

Spring 2015 PSU Oral Communication Report

Pittsburg State University

*The 2015 General Education Oral Communication Assessment Report*

Submitted to

Dr. Lynette Olson, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs,

The Faculty Senate General Education Committee,

& The University Assessment Committee

by

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December 2015

## **Introduction**

As presented in the December 2012 Report, the Oral Communication Task Force proposed a definition of and a rubric for non-written, oral communication for PSU and an ongoing plan to assess students' speech performance in the general education course, COMM 207 Speech Communication. This report describes the assessment plan for oral communication and summarizes the process and results for the 2015 spring assessment.

## **Oral Communication at PSU**

Based on the definition of public speaking by the American Association of College and Universities (AACU), the PSU Oral Communication Task Force defined oral communication as follows:

**Oral Communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.**

Oral communication is addressed by the first objective under the first general education goal ([http://catalog.pittstate.edu/contentm/blueprints/blueprint\\_display.php?bp\\_listing\\_id=162&blueprint\\_id=128&sid=1&menu\\_id=7984](http://catalog.pittstate.edu/contentm/blueprints/blueprint_display.php?bp_listing_id=162&blueprint_id=128&sid=1&menu_id=7984)).

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Goal 1. *Students should be able to communicate effectively.*

**Objective 1. Apply the principles of effective oral communication either in-group or individual presentations.**

Modified from the AACU rubric, the PSU Oral Communication Rubric consists of two specific rubrics, one for individual public speaking and one for interpersonal and group communication. The rubric for individual public speaking delineates the five areas of organization, language, delivery, supporting materials, and the central message of a speech performed at four levels of achievement. The interpersonal and group communication rubric addresses seven areas: competence, language, ethics, interviewing skills, effective listening, supporting materials, and leadership skills, at four levels of achievement. (See *Appendix A* for PSU Rubric.)

### **General Education Assessment Plan for Oral Communication**

For the purpose of improving general education, the assessment of oral communication will be conducted annually in COMM 207 Speech Communication. All PSU undergraduate students are required to one course in oral communication, and if they do so at PSU, it will be COMM 207, taken in the fall or spring semester. Students who transfer to PSU with a speech course from another institution will not be included in the oral communication assessment sample.

In COMM 207, all students prepare and deliver two types of formal individual speeches: informative and persuasive. Students receive feedback on their first speech before their second speech in order to provide them with information that would allow them to make improvements. Each undergraduate student who completes COMM 207 will have rubric-based scores on the two speeches. The course instructor evaluates each speech and using a 1-5 rating scale, generates a score for each of the five areas from the PSU Oral Communication Rubric and a total score. For the pilot year only, the focus was gaining an appropriate sample in one faculty's (Dr. Shirley Drew) course sections for evaluation of the total score. In the second year (2014), the plan was to focus on the scoring of the five areas of the rubric for both speeches. However, because the Assessment Director position was open and there was no student help to conduct this assessment, we collected the same kind of data as we did in 2013. During this cycle, we collected data from six sections and 54 students.

Each speech is evaluated by course faculty, consisting of either Dr. Shirley Drew or a graduate teaching assistant. Dr. Drew orients graduate teaching assistants to the COMM 207 course, particularly the use of the PSU rubric for evaluating speeches. When and if adjuncts are included in the process, Dr. Drew will orient them and determine the reliability of their evaluations based on their scores of online or live presentations.

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For the first two years, 2012-13 (pilot) and spring 2014, the communication assessment focused on individual speeches, specifically using the informative and persuasive speeches for students in the sample. This attention on individual speeches allowed time and talent directed at improving the process of scoring with the use of the rubric. We will continue to assess individual speeches each semester, though in spring of 2015 we looked at the five individual criteria of achievement *within* the rubric in addition to the total rubric score. This means that we should be able to determine exactly *where* improvements in the speeches were made, as well as where improvements *need* to be made.

