety and appropriate word choice?

At 1.88, English 310 students demonstrate some syntactic variety and generally appropriate word choice, with occasional lapses in usage. As explained above in the “Procedure” of the evaluation process, the wording of this descriptor--while consistent with the Segment I learning objectives--is that used in our own grading criteria. “Syntactic variety” includes “knowledge of the principles of coordination and subordination, and of the ability to develop ideas at the level of the sentence.” We also added “appropriate word choice” to the descriptor because of the importance, for ESL and EFL students, of learning collocations, idioms and jargon used in various disciplines.

English 310 student writing is still flawed with non-idiomatic language. We understand that such errors are distracting, and occasionally interfere with meaning for many instructors in the disciplines. Nonetheless, English 310 students do use a variety of sentence structures including coordination and subordination to “develop ideas at the level of the sentence.” Since the addition of English 212, “Grammar for Writing,” to our ESL Program, students’ ability to write complex sentences in order to pack details into a sentences or to express the relationship between ideas has greatly improved. We encourage and reward attempts to create meaning at the sentence level, even when the attempt is flawed.

7. Do English 310 writers display good control of language and ability to proofread so that errors are not distracting?

At 1.99, English 310 students demonstrate adequate--not good--control of language. Their essays contain some errors, but grammar, in general, does not distract from meaning.
Once again, this descriptor is adapted from the Segment I learning objective which asks whether essays “are mainly free of significant errors in usage, writing mechanics and spelling.” ESL students must actively proofread their writing, not just for mechanical errors, but for grammar errors as well. Therefore, we needed and developed a descriptor that addresses this more directly.

Interestingly, students did not do as well in proofreading their essays as they did in using syntactic variety. In a timed-writing situation, students often make a strategic decision—despite our pleas to the contrary—to spend their time on content and organization as opposed to proofreading. The results of the assessment may reflect this writing strategy. The majority of students in our ESL program have been taught methods for proofreading and are evaluated on their control over language. Since proofreading is an extremely time-consuming process, and because in-class essays are graded based on six criteria, and not just one, it is safe to say that many students make the choice to use their 90 minutes to focus on content, organization and style, and not on proofreading. Perhaps they know, also, that what ESL instructors consider “significant errors” may not always be the same as what instructors in other disciplines consider “significant errors.”

English 310 instructors give individualized feedback and instruction to students based on their specific language needs. Given the other teaching objectives we must address, there simply is not enough time in a 3-unit writing class to address language and proofreading in greater depth.

8. English 310 students received an average summary-grade of “B” on their in-class essays.

CONCLUSIONS:

On assessment procedure: Using the existing final in-class essay exam as the core of a biannual assessment seems wise. However, as explained in the “Discussion of Procedure,” translating the language of the Segment I learning objectives directly into individual scoring criteria does not always work. Because the current English 310 Grading Criteria are largely consistent with the Segment I learning objectives, I would recommend the following: 1) English 310 instructors rework the current Grading Criteria, where possible, to more closely parallel the Segment I Learning Objectives. For instance, inclusion of a criterion that parallels the first Segment I learning objective would strengthen our current grading criteria. 2) English 310 instructors, in preparation for future Segment I assessment projects, develop scoring criteria—as we originally proposed—based on the wording of our own grading criteria.

Assessing more than four sections of English 310 would be difficult. Because the reading used as the basis of the in-class essay is chosen based on a topic discussed previously during the semester, and because topics vary from section to section, it would be difficult to find one or two readings that draw on issues raised and discussed in all sections. If we were to choose a reading on a topic unrelated to any we had discussed during the semester, instructors would have to invest at least two class sessions to helping students develop schema—the cultural, political, historical or geographic knowledge—discussed in #1 under “Analysis of Data.” Given the learning objectives of the course and student outcomes, particularly in the areas of language, this would seem to be an unwise use of class time.
On what we learned from the assessment: English 310 students, on the average, performed adequately or better in all the skills covered in the seven Segment I learning objectives. Variations in the results of performance on individual learning objectives are—with the exceptions noted in the discussion—interesting and will be useful in focusing the on-going work of refining course design and methods and choosing materials for the course. The results also demonstrate that we are teaching the strategies and skills that enable students to become effective academic writers.
ATTACHMENTS
## Assessment of Communication Competence in English 310

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions/Descriptors</th>
<th>Average Scores (1-4 Scale)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the writer demonstrate an understanding of the text and use it as a basis for the writing?</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does the writer establish a thesis which addresses the writing task?</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the writer substantiate the thesis through appropriate references to the text(s) and, where appropriate, through personal insights?</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does the writer provide appropriate and sufficient evidence to support her/his thesis both at the essay and paragraph levels?</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does the writer maintain a consistent focus throughout the essay, organizing support logically and cohesively both throughout the essay and within each paragraph?</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does the writer demonstrate syntactic variety and appropriate word choice?</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does the writer display good control of language and ability to proofread so that errors are not distracting?</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Please give an overall, summary grade.</td>
<td>2.52</td>
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</tbody>
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SCORING GUIDE for 310 ASSESSMENT PROJECT: Spring 2000

1. Does the writer demonstrate an understanding of the text and use it as a basis for the writing?
   The writer, in her/his essay,
   a. reveals a thorough understanding of the text.
   b. reveals a basic understanding of the text.
   c. reveals a simplistic understanding of the text.
   d. reveals an understanding of the text that is seriously flawed.

2. Does the writer establish a thesis which addresses the writing task?
   The writer
   a. provides a thesis which clearly suggests the argument or discussion that follows.
   b. provides a thesis that at least partially suggests the argument or discussion that follows.
   c. provides a thesis which only vaguely suggests the argument or discussion that follows.
   d. does not provide a thesis, or provides one that does not address the assignment.

3. Does the writer substantiate the thesis through appropriate references to the text(s) and, where appropriate, through personal insights?
   The writer
   a. supports his/her thesis with appropriate references to the text(s). The writer includes, where appropriate, personal insights in such a way that the connection to the thesis is clear.
   b. partially supports his/her thesis with appropriate references to the text(s). The writer includes, where appropriate, personal insights, though the connection to the thesis may not always be clear.
   c. makes limited use of text(s) to support his/her thesis. The writer includes limited personal insight; and, that which s/he does include has little connection to the thesis.
   d. offers no support from the text(s) and/or from insights for the points s/he is making.

4. Does the writer provide appropriate and sufficient evidence to support her/his thesis both at the essay and paragraph levels?
   The writer
   a. effectively develops ideas with convincing evidence of various kinds. The writer offers clear explanation of how this support is related to the points s/he is making.
   b. adequately develops ideas with evidence of various kinds. The writer offers some, though not always consistent, explanation of how this support is related to the points s/he is making.
   c. develops some ideas, but evidence may be weak or underdeveloped. The writer may fail to explain the importance of the support to the points s/he is making.
   d. provides inadequate or unconvincing support, or presents support in a way that is illogical or suggests s/he fails to understand the text(s).
5. Does the writer maintain a consistent focus throughout the essay, organizing support logically and cohesively both throughout the essay and within each paragraph?
The writer
a. maintains consistent focus and develops ideas logically and coherently, both throughout the essay and within each paragraph.
b. maintains focus and develops her ideas logically and coherently, but may occasionally wander from the topic. There may be lapses in logical organization, and the connections between ideas may not always be explicit.
c. does not always maintain focus. Ideas throughout the essay and/or within paragraphs may be loosely organized or repetitious.
d. fails to organize her ideas logically both at the essay and paragraph level.

6. Does the writer demonstrate syntactic variety and appropriate word choice?
The writer
a. demonstrates syntactic variety and appropriate word choice.
b. demonstrates some syntactic variety and generally appropriate word choice, with occasional lapses in usage.
c. demonstrates minimal facility with syntax and usage.
d. demonstrates inadequate sentence control and a limited vocabulary.

7. Does the writer display good control of language and ability to proofread so that errors are not distracting?
The writer
a. demonstrates good control of language. Errors are not distracting.
b. demonstrates adequate control of language. The essay may contain some errors, but grammar does not distract from meaning.
c. demonstrates inconsistent control of language. Errors may occasionally obscure meaning.
d. makes serious and frequent errors that interfere with readability.

8. Please give this essay an overall, summary grade. (d=nc)
a
b
c
d
Course description: English 310 is a composition course, focusing on academic writing. You will learn to critically evaluate and interact with readings in order to generate ideas for your own essays. You will learn to develop your ideas/arguments through clear reasoning, personal insight and appropriate references to the readings. This will include instruction in the use of academic citation and documentation. During the semester, you will keep a reading/writing notebook in which you will respond to the readings. For each essay, you will write multiple drafts, discuss your writing with classmates in small groups and with me in conference. While the primary classroom focus will be on how to develop and organize an academic essay, you will be expected to write effectively at the sentence level. That is, you must employ a variety of grammatical structures which help you to express your ideas clearly and you must proofread so that your final essays are free of serious and distracting grammar errors. Throughout the semester, you will work towards meeting the learning objectives for Written Communication (General Education Segment I Policy) outlined at the end of this course description.

Required texts:

* English 310 Course Reader


* Instructor Materials

Attendance Policy: I take attendance at every class meeting. If you are absent more than the equivalent of two weeks’ class meetings, you will receive a No Credit in the course. Being late for class three times is the same as one absence. Missing or coming unprepared for a scheduled conference is the same as missing two class meetings. You are responsible for class work and homework even if you are absent.

Evaluation/Grading Policy: You may take this course ABC/No Credit or Credit/No Credit.

Final grades will be based on cumulative average of your essays, in-class essay exams, reading/writing journal, short writing assignments and attendance and participation. See the current course syllabus for a percentage breakdown. In order to receive a grade for an essay, you must submit multiple drafts which reveal your writing process and proofreading strategies. You must complete all assignments and achieve an average of C—including on the in-class midterm and final essay exams—to pass this course.

I will grade your essays based on what you write (content) and how you write it (organization and language.) I am looking for writing that is honest and compelling.

Due dates/Late work: Reading/Writing notebook entries will not be accepted late. Late essays will not be accepted without prior arrangement.

Conferences: I will be discussing your writing and your grammar with you in conferences. One-on-one conferences are an important part of the course because they give you the opportunity to get individual feedback and to ask questions about your writing. Conferences are required.
San Francisco State University
GENERAL EDUCATION SEGMENT I POLICY

Learning Objectives for Written Communication

Students who complete Segment I should attain writing skills suitable for upper division work. Written composition courses should provide students with ample opportunities to practice their writing, and student work should receive thorough and demanding instructor critique. Students will be expected to do significant amounts of writing in order to enhance their composition skills. Drafts and final papers should range in length from 500 to 2000 words. The total quantity of writing assigned including drafts and final papers, should amount to a total of between 6000 to 7000 words. Courses should require reading as a source of information and as a model of excellent writing. Skills practiced in composition courses should include clear reasoning, organization, accuracy in language use, and the ability to discover, critically evaluate, and report information.

By the end of this course, students should be capable of:

1. Understanding discipline-specific texts thoroughly and using them as a basis for their writing assignments.
2. Formulating a thesis based on their readings.
3. Substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts, and through personal insights.
4. Distinguishing between adequate and inadequate substantiation of a thesis or topic, both of the essay and the paragraph levels.
5. Writing essays and paragraphs that are well focused and relevant to the subject identified in their theses and topics.
6. Demonstrating knowledge of the principles of coordination and subordination, and of the ability to develop ideas at the level of the sentence, rather than by mere accretion of sentences.
7. Writing compositions which are mainly free of significant errors in usage, writing mechanics, and spelling.
June 18, 2002

To:    Nancy McDermid
       Dean, College of Humanities

From:  Ceci Hermann and Dodie Lindsay
       Coordinators, 2002 General Education Assessment Project

Re:    2002 Assessment for English 310

LEARNING OBJECTIVES ASSESSED

For the 2002 assessment activity, English 310 instructors chose to focus in greater detail on the following two Segment I Written Communication Objectives which specify that students should be capable of:

1. Understanding discipline-specific texts thoroughly and using them as a basis for their writing assignments.

2. Substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts, and through personal insights.

We broke down these two larger objectives into more specific learning objectives, assessing whether, by the end of the semester, students are capable of:

1. Comprehending and using main ideas from the readings to inform his/her discussion of the topic.

2. Drawing on personal insight and/or relevant experiences and observations in order to elaborate on ideas from the readings.

3. Using appropriate evidence from primary and secondary reading sources to substantiate his/her discussion/argument.

4. Synthesizing ideas and details from more than one reading source.

5. Establishing a context for specific references to the texts whenever she/he paraphrases or quotes.

6. Making appropriate decisions about when to quote.

7. Paraphrasing accurately, maintaining the source writers’ idea(s).

8. Paraphrasing accurately at the syntactic and word choice level.
9. Using words and phrases to distinguish his/her ideas or support from those of another writer.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Background and strategies used to collect information
In a 2000 assessment project, English 310 students demonstrated a better than basic understanding of the text. They were, however, only partially able to support their theses with appropriate references to the text and appropriate personal insights connected to the text. While the 2000 outcomes were based on a very limited assessment of one in-class essay, the 2002 project is based on a portfolio assessment of two substantive take-home essays. By gathering information based on both the first and final take-home essays, we felt we could better determine how well students learn over the course of one semester.

Fall 2001 and Winter 2002
1. English 310 instructors met to determine a focus and an initial strategy for the 2002 assessment project. We agreed to take a closer look at how well students use readings as the basis of their writing on their first and final take-home essays. We brainstormed to determine the individual skills that students must learn in order to use texts as the basis of their writing. We decided to assess student performance in four of the eleven sections of English 310, and three instructors and the English 310 coordinator volunteered. The four participating instructors agreed to use the same two thematic units ("Globalization/U.S. Image as Seen from Afar," and "Privacy and Security"), the same readings, and similar essay assignments for both essays (see appendices 1 and 2).

2. In Winter 2002, the four instructors met in what turned out to be a very time-consuming process of agreeing on readings for the two essays. Readings in English 310 are expository, not literary. For each unit, we chose a variety of readings which present differing analyses and views and which employ a variety of rhetorical strategies (see appendix 3 for an example). We also attempted to choose readings that were of similar difficulty for both units.

Spring 2002
1. The project coordinators, with input from the other two participating instructors, devised a portfolio scoring rubric (see appendix 4) to assess nine learner outcomes, ranging from the conceptual to the more rhetorical and language-based skills required to use readings as the basis for writing.

2. Because we were also curious about how students evaluate their own writing, the project coordinators devised a student self-assessment. Seven of the questions loosely parallel the categories of the instructors' portfolio scoring rubric. The final three questions ask students about the difficulty of the readings in comparison to those they are assigned in other classes, their previous experiences with academic writing, and whether or not they think this kind of writing will be useful for them in the future (see appendix 5).
3. Using a computer-generated random sampling, ten students were chosen from each of the four sections, a total of 40 students.

4. The four instructors administered the student self-assessment to all students—not just those chosen for the project—on the days students turned in their first and final essays. For the purposes of this project, we will report only the information gathered from the 40 students in the random sampling.

5. In preparation for the reading and scoring of the essays, names were removed and two photocopies made of each of the 40 students’ first and final essays.

6. During final exam week, the four instructors met for a three-hour norming session to familiarize ourselves with the new rubric and procedures, and to read, score and norm ourselves.

7. In the week following final exams, each instructor read and scored 40 essays—20 each of the first and final essays—using the 9 categories on the “portfolio assessment.” In this way, each essay was read and scored by two instructors.

8. The instructors recorded their response on Zeus test forms, which were coded to help track the double readings for each student’s two essays. The Zeus forms were scanned by the Testing Center, which provided data in two forms: summary and raw. We were more interested in the raw data, which allowed us to look more closely at achievement of the specific learner objectives described on the rubric. The project coordinators enlisted the assistance of Yasuhiro Imao, a former MATESOL graduate student, to help analyze the raw quantitative data.

DISCUSSION OF PROCESS

Flaws in the procedure
In the process of devising strategies for collecting information, we realized two major flaws in our process:

1. While it was our intention to measure student progress during the course of one semester, we realized that—in fact—we are actually measuring progress over two-thirds of the semester. The first take-home essay is collected after one-third of the instructional time has passed. In designing such an assessment in the future, we could do one of the following: assess a final take-home essay in English 209/Composition I (English 114 equivalent) and the final essay in English 310; or, assign a take-home essay at the second or third class meeting in the place of the current in-class essay diagnostic.

2. While the writing tasks required for the first and final essays in English 310 are similar, they are not the same. The first assignment draws on only three readings, while the final essay draws on a minimum of six readings. The topic for the first assignment was easier to substantiate with personal insight and experience than was the topic for the final essay. We spend more time analyzing and elaborating on the readings for the first essay than we do for the final essay. In designing such an assessment in the future, we could rework the syllabus and devise assignments for the first and final take-home essays that were more similar and that require the same number of readings.
Assumptions about learner outcomes
Based on what we teach during the course of the semester, we assumed—even before reading the student essays—that students would generally show progress in categories three through nine based on the Portfolio Scoring Rubric. That is, by the end of the semester, they would do a better job of using evidence from the readings to substantiate their discussion/argument, synthesizing, establishing a context for references to the readings, quoting, paraphrasing and using reporting language.

However, because of the differences in the two assignments, we could not predict how students would perform on the first two criteria: 1) comprehending and using main ideas, and 2) drawing on personal insight and/or relevant experiences and observations.

