

**Millikin University**  
**Student Learning in the Oral Communication Studies Requirement**

Jeffrey Brand, Chair  
Department of Communication  
For 2009 - 2010  
Submitted October 2010

**Executive Summary**

The revised general education curriculum that went into effect for students entering Millikin University in the Fall of 2008 included a new requirement for an oral communication studies course. That requirement was added despite no allocation for resources in the form of budget support for the additional courses offered by the department and without establishing a position of basic course director or an assessment plan for the new requirement. Requests for this support remain unfulfilled. The absence of University oversight and review of the requirement means there has been no assessment report for the first year of the requirement and this report will provide an overview of the intention to begin an assessment plan for the requirement in the future.

**Goals**

The learning outcome goals for students taking an oral communication course are that students will be able to:

1. understand and demonstrate communication processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, and presentation;
2. analyze, evaluate, and synthesize in a responsible manner material from diverse sources and points of view;
3. select appropriate communication choices for specific audiences;
4. use authority, point of view, and individual voice and style in communications; and
5. participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.

**Snapshot**

During the 2009-2010 academic year, 21 sections of oral communication studies courses were taught (CO200-15; CO242-4; IN 206-2 Honors Public Speaking). The oral communication studies requirement can be fulfilled by any one of three courses. The majority of students will take the CO 200 Public Speaking course. All Tabor business students and others take the CO 242 Business and Professional Communication course. This year, two honors sections of the course were taught. Teaching the oral communication course for the Honors Program was a one-time offering, it is not a regular part of the program. These courses were offered by 10 full and part-time faculty from the Department of Communication (see Appendix A). Three sections were taught as unpaid overloads to assist with the financial problems facing the institution. The overall trend for teaching the oral communication requirement is to rely on adjunct teaching until such time as

sufficient full-time faculty are hired to cover major courses along with the general education curriculum.

### **The Learning Story**

In all sections of oral communication courses, students prepare to address audiences in intentional, strategic ways using communication theory to prepare and present appropriate messages to audiences. Public speaking classes teach students how to use new technologies in their presentations. They develop critical thinking. They provide instruction in library research. They encourage students to reflect on who they are as individuals and to become more aware of the persona they project to others. Students develop confidence in their ability to express their feelings. They learn perspective taking. They learn how to provide constructive criticism. These achievements map well onto several of the MPSL learning goals, specifically: *inquiry methods, technological literacy, diversity of individuals in society and understand and express the self*. The course is designed to fulfill not only the University's oral communication expectations and general education objectives, but to also respond to the statewide Illinois Articulation Initiative (see guidelines in Appendix B). This course is transferable to other universities and other public speaking courses may be transferred to Millikin University.

### **Assessment Methods and Data**

In the absence of current assessment data, this section details the plans for developing assessment resources. The assessment plan for the oral communication requirement will consist of a collection of artifacts pertaining to the course including speeches and exams covering course content and focused on the learning goals established for the program. Artifacts may be assessed with a rubric on a 1-5 scale (1-establishing nominal performance, 5-identifying excellence), for each learning goal appropriate for the assignment. For example, an oral performance could be recorded and evaluated on a rubric similar to one in Appendix C. This is a typical rubric designed to place the student performance. An adjusted rubric will be developed to specify the learning goal in relation to the assigned performance areas listed in Appendix C. Performance on exams or other individual assignments may also be assessed. The department currently had no assessment team or person. The communication discipline has a long history and academic specialty in the basic course director. That expertise should be added to the department, but until then, a limited form of assessment is possible. Training of two members of the department will begin with an assessment conference in October 2010, but that is not sufficient in terms of the need for a trained, basic course professional.

Current departmental assessment in the Spring of 2010 has included reviews of teaching materials and syllabi in an effort to provide standardized content for all sections of CO 200 and CO 242. A revision for CO 242 content was developed over the summer of 2010. An evaluation of these changes is planned for Fall of 2010. For the Spring of 2011, a final rubric and evaluation of a random set of speeches from CO 200 and CO 242 is planned.

Armed with this preliminary assessment data, a focused and annual assessment plan will be developed to begin to create a consistent annual evaluation of the oral

communication requirement at Millikin University.