### Spring 2015 Assessment of Oral Communication

The purposes of this assessment were to :

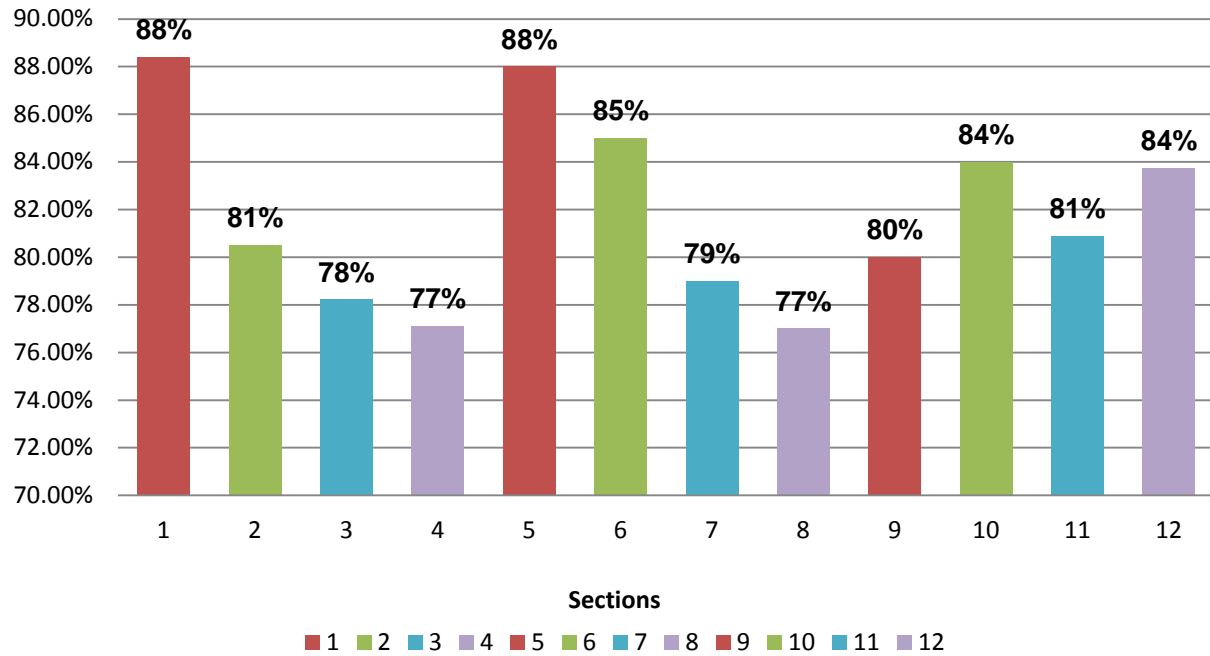
- (a) Repeat the process for sampling two student speeches in COMM 207.
- (b) Use the PSU Oral Communication Rubric for generating a total score for the two speeches.
- (c) Assess the change in the students' total scores from the first informative speech to the second persuasive speech.
- (d) Assess the individual speeches based on the rubric's five individual criteria for both the informative and persuasive speeches.
- (e) Assess the change in students' scores on the rubric's five individual criteria from the first informative speech to the second persuasive speech.
- (f) Determine where improvements in instruction might be made in future semesters.