FINDINGS FROM THE ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Quantitative data
Yasuhiro provided us with statistical analyses of the raw data in four areas of interest to us:
1. Statistically significant variations in the students’ writing that were observed in the portfolio assessment results
2. Statistically significant variations in the students’ own assessment of their writing
3. Inter-rater (reader) reliability
4. The correlation between students’ self-assessment and instructors’ assessment

This section will describe the findings in areas 1 and 2. Findings related to areas 3 and 4 will be described in the Qualitative Data section.

I. Description of portfolio assessment findings
The following charts summarize the mean scores, standard deviation, and range of scores for Essay 1 and Essay 3. Note that the total scores are represented as well as the scores for each of the learner objectives (LO) in the assessment rubric (Appendix 4). In columns labeled LO, a score of 4 represents “above average”; a score of 1 represents “Poor”.

Chart 1 (Essay 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>E1 Total</th>
<th>LO-1</th>
<th>LO-2</th>
<th>LO-3</th>
<th>LO-4</th>
<th>LO-5</th>
<th>LO-6</th>
<th>LO-7</th>
<th>LO-8</th>
<th>LO-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>20.81</td>
<td>21.83</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 2 (Essay 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>LO-1</th>
<th>LO-2</th>
<th>LO-3</th>
<th>LO-4</th>
<th>LO-5</th>
<th>LO-6</th>
<th>LO-7</th>
<th>LO-8</th>
<th>LO-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>22.64</td>
<td>24.82</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next chart reports assessment variation between Essay 1 and Essay 3. Figures in bold represent variation that is statistically significant (P value – the probability that the variations are by chance only – is less than .01).

Chart 3 (Assessment Variation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Var Total</th>
<th>LO-1</th>
<th>LO-2</th>
<th>LO-3</th>
<th>LO-4</th>
<th>LO-5</th>
<th>LO-6</th>
<th>LO-7</th>
<th>LO-8</th>
<th>LO-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Discussion of findings

A. Positive variations

Earlier we stated that we assumed that students generally would show improvement in categories 3 through 9. In fact, this was true only for categories 3 through 8, and the progress was "significant" only in categories 3, 4 and 6. These categories pertain to skills that receive decidedly more instructional emphasis in English 310: using appropriate evidence, synthesizing ideas and details from more than one source, and quoting. Participants in the study improved from ratings of Poor or Below Average in these areas (see Chart 1, means for LO-3, LO-4, LO-6) to ratings of Average (see means for these categories in Chart 2).

In category 8, variation was also positive, though slightly less significantly (P value is less than .05). Here, we find that students’ ability to paraphrase accurately at the syntactic and word choice level improved slightly. This increase in fluency may be a result of a combination of factors, including students’ greater awareness of the language and discourse in assigned readings and confidence in how to paraphrase; practice; effort; and, a possibly higher incidence of unattributed use of original language from sources.

In categories 5 (establishing context for text references) and 7 (accurate paraphrasing of source writers’ ideas), slight improvements were again demonstrated, though they were not statistically significant.

B. Negative variations

There were negative variations in categories 1, 2 and 9; the “decline” in category 2 was statistically significant, with a P value less than .01. Here, students moved from performing at a slightly above Average level to a level midway between Average and Below Average. However, we feel that this particular finding does not necessarily reflect a decline in students’ ability to draw on personal insight and/or relevant experience in order to elaborate on ideas from the readings; rather, it could reflect the difference in the nature of the two writing tasks. In Essay 1,
students are explicitly instructed to “examine the relationship between ideas in the readings and [their] own experiences, observations and attitudes.” In Essay 3, the objective is to explore and analyze the various facets of a particular issue, using a number of sources. In this case, references to relevant personal experience may seem less appropriate and even less possible, depending on the issue. (See also “Discussion of Process: Flaws in the Procedure #2”) Therefore, the negative variation in Category 2 may be a reflection of the different kinds of writing required for the two essays, and of the instructors’ different interpretations of “personal insight” in a research essay. (See “Qualitative Data: Inter-rater Reliability”)

Though not statistically significant, we feel that the negative variation in category 1 – comprehending and using main ideas from the reading to inform one’s discussion of the topic – is worthy of attention and comment. Generally, the reading material for Essay 3 is more difficult than that required for Essay 1; at the same time, much less class time is devoted to comprehension-related tasks and discussion for Essay 3 readings. Indeed, since students are required (for Essay 3) to find a number of articles independently, they are approaching these articles without any instructor support. A variation, then, of -.03 (Chart 3, LO-1) is difficult to interpret definitively. If this sharp increase in difficulty were to be factored in, it is conceivable that a slight increase in this category would be detected. It should also be noted that we did not expect a measurable improvement in this category due to the brief amount of time involved (3-4 months); such an expectation would be unrealistic.

Lastly, there was an insignificant negative variation in category 9, which rates students’ use of reporting language to clearly distinguish source ideas from their own ideas. Students achieved a mean score of 2.91 in this area for Essay 1, and a mean score of 2.81 for Essay 3, representing a slight movement downward from Average. Because students used less reporting language overall in Essay 1, it is not surprising that they would have fewer problems than they did for Essay #2 in attributing their sources. (See also “Qualitative Data: Inter-rater Reliability”)

III. Description of student self-assessment findings
The following chart summarizes the mean scores, standard deviation, and range of scores for students’ responses on the two self-assessment surveys (Appendix 5). The students completed this survey when they submitted their essays. Note that Charts 4 and 5 include the total scores and the scores for each of the first seven categories of the survey (the last three categories of the survey will be discussed in “The Student Self-Assessment” in the Qualitative Data section). For these categories, a score of 4 indicates that the student chose the descriptor related to greatest competence; a score of 1 indicates that the student chose the descriptor related to least competence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 4 (Self-Assessment after Essay 1)</th>
<th>SI Total</th>
<th>Cat. 1</th>
<th>Cat. 2</th>
<th>Cat. 3</th>
<th>Cat. 4</th>
<th>Cat. 5</th>
<th>Cat. 6</th>
<th>Cat. 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>21.74</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 5 (Self-Assessment after Essay 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cat. 1</th>
<th>Cat. 2</th>
<th>Cat. 3</th>
<th>Cat. 4</th>
<th>Cat. 5</th>
<th>Cat. 6</th>
<th>Cat. 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>22.51</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next chart reports variation between the earlier and later self-assessments. Figures in bold represent variation that is statistically significant (P value is less than .01).

Chart 6 (Self-Assessment Variation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Var Total</th>
<th>Cat. 1</th>
<th>Cat. 2</th>
<th>Cat. 3</th>
<th>Cat. 4</th>
<th>Cat. 5</th>
<th>Cat. 6</th>
<th>Cat. 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next two charts report actual number of responses in each category, for each survey.

Chart 7 (Responses by Category, Self-Assessment after Essay 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cat. 1</th>
<th>Cat. 2</th>
<th>Cat. 3</th>
<th>Cat. 4</th>
<th>Cat. 5</th>
<th>Cat. 6</th>
<th>Cat. 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a = 4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>b = 3</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c = 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d = 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 8 (Responses by Category, Self-Assessment after Essay 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cat. 1</th>
<th>Cat. 2</th>
<th>Cat. 3</th>
<th>Cat. 4</th>
<th>Cat. 5</th>
<th>Cat. 6</th>
<th>Cat. 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a = 4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b = 3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>c = 2</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d = 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. Discussion of findings

Regarding variation between Essays 1 and 3, there was only one area in which students rated themselves significantly differently: in the area of using details from the readings (category 4), they indicated that they became more proficient in using details from the readings as support for their ideas.

Differences in two other areas, though not significant, should be noted. In the area of using main ideas from the readings (category 2), students indicated a very slight amount of improvement (.15) in their ability to do this. This is understandable based on the fact that one of the primary goals of English 310 is to develop competence in academic writing, and particularly the incorporation of source ideas in their writing.

Nevertheless, Category 6, which pertained to balancing references to sources with references to students' own ideas, is the category where students in general gave themselves lower ratings.
compared to the other categories. Regardless of the fact that 310 students are exposed to explicit instruction in strategies for incorporating sources into their writing, and despite their awareness of this set of skills as a core component of academic writing, more than half of the participants feel less confident in their ability to demonstrate competence in this area. In this category, in fact, we observe negative variation between the earlier and later surveys, though it is not a significant variation (−.15). Interestingly, in the two surveys, the exact same number of students (10) gave themselves the lowest score in this category.

Qualitative data

I. Discussion of the portfolio assessment

A. Scoring rubric process
After analyzing the findings of the portfolio assessment, we realized that categories one and two of the scoring guide are poor measures of student progress. While categories 3 through 9 assess learning that is clearly connected to instruction, the first two categories—which assess students' ability to comprehend and use the readings and to draw on personal insight and relevant experiences—seem to measure the reading and writing skills students bring with them to the class at the beginning of the semester, their world knowledge and experiences, engagement with a particular topic, and/or the level of difficulty of the assigned readings.

In addition, we now recognize that “drawing on personal insight” (category 2) is very different given a writer's purpose. In essay #1, for instance, “personal insight” often takes the form of challenging the validity of or extending another writer's argument based on personal experience. In essay #3, however, “personal insight” may come in the form of synthesizing the views of others on a controversial issue in order to come to a fuller understanding of a topic. The personal insight in argument may seem more compelling to us as instructors than the personal insight in other kinds of exposition. As a result, it is impossible to judge progress by examining the variations in category 2 scores for essays #1 and 3.

B. Inter-rater (reader) reliability
We were surprised that, despite the three-hour norming session (see #6 under “Background and strategies used to collect information”), the raw data showed extremely poor inter-reader reliability. Although the overall scores assigned by each of the four instructors were—on the average—very close, they varied widely in each category for each essay. Such unreliability suggests further flaws in the portfolio assessment procedure. On a more positive note, it provides insight into the difficulty of assessing such very discrete learning objectives.

The following chart summarizes the inter-rater reliability for both essays in each of the 9 categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A result of between 1.0 and 0.8 is considered reliable. What is particularly striking in these results is that the reliability fell significantly between essay #1 (at 0.62) and essay #3 (at 0.44). The greatest variability is in categories 5, 7 and 9.

One possible explanation for the greater unreliability in essay #3 is that—because this essay assignment requires more references to the sources—it became increasingly difficult for the instructors to pinpoint weaknesses and strengths using discrete criterion. For instance, while two instructors may have agreed on similar overall weaknesses or strengths in an individual student’s use of the sources, they might not be able to agree on to what extent their general assessment was based on the student’s ability or inability to (5) establish a context for references to the texts, (7) paraphrase while maintaining the writer’s ideas, and/or (9) use reporting language. Assessing each essay on the basis of nine criterion may simply be too difficult.

In addition, unreliability for both essays could have resulted from confusion about individual criterion, and/or from a lack of practice in this kind of assessment procedure. Although all four instructors had input into writing the scoring rubric, it was clear at the norming session that we had different interpretations of criteria that had seemed--on paper--to be very clear. We had a long discussion, for instance, about exactly what constitutes “us[ing] a main idea to inform [a] discussion,” and weren’t always in complete agreement as to what are the “main ideas” for a particular reading. Since reading, scoring and discussing take-home essays at a norming session is extremely time consuming, we were able to read and agree on scores for only 7 of the 40 essays. The rest were done independently by each instructor.

II. Discussion of the student self-assessment

A. In relation to the portfolio assessment

Although the nine categories in the Portfolio Assessment do not precisely parallel the first seven questions of the Student Self-Assessment, we were curious to see if there was a correlation between the two. Yasuhiro provided us with a Correlation Matrix which, while not definitive, suggests that students in general evaluated their writing skills at a higher level than did the instructors. There was a slightly greater correlation between the two assessments on the third essay. This was not surprising since students need to be trained to evaluate themselves. We can posit that students who are better writers know what they don’t do well, and, therefore, evaluate themselves lower while weaker students do not know what they don’t do well, and, as a result, evaluate themselves higher. The greater correlation between the two assessments for the final essay, while still not statistically significant, suggests that students had a slightly better understanding of the discrete academic writing skills described and were better at evaluating their own work; that is to say, they were learning to evaluate themselves.

B. Categories 8 through 10

These three questions (see appendix 5, categories 8-10) were added to provide us with important qualitative information about how the reading and writing in English 310 compares to that in other
courses and about whether or not students felt that this kind of writing would be useful to them in the future.

The following chart shows the actual number of responses in each category for each essay:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSAY 1</th>
<th>08</th>
<th>09</th>
<th>10</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>21</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>ESSAY 2</th>
<th>08</th>
<th>09</th>
<th>10</th>
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<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Category 8: Difficulty of readings*

For essay #1, a majority of students felt the readings were similar in difficulty to the readings assigned in other courses outside of the English Department (A). Thirty-eight percent of the students felt the readings were more difficult (B), and one student felt the readings for the first essay were easier.

For essay #3, the percentage of students who felt the readings were of similar difficulty fell to 48%. While we judged the readings for the two essays to be similar in difficulty, we do not know whether this is, in fact, the case. Therefore, the drop may be because the readings for essay #3 were, in fact, more difficult, or it may be because we spent significantly less class time discussing them. (See also “Quantitative Data: Discussion of Findings; B. Negative Variations”)

The fact that almost all students fell into one of two “camps”, believing either that the readings were of similar difficulty to readings in non-English courses, or that they are more difficult, has broader implications. Across all disciplines, it seems that, in reality, there are substantial differences in the amount and difficulty of required reading, depending on the discipline.

*Category 9: Familiarity with academic writing*

The answers for questions 9 and 10 should have been the same for essays #1 and 3, and were with only one insignificant variation.

For question 9, only a few students reported that using readings as the basis for their writing was something entirely new to them (A), but 53% of the students reported that they had only done this kind of writing a few times (C), either in other classes at SFSU or in another university. While we are not surprised by these numbers, they are salient reminders of how difficult it is to teach academic writing skills when students are so rarely required to use them in the disciplines.
Category 10: Usefulness of this kind of writing
Happily, 87% of the students reported that they felt the kind of writing they do in English 310 will be of use to them in the future (A). This last piece of qualitative information is a shot-in-the-arm for English 310 instructors.

USE OF THE FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Using the scoring guide and future assessment
Breaking down larger learning objectives into smaller objectives that reflect actual instruction and presumed learner outcomes was a valuable process. The nine categories from the Portfolio Assessment can be used by instructors in:
- defining expected learner outcomes for students in our course objectives and in course syllabi
- discussing course objectives as a faculty
- refining grading profiles

However, using discrete learning objectives for a quantitative assessment in the future may not be wise. The lack of inter-rater reliability--despite the careful work in devising a scoring guide and in norming ourselves--suggests that it is very difficult to accurately pinpoint discrete strengths and weaknesses.

Implications for instruction
The quantitative and qualitative data from this assessment will be used at the beginning of 2002-03 academic year for a series of discussions for instructors teaching at all levels in the ESL program. We can, at this point, make a few observations based on the quantitative data to launch this discussion.

By the end of the semester in English 310, students have made statistically significant improvement--and perform just below average, average, or above average--in:
- using appropriate evidence from primary and secondary reading sources in order to substantiate a discussion/argument;
- synthesizing ideas and details from more than one reading source;
- making appropriate decisions about when to quote.

Students make very small gains in:
- establishing clear contexts for their references to the text;
- maintaining the source writers' original idea(s) when paraphrasing.
This may have instructional implications for English 410 and 411, as well as for English 310, since these skills continue to receive focus in the upper division courses.

When essay assignments require greater interaction with reading texts, students have greater difficulty in:
- using words and phrases to distinguish their ideas or support from those of another writer.
This may have instructional implications for English 212 as well as for English 310, since the focus of 212 is to develop students' skills on the syntactic level.

Because of the different kinds of readings and writing assigned during one semester, it is difficult to measure improvement in students' ability to:
- comprehend and use main ideas from the readings to inform a discussion/argument;
- draw on personal insight and/or relevant experiences and observations in order to elaborate on ideas from the readings.

Referring back to the two Segment I Written Communication Objectives mentioned at the beginning of this report, we can say that English 310 students make significant improvement in "using discipline-specific texts as a basis for their writing assignments," but do not necessarily make improvement in one semester in "understanding [such] texts." We can also say that students make significant improvement in "substantiating a thesis through appropriate references to primary and secondary texts" but not necessarily through "personal insights."

The qualitative findings suggest that we are using appropriate reading materials, that students feel they are learning in English 310, and that they feel what they are learning will be of use to them in the future.

In the students' assessment of their abilities, they generally rated their skills more highly than the instructors did. As discussed earlier, this is most likely due to their lack of training in rating their own skills. Nevertheless, it is particularly surprising that students would rate themselves as slightly above average after the first essay, when a relatively small segment of the course has been completed (and in fact, their assessment of their skills did not increase significantly after the final essay). Besides the lack of training, it is possible that this reflects the results of a 1999 ESL Program study of the articulation between English 209 (Composition I, which precedes 310), and English 310. The findings from this study led to proposed strategies for improving the articulation between the courses. Quite possibly, we are seeing that the implementation of these strategies has resulted in a perception on the part of the students that they have already made some progress in the area of mastering academic writing skills before they reach English 310; at the very least, the surveys reflect that students feel that most of these skills are familiar, and not necessarily brand new territory.
ESSAY #1: Spring 2002
Topic: “A Nation Alone: U.S. Image as Seen from Afar”

Background:
In a recent poll by the Pew Research Center, a significant majority of business, media and governmental leaders from 24 countries expressed a favorable opinion of the United States for, among other things, its “democratic ideals” (Longworth, 2001, par 12 & 13). These same leaders, however, were also critical of the United States’ policies and actions and of American attitudes. Why does the U.S. have such a negative image as seen from afar? This is the question addressed in the three articles we have just finished reading. One article was written prior to, and two were written after the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Assignment:
Drawing on at least two of these readings, write an essay in which you explain and discuss what you consider to be the most important reasons “why so much of the world doesn’t like [the U.S.] very much, or agree with [the U.S.] or think [Americans] know what [they’re] doing” (Longworth, par 3).

