

2002-2003 Annual Report of Oral Communication Focus Board

The OC board incorporated two new members this year and two members finished their terms. The bulk of the work developing hallmarks was done during 2001-2002 and those hallmarks served us well this year, allowing for a significant reduction in the collective stress of the OC board members. Some highlights, concerns, and future needs:

Decision-making and Application of Hallmarks

- The hallmarks are proving specific enough to allow for relatively easy and painless incorporation into and modification of classes by faculty members from a variety of disciplines.
- Relatedly, the great majority of decisions by the Board were unanimous and made without undue difficulty.
- Applications that did not satisfy the hallmarks typically failed to address the hallmarks adequately; such cases were easily corrected usually via email correspondence with the submitting faculty member.
- After our initial meetings together, the OC Board found we could assess documents independently at the Gen Ed Advisory office and leave notes to the other Board members on each application. Applications that required discussion among Board members could usually be addressed via email.
- One troublesome hallmark has been the limitation to class size. The variety of assignments that can be used to satisfy OC requirements also allows for some flexibility in class sizes. The OC Board must be flexible in the application of this hallmark.

Future Concerns

- Clearly we need more classes to satisfy OC course demand. We sent a letter (via the deans) to all Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences chairs requesting that faculty consider modifying classes to meet OC needs. This produced only a small response. It is highly recommended that the OC Board make more personal, face-to-face appeals to various departments in an effort to drum up more support.
- Assessment still needs to get off the ground. In some respects this is a relatively easy task to accomplish as there are many instruments available for assessing aspects of oral communication performances. On the other hand, though subjective, self-report assessments (e.g., communication apprehension, presentation confidence, personal assessment) can be obtained easily, more objective performance-based data will be more difficult and costly to come by. The Speech department has considerable experience in collecting such data but there is no simple, cost-free way of securing such data.

- A website offering advice on assignments, teaching of OC materials, and assessing OC performances has been developed and is now online. In addition, a workshop will be offered this August by a Speech department faculty member for OC teachers or those considering offering an OC class. However, workshops ought to be offered at least twice a year and some form of incentive or compensation needs to be found for the parties who conduct these workshops. I do not believe we should rely on faculty good will to meet this demand.
- Consideration should be given to raising the OC requirement from *one* class to *two* classes with the additional requirement to be satisfied in lower division classes. This would provide students with a more general OC experience as well as an OC experience more peculiar to their discipline.

Submitted by:

Kelly Aune
OC Board Chair 2002-2003