### OVERALL INFORMATIVE/PERSUASIVE SPEECH COMPARISON DATA

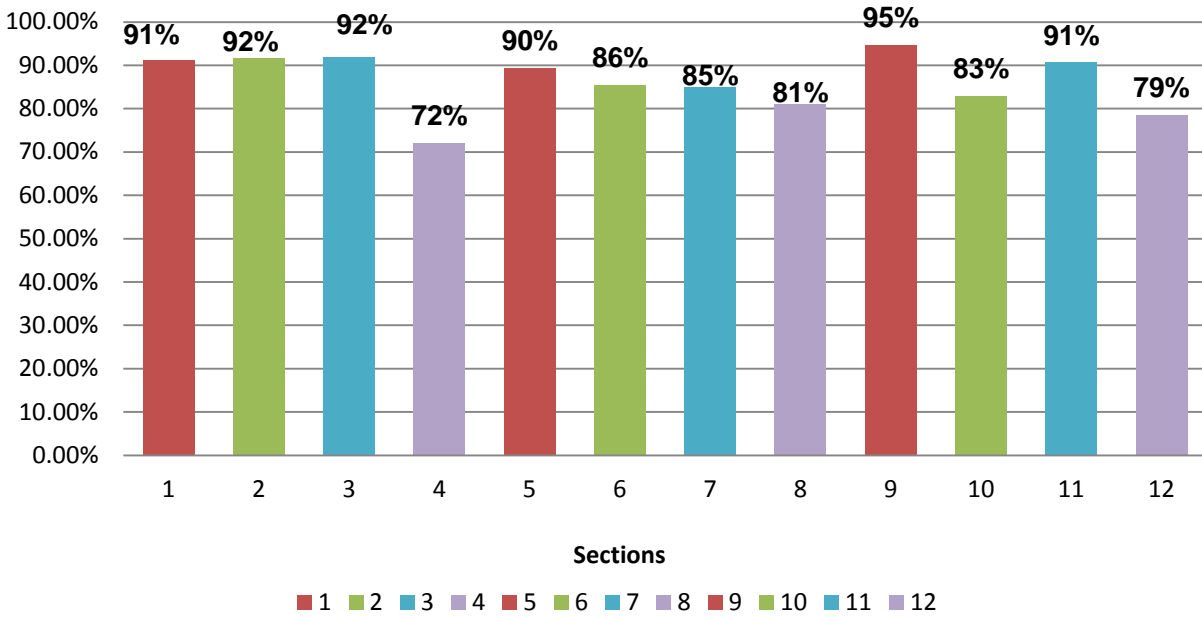
The general assessment of oral communication involved a random sample of 108 students from twelve (12) COMM 207 sections at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. These sections were taught by graduate assistants under the direction of Dr. Shirley Drew during the spring semester of 2015. The sample consisted of students with individual informative and persuasive speeches; each student received scores on two speeches.

The tables below display the average scores per section on the Informative Speeches (Table 1), the average scores per section on the Persuasive Speeches (Table 2), and the percent of change in average scores per section from the Informative to the Persuasive Speeches (Table 3).

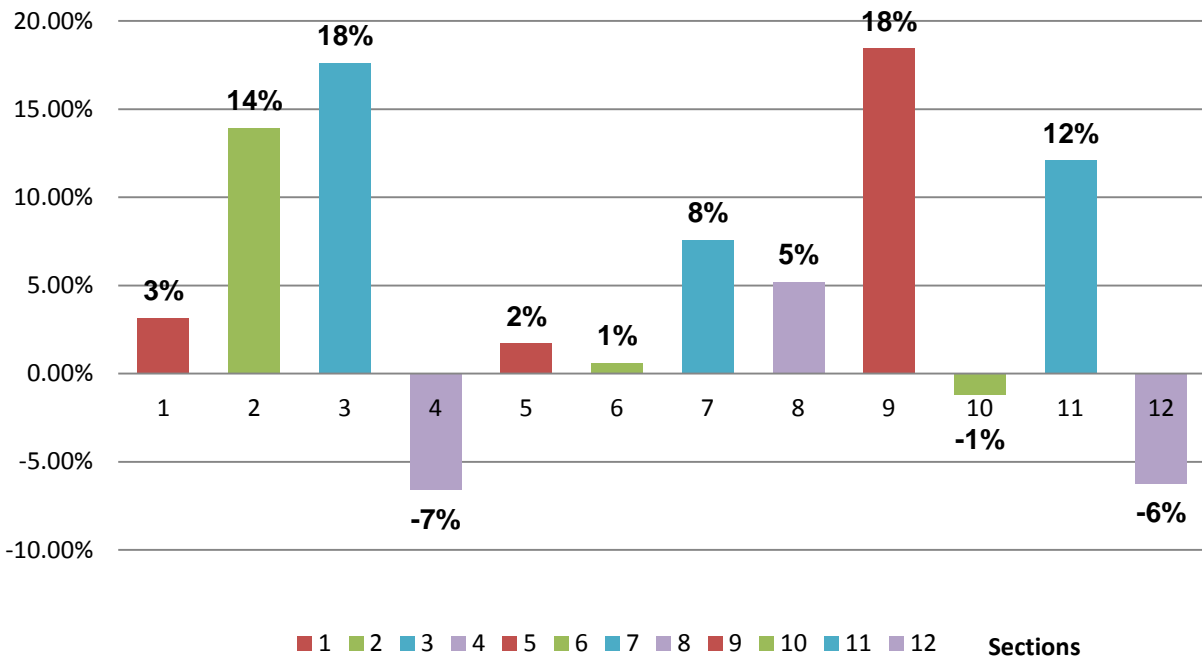
**TABLE 1: INFORMATIVE SPEECHES  
AVERAGE SCORES PER SECTION**