Your purpose in writing this essay will be to illuminate, evaluate, or test the validity of the ideas and opinions contained in the readings and/or to compare them with your own views, experiences and observations.

In your discussion of the reasons, you may wish to do some combination of the following:
* validate a particular reason by illustrating it with your own observations of others or experiences;
* challenge a particular reason, showing how it is weak, contradictory, self-serving or illogical;
* expand upon the reasons given by other writers, putting forth a reason that they failed to mention;
* discuss the implications of such a negative image for the future of global trade, for economic development in your native country or elsewhere, for the fight against terrorism, for world peace, etc;
* make suggestions—drawn from the readings or from your own ideas—of how the U.S. should address its negative image abroad.

(Be careful: don’t try to do all of this!)

In order to clarify and strengthen your own ideas, you will need to provide specific and vivid support based upon your experiences or observations of others. In order to refer to ideas and details in the reading(s), you will need to use summary, paraphrase and quotation. (Since we have not yet discussed how to quote, I would prefer that you mostly summarize and paraphrase. Use quotes only in a limited quantity.)

Caution: You cannot fulfill this assignment by writing a paragraph summary and then responding without making further references to the readings. This assignment requires that you interact with and use the readings throughout your essay. At least 1/3 of your essay should be drawn from ideas and details in the readings.
essay #1—page 2

Due dates:
First Draft for Conference with Instructor: Tues and Wed 2/19 and 2/20
(Make sure to read Conference Guidelines on p. 117 of Course Reader)
Class canceled on Tuesday 2/19

Second draft for Peer Review: Tuesday 2/26

Final Essay: Thursday, February 28

Length: Approximately 750 to 1000 words (3 to 4 pages, 12 pt. type)

Format: Please read pages 118-120 “Requirements for Written Work,” “Minimum Standards of Acceptability...” and page 122 on “Plagiarism and Cheating.”

GETTING STARTED: GATHERING MATERIAL AND FOCUSING YOUR IDEAS:

1. Reread all your discussion questions on course handouts and the freewriting you wrote in response to ideas in the readings. Look for interesting ideas that might be worth writing about.

2. Ask yourself:
   -- Which of the ideas in the readings interested me the most?
   -- Do I have enough to say about the ideas in these readings? In other words, do I have opinions, personal experiences or observations that could support my ideas?

3. Once you have begun to focus your ideas:
   -- reread the articles, looking carefully at your annotations and searching for passages you especially like.
   -- review the discussion questions and freewrite for 10 minutes on one or two questions.

4. Read a sample of an English 310 student essay in the Course Reader on pp 20-21. Notice that all the material in brackets } is paraphrased from the reading sources.

WHAT TO BRING TO CONFERENCE:

— Your Course Reader with the annotated articles.
— The homework assignments you completed: make sure that your charts are complete.
— The summary and any other writing you did for homework.
— Your first draft (NOT a freewrite) of your essay. Underline your thesis.
— Be prepared to tell me what parts of your essay you feel are the strongest, and what parts you are concerned about.
Essay #3 – Spring 2002

Issues related to the relationship between the growing use of technology and the effects on personal privacy

ASSIGNMENT: Write an essay in which you discuss the current controversy surrounding the development and greater use of surveillance technologies in the U.S. As background, you will need to briefly describe some of these technologies and their advantages or effectiveness; also, you should present and explain arguments of those who feel that using these technologies is necessary for security, and the arguments of those who are concerned about the impact of using these technologies on privacy.

PURPOSE: Your purpose in this essay will be to explore and develop a fuller understanding of the issue and its implications. Though you should be aware of developing a focus and clear thesis for your essay, you do not necessarily need to take a position for or against using this technology. Refer to the research questions we have discussed and developed as a class (see attached) to help you define your essay’s focus.

You will be supporting your thesis by synthesizing information from several sources, using specific references to arguments, “expert” opinions, statistics and examples. You should also add your own comments, observations, and logical reasoning.

Due Dates: See schedule for all due dates!

Length: Minimum 1000 words (4 pages)

References: Minimum 6 documented sources; you must use at least four of the articles in the Course Reader, and an additional two in-depth articles that you find independently, using the specified databases. The articles you find should be no more than a year old. All references to sources must be cited in your essay’s text; all sources used must be documented on your list of “References”.

PLEASE NOTE: You must submit copies of the sources you found independently with your final draft. At the time of the final exam, I will return any final draft folders (unread and ungraded) that do not contain all related drafts (including a specific editing draft) and copies of the two articles you found. Remember that using information from a source that you don’t clearly identify is considered to be plagiarism. If you want to avoid plagiarizing but are uncertain about what it is, please ask me or consult your Course Reader (p. 55).
When Golden Arches Are Too Red, White and Blue
*New York Times*, New York, N.Y.; Oct 14, 2001; David Barboza;

1 HOURS after the United States started its bombing raids in Afghanistan last week, the backlash began. In Pakistan, angry crowds vandalized McDonald's outlets in Islamabad and Karachi. In Indonesia, demonstrators burned an American flag outside a McDonald's restaurant in the resort town of Makassar and then stormed it, while across the country in Yogyakarta, other protesters blockaded yet another McDonald's.

2 Elsewhere, chanting throngs vented their displeasure with the policies of the United States government by descending on Pizza Hut restaurants, Dunkin' Donuts stands, a Nike store and even billboards for KFC, Coca-Cola, Pepsi and other symbols of American corporations.

3 Multinational businesses have long been the target of complaints about the Coca-Cola-Colonization of the planet, about globalization creating a McWorld in which people in a standardized and ultimately antiseptic global village are cowed into existing on Big Macs and fries. But the growing worries about what some people, even in Europe, see as American cultural imperialism sweeping the globe, as well as the events since Sept. 11, have infused the debate about culture and cuisine with the even more volatile issues of politics and religion. And some executives who have pinned their companies' futures on conquering fast-growing new markets around the world are wondering: Is globalization, the chosen growth strategy of so many, still going to work?

4 "Globalization is going to be at a standstill for a while, until this high level of uncertainty diminishes," said Henry Kaufman, the economist and former vice chairman of Salomon Brothers.

5 No company faces that issue more acutely than McDonald's, which registered more than half its sales last year from outside the United States, up from one-third of its sales 10 years ago. The McDonald's Corporation, based in Oak Park, Ill., is already in so many cities and towns in the United States that its executives concluded long ago that rapid growth of its namesake restaurants would have to come from abroad. If that option is denied, shareholders and Wall Street analysts are beginning to wonder, can the company thrive?

6 McDonald's and other major brands — like Burger King, which was founded in Florida but is owned by Diageo P.L.C. of Britain, and KFC, which is owned by Tricon Global Restaurants Inc. of Louisville, Ky. — said they were not considering scrapping their global ambitions or taming their expansionist hopes. But some branding experts said that, for indisputably American brands like McDonald's, global dominance now — more than ever — may be as much a liability as an asset.

7 "I definitely think the golden age of the global brand has passed," said Alan Brew, a corporate branding expert at Addison, a communications consulting company in San Francisco. "The great appeal of the global brand in the 50's, 60's and 70's was that it could be the same worldwide; that it's just a question of distribution. But you're getting a lot of reaction against that, particularly against the big American brands."

Retrieved January 16, 2002 from ProQuest Newsstand
Aside from McDonald's, food and lifestyle brands like Coca-Cola and Nike have suffered various degrees of backlash after expanding aggressively around the globe -- some say too aggressively. Recently, Muslim clerics in Lucknow, India, urged the faithful to boycott all things American and British, including airlines, movies and television programs.

But McDonald's, which has planted its trademark golden arches outside more than 29,000 outlets in 120 countries, stands as one of the most visible and ubiquitous symbols of America in the world -- and is one of the most American of American companies, at least in the minds of foreigners. And because McDonald's has its distinctive outlets just about everywhere, from Andorra to Oman, it is much more exposed to shifting economics and political upheavals around the globe.

Despite all the success that McDonald's has had overseas -- and that success has been impressive, analysts and investors said -- its stores have been vandalized repeatedly by people angry about everything from genetically modified foods to globalization to United States foreign policy.

Even before the American strike against Afghanistan, McDonald's executives were trying to cope with a multitude of global problems. Profits have been hurt by the strong dollar and slowing economic growth in Latin America. Sales of burgers have been depressed by fears in Europe and Japan of mad cow disease.

Some branding experts say the McDonald's juggernaut may be slowing. The same may be true of Coca-Cola, they add. "The world will not stand still and let one brand dominate," said Mr. Brew at Addison. "You can no longer sit in Atlanta and decide what people in Karachi are going to drink." That may be why Coca-Cola is moving to sell more bottled water, tea and other noncarbonated beverages, and why McDonald's is looking into pizza. It certainly accounts for the two corporations' efforts to cast themselves as global companies with local operations, not insensitive American behemoths.

McDonald's executives declined to be interviewed for this article, but a spokesman repeated a longstanding corporate tenet: McDonald's, he said, is not an American company, but a global one owned and run by local people around the world. "We're a confederation of very local companies," said Jack Daly, the spokesman.

McDonald's is so adamant that its outlets in France are French that two years ago, when the company came under attack as a symbol of American culinary and cultural imperialism, it ran print advertisements in France that poked fun at Americans and their food choices. One depicted a hefty American cowboy and said that although McDonald's was born in the United States, its food was made in France, by French suppliers using French products.

The problem is that many people around the world do not believe it. They see Coke and McDonald's as quintessentially American. The brands represent the hopes and aspirations of many people who admire the American spirit and business ingenuity -- not to mention the quick convenience of the products. But they also represent what people most despise about American culture: its seductive, indulgent and fast-paced lifestyle.
And because American brands dominate the global landscape — 9 of the top 10 global brands are
American, according to a recent survey by Interbrand, the branding consulting firm — being
Coke, McDonald’s or CNN is problematic, academics and branding experts say. The lines
between America, its foreign policy and its corporate brands are blurred, particularly in parts of
the world where governments own or control oil companies, utilities and other big businesses.
Americans are not simply a diverse, freedom-loving people, these experts say; to many others,
they are the sum of their corporate identities.

"This is how people see America, the America of fast food, fast computers, MTV and
Hollywood," said Benjamin R. Barber, author of the book "Jihad vs. McWorld" and a professor
of political science at the University of Maryland. "This crisis has made clear that Americans
have no idea how they're perceived around the world."

In his 1995 book, recently reissued, Mr. Barber argues that there could be a coming clash of
cultures between a globalized, standardized "McWorld" that everywhere looks and operates alike
and a splintered, tribalistic world that will ultimately resist what it considers a threat to
traditional cultures.

Coca-Cola is making war on the tea culture of India, he said, by trying to persuade people to
drink more of its carbonated beverages. McDonald’s is at war with the French idea of an almost
sacred, lengthy mealtime. Often, he adds, American and Western companies are insensitive to
the impact of their goods and images on other cultures.

"The McWorld cultivates its own resistance," Mr. Barber said in a telephone interview last week.
Multinational corporations "are engaged in a kind of symbolic war that other people perceive as a
war on their culture," he added. "Most of the world is attracted to our brands, but they're angry
about being seduced by them."

McDonald's officials strongly disagree. They say that the company is acutely sensitive to local
cultures, that the stores are run and supplied by local people, and that this longstanding principle
is one reason McDonald's has been so successful in expanding abroad.
In Saudi Arabia, for instance, single men must eat separately from women and children. In India,
there is no beef or pork, but a vegetarian Maharaja Mac, the equivalent of a Big Mac. And in
Japan, where the "t" sound is rarely pronounced, Ronald McDonald is known as Donald
McDonald. "We don't act local; we are local," said Walt Riker, a spokesman at McDonald's. "It's
localization, not globalization. We're exporting the business dynamics."

Sporadic vandalism and violence are things the company said it had learned to live with; that is
the price of being the largest restaurant chain in the world, and a major source of jobs around the
world, with more than one million employees, executives said.

Some academics said McDonald's was so big that it was inevitable there would be jealousy,
envy, anger and anti-establishment and anti-American sentiment directed at the golden arches.
"People think that if they can't get the U.S. embassy, McDonald's is the next best thing," said
James L. Watson, editor of the book "Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia" and a
professor of anthropology at Harvard. "It's almost as identifiable as the Stars and Stripes, so they think it's the next best surrogate."

Mr. Watson said he had spent 20 years interviewing McDonald's customers in East Asia. For the last 10, he has also tracked attacks on McDonald's franchises. So far he has registered attacks in about 50 countries. He and others say, though, that the attacks come from a tiny minority who inflate the significance of McDonald's because of what the company symbolizes.

"It represents American popular culture and many of the features that people might now loathe and despise," he said. "The middle classes love it but the intelligentsia and the guardians of culture find it troubling. From their perspective, this is an overarching foreign policy. We don't use the Marine Corps or the Delta Force; we use McDonald's to dominate."

Marketing experts say that in the short run, the vandalism is not likely to cost McDonald's much in terms of lost sales. After all, it is a $40 billion global enterprise. But the array of troubles the fast-food franchiser now faces may be a sign of something much deeper. Perhaps McDonald's and America's other big corporate brands have expanded too quickly, too aggressively. Perhaps they have exposed the public, here and abroad, to too many marketing images, golden arches, smiling colonels, swooshes and other logos. Perhaps the small, underground resistance is a sign of things to come: a feeling that the globe and the market are supersaturated.

Wall Street analysts are also beginning to consider such a possibility. "Even pre-Sept. 11, there were some very real concerns about whether McDonald's had grown too aggressively around the globe and whether they had reached the saturation point in some of these markets," said Andrew Barish, an analyst at Banc of America Securities.

The problem may be in the United States, where McDonald's has been trying to cope with a fully developed market since the mid-1990's. To drive growth, the company moved aggressively overseas, expanding to about 15,000 restaurants outside the United States today from about 3,000 a decade ago. "McDonald's is like the British empire was," said Eric Schlosser, author of "Fast Food Nation." "It looks enormous on the map, but it expanded because there were core economic problems at home.

McDonald's is hedging by investing in different, faster-growing kinds of restaurants, outlets that sell everything from pizza to upscale coffee. But a significant crimping of growth abroad would be grim news for the company, as it would be for many others. And it may be unavoidable. "I think there is a grave danger for American companies," Mr. Brew said. "The world is no longer a bigger version of the U.S. What plays in Peoria doesn't necessarily play in Poland."
ENGLISH 310, SEGMENT 1 GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT: USING READINGS AS THE BASIS FOR WRITING

DIRECTIONS:
1) Fill in your student identification number on the Scantron form.
2) For each category, read ALL of the statements and then choose the ONE that BEST describes your experience in writing the essay you just turned in. Fill in the appropriate circle on the Scantron card.

UNDERSTANDING THE MAIN IDEAS
1. 
   a. I understood many, but not all, the main ideas, in the assigned readings.
   b. I didn't understand very many of the main ideas.
   c. I understood the main ideas in the assigned readings.
   d. I didn't really understand the main ideas in the assigned readings.

USING THE MAIN IDEAS FROM THE READINGS
2. As I wrote my essay,
   a. I referred to some ideas from the readings but I'm not sure if these were main ideas or less important ideas.
   b. I was able to use a few ideas from the readings to explore the issues raised in the essay assignment.
   c. I used several main ideas from the readings to explore issues raised in the essay assignment.
   d. I mainly used ideas from class discussion to explore the assigned essay topic.

MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN IDEAS IN THE READINGS AND MY OWN VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES
3. As I wrote my essay,
   a. I didn't really know how to respond to or build on the ideas from the readings.
   b. I was able to draw on my own ideas, experiences and/or observations to respond to or build on ideas that interested me from the readings.
   c. I did use my own ideas, experiences, and/or observations to respond to or build on the writer's ideas although I found it difficult to think of ways to do this.
   d. I wasn't able to add very much to the ideas in the readings.

USING DETAILS FROM THE READINGS
4. In my essay,
   a. I wasn't sure how to identify an "example" or "detail" in the readings.
   b. I used some examples and other details from the readings, but most of my support is not from the readings.
   c. I couldn't find relevant details or examples from the readings to use to support my ideas.
   d. I used examples and other details from the readings that provided strong support for my own ideas.
PARAPHRASING
5. As I wrote my essay,
   a. I don’t think my paraphrasing was very clear.
   b. I paraphrased the authors’ ideas clearly although I may have a few grammar mistakes.
   c. I didn’t understand the readings so I couldn’t paraphrase clearly.
   d. I paraphrased the authors’ ideas, but some of my paraphrasing may not be completely clear.

INCLUDING A BALANCE OF MY OWN IDEAS AND IDEAS DRAWN FROM THE READINGS
6. In general,
   a. My essay contains a good balance of my own ideas and ideas drawn from the readings.
   b. I used ideas from the readings, but I’m not sure they are really connected to my ideas.
   c. I think I’ve taken too many ideas from the readings.
   d. I don’t think I used enough ideas or details from the readings.

USING REPORTING LANGUAGE
7. In my essay,
   a. I used words and phrases that made it clear whose idea I was writing about.
   b. I used very few words and phrases to help the reader understand whose idea I was writing about.
   c. I didn’t use words and phrases that made it clear whose ideas I was writing about.
   d. I used some words and phrases to help the reader understand whose idea I was writing about.