**Appendix A**  
**Teaching for the Oral Communication Requirement**

<b>Course Number</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>FT Tenured or T-track, w/terminal degree</b>	<b>FT Contract Faculty w/o terminal degree</b>	<b>Adjunct Faculty</b>
<b>Fall 2009</b>				
CO200.1	Public Speaking		•*	
CO200.2	Public Speaking			•
CO200.3	Public Speaking			•
CO200.4	Public Speaking			•
CO200.5	Public Speaking			•
CO200.6	Public Speaking			•
CO242.1	Business and Professional Speaking			•
CO242.2	Business and Professional Speaking			•
IN206	Honors Public Speaking	•		
<b>Spring 2010</b>				
CO200.1	Public Speaking	•*		
CO200.2	Public Speaking	•*		
CO200.3	Public Speaking			•
CO200.4	Public Speaking	•*		
CO200.5	Public Speaking			•
CO200.6	Public Speaking			•
CO200.7	Public Speaking			•
CO200.8	Public Speaking			•
CO200.9	Public Speaking			•
CO242.1	Business and Professional Speaking			•
CO242.2	Business and Professional Speaking			•
IN206	Honors Public Speaking	•		
<b>Faculty Totals</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>

- Three sections in 2009-2010 were taught by full-time faculty as unpaid overload for University financial reasons.

**Appendix B**  
**State Articulation Requirements for General Education**  
**Oral Communication Courses**

**Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI)**  
**General Education Core Curriculum**

**C2900 : Oral Communication**

**(3 semester credits)**

The oral communication course, either a traditional public speaking or a hybrid course, combines communication theory with the practice of oral communication skills. The oral communication course: (1) develops awareness of the communication process; (2) provides inventional, organizational and expressive strategies; (3) promotes understanding of and adaptation to a variety of communication contexts; and (4) emphasizes critical skills in listening, reading, thinking and speaking.

Students are expected to prepare and give at least three substantive speeches, including both informative and persuasive assignments delivered extemporaneously. To be substantial, these speeches should be of sufficient length to allow for careful development of thought (minimum five minutes each). All mediated oral communication classes shall require face-to-face (unmediated) performance of the three substantial speeches with the class and the instructor serving as an in-class audience.

Upon successful completion of the oral communication course, students should have attained **at least** the competencies in both theory and practice as listed below.

**Communication Theory--The student is expected to:**

- have a theoretical understanding of communication;
- understand the relationships among self, message and others; and
- understand the process of effective listening.

**Communication Practice--The student is expected to:**

- phrase clear, responsible and appropriate purpose statements;
- develop specific, well-focused thesis statements;
- analyze an audience and situation, and then adapt a message to those needs;
- generate ideas and gather supporting material;
- incorporate material from various appropriate sources, using proper verbal citations;
- use evidence, reasoning and motive appeals in persuasive speaking;
- prepare and use visual aids that promote clarity and interest;
- organize and outline an effective message;
- use language that is appropriate to enhance understanding and effect the desired result;
- establish credibility by demonstrating knowledge and analysis of topic;
- use extemporaneous delivery with reasonable fluency, expressiveness and comfort;
- cope effectively with the tensions involved in public speaking;

- demonstrate acceptable ethical standards in research and presentation of materials; and
- listen to, analyze and critique oral communication.

**Source:** <http://www.itransfer.org/iai/gened/Default.aspx?section=students&p=c>

## Appendix C Speech Evaluation Form

Performance Trait	Score	Comments
<p><b>Organization:</b> Clear arrangement of ideas? Introduction, body, conclusion, transitions? Was there an identifiable structure?</p>		
<p><b>Language:</b> Clear, accurate, varied, vivid? Appropriate standards of usage? Was language appropriate to situation and audience? Were unfamiliar terms defined?</p>		
<p><b>Material:</b> Are supporting materials specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting? Appropriate to the situation? Is relationship between main points and supporting materials clear?</p>		
<p><b>Analysis:</b> Was the presentation adapted to the audience and situation? Was critical thinking employed in examining the issue(s)? Was the approach and structure consistent with the overall purpose?</p>		
<p><b>Nonverbal Delivery:</b> Eye contact? Awareness to audience reaction? Do gestures seem natural? Did presenter use notes and/or audio/visual aids effectively?</p>		
<p><b>Verbal Delivery:</b> Varied in pitch, volume, rate, emphasis? Enthusiastic? Free of fillers (ahs, uhms, ers)? Effective articulation and pronunciation?</p>		