8. In general, I would say that these readings are:
   a. similar in difficulty to the readings I am assigned in other courses outside of the English Department.
   b. more difficult than the readings I am assigned in other courses outside of the English Department.
   c. easier than the readings I am assigned in other courses outside of the English Department.

9. Using readings as the basis for my writing is something:
   a. that is entirely new to me.
   b. that I have done often in other classes either at SFSU or in another university in the U.S. or in my native country.
   c. that I have done, but only a few times, in other classes either at SFSU or in another university in the U.S. or in my native country.

10. I think this kind of writing will be:
    a. of use to me in the future.
    b. of very little use to me in the future.
The statements have been SCRAMBLED as follows:

1) 
   b
   c
   a
   d

2) 
   c
   b
   a
   d

3) 
   d
   a
   b
   c

4) 
   d
   c
   b
   a

5) 
   c
   a
   d
   b

6) 
   a
   d
   c
   b

7) 
   a
   c
   d
   b
ENGLISH 310: 2002 PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

DIRECTIONS: For each category listed below, fill in the corresponding score from the 4-point rubric on a Scantron card. Note that in Category 6 only, there is a “not applicable” option.

Category One
The writer comprehends and uses main ideas from the readings to inform his/her discussion of the topic.

Above Average  3  Average  2  Below Average  1

Category Two
The writer draws on personal insight and/or relevant experiences and observations in order to elaborate on ideas from the readings.

Category Three
The writer uses appropriate evidence from primary and secondary reading sources to substantiate his/her discussion/argument.

Category Four
The writer synthesizes ideas and details from more than one reading source.

Category Five
The writer establishes a context for specific references to the texts whenever she/he paraphrases or quotes.

Category Six
The writer makes appropriate decisions about when to quote.

Above Average  3  Average  2  Below Average  1  Poor  0

Category Seven
The writer paraphrases accurately, maintaining the source writers’ idea(s).

Category Eight
The writer paraphrases accurately at the syntactic and word choice level.

Category Nine
The writer uses words and phrases to distinguish his/her ideas or support from those of another writer.
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**Notes:**
- This table contains various data points across multiple columns.
- The specific entries are not legible due to the image quality.

**Appendix G:**
- This section contains additional information relevant to the table.
- It expands on the data provided in the main body of the document.
### Survey

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Assessment Pilot Project: Final Report
June 30, 1998

prepared by:

Carolyn Chaney (Speech)
Robert Mutti (Philosophy)
Deborah Swanson (English)
## Table of Contents

I. Introduction
   - Background to the Pilot Study .................................................. 1
   - Why this Form of Assessment .................................................... 2
   - Overview of the Pilot Project ................................................... 2
   - Project Faculty ............................................................................. 3

II. Description of the Process ............................................................... 3
   A. Developing Evaluation Guidelines/Instruments/Criteria ................ 3
   B. Developing Guidelines for Students ............................................. 4
   C. Selection of Student Participants ............................................... 4
   D. Assessing Writing through Portfolios ....................................... 4
   E. Assessing Speaking and Critical Thinking through Oral Performance 5
   F. Evaluation of the Assessment Pilot Project .................................. 5

III. Results and Evaluation of the Assessment Pilot Process: Summaries of Faculty and Student Feedback .................................................. 6
   A. Value of a Performance-Based Assessment ................................ 6
   B. Faculty Responsible for Assessing Basic Skills in the Disciplines .. 7
   C. Adequacy of Assessment Instruments .......................................... 8
   D. Recommendations for Modifications to the Instruments/Procedures . 9
   E. Faculty Time ................................................................................ 10

IV. Recommendations for Fall, 1998 .................................................... 10
   A. Assessment Schedule ................................................................. 10
   B. Cost ............................................................................................. 11

V. Summary and Closing Comments ..................................................... 12

Reference List .................................................................................... 13
Appendices ......................................................................................... 14
List of Tables

Table 1. Student Sample: GPA and Performance Assessment

Table 2. Students' Evaluation of the Assessment Instruments (Portfolio and Speech)

Table 3. Assessment Pilot Project Proposed Schedule of Activities for Fall, 1998
List of Appendices

Appendix A: December 8, 1997 memo from N. McDermid, Dean, College of Humanities, to T. LaBelle, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Appendix B: Writing and Speech Assessment Instruments

Appendix C: Procedural Guidelines for participating faculty and students

Appendix D: Samples of Faculty Feedback on Students' Portfolios & Speeches

Appendix E: Project Certificates for Participating Students

Appendix F: Student Questionnaire

Appendix G: Faculty Questionnaire

Appendix H: Faculty Responses

Appendix I: Students' Evaluation of the Assessment Instruments

Appendix J: Revised Writing and Speech Assessment Instruments
Assessment Pilot Project: Final Report
June 30, 1998

Prepared by:
Carolyn Chaney (Speech),
Deborah Swanson (English), and
Robert Mutti (Philosophy)

I. Introduction

The purpose of this project was to develop a performance-based assessment instrument and process that can be used to evaluate the basic skills (oral and written communication, and critical thinking) of senior students. Outcome assessments have become a necessary and potentially important part of the culture of higher education for a number of reasons—the most pressing on our campus being our need to meet the requirements of WASC, the University’s accrediting agency, and to respond to the concerns expressed by employers who expect to hire competent graduates.

Background to the Pilot Study

Prior to the severe budget cuts in the early part of this decade, CSU had already started to formulate an assessment plan. As part of this effort, a Chancellor-appointed Advisory Committee on Student Outcomes Assessment produced a report in which they recommended, “specific assessment policies, strategies and practices the Committee believe[d were] appropriate and of significant potential benefit to the CSU” (CSU Report to the Chancellor. December 1989, p. 1). At the level of departmental or programmatic assessment, the committee recommended that “the faculty of each department or program . . . have ways of evaluating student attainment in the major that go beyond the evidence provided by course grades” (p. 14). At the level of the campus-wide assessment, the committee recommended that “the faculty of each CSU campus. . . have mechanisms to assess how well students are meeting the goals of the General Education program of the university” (p. 14).

Though discussed as separate “levels” of institutional assessment in this and other assessment documents (e.g., August 1997 Draft of “New Perspectives on Assessment at SFSU”), clearly the connection between evaluating students’ subject matter competence and their ability to communicate that competence orally and in writing is a significant one, for, as the committee noted a decade ago,

although the CSU professes knowledge of the discipline to be important, current practices do not generally assess to what extent students acquire it. Students often complain of a bewildering mosaic of demands and of the lack of opportunity to
discover the patterns which lend coherence and meaning to them. The relationship of courses to major programs and to general curricular goals and such learned abilities as effective written and oral communication and critical thinking remains unclear and unarticulated. (p. 14)

An effective assessment plan could minimize the number of times students imagine bewildering connections among courses within their major, as well as between G.E. courses and those in the major. Ideally, such a plan would provide students with the opportunity to forge their own coherent and meaningful understanding of their field of study, and to communicate this understanding through significant written and oral texts. An assessment method commonly recommended to promote and evaluate such “integration of knowledge” and application of “basic ‘cognitive skills’” is the performance-based assessment method of portfolios (see for example the August 1997 Draft of “New Perspectives on Assessment at SFSU”).

Why this Form of Assessment?

The rationale for performance-based assessments (in this case a portfolio of essays and a short speech) is that certain types of student learning can be best evaluated directly in the context of the students’ performance of the target skills, rather than in a traditional test venue, where competence is measured indirectly by examining discrete skills. (For a good review of the professional positions and research on the topic of writing assessment, see the CCC Committee on Assessment: Position Statement, 1995; CCC Committee on Assessment: A Selected Bibliography on Post Secondary Writing Assessment 1979-1991, 1992; Conlan, 1986; Huot, 1990.) Furthermore, in this outcome assessment plan, we wish to measure students’ abilities to apply basic skills to their subject matter disciplines; that is, how well they speak, write about, and think about concepts important to their chosen fields. To date, one of the best methods to directly assess both subject matter knowledge and basic skills is the holistic assessment of a portfolio of student work (Charney, 1984; Decker, Cooper, & Harrington, 1993; McDonald, 1996; Mondack, 1997; Raines, 1996).

Overview of the Pilot Project

The purpose of this pilot project and the responsibilities of the faculty assessment team were clearly articulated in a memo from Nancy McDermaid to Thomas La Belle. (This 12/8/97 memo is attached as Appendix A.) In this Pilot Project, two performances were prescribed: a portfolio of two essays that were completed in upper-division courses, and a speech, presented to a group of evaluators and peers, on one of the essay topics.
The basic subject faculty team was directed to
- develop guidelines and criteria for evaluating basic skills both in the
  writing turned in as part of a student's portfolio of work and in a brief
  speech given by him/her on one of the submitted pieces;
- develop guidelines for student participants;
- carry out this assessment process;
- provide feedback to students; and
- prepare a written report that includes: a discussion of the benefits and
difficulties involved in a performance-based assessment of seniors, an
estimate of the feasibility of performing the assessment on a larger scale,
and a cost analysis of the time involved.

Project Faculty

The basic subjects (BS) faculty participants were Carolyn Chaney (Speech &
Communication Studies), Robert Mutti (Philosophy), and Deborah Swanson
(English). Three subject matter (SM) disciplines were chosen from three
Colleges of the University; the SM faculty participants were: Bill Issel
(History), David Mustart (Geology) and Gary Selnow (Business: BACS).

II. Description of the Process

The basic subject (BS) faculty met weekly throughout the 1998 spring
semester. In addition, three meetings were held with all subject matter (SM)
faculty members, the purposes of which were to: 1) orient SM faculty to the
project and discuss evaluation criteria, 2) discuss assessment procedures, and
3) evaluate of the process. At the end of the semester, subject matter and basic
subject faculty also discussed their evaluations of student writing and
speeches.

A. Developing Evaluation Guidelines/Instruments/Criteria

The basic subject (BS) faculty first examined the processes, procedures, and
criteria used to assess speaking, writing, and critical thinking in the BS
departments, and in the University Junior English Proficiency Essay Test
(JEPET) and the Graduate Essay Test (GET). A great deal of discussion was
needed to decide how critical thinking could be best assessed within the
writing and speaking assignments; we agreed that critical thinking overlaps
with speaking and writing in that all three of these involve: 1) using clear
and unambiguous language, 2) organizing in a coherent form that provides a
logical argument, and 3) providing substantive content with evidence used to
back up claims. Therefore we decided that the criteria for critical thinking
would be best merged with the criteria for writing and speaking in our forms.

Basic subjects faculty then met with the subject matter faculty to consider
criteria needed to assess content issues in speaking and writing; for example,
the types of evidence or analysis that would be expected in the varied
disciplines. We then developed drafts of two instruments for evaluation of
the writing and speaking assignments. We distributed the drafts to the subject
matter faculty and also to faculty members (including department chairs) in
the basic subjects departments to solicit additional input.

The instruments that emerged after significant discussion and consultation
are given in Appendix B. These evaluation forms are designed to provide
both formative feedback and summative evaluations of students’ work.
Formative feedback to students consists of comments about strengths and
weaknesses in three components of writing: Content, Discourse Design
(form), and Language Control, and in three components of speaking/critical
thinking: Content, Organization/ Development, and Language/Delivery).
Summative evaluation consists of scores in each of these components, where
scores of 1 - 2 are not passing and scores of 3 - 4 are passing.

B. Developing Guidelines for Students

The basic subjects faculty wrote a booklet to explain the purpose of the
Assessment Pilot Project to students, describe the activities in detail, and
inform students of all requirements for their writing portfolios and speeches.
This booklet is given in Appendix C.

C. Selection of Student Participants

The subject matter faculty had the task of selecting student participants. We
agreed that students must be seniors, and that they should represent the range
of abilities found within the major. In History and Geology, Bill Issel and
Dave Mustart recruited students from several seminars taken by seniors. In
BACS, Gary Selnow identified a random sample of seniors in BACS.
However, regardless of method, student selection turned out to be one of our
most difficult tasks. Even with the $50 stipend provided by Dean McDermaid
and our promise of certification of competence for students resumes, students
were reluctant to participate. In History and BACS, students pulled out at the
last minute. Our final student sample totaled 13, distributed as follows:
BACS: 3 students; History: 3 students; Geology: 7 students. An additional 2
students submitted portfolios but did not present a speech.

D. Assessing Writing through Portfolios

Students turned in portfolios containing two essays or other pieces of writing
and a cover letter explaining both why the pieces were selected and how each
illuminates the student’s strengths and weaknesses. To provide faculty readers
with a context by which to evaluate the writing, each essay was accompanied
by information about the original assignment. Although students were asked
to provide two essays written in upper division courses, this was not always
possible because students had not necessarily produced or saved upper-
division writing. Also noteworthy is that several students in BACS
submitted work that had been produced as a group effort because that was the
nature of the assignments that had been given in their major coursework.

Portfolios were read and independently assessed by three faculty members,
two from basic subjects plus the subject matter faculty member. Generally no
feedback was written on the essays in cases where the work was passed from
reader to reader; however, each essay received feedback on the evaluation
forms. A meeting of the assessment team was held to discuss the writing
assessments. Essays and feedback were returned to students at the completion
of the assessment process.

E. Assessing Speaking and Critical Thinking through Oral Performance

Students from each discipline attended a Friday afternoon session to speak
about a topic derived from one of their portfolio essays, and to hear their
peers speak. Each student spoke for approximately 7 minutes, followed by a
question and discussion period of 5 - 7 minutes. The purposes of the
question period were: 1) to provide each student an opportunity to further
reveal knowledge of the topic in an impromptu fashion with the decrease in
pressure that occurs following the more formal talk, and 2) to allow the
assessors to explore areas that seemed inadequately explained in the speech.

Four faculty assessors (all basic subjects faculty and the subject matter faculty)
made notes during the speeches using the evaluation form, and all speeches
were videotaped for later review by both faculty and students. Immediately
after completion of the day’s speeches the assessment team met to discuss the
presentations. Within a few days of the presentations, tapes were placed on
reserve in the Media Access Center (Lib 3rd floor) to make them available to
the students, and students were given written feedback at the end of the
assessment process. (Samples of faculty feedback on selected written and
speaking performances are included in Appendix D.)

All student participants were given a lovely certificate of completion (thanks
to Donna Smith of the Speech & Communication Studies Department), and
those who passed both activities were certified as competent in the basic skills
of writing, speaking and critical thinking. (The wording of the two certificate
forms are provided in Appendix E.)

F. Evaluation of the Assessment Pilot Project

Each Friday, immediately after the completion of all student speeches,
students completed a written evaluation of the Pilot Assessment Process,
using the instrument shown in Appendix F. In addition, students were
invited into oral discussion about the process.
Subject matter faculty were asked to respond to a set of questions, shown in Appendix G. At the final project meeting the faculty was asked to give their input orally, and this session was audiotaped for later transcription. (A full report of faculty responses is provided in Appendix H.)

III. Results and Evaluation of the Assessment Pilot Process:  
Summaries of Faculty and Student Feedback

A. Value of a Performance-Based Assessment

All faculty members agreed that such an assessment should be done and that the pilot project showed that performance based assessments are feasible and valuable. Faculty members were concerned about remediation of those students whose skills were not adequate, and recommended that the assessment be done early in the senior year so that students would have time to address their deficiencies before graduation. While this remediation is not itself an outcome measure, the faculty felt strongly that any kind of genuine assessment required follow-up if the assessment were to serve the interests of students or the institution.

Students were similarly supportive of the assessment process. Because of the small size of the total sample (13), and an even smaller number of students from each of the three participating departments (History and Business each having only 3 student participants), the following discussion merely summarizes a few general patterns in the data. Hopefully, future work will build on these preliminary results. Table 1 summarizes the student participants’ overall GPAs, GPAs in the Major, and their speaking and writing pass/fail rate in this assessment.

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Table 1. Student Sample: GPA and Performance Assessment
Not surprisingly, these student volunteers turned out to have good overall GPAs and even higher GPAs in their majors. As we might expect, 85% of them (11 out of 13) were judged to be competent speakers, while 77% (10 out of 13) were evaluated as competent writers.

When asked if they felt their portfolio and speech served as “fair examination[s] of [their] basic skills,” most students (85% – 11 out of 13) felt their portfolios provided evaluators with a reasonable sample of their writing; a majority (69% – 9 of 13) felt the speech provided evaluators with reasonable evidence of their speaking skills—when they performed poorly they blamed themselves rather than the speech task; but a notable proportion (38% – 5 of the 13) felt that their critical thinking skills were not necessarily evaluated in the work they turned in or in speech they gave. The following table summarizes students’ evaluation of the assessment instruments. (A breakdown of these data by department is provided in Appendix I.)

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Table 2. Students’ Evaluation of the Assessment Portfolio and Speech (Question #4, Student Questionnaire, Appendix F: “Do you think this assessment was a fair examination of your basic skills?”)

The students’ responses paralleled those of the faculty in this area (see faculty responses to question 4, Appendix H). In light of these preliminary responses, the mechanism(s) by which students’ critical thinking skills need(s) to be further explored and refined.

B. Faculty Responsible for Assessing Basic Skills in the Disciplines

All faculty agreed that a combination of the subject matter and basic skills faculty is necessary. Only faculty of a discipline can properly evaluate students’ explications of the content of the discipline. We had a clear case of this during evaluation of speeches: while the basic skills faculty members all voted to pass one student’s speech, the subject matter faculty member showed that content was not only lacking, it was incorrect in many cases! Just as crucial is the input of faculty members who are skilled in evaluating basic skills. For example, during one speech it became clear that the SM faculty member was influenced so strongly by content that his assessment of organizational and delivery skills were negatively biased. It was helpful therefore when the BS faculty could parse out the varied strengths and
weaknesses of the student’s performance to show that his speaking skills were adequate despite the substantive problems evident in his subject matter knowledge.

In addition to needing both subject matter and basic skills expertise, there are other reasons to involve both SM and BS faculty. As subject matter faculty members get involved in the assessments, they begin to take more responsibility for students’ on-going literacy development by reinforcing basic skills in the context of the subject matter. Likewise, having basic skills faculty involved in assessments provides such faculty with opportunities to examine the ways students employ these skills in their advanced collegiate work, as well as the kinds of discipline-specific, advanced literacy skills today’s students are expected to possess by the time they graduate.

Finally, the subject matter and basic skills faculty agreed that assessments of basic subjects and subject matter knowledge are best evaluated as distinct but interrelated areas of competence. For example, all agreed that the basic subjects assessments might be timed to coincide with certain major coursework (i.e., a capstone course in the major in which students produce substantive written and oral texts). In short, all agreed that disciplinary content should supply the context for the speaking and writing performances, but that demonstrated competence using basic skills would not be an adequate outcome measure of subject matter knowledge.

C. Adequacy of Assessment Instruments

Of the 15 students submitting portfolios, 11 passed (73%), 1 failed, and 3 received mixed scores by evaluators. After discussing the three borderline performances, the team decided none was passing, for a final failure rate of 27%. Of the 13 students who presented a speech, 10 passed (77%) and 3 failed (23%). We consider both instruments to be basically sound since both were able to distinguish between adequate and inadequate performances in writing and speaking.

One student’s writing and speaking performance--a performance reservedly deemed “passing” by the group--raised a number of questions worth further consideration. In this specific case, the student’s oral presentation and all of his writing consisted of simple reporting with no critical analysis. To some evaluators, this student appeared to lack critical thinking skills. In the end, the decision was made to certify the student as “passing” because we could not be certain that critical thinking had been a necessary part of the student’s original assignment in the major field. This student’s performance indicated

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1 Considering that student participants were all volunteers who presumably desired faculty feedback about their skills, we might expect a higher failure rate in the general population of senior students.
that we may need to revise our instructions to students so that critical analysis is a clear requirement in the writing portfolio and in the speech.

We also considered that merging the critical thinking criteria with the speech and writing criteria made it more difficult for evaluators to discriminate adequate from inadequate critical thinking skills. Subject matter faculty all felt that critical thinking is crucial to their disciplines, but that standards may vary across departments (e.g., what counts as credible questions and evidence). How we might better assess critical thinking within the disciplines is clearly a topic worth pursuing in the next phase of this work.

D. Recommendations for modifications to the instruments/procedures

Following our final discussion with all of the subject matter faculty, minor modifications were made to the forms to clarify terminology and to make the pass/fail criteria apparent. (The revised forms are provided in Appendix J.)

In both speaking and writing forms, two content criteria were often marked “not seen” by evaluators since students rarely included them. These two criteria were: “accurately draws upon a range of credible evidence”; and, “provides a critical analysis or application of theory.” We considered the question of whether we should try to evaluate skills that are not generally taught or required in the disciplines, or whether these criteria should be eliminated from the assessment instruments. For the time being, we decided to retain these two criteria and hope that the assessment process itself may eventually encourage faculty across the disciplines to consider the relevance of, or role(s) played by, these high-level literate activities.

Based on our experience in the pilot project, several changes were recommended for the portfolio instructions. First, having found that several students could not provide two pieces of upper-division writing, the team considered whether the portfolio could include lower-division writing (completed, say, in the past six months), or whether to stress the importance of evaluating students’ upper-division work in the major since the stated purpose of these assessment efforts is to examine the basic skills of students nearing the completion of their undergraduate study. At this point, the team would still like to push for upper-division work only, but part of our motive for wanting to continue this pilot study for another semester is to see if such expectations are feasible given the work students are being asked to do in their major courses.

Second, having found that some students could not submit any independently produced written work, the team decided the portfolio directions should specify that the writing submitted must be independently executed—that group projects are not acceptable for this system of assessment. Along these same lines, faculty considered how to ensure that the writing samples students
submitted reflected the individual's and not an editor's effort. One suggestion was to require one of the pieces of writing to be produced in a controlled environment (e.g., planning and drafting a piece in one class period, turning it in, and reworking/revising the text during the next class session). Another was having each student revise an earlier piece of work, submit both versions for evaluation, and write a cover letter explaining the decisions he/she made when revising. As noted earlier, our hope is that this pilot work will continue so that those responsible for assessing the basic skills of seniors can gain clearer answers to such questions.

E. Faculty Time

The development of instruments and procedures took the majority of the faculty time in this Assessment Pilot Project. If the project is repeated, faculty assessment teams would need to meet three times: first to become oriented to the instruments and the procedures (1-1 1/2 hours), second to hear the speeches (2 hours) and discuss the results of the assessments of writing and speaking (1-1 1/2 hours), and third to evaluate the process and distribute materials to be returned to students (1 hour). Speeches take approximately 15 minutes per student, and portfolios take about 20-30 minutes. In sum, subject matter faculty could expect to spend approximately 10 hours in meetings and assessing student work, plus whatever time is needed to recruit and orient student participants (estimated at 2-3 hours). Basic skills faculty would also spend 10 hours as members of each assessment team, plus time for administration and organization, estimated at 2-3 hours per team, plus time for data analysis and report writing (estimated at 10-12 hours each). Although it was very important to have larger teams during development of the instrument, teams consisting of 1 subject matter faculty member and 1 basic skills faculty member would suffice in future.

IV. Recommendations for Fall, 1998

The faculty of the Assessment Pilot Project strongly recommend a second semester of pilot testing to take place in Fall, 1998. This second semester is necessary in order to evaluate the instruments and procedures with a larger sample of students and over a broader spectrum of the departments of the University. With a heavier schedule of testing, the APP team will be better able to judge how feasible this type of performance-based assessment will be on a large scale.

A. Assessment Schedule

Because the instruments are essentially complete, testing could begin as early in the semester as SM faculty and students can be recruited; each round of testing would require two weeks (one week for faculty to read portfolios, and one week for assessment of speeches). Thus each BS faculty member assigned
to the project could potentially run the project with five departments over the semester. A minimum of two BS faculty members is recommended for a good-sized sample of departments, to provide a third evaluator of essays/speeches where there is disagreement within the 2-member assessment teams, and for collaboration in designing the final report with its recommendations for broader campus usage. A schedule of testing is shown in Table 4. Keeping this schedule means having the first group of SM faculty committed by Sept. 4 and the first cohort of students committed by Sept. 18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aug. 31 - Sept. 4</td>
<td>Deans recruit faculty members</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Sept. 8 - 11</td>
<td>BS faculty meet with Cohort #1 of SM faculty for orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Sept. 14 - 18</td>
<td>SM faculty recruit and orient 8 students each BS faculty meet with Cohort #2 of SM faculty for orientation</td>
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<td>4. Sept. 21 - 25</td>
<td>Cohort #1 portfolios due Sept. 25</td>
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<td>BS faculty meet with Cohort #3 of SM faculty for orientation</td>
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<td>5. Sept. 28 - Oct. 2</td>
<td>Speeches for Students in Cohort #1 on Oct. 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Oct. 5 - 9</td>
<td>Cohort #2 portfolios due Oct. 9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BS faculty meet with Cohort #4 of SM faculty for orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Oct. 12 - 16</td>
<td>Speeches for Students in Cohort #2 on Oct. 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Oct. 19 - 23</td>
<td>Cohort #3 portfolios due Oct. 23</td>
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<tr>
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<td>BS faculty meet with Cohort #5 of SM faculty for orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Nov. 2 - 6</td>
<td>Cohort #4 portfolios due Nov. 6</td>
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<td>BS faculty meet with Cohort #5 of SM faculty for orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Nov. 9 - 13</td>
<td>Speeches for Students in Cohort #4 on Nov. 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Nov. 16 - 19</td>
<td>Cohort #5 portfolios due Nov. 19</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BS faculty meet with Cohort #6 of SM faculty for orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Nov. 23 - 27</td>
<td>Catch up week</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Nov. 30 - Dec. 4</td>
<td>Speeches for Cohort #5 on Dec. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Dec. 7 - 11</td>
<td>Final Project Evaluations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Assessment Pilot Project Proposed Schedule of Activities for Fall, 1998

B. Cost

Each basic skills faculty member will require .20 assigned time for the project. The cost is dependent on the number of BS faculty assigned to the project.
Students must be paid a minimum of $50. Their time is estimated at about 5 hours at $10 per hour. If five SM faculty each recruit 8 students, the maximum cost would be 5 x 8 x $50 = $2000 per BS faculty member. This figure is high due to high student dropout.

Faculty remuneration: With the new streamlined process, the time estimated for subject matter faculty is 12 - 13 hours. It is recommended that deans contribute toward the project by offering 1 unit of assigned time or $750 to participating SM faculty members.

V. Summary and Closing Comments

This project developed a performance-based assessment process to evaluate basic skills of outgoing senior students. Three basic subjects faculty members (in English, Philosophy, and Speech Communication) and three subject matter faculty members (in BACS, Geology, and History) produced criteria, processes, and forms for assessing students' abilities in writing portfolios and oral presentations made in the context of their disciplines. A pilot test with 13 students showed that the instruments were clearly capable of discriminating passing from non-passing performances in speaking and writing, but that critical thinking evaluation remained unclear. Evaluation of the process indicated that only minor modifications were needed to improve the assessment process, criteria, and forms, and to make the criteria for critical thinking more transparent. Participating faculty and students found the process to be worthwhile and recommended that it be continued, again with a combination of basic subjects and subject matter faculty.

Though much of the original impetus behind this outcome-assessment process was to address external pressures from accrediting agencies and/or employers of our graduates, we found that this performance-based assessment served other significant educational agenda as well. First, participating students and subject matter faculty members were interested in learning the assessment outcomes, with the desire to seek supportive experiences before graduation for those whose skills were not passing. Second, the method for assessing basic skills in seniors showed the subject matter faculty members the crucial role that they play in developing students' oral and written literacy within their departments. Third, the interaction among basic subjects faculty and subject matter faculty was fruitful and offered a model for ways to increase future communication and work together to increase our students' skills in writing, speaking and critical thinking.

It is recommended that a second semester of pilot testing be conducted with a minimum of two basic subjects faculty members and ten additional departments. The purpose of the additional pilot testing is to see if the instruments can be used on a more massive scale and with a greater variety of students.
Reference List


CCCC Committee on Assessment. (May, 1992) “A selected bibliography on post secondary writing assessment, 1979-1991.” College Composition and Communication, 43, 2, 244-255.


December 8, 1997

To: Thomas La Belle, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
From: Nancy G. McDermid, Dean, College of Humanities
Subject: Juggernauts #12B and #26

This proposal is a plan for the assessment of three basic skills—writing, speaking, and critical thinking—of graduating seniors. I ask for your approval and support for a very modest pilot assessment this spring, 1998. I have shared this proposal with Gail Whiraker, Richard Giardina, and Helen Goldsmith. I have received positive feedback from all three.

Background

I first met with representatives from the Academic Senate's APC and with members of the English Department to address the issues of using JEPET as a graduation requirement. Our discussion generated an expanded agenda and invitations to the Philosophy and Speech and Communication Studies chairpersons to join us at our second and all subsequent meetings. We agreed that the basic (GE) skills to be assessed—critical thinking, oral communication, and written communication—can be most usefully assessed through a portfolio process of evaluation of learning, to be scored by a four person faculty assessment team.
Selection of Faculty Assessment Teams

Each team will consist of four faculty. One faculty must be from the senior's major; there must be one faculty member from each of the three disciplines instructing students in the areas being assessed: Philosophy Department faculty for Critical Thinking, Speech and Communication Studies faculty for Oral Communication, and English faculty for Written Communication. (The Philosophy, Speech and Communication Studies, and English faculty member will serve on all three pilot teams.)

Selection of Student Participants in Pilot Project for Spring 1998

All College Deans will be asked to identify one department in their college that could be part of the pilot. Three departments will then be selected from among those nominated this spring by their Deans. ( Majors in the College of Humanities will not be included for this first experiment since three departments—English, Philosophy, and Speech and Communication Studies—will be represented on each of the Faculty Assessment Teams set up for the Pilot.) From each of the three departments, eight students will be randomly selected and recruited to participate in the pilot project.

Student Assessment Requirements

1. The senior students selected for the pilot assessment will each provide a "Senior Portfolio" containing two essays of four to ten pages each that were completed in upper-division courses. Adjustments will be made if this page designation is not representative of the length and forms of written work done in the particular major. The selection must include one essay or piece of writing completed for a class in the student's major; the second may come from another class in the major or an upper division class outside of the major. (Note: We may decide to ask for both papers from the student's major.)

2. Each senior selected will attend a three-hour assessment meeting with seven peers. S/he will present a five-minute speech on one of the two essays or pieces of writing, and answer questions during a follow-up discussion with the seven peers also participating in the culminating assessment process.

3. Each selected senior will sign up for a one-unit individual study in CHS (Center for Humanistic Studies) or in the major department and will be assigned a Credit grade by the Faculty Assessment Team faculty after completing the above stated requirements. (Some additional "compensation" may be necessary: waiver of graduation fees, certificate, etc.)
Faculty Assessment Teams' Responsibilities

1. Develop and disseminate guidelines for students' "Senior Portfolio" and for their assessment meeting presentations.

2. Develop evaluation guidelines for oral communication, written communication, and critical thinking subject matter skills.

3. Develop guideline scales for evaluating the written work, the oral presentations, and the critical thinking. Evaluate the written work in the portfolios.

4. Plan, develop, and administer the three-hour culminating assessment meeting.

5. Evaluate the oral presentation and the question session following the oral presentation.

6. Prepare for each student written feedback on his/her work.

7. Prepare a pilot project report on what was learned from this type of assessment. Include in this report a cost analysis of the time involved, an evaluation of the feasibility of performing this assessment process for a larger number of graduating seniors, and a discussion of the benefits and difficulties created by this type of assessment of graduating seniors.

Portfolio Assessment Procedures

1. Each student prepares the portfolio and attaches the following statement: "I certify that this is my own work submitted (date) in (course number/title)."

2. At the meeting, each student presents a five-minute speech and then participates in an eight-to-ten minute “Question Session.” The speeches and Question Sessions are recorded on audiotapes for the Faculty Assessment Team’s review.

Pilot Project Resources

The three faculty from English, Speech and Communication Studies, and Philosophy will each be given .20 University or College released time. The team member from each of the three major departments should receive .10 assigned time or a stipend equivalent to .10 assigned time. Students will receive 1 unit of CHS individual study credit.

Total Resources Needed for Pilot: .90 released time.

r/a: rita / jugg2
Writing Evaluation Form (Spring 1998 version)

Student Name: ______________________________

Paper written for: ___________________________ Date Work originally submitted: __/__/____
(class name and number)

Essay Title: ________________________________

Evaluative Criteria

Content
1. selects a substantive topic whose scope is appropriate
2. accurately draws upon a range of sources of evidence appropriate to the discipline (e.g., primary, secondary sources, course lectures, etc.)
3. demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline (including controversies and disagreements)
4. provides a critical analysis and/or application of theory where appropriate

CONTENT SCORE 4 3 2 1

Discourse Design
5. effective opening (establishes context, purpose & point of view)
6. develops points sufficiently
7. writing is well-organized (ideas flow clearly; are logically connected)
8. effective closure

DISCOURSE DESIGN SCORE 4 3 2 1

Language Control
9. writer uses a variety of sentence structures
10. appropriate vocabulary & diction (level of formality)
11. standard conventions of usage, spelling, punctuation used consistently except where text is deliberately experimental

LANGUAGE SCORE 4 3 2 1

(Please make any relevant additional comments on the back of this sheet.)

Key to Rating Scale:
4 = excellent strengths in this area  3 = Good performance  2 = Needs improvement  1 = Inadequate
RESPONSE FORM
Oral Communication/Critical Thinking

Speaker ________________________________ Topic __________
Evaluator ______________________________ Date __________

Evaluation Criteria

CONTENT
1. Selects a substantive topic
2. Articulates a point of view
3. Demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline
4. Accurately draws upon a range of credible evidence
5. Provides a critical analysis or practical applications of theory

CONTENT SCORE 4 3 2 1

ORGANIZATION/DEVELOPMENT
6. Effective opening (captures interest, establishes context)
7. Communicates purpose clearly
8. Organizes ideas coherently and smoothly
9. Develops ideas sufficiently
10. Uses logical reasoning
11. Provides closure

ORGANIZATION/DEVEL. SCORE 4 3 2 1

LANGUAGE AND DELIVERY
12. Is comfortable and confident in delivery
13. Makes eye contact/does not read
14. Has adequate rate, volume, vocal variety
15. Uses vivid, clear and precise language

LANGUAGE/DELIVERY SCORE 4 3 2 1

KEY TO RATING SCALE
4 = Excellent strengths in this area  3 = Good performance  2 = Needs improvement  1 = Inadequate
Assessment Pilot Project

Spring, 1998

Faculty:

Carolyn Chaney
Speech & Communication Studies

Robert Mutti
Philosophy

Deborah Swanson
English

Bill Issel
History

David Mustart
Geology

Gary Selnow
Business Analysis & Computing Systems
### ASSESSMENT PROJECT CALENDAR

<table>
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<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Tu</th>
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<tr>
<td>Guidelines for the &quot;Senior Portfolio&quot; given to faculty advisors by March 27</td>
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<td>Guidelines for the Senior Portfolio given to students by April 3</td>
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<td>Senior Portfolios due by April 17</td>
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<td>Three Friday afternoon assessment meetings (see below for further details)</td>
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<td><em>22</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty feedback given to students by 5/22</td>
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</table>

**Assessment meetings start at 3 PM (Friday)**

Students attend until 6 PM. Each student speaks for about 6-7 min., followed by the "Question Session" of about 5-6 min. (with all students and faculty participating). Finally, students will participate in a 45 min. evaluation of the whole process. [Eight 15 min. periods plus 15 min. of break-time plus 45 min. of evaluation is three hours.]

Faculty stay until about 7 PM having a one-hour final assessment meeting.
General Information:

The Assessment Pilot Project (APP) is designed to determine whether our graduating seniors will be entering the workforce with adequate skills in writing, speaking, and critical thinking. A capstone assessment is more than just another test or pointless hurdle. It should help you think about what you have learned at SFSU, and how you may apply that learning to the next stage in your career preparation. The activities may help you address the question: How will my skills in writing, speaking and thinking support me in my future career?

You may feel that since you have passed your courses, this should prove that you are competent in your subject matter and in basic skills. Many students and teachers would agree with you. However, a few years ago WASC, the accreditation agency for secondary schools and colleges, determined that passing coursework was insufficient proof that students were meeting the objectives set by academic departments and colleges. Universities now face the choice of examining our graduates with mass multiple choice tests or developing alternate assessment tools. At SFSU, we do not believe that our students will be best served by a multiple choice test, and we know that competencies in writing, speaking and critical thinking cannot be adequately measured with such a test. So we have decided to try developing a performance test that will better allow our students to demonstrate their skills. As a participant in this pilot project, you will play an important role in determining the future assessments used at SFSU, and we will be inviting you to give us feedback as we go, so that we can design the best possible experience for future students.

As a participant, you will be helping future faculty and students. But you should get a lot from the experience, too. First, you will participate in activities that are designed to mirror the real world. Employers say that the top requirement for today's jobs is the ability to communicate...orally and in writing. The pilot activities provide practice and feedback to you about your communication skills. Second, if you pass the activities, we will certify that you are competent in the skills most desired by employers: critical thinking, oral, and written communication. You will receive a certificate that you may show to prospective employers or describe in your resume.

What happens if you do not pass the activities? Nothing. Because this is a pilot project, your performance will be a confidential matter between you and the faculty assessors. But you will receive feedback about your performance that you can use to your personal advantage, to plan ways to improve your skills for your future.
Activity #1: Writing in my Field

Overview:

In this part of the project, you are asked to submit two pieces of writing, both of which should have been produced for upper-division classes here at SFSU. You will be the one to decide which writings to include in your portfolio. Ideally, you should include work you think best represents the writing you've been doing in your upper-division courses. You will also be expected to use one of these two pieces as the basis for a seven minute speech. (This requirement is fully explained in the subsequent section entitled, “Speaking in my Field of Study.”)

Both writings in your portfolio will be read by two different faculty evaluators, each of whom will fill out an evaluation form. As indicated on the attached form, your writing will be evaluated according to the substance as well as presentation of your ideas, the variety and structure of your sentences, and your demonstrated mastery of grammar (e.g., subject/verb agreement) and mechanics (e.g., punctuation, apostrophes).

This feedback is confidential—between you and the faculty assessors, and is designed to let you know the strengths and weaknesses evident in your upper-division academic writing—information you can use to your personal advantage as you see fit.

Portfolio Requirements:

- two, 4 to 10 page papers
- assignment information for each paper (see #3 below)
- a cover letter discussing your submissions (see #4 below)

1. One of your pieces must have been written for a course in your major field of study. The second piece of writing may come from another class in your major or from an upper-division class outside your major.

2. Ideally, each piece should be between four and ten typed, double-spaced pages of writing (note: attachments, charts, tables, and figures do not count as part of the page limit). Should you only have papers longer than ten pages to select from, you may submit longer pieces in your portfolio. You may submit either a clean (unmarked) copy, or one with faculty comments/feedback on it.

3. You should include whatever assignment sheets/directions you have for each piece you are submitting to provide your readers with a context for the writing. If you have no written record of the assignment, you will
need to produce one so the faculty evaluators have a good idea what you were being asked to do in the assignment. Please be sure you let the evaluators know: the course name and number; assignment purpose and audience; assignment length; and any other assignment requirements (e.g., the need for tables, a particular kind of conclusion, etc.)

4. You should also include a cover letter (between one and two typed, double spaced pages) in which you briefly explain both:

- why you selected each of these particular pieces of writing for your portfolio.
- how each illustrates your strengths and any weaknesses you believe you have as a writer.

Completed portfolios are due on Friday April 17th by 5:00 p.m. and should be submitted to your department office.
Writing Evaluation Form

Student Name: ____________________________

Paper written for: ________________________ Date Work originally submitted: ___/___/___
(class name and number)

Essay Title: _______________________________

Evaluative Criteria

Content

1. selects a substantive topic whose scope is appropriate
2. accurately draws upon a range of sources of evidence appropriate to the discipline (e.g., primary, secondary sources, course lectures, etc.)
3. demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline (including controversies and disagreements)
4. provides a critical analysis and/or application of theory where appropriate

CONTENT SCORE 4 3 2 1

Discourse Design

5. effective opening (establishes context, purpose & point of view)
6. develops points sufficiently
7. writing is well-organized (ideas flow clearly; are logically connected)
8. effective closure

DISCOURSE DESIGN SCORE 4 3 2 1

Language Control

9. writer uses a variety of sentence structures
10. appropriate vocabulary & diction (level of formality)
11. standard conventions of usage, spelling, punctuation used consistently except where text is deliberately experimental

LANGUAGE SCORE 4 3 2 1

(Please make any relevant additional comments on the back of this sheet.)
Activity #2: Speaking in my Field

Overview:

In this assignment you are asked to present an oral argument, speaking as a professional in your field of study, and addressing others like yourself. The subject of the speech should be taken from one of the two papers that you submitted in your writing portfolio. The task is meant to encourage you to articulate a point of view about your topic, explain relevant theories, concepts and methods to colleagues and provide them with a critical analysis of the issues or, possibly, some ideas about practical applications of the topic.

The Task:

1. Topic and Purpose: From the two papers in your writing portfolio, select a central idea that you wish to speak about. Next, decide on your speaking purpose. Your may choose to share information about your subject and present your point of view, in order to enhance understanding of the subject by all participants in the interaction. An alternate purpose is to encourage others to change their beliefs or actions in particular directions...in this case you will be persuading others to think as you do, to accept your proposal, or to act in ways that you believe are most appropriate. With either purpose you will provide the fullest expression of your perspective, based upon thorough research into and careful thinking about why you came to hold that point of view. Your perspective may express a commonly held view or your perspective may be quite different from the prevailing view. In either case, you encourage others in the interaction to think critically along with you as you explore theory, concepts, or methods that are relevant to your field of study at SFSU.

2. Planning: You should prepare carefully for the oral presentation, as you would if you were making a professional presentation to colleagues. As you plan your speech, be sure that it includes the following elements:
   • an interesting opening
   • a clear central point or statement of the problem that shows the point of view that you are taking
   • alternate perspectives or solutions that challenge your point of view
   • theories, research, analysis that bear on the issues you are discussing
   • evidence, illustrations or examples that support your point of view
   • a closing that summarizes and provides closure
Plan to speak for 6-7 minutes without interruption, and another 5 minutes to answer questions posed by audience members. You should time yourself during practice so that you can pace yourself within the time limits. You may use note cards or written text as a speaking aid, but do not plan to read from a full text, as this will prevent you from making adequate contact with your audience.

3. Nervous? Do not be surprised if you experience some performance anxiety while preparing or on the speaking day. This is totally normal. To help yourself be more relaxed, plan to eat something light about an hour before speaking. Plan some physical activity during the speech...a few hand gestures or use of a visual aid may help to dispel nervous energy. A glass of water will relieve dry mouth, and a few slow deep breaths will help to slow heart rate. And be sure to think positive thoughts...remember, nothing terrible can happen to you. We want you to succeed, and we will try to be an audience that listens thoughtfully to your ideas.

4. Speaking: You will be seated along with several of your peers, as though this were a professional panel. Within this group, you may decide on the speaking order; it is recommended that nervous participants be given the opportunity to speak first, as nervousness may increase over time. Your audience will consist of the remaining student colleagues plus four faculty evaluators. One of the audience members will serve as timer and will signal you when you have 3 minutes and 1 minute remaining. Performances will be videotaped...not to make you nervous, but for three purposes: 1) for you to review after receiving your feedback; 2) for the instructors to review, in case of disagreement; and 3) for the instructors to examine the criteria and improve the process next time. Try to ignore the taping if you can.

Evaluating your Competencies:

The attached response form identifies the criteria by which your presentation will be evaluated by four instructors. Note the three areas in which your talk will be assessed: content and ideas, organization and development of the presentation, and language and delivery. You will receive feedback that is designed to help you improve your oral communication and/or critical thinking.

Assessment Pilot Project Faculty Participants:

Carolyn Chaney, Speech & Communication
Bill Issel, History
David Mustart, Geosciences
Robert Mutti, Philosophy
Gary Selnov, Business Analysis & Computing Systems
Deborah Swanson, English
RESPONSE FORM
Oral Communication/Critical Thinking

Speaker  M. B  
Evaluator  Oralia Ramirez

Evaluation Criteria

CONTENT
1. Selects a substantive topic
2. Articulates a point of view
3. Demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline
4. Accurately draws upon a range of credible evidence
5. Provides a critical analysis or practical applications of theory

CONTENT SCORE  4  (3 / 2 / 1)

ORGANIZATION/DEVELOPMENT
6. Effective opening (captures interest, establishes context)
7. Communicates purpose clearly
8. Organizes ideas coherently and smoothly following
9. Develops ideas sufficiently
10. Uses logical reasoning
11. Provides closure

ORGANIZATION/DEVEL. SCORE  4  (3 / 2 / 1)

LANGUAGE AND DELIVERY
12. Is comfortable and confident in delivery
13. Does not read
14. Has adequate rate, volume, vocal variety
15. Uses vivid, clear and precise-language

LANGUAGE/DELIVERY SCORE  4  3  (2 / 1)

Comments about Content
I think you got the Guthrie into your audience. I appreciated your sensitivity to our need to understand you clearly. I'd love to hear a bit more @ the units, in a bit more depth. So still ask

Comments about Organization/Devel.
Good to establish the topic - but might to establish context a bit more. I felt a bit lost on the principle @ the main ideas

Comments about Language/Delivery
Eye contact was very limited - you looked mostly at the board, not the ceiling. Voice was nice. Even in the

KEY TO RATING SCALE
4 = Excellent strengths in this area  3 = Good performance  2 = Needs improvement  1 = Inadequate
RESPONSE FORM
Oral Communication/Critical Thinking

Speaker  
Evaluator  

Topic  Geology  
Date  5/8/88  

Evaluation Criteria

CONTENT
1. Selects a substantive topic  √
2. Articulates a point of view  √
3. Demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline  
4. Accurately draws upon a range of credible evidence  
5. Provides a critical analysis or practical applications of theory  

CONTENT SCORE  (4) 3 2 1

ORGANIZATION/DEVELOPMENT
6. Effective opening (captures interest, establishes context)  
7. Communicates purpose clearly  
8. Organizes ideas coherently and smoothly  
9. Develops ideas sufficiently  
10. Uses logical reasoning  
11. Provides closure  

ORGANIZATION/DEVEL. SCORE  (4) 3

LANGUAGE AND DELIVERY
12. Is comfortable and confident in delivery  √
13. Makes eye contact / does not read  √
14. Has adequate rate, volume, vocal variety  √
15. Uses vivid, clear and precise language  √

LANGUAGE/DELIVERY SCORE  (4) 3 2 1

KEY TO RATING SCALE
(4) = Excellent strengths in this area  (3) = Good performance  (2) = Needs improvement  (1) = Inadequate

Comments about Content

Comments about Organization/Devel.

Comments about Language/Delivery
Writing Evaluation Form

Student Name: [Blank]
Paper written for: [Blank] Date Work originally submitted: [Blank]
(class name and number) Essay Title: [Blank]

Evaluative Criteria

Comments about Content

Content
1. selects a substantive topic whose scope is appropriate
2. accurately draws upon a range of sources of evidence appropriate to the discipline (e.g., primary, secondary sources, course lectures, etc.)
3. demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline (including controversies and disagreements)
4. provides a critical analysis and/or application of theory where appropriate

CONTENT SCORE

4 3 2 1

Discourse Design
5. effective opening (establishes context, purpose & point of view)
6. develops points sufficiently - p. 1 not sure if all first claims; some w/ 2 p. - write just lists
7. writing is well-organized (ideas flow clearly; are logically connected) ideas flow; writer uses transitions; giving clear
8. effective closure

DISCOURSE DESIGN SCORE

4 3 2 1

Comments about Discourse Design

Comments about Language

Language Control
9. writer uses a variety of sentence structures
10. appropriate vocabulary & diction (level of formality)
11. standard conventions of usage, spelling, punctuation used consistently except where text is deliberately experimental

LANGUAGE SCORE

4 3 2 1

(Please make any relevant additional comments on the back of this sheet.)

Description of Cold War assignment virtually absent

Topic: decision making

Sends reason for turning in - exceedences, this was on a disk
Joseph -

I'm sorry, I referred to you as "the writer" in some places - I was really writing my notes to myself. Hopefully this brief note will give you a better sense of my reading and your paper on the Civil War. I see this essay as the "backbone" of the two essays submitted in your portfolio because you mostly list a series of points without providing much explanation or illustration of those points. (See for example your discussion of D.E. Dienings work.) I don't know what you were expected to do for this assignment, however, so perhaps your professor was looking for breadth rather than depth for discussion about this topic.

Technically your writing is fairly sound. I recommend you review the punctuation rules for words like however, this, and for "whereas." A very brief lesson:

- However is thus are transitional adverbs (transition words) that do not join sentences so you need a semicolon or need to start a new sentence.
  - OK: I like cake. However, I can't eat it.
  - OK: I like cake; however, I can't eat it.
  - NOT: I like cake, however I can't eat it.

On the other hand, "whereas" can not be a statement that is complete.

OK: I like cake whereas John doesn't.
NOT: I like cake whereas John does.
Writing Evaluation Form

Student Name: 

Paper written for: (class name and number)

Date Work originally submitted: 

Essay Title: Cold War

Evaluative Criteria

Content
1. Selects a substantive topic whose scope is appropriate
2. Accurately draws upon a range of sources of evidence appropriate to the discipline (e.g., primary, secondary sources, course lectures, etc.)
3. Demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline (including controversies and disagreements)
4. Provides a critical analysis and/or application of theory where appropriate

CONTENT SCORE 4

Discourse Design
5. Effective opening (establishes context, purpose & point of view)
6. Develops points sufficiently
7. Writing is well-organized (ideas flow clearly; are logically connected)
8. Effective closure

DISCOURSE DESIGN SCORE 4

Language Control
9. Writer uses a variety of sentence structures
10. Appropriate vocabulary & diction (level of formality)
11. Standard conventions of usage, spelling, punctuation used consistently except where text is deliberately experimental

LANGUAGE SCORE 4

Comments about Content

Topic seems unfocused. (Too many views covered.) Plenty of sources, but arguments are treated in a sketchy, off-hand manner.

Comments about Discourse Design

Opening vague. Discussion starts between Cold War and Soviet policy. (Second to last paragraph needed earlier.) Idea seems expansion undeveloped. The

Comments about Language

9 and 10 pretty good (but some grammar/usage problems). Frequent misuse of the comma. Spelling good except for some key names.

(please make any relevant additional comments on the back of this sheet.)
Pilot Assessment of Basic Skills
Input from Student Participants about the Process

Name: ___________________  Expected Graduation Date: ________
Major: ___________ estimated GPA: _____  Major GPA: _______
Career Goal: ____________________________

Directions: Please give input to help us revise our assessment process for future use. Questions 1 - 3 ask about your preparation in basic skills; the remaining questions ask about the assessment process itself.

1. Tell us about the opportunities you have had to learn basic skills (writing, oral communication, critical thinking) at SFSU:  
   • in your major coursework:
   • in GE and other courses:

2. How much did faculty in your major courses stress and weight the following: (Give weights in %, but don't try to make the %s add up to 100%).
   Subject matter content _____%  Writing Skills _____%  
   Critical thinking skills _____%  Oral communication _____%  
   Specify Other (e.g., research methods): __________________________ at _____%

3. Please share your thought as to how SFSU could better prepare you in basic skills:  
   • in your major coursework:
   • in GE and other courses:

4. Do you think this assessment was a fair examination of your basic skills?  
   why? why not?  
   • in writing:
   • in oral communication:
   • in critical thinking:  

(cont’d.)
5. Please give us specific feedback about the process:

- the time frame:

- putting together the portfolio of your writing, and writing a cover note:

- preparing/presenting the speeches:

6. Do you think that this kind of assessment should be done as an outcome assessment by itself, administered by basic skills faculty, OR do you think it should be done as a part of a major course, such as a Senior Seminar?

7. Anything else you want to tell us?

Thank you again for your participation in this project.
1. Do you think a performance-based assessment of basic skills should be used with seniors in your discipline? If such an assessment is not feasible or useful, please explain why.

2. Do you think the assessment of basic skills in your graduating seniors:
   • could be handled exclusively by faculty within your discipline?
   • could be handled exclusively by faculty in the basic subjects?
   • could only be handled by some combination of both?
   
   Briefly explain why.

3. Assuming all departments and programs will eventually be required to assess both the disciplinary knowledge and the basic skills of their graduating seniors, do you see a way your program could measure both together? or, do you think that it would be best to try and evaluate these proficiencies separately? Please explain.

4. Do you think the “basic skill” of critical thinking can be measured as a recognized proficiency (as speaking or writing can), or do you think it can not be teased apart from the content and organization of knowledge in your discipline?

   If separate, how could we better assess it in seniors in your program?

5. How long, on average, did it take you to read and evaluate both papers in a single portfolio? Please explain any observations you had about using this method to evaluate students’ writing.

6. Did the written and the oral communication forms seem to measure what you think is important? Were they easy to use? If not, what recommendations could you make so the forms could be better assessment instruments.

7. Did you learn anything particularly surprising from doing this project? (It’s perfectly reasonable if you didn’t.) If you did, briefly explain what you found surprising, and if relevant, describe the effect this observation might have on your work/your program.

8. Were this pilot project to continue with new faculty, what incentives would you recommend we use to entice faculty to participate? to entice students to participate?

9. Anything else you want to tell us? (Please don’t hesitate!)
FACULTY FEEDBACK ON THE
PILOT ASSESSMENT PROJECT

What follows is a series of questions about the Pilot Assessment Project (formulated by Carolyn Chaney [Speech], Deborah Swanson [English], and Robert Mutti [Philosophy]), and a summary of the answers to those questions given by David Mustart (Geosciences), Bill Issel (History), and Gary Selnow (BACS).

1. Do you think a performance-based assessment of basic skills should be used with seniors in your discipline? If such an assessment is not feasible or useful, please explain why.

All agreed that it should be used. Bill Issel added that such an assessment would complement the History Department's emphasis on basic skills in their History 300 and 600 series. David Mustart added that it should be done early enough (last semester junior or first semester senior year) so that some form of remediation could be imposed, if necessary--perhaps in conjunction with their scientific writing course.

2. Do you think the assessment of basic skills in your graduating seniors:
   * could be handled exclusively by faculty within your discipline?
   * could be handled exclusively by faculty in the basic subjects?
   * could only be handled by some combination of both?

Briefly explain why.

All agreed that some combination of both kinds of faculty is necessary. They said that only faculty in each specific discipline can properly evaluate students' knowledge of the material in that discipline. David Mustart added that it is crucial to get faculty in the disciplines involved so that they will take responsibility for teaching these basic skills, (and not treat these assessments they way they treat the JEPET exam). The faculty also agreed that it is valuable to include outside faculty, who are used to evaluating performance in the basic skills of writing and speaking, and that "independent" evaluators provide an objective kind of "reality check" on departmental assessments.
3. Assuming that all departments and programs will eventually be required to assess both the disciplinary knowledge and the basic skills of their graduating seniors, do you see a way your program could measure both together? Or do you think that it would be best to try to evaluate these proficiencies separately?

All agreed that separate assessments would be best. Bill Issel repeated that he sees the basic skills assessment as a useful follow-up to (and check on) the History 300 and 600 series. David Mustart sees the basic skills assessment as being done in a performance-oriented, one-unit course, and the disciplinary assessment by means of a GRE type exam. Nevertheless, all agreed that there should be disciplinary content to the speaking and writing performances in which basic skills are assessed (so that basic skill assessment is not totally separate from disciplinary assessment).

4. Do you think the basic skill of critical thinking can be measured as a recognized proficiency (as speaking or writing can)? Or do you think it cannot be teased apart from the content and organization of knowledge in your discipline? Please explain.

If (it is a) separate (skill), how could we better assess it in your program?

All agreed that critical thinking is different from writing and speaking skills, and that some crucial aspects of critical thinking are uniquely related to their disciplines. David Mustart added that critical thinking should be tested in a regular department course. Bill Issel said that he viewed critical thinking as a general skill which is related to each discipline but not entirely specific to it. For example, he believes that there is a "logic of historical thought", by means of which general fallacies of inquiry, explanation, and argument are viewed in an historical context. He added that he teaches and tests this sort of "logic" by means of the assignments he gives in his regular courses.

All the faculty also agreed that different departments have quite different standards about what count as good sources of evidence and information.

Gary Selnow added that no student should be failed on the critical thinking component of a basic skill assessment unless this evaluation is supported by the more wide-ranging assessment of discipline-related knowledge done by the department.

The consensus seems to be that a basic skill assessment should focus on speaking and writing as the two crucial ways of communicating discipline-specific knowledge and of showing off any discipline-related critical thinking skills.
5. How long, on average, did it take you to read and evaluate both papers in a single portfolio? Please explain any observations/thoughts you had about using this [portfolio] method to evaluate students' writing.

All agreed that it takes about 20 to 30 minutes (plus or minus a bit) to read a portfolio (though this seems to depend, to some extent, on whether the papers are on a subject with which they are familiar). They repeated that this seemed to be a fair and workable method of evaluation. David Mustart added that there should be an in-class writing assignment [which, I gather, would be part of the one-unit course mentioned by David in #3 - RM], and that this, perhaps in an edited form, should be included in the portfolio. This would guarantee the authenticity of the written work. Gary Selnow agreed that it is important to make sure that written work is authentic; and he repeated his concern that it should be representative of a student's overall abilities.

6. Did the written and the oral communication forms seem to measure what you think is important? Were they easy to use? If not, what recommendations could you make so the forms could be better assessment instruments?

All agreed that some clarification of terminology, to make it as familiar and transparent as possible, would improve the forms. Bill Issel added that he already uses evaluation forms similar to these (and that he was pleased to have been able to help design these forms), and so he found them easy to use. He also said that it might not be fair to require a student to demonstrate an understanding of "theory" (as part of the evaluation of content), since many teachers emphasize a more "narrative" approach to history (but he added it might be good for them anyway!).

7. Did you learn anything particularly surprising from doing this project? If you did, briefly explain what you found surprising and, if relevant, describe the effect this observation might have on your work or your program.

All faculty were more or less surprised by how enthusiastic students were about the idea of this sort of assessment. Apparently students feel it would add to the value of their degree. David Mustart was surprised by how much better--and how much worse--some of his students did, compared to what he expected of them based on their standing in their department. He thought this showed that an independent assessment of basic skills of this sort would be very good for his department. Bill Issel added that he was a bit surprised at how difficult it was to get students to actually participate in the project. He thought that they probably felt the need for more time to prepare.
8. Were this pilot project to continue with new faculty [and students], what incentives would you recommend we use to entice faculty to participate? To entice students to participate?

All agreed that students would respond to extra financial incentives (such as $100 instead of $50), and that having enough time to prepare for and participate in the assessment was an important issue. Also, in view of the fact that students believe that passing such an assessment adds value to their degree, it was agreed that it should be emphasized to students in a pilot project that if they pass, they will receive a certificate acknowledging that they have passed, and that this will look good on their Vita. (David Mustart added that his students were intimidated by not having enough written work and he suggested broadening the criteria for the written work.)

All of the faculty agreed that faculty would like more money too, but that they would probably respond to the incentives which got them involved this time.

9. Anything else you want to tell us?

Gary Selnow said, to enthusiastic agreement, that he would like to start an on-line writing lab at S.F.S.U. (such as the ones in Pennsylvania and Texas) to which students could go to help them improve their writing skills. Such a lab could be customized so that each department's special requirements and skills are covered.

Suggestions were also made concerning other departments which would be good candidates for participating in another pilot project of this kind, including Biology, Engineering and Chemistry, Urban Studies, and International Business.
### Appendix I

**Students' Evaluation of the Assessment Instruments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geoscience</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>N/A Not Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Totals</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table x. Students' Evaluation of the Assessment Portfolio and Speech (Question #4, Student Questionnaire, Appendix F: “Do you think this assessment was a fair examination of your basic skills?”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>N/A Not Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Totals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table x. Students' Evaluation of the Assessment Portfolio and Speech (Question #4, Student Questionnaire, Appendix F: “Do you think this assessment was a fair examination of your basic skills?”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>N/A Not Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Totals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table x. Students' Evaluation of the Assessment Portfolio and Speech (Question #4, Student Questionnaire, Appendix F: “Do you think this assessment was a fair examination of your basic skills?”)
Writing Evaluation Form (revised version)

Student Name: ________________________

Paper written for: ____________________ Date Work originally submitted: ___/___/___
(class name and number) Essay Title: ____________________ Essay Evaluator: ________________

Evaluative Criteria

Content
1. selects a substantive topic whose scope is appropriate
2. accurately draws upon a range of sources of evidence appropriate to the discipline (e.g., primary, secondary sources, course lectures, etc.)
3. demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline (including controversies and disagreements)
4. provides a critical analysis and/or application of theory where appropriate

CONTENT SCORE 4 3 2 1

Organization & Development
5. effective opening (establishes context, purpose & point of view)
6. develops points sufficiently
7. writing is well-organized (ideas flow clearly; are logically connected)
8. effective closure

ORG. & DEV. SCORE 4 3 2 1

Language Effectiveness, Grammar, & Usage
9. writer uses a variety of sentence structures
10. appropriate vocabulary & diction (level of formality)
11. standard conventions of usage, spelling, punctuation used consistently except where text is deliberately experimental

LANGUAGE EFFECTIVENESS SCORE 4 3 2 1

Comments about Content

Comments about Org. & Dev.

Comments about Language Effectiveness

Key to Rating Scale:
4 = excellent strengths in this area 3 = Good performance 2 = Needs improvement 1 = Inadequate
Note: Scores of 3-4 are passing; scores of 1-2 are not passing.
RESPONSE FORM
Oral Communication/Critical Thinking

Speaker _______________________________  Topic __________
Evaluator _______________________________  Date __________

Evaluation Criteria

CONTENT
1. Selects a substantive topic
2. Articulates a point of view
3. Demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline
4. Accurately draws upon a range of credible evidence
5. Provides a critical analysis or practical applications of theory

CONTENT SCORE  4  3  2  1

ORGANIZATION/DEVELOPMENT
6. Effective opening (captures interest, establishes context)
7. Communicates purpose clearly
8. Organizes ideas coherently and smoothly
9. Develops ideas sufficiently
10. Uses logical reasoning
11. Provides closure

ORGANIZATION/DEVEL. SCORE  4  3  2  1

LANGUAGE AND DELIVERY
12. Is comfortable and confident in delivery
13. Makes eye contact/does not read
14. Has adequate rate, volume, vocal variety
15. Uses vivid and unambiguous language

LANGUAGE/DELIVERY SCORE  4  3  2  1

Comments about Content

Comments about Organization/Devel.

Comments about Language/Delivery

KEY TO RATING SCALE
4 = Excellent strengths in this area  3 = Good performance  2 = Needs improvement  1 = Inadequate
Scores of 3 and 4 are passing; scores of 1 and 2 are not passing.
Assessing
Oral and Written Communication Skills
in Graduating Seniors

Carolyn Chaney (Speech & Communication)
Deborah Swanson (English)
San Francisco State University
June, 1999

I. Introduction and Project Objectives

The purpose of this assessment pilot project was to design both a process and a set of performance-based instruments that could be used to evaluate effectively the basic skills (oral and written communication, and critical thinking) of our university graduates. Clearly, outcome assessments have become a necessary and potentially important part of the culture of higher education for a number of reasons—the most pressing on our campus being our need to meet the requirements of the University’s accrediting agency, and to respond to the concerns expressed by employers who expect to hire competent graduates.

Our primary rationale for designing and testing a performance-based assessment plan was that certain types of student learning can be best evaluated directly in the context of the students’ performance of the target skills, rather than in a traditional test venue, where competence is measured indirectly by examining discrete skills.\(^1\) Furthermore, we wished to evaluate students’ abilities to use basic communication skills in the context of their subject matter disciplines—that is, their ability to speak, write about, and think about concepts important to their chosen fields.

Unfortunately, to this point, basic skills and subject matter knowledge have been assessed as separate entities on our campus,\(^2\) although the connection between evaluating students’ subject matter competence and their ability to

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\(^1\) For a good review of the research and professional policies on writing assessment, see the CCCC Committee on Assessment: Position Statement, 1995; CCCC Committee on Assessment: A Selected Bibliography on Post Secondary Writing Assessment 1979-1991, 1992; Conlan, 1986; Huot, 1990.

\(^2\) A recent illustration of this view is provided in the August 1997 document “New Perspectives on Assessment at SF State University” in which “assessment of general education basic skills development” is completely distinct from “assessment in the major.”
communicate that competence orally and in writing was recognized over a decade ago:

Although the CSU professes knowledge of the discipline to be important, current practices do not generally assess to what extent students acquire it. Students often complain of a bewildering mosaic of demands and of the lack of opportunity to discover the patterns which lend coherence and meaning to them. The relationship of courses to major programs and to general curricular goals and such learned abilities as effective written and oral communication and critical thinking remains unclear and unarticulated. (Student Outcomes Assessment in the California State University, 1989, p. 14)

An effective performance-based assessment plan would thus provide students with the opportunity to forge their own coherent and meaningful understanding of their field of study, and to communicate this understanding through significant written and oral texts. To date, one of the best methods to promote and evaluate such "integration of knowledge" and demonstration of basic skills is the holistic assessment of a portfolio of student work (Charney, 1984; Decker, Cooper, & Harrington, 1993; McDonald, 1996; Mondack, 1997; Raines, 1996).

Given what we know about assessing basic skills, we designed an assessment plan that asked students to (1) compile a portfolio which consisted of writings completed in upper-division courses as well as a written evaluation of those writings, and (2) give a speech on one of the portfolio texts to a group of faculty evaluators and peers.

In the remainder of this paper we will describe how we

- worked with subject matter faculty to develop guidelines and criteria for evaluating critical thinking, oral and written communication skills
- developed guidelines and instructions for student participants;
- carried out this assessment process with subject matter faculty members; and
- collected feedback from, and provided feedback to, participating students.

Following this, we will share the results of the assessments and discuss the benefits and difficulties involved in a performance-based assessment of seniors speaking and writing in their disciplines.
II. Method

The Assessment Pilot Project took place over the Spring (Sem. I) and Fall (Sem. II) semesters of 1998.

Project Faculty

Three faculty members (from English/Composition, Philosophy/Critical Thinking, and Speech and Communication) were the basic subjects faculty team who developed the assessment process in Sem. I. From five Colleges of the University, seven subject matter disciplines were chosen: Art History, Business Analysis and Computing Systems (BACS), Consumer and Family Studies/Dietetics, International Relations, Geology, History, and Management. Three Sem. I subject matter faculty volunteered to assist with the development of the pilot, including locating student participants. Semester II subject matter faculty taught capstone courses that included both writing and speaking assignments that could be modified to meet the needs of the Assessment Pilot Project.

Developing Evaluation Guidelines/Instruments/Criteria

During Sem. I, basic subject faculty in speech, writing and critical thinking worked with subject matter faculty in History, Geology, and BACS to develop criteria needed to assess issues in speaking, writing, and critical thinking. The input of subject matter faculty was crucial as we considered criteria needed to assess content issues in speaking and writing—for example, the types of evidence or analysis that would be expected in the varied disciplines.

A great deal of discussion was needed to decide how critical thinking could be best assessed within writing and speaking assignments; in the end, we agreed that critical thinking overlapped with speaking and writing in that all three of these skill areas involve: 1) using clear and unambiguous language, 2) organizing in a coherent form that provides a logical argument, and 3) providing substantive content with evidence used to back up claims. The team therefore decided that the criteria for critical thinking would be best merged with the criteria for writing and speaking in our assessment forms.

Using subject matter faculty input, the basic subjects faculty then developed drafts of two instruments for evaluation of the writing and speaking assignments, distributed them to other basic subject faculty members to solicit additional input, and pilot-tested them with students in BACS, Geology, History.

The instruments that emerged after significant discussion, consultation, and pilot testing are given in Appendix A. These evaluation forms are designed to provide both formative feedback and summative evaluations of students'
work. Formative feedback to students consisted of comments about strengths and weaknesses in three components of writing/critical thinking: Content, Discourse Design (form), and Language Control, and in three components of speaking/critical thinking: Content, Organization/Development, and Language/Delivery. Summative evaluation consisted of a passing or failing holistic score assigned to each of these components.

Developing Guidelines for Students

The basic subjects faculty wrote a booklet to explain the purpose of the Assessment Pilot Project to students, describe the activities in detail, and inform students of all requirements for their writing portfolios and speeches. This booklet is available upon written request to the authors.

Student Participants

During Sem. I, the subject matter faculty had the task of selecting senior student participants that represented the range of abilities found within the major. Student selection turned out to be one of our most difficult tasks; even with a $50 stipend and a promise of certification of competence for students’ resumes, students were reluctant to participate because the assessment had no true bearing on their degree work. As a result of this difficulty, we changed our strategy during Sem. II, enlisting faculty participants who were teaching capstone courses. All students enrolled in these capstones were automatically enrolled in our project, with faculty members writing the project requirements into their syllabi. Table 1 lists the Sem I and II programs that participated in the project, as well as the number of students within each who completed both the required assessment activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sem. (I, II) Discipline</th>
<th>Completed Both Activities</th>
<th>Completed Portfolio only</th>
<th>Completed Speech only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. BACS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Geology</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. History</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Art History</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. CFS/D</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. IR</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Management</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total N</strong></td>
<td><strong>102 (84%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>11 (9%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>8 (7%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Distribution of student participants.
Assessing Writing through Portfolios

Sem I students turned in portfolios containing two upper-division papers and a cover letter explaining why the pieces were selected and how each illustrated the student’s strengths and weaknesses. Sem. II students provided one writing assignment from an upper-division class and one from the capstone course. To provide faculty readers with a context by which to evaluate the writing, every paper was accompanied by information about the original assignment.

Portfolios were to be read and independently assessed by two faculty members—one from basic subjects plus the subject matter faculty member. However, the Sem II subject matter faculty did not read the assignments produced for other courses. When possible, a meeting of the assessment team was held to discuss the writing assessments. Essays and feedback were returned to students at the completion of the assessment process. In one course (Management), students who did not pass were given feedback and then were reassessed with a new paper submission.

Assessing Speaking and Critical Thinking through Oral Performance

Sem. I students from each discipline attended a session to speak about a topic derived from one of their portfolio essays, and to hear and respond to their peers’ speeches. Each student spoke for approximately seven minutes, followed by a question and discussion period of five to seven minutes.

Sem. II students made oral presentations in their capstone courses. These presentations varied in length and format: in two of the four courses students had several opportunities to make speeches. In one course (Management), students who did not pass were provided with feedback and then assessed a second time during a later speech.

Faculty assessors (four in Sem. I and two in Sem. II) made notes during the speeches using the evaluation form, and all speeches were videotaped for later review by both faculty and students. Generally, the assessment team met immediately after speeches to discuss the presentations. Within a few days of the presentations, tapes were made available for student viewing, and students were given written feedback at the end of the assessment process.

All student participants were given a certificate of completion, and those who passed both activities were certified as competent in the basic skills of writing, speaking and critical thinking.
Evaluation of the Assessment Pilot Project

Participating students and subject matter faculty were asked to complete written evaluations of the Assessment Pilot Project. (Samples of student survey and faculty interview questions are provided in Appendix B.)

III. Project Results

Adequacy of Assessment Instruments

We consider both speaking and writing instruments to be basically sound since we were able to distinguish between adequate and inadequate performances in oral and written communication. In most cases basic subject and subject matter faculty members agreed on the pass fail decision; when they disagreed, discussion always resolved the matter. Most often disagreements occurred when the subject matter faculty member focused exclusively on content and the basic subject faculty member was heavily influenced by organization or language/delivery issues.

Merging the critical thinking criteria with the speech and writing criteria made it more difficult for evaluators to discriminate adequate from inadequate critical thinking skills. All participating subject matter faculty felt that critical thinking is a central component of disciplinary knowledge, but believed that standards vary enough across programs of study (e.g., what counts as credible questions and evidence) to warrant instruments being tailored according to discipline-specific epistemologies and expectations.

Student Performance

Students who failed any of the three major components (content, organization, language/delivery) were considered to fail the task. Table 2 summarizes the pass-fail rate on each task for students who completed both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. BACS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>3 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Geology</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5 (71%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. History</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Art History</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 (83%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CFS/D</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17 (74%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>19 (83%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. IR</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21 (72%)</td>
<td>8 (28%)</td>
<td>17 (59%)</td>
<td>12 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Management 1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
<td>18 (60%)</td>
<td>12 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management 2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
<td>24 (80%)</td>
<td>6 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 101 | 73 (72%) | 18 (17%) | 75 (74%) |

Table 2. Pass-Fail rate by discipline for students completing both tasks.
Since it is possible that Table 2 might reflect performance of better students (e.g., those capable of/willing to complete all assigned work), Table 3 shows the pass-fail rate for all participants. Two scores are given for management students: the pass-fail rate on the first try, and the total pass-fail rate after counseling and retakes. It is easy to see that even brief remediation made a difference, especially for the speaking task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sem. (I, II) Discipline</th>
<th>Writing # Pass/N (%)</th>
<th>Writing # Not Pass/N (%)</th>
<th>Speaking # Pass/N (%)</th>
<th>Speaking # Not Pass/N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. BACS</td>
<td>2/3 (67%)</td>
<td>1/3 (33%)</td>
<td>3/3 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Geology</td>
<td>5/7 (71%)</td>
<td>2/7 (29%)</td>
<td>6/7 (86%)</td>
<td>1/7 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. History</td>
<td>3/3 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2/3 (67%)</td>
<td>1/3 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Art History</td>
<td>5/6 (83%)</td>
<td>1/6 (17%)</td>
<td>5/7 (71%)</td>
<td>2/7 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CFS/D</td>
<td>19/29 (66%)</td>
<td>10/29 (34%)</td>
<td>21/29 (72%)</td>
<td>8/29 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. IR</td>
<td>23/32 (72%)</td>
<td>9/32 (28%)</td>
<td>18/31 (58%)</td>
<td>13/31 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Management 1</td>
<td>18/30 (60%)</td>
<td>12/30 (40%)</td>
<td>19/31 (61%)</td>
<td>12/31 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management 2</td>
<td>20/30 (67%)</td>
<td>10/30 (33%)</td>
<td>25/31 (81%)</td>
<td>6/31 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77/110 (70%)</td>
<td>33/110 (30%)</td>
<td>80/111 (72%)</td>
<td>51/111 (28%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Pass-Fail rate by discipline for all participating students.

In both speaking and writing, two content criteria were often not met by students: "accurately draws upon a range of credible evidence"; and "provides a critical analysis of theory." This failure to show competence in information gathering and analysis occurred across the disciplines, suggesting to us and to subject matter faculty that students may need more guided opportunities to develop such competencies in their major coursework.

Faculty Time

The development and revision of instruments and procedures was time consuming during Sem. I, taking place over a period of approximately 6 weeks during which faculty met and reviewed instrument drafts. In Sem. II, faculty assessment teams chose to adopt the writing and speech assessment instruments already developed, and met approximately four times, spending a total of 5 to 6 hours over the term. Meetings were held to: become oriented to the instruments and the procedures (1 - 2 hours), discuss the results of the assessments of writing and speaking (3 hours), and evaluate the process and distribute materials to be returned to students (1 hour).

Speeches took from 15 - 45 minutes per student, and portfolios took anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes to read. Although subject matter faculty did not read the papers written for other courses, the second paper and cover letters were very useful to the basic subject faculty members in assessing writing. Subject
matter faculty tended to be the persons whom students sought out for feedback, adding some time for counseling in their ordinary office hours.

During the initial phase of our project, it was important to include a writing expert, a speaking expert, and a subject matter expert on each assessment team; however, after the basic subject faculty became trained in the assessment of both writing and speaking, teams consisting of one basic subject and one subject matter faculty member sufficed.

In future, subject matter faculty could expect to spend approximately 5-6 hours in team meetings, plus whatever time is needed to orient student participants (estimated at 1-2 hours), plus the time needed for each student’s assessment and follow-up advising (estimated at 1-2 hours per student). Basic subject faculty would also expect to spend an additional 5 hours per team for organization and 10-15 hours for data analysis and report writing.

Faculty and Student Responses to this Performance-Based Assessment Plan

All faculty members agreed that such an assessment should be done with seniors in their disciplines and that the pilot project showed that performance based assessments are feasible and valuable. All also expressed skepticism that a standardized test could assess actual skills in writing, speaking and critical thinking. Several faculty members noted that the attention on assessment and assessment criteria caused students to try harder than usual, especially those who had second opportunities to pass the assessment, and that assessment focused students on skills that will be essential in the transition from the University to the world of work.

Students were less supportive of the assessment process than were faculty. When asked if they felt their portfolio and speech served as fair examinations of their basic skills, 51% of students felt their portfolios provided evaluators with a reasonable sample of their writing; 49% felt the speech provided evaluators with reasonable evidence of their speaking skills. When they performed poorly they commonly cited logistical rather than substantive reasons (e.g., lack of preparation time). Also notable is the total proportion of students (64%) who felt that their critical thinking skills were not fairly or even necessarily evaluated in the work they turned in or in the speech they gave. (The possible implications of these student responses are discussed in our conclusion.)

Faculty Responsible for Assessing Basic Skills in the Disciplines

All participating subject matter faculty members agreed that (1) disciplinary content should supply the context for the speaking and writing performances, and (2) demonstrated competence of ‘basic skills alone would be an insufficient measure of students’ subject matter knowledge.
All but one faculty member agreed that a combination of the subject matter and basic skills faculty was necessary because, they argued, only faculty of a discipline can properly evaluate students' explications of the content of the discipline, while faculty members who are professionally trained to evaluate written and oral communication competencies are in a position to help subject matter faculty design and evaluate speaking and writing tasks to promote better writing and speaking performances within the disciplines.

Not surprisingly, as subject matter faculty members got involved in the assessments, they began to take more responsibility for students' on-going development by reinforcing basic skills in the context of the subject matter. As one faculty member put it, "In my work with [a basic subjects faculty member] I learned how to better teach oral presentation skills. In the past I have focused more on content than on delivery, and I am now much better prepared to focus on both as a result of the input [this faculty member] offered regarding basic speech skills." Likewise, basic skills faculty responsible for designing and executing basic skills service courses needed opportunities to examine the kinds of speaking and writing students are expected to do in advanced coursework and in their majors.

IV. Summary and Conclusions from the Pilot Project

For those involved in assessing the oral and/or written communicative competence of graduating seniors, we offer the following recommendations and caveats:

1. Evaluation teams should work with capstone courses. Doing so during our second semester reduced logistical problems, and provided an automatic "I care" component for students since their grades were based on the same performances we were using to determine basic skills competencies.

2. Basic subjects faculty should meet with subject matter faculty to discuss evaluative criteria. Time spent developing evaluative speech and writing criteria:
   - helps subject matter faculty to be clearer about the communicative competencies they expect from their graduates;
   - promotes subject matter faculty investment in the design and evaluation of the writing and speaking opportunities they provide their students;
   - creates a better fit between basic subjects assessment criteria and the assessment context (the discipline within which the assessment takes place);
• provides basic subject faculty with updated and detailed information about the types of speaking and writing tasks students are expected to complete in their upper-division work.

3. Assessment endeavors should include a good student handbook; providing students with clear and detailed information in writing saved us from having to address a lot of time-consuming student concerns and questions.

4. Assessment teams should encourage students to give a speech on one of the written pieces they include in their portfolio. In so doing, students provide evaluators with a basis for comparing competencies across modalities.

5. Students' writing portfolios should include:
  • a cover letter/report discussing the work they have chosen to submit;
  • independently produced work (not group projects unless a separate report detailing the individual's contributions is attached); and
  • work that evaluators can be sure reflects the student's and not someone else's competence (e.g., work edited by someone other than the writer and/or plagiarized text).

6. While remediation opportunities were not built into the design of this pilot project, all participating faculty felt strongly that any kind of genuine assessment required such opportunities if an assessment plan were, in the end, to serve the interests of students or the institution.3

V. Closing

We believe that speaking and writing are best evaluated in the context of actual speaking and writing, rather than by means of multiple choice tests about speaking and writing. While this assumption may seem self-evident to teachers of oral and written communication, it is by no means an institutionally accepted truth by those who must be concerned about the costs of such assessments. Though likely to be more costly than multiple choice tests, performative assessments of students' communicative competencies yield something such tests cannot: direct and meaningful evidence of students' learning—evidence that can readily inform the curricular practices and institutional policies which shape the basic skills of our university graduates.

3 In this pilot, for example, when students in Management were offered feedback and a second assessment opportunity, two (17% of the failed students) met the passing criteria for writing and 5 (50% of the failed students) met the passing criteria for speaking. (See Table 2.) The dramatic rise in the pass rate for speaking suggests that opportunities for formative evaluation of student's basic skills in advanced courses may be of real value.
Reference List


*Student Outcomes Assessment in the California State University*. A Report to the CSU Chancellor from the Advisory Committee on Student Outcomes Assessment, December, 1989.
Appendix A

Writing Evaluation Form

Speech Evaluation Form
Writing Evaluation Form -- Fall 1998

Student Name:__________________________

Paper written for:______________________  Date Work originally submitted: ___/___/
(class name and number)  Essay Title:__________________________  Essay Evaluator:__________________________

Evaluative Criteria

Comments about Content

Content
1. selects a substantive topic
   whose scope is appropriate
2. accurately draws upon a range
   of sources of evidence appropriate to
   the discipline (e.g., primary, secondary
   sources, course lectures, etc.)
3. demonstrates a working knowledge
   of theories, concepts, and methods
   appropriate to the discipline (including
   controversies and disagreements)
4. provides a critical analysis

CONTENT SCORE

4 3 2 1

Organization & Development

Comments about Org. & Dev.

5. effective opening (establishes
   context, purpose & point of view)
6. develops points sufficiently
7. writing is well-organized (ideas
   flow clearly; are logically connected)
8. effective closure

ORG. & DEV. SCORE

4 3 2 1

Language Effectiveness, Grammar,
& Usage

Comments about Language
Effectiveness

9. writer uses a variety of sentence
   structures
10. appropriate vocabulary & diction
    (level of formality)
11. standard conventions of usage, spelling,
    punctuation used consistently except
    where text is deliberately experimental

LANGUAGE EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

4 3 2 1

Key to Rating Scale:
4 = excellent strengths in this area  3 = Good performance  2 = Needs improvement  1 = Inadequate
Note: Scores of 3-4 are passing; scores of 1-2 are not passing.
Response Form
Oral Communication/Critical Thinking

Speaker: _______________ Topic: _______________
Evaluator: _______________ Date: _______________

Evaluative Criteria Comments about Content

Content

1. Selects a substantive topic
2. Articulates a point of view
3. Demonstrates a working knowledge of theories, concepts, and methods appropriate to the discipline
4. Accurately draws upon a range of credible evidence
5. Provides a critical analysis or practical application of theory

CONTENT SCORE 4 3 2 1

ORGANIZATION/DEVELOPMENT Comments about Org./Dev’t.

6. Effective opening (captures interest, establishes context)
7. Communicates purpose clearly
8. Organizes ideas coherent and smoothly
9. Develops ideas sufficiently
10. Uses logical reasoning
11. Provides closure

ORGANIZATION/DEVELOPMENT SCORE 4 3 2 1

LANGUAGE AND DELIVERY Comments about Lang./Delivery

12. Is comfortable and confident in delivery
13. Makes eye contact/does not read
14. Has adequate rate, volume, vocal variety
15. Uses vivid and unambiguous language

LANGUAGE/DELIVERY SCORE 4 3 2 1

Key to Rating Scale:
4 = excellent strengths in this area  2 = Needs improvement
3 = Good performance  1 = Inadequate
Appendix B

Faculty Interview Questions

Student Survey
Pilot Assessment Project—Spring & Fall 1998
Faculty Questions

1. Do you think a performance-based assessment of basic skills should be used with seniors in your discipline? If such an assessment is not feasible or useful, please explain why.

2. Do you think the assessment of basic skills in your graduating seniors:
   • could be handled exclusively by faculty within your discipline?
   • could be handled exclusively by faculty in the basic subjects?
   • could only be handled by some combination of both?

   Briefly explain why.

3. Assuming all departments and programs will eventually be required to assess both the disciplinary knowledge and the basic skills of their graduating seniors, do you see a way your program could measure both together? or, do you think that it would be best to try and evaluate these proficiencies separately? Please explain.

4. Do you think the "basic skill" of critical thinking can be measured as a recognized proficiency (as speaking or writing can), or do you think it can not be teased apart from the content and organization of knowledge in your discipline?

   If separate, how could we better assess it in seniors in your program?

5. How long, on average, did it take you to read and evaluate both papers in a single portfolio? Please explain any observations you had about using this method to evaluate students' writing.

6. Did the written and the oral communication forms seem to measure what you think is important? Were they easy to use? If not, what recommendations could you make so the forms could be better assessment instruments.

7. Did you learn anything particularly surprising from doing this project? (It's perfectly reasonable if you didn't.) If you did, briefly explain what you found surprising, and if relevant, describe the effect this observation might have on your work/your program.

8. Were this pilot project to continue with new faculty, what incentives would you recommend we use to entice faculty to participate? to entice students to participate?

9. Anything else you want to tell us? (Please don't hesitate!)
Pilot Assessment of Basic Skills
Input from Student Participants about the Process

Name: ___________________ Expected Graduation Date: ________
Major: ___________ estimated GPA: _______ Major GPA: _______
Capstone Course Number and Title: ____________________________
Career Goal(s): __________________________________________________________________________

Directions: Please give input to help us revise our assessment process for future use. Questions 1 - 3 ask about your preparation in basic skills; the remaining questions ask about the assessment process itself.

1. Tell us about the opportunities you have had to learn basic skills (writing, oral communication, critical thinking) at SFSU:
   • in your major coursework:
   • in GE and other courses:

2. How much did faculty in your major courses stress and weight the following: (Give weights in %, but don't try to make the %s add up to 100%).
   Subject matter content _____% Writing Skills _____%
   Critical thinking skills _____% Oral communication _____%
   Specify Other (e.g., research methods): __________________________
   at _____%

3. Please share your thought as to how SFSU could better prepare you in basic skills:
   • in your major coursework:
   • in GE and other courses:

4. Do you think this assessment done in your capstone course was a fair examination of your basic skills? Why? Why not?
   • in writing:
   • in oral communication:
   • in critical thinking:

5. Please give us specific feedback about the process:
   • putting together the portfolio of your writing, and writing a cover letter:
   • preparing/presenting the speeches:

6. How useful was the feedback that you received from your course instructor and from the basic subject faculty?
   • on your portfolio writings?
   • on your speech?

7. Do you think this kind of assessment should be done as a part of a major