**TABLE 2: PERSUASIVE SPEECHES  
AVERAGE SCORES PER SECTION**



**TABLE 3: PERCENT OF CHANGE BETWEEN  
SPEECHES BY SECTION**



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We again hypothesized that students' performances on the two individual speeches would improve between the first speech (informative) and the second speech (persuasive). Students would receive feedback on the first speech from the faculty before preparing and delivering the second speech. Sections 4, 10, and 12 showed a negative change in scores from the first to the second speech, while the remaining nine sections all showed a positive change in the scores from the first to the second speech.

### **Interpretation and Analysis of Assessment Results: Informative and Persuasive Speeches**

Overall, PSU students performed well on the two speeches with averages 77% to 88% on the Informative Speeches, and averages of 72% to 95% on the Persuasive Speeches. The scores for both speeches were above average to high, but the GTA's were well-trained to evaluate them, and so that seemed to suggest that students had performed well. It is important to note, too, that the second speech is a more demanding assignment than the first. First, the Persuasive Speech is worth double the points of the Informative Speech. It requires additional sources, (ie., more research), arguments that try to convince rather than just inform, and it is a seven minute as opposed to five minute speech. This would imply that the higher scores does not fully capture the extent of student improvement.

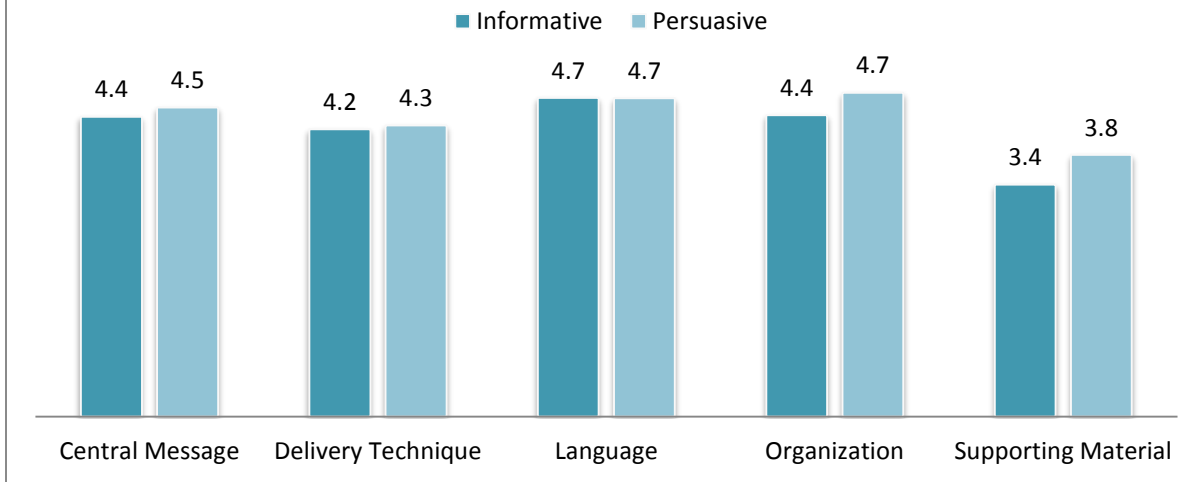
The results showed improvement in nine of the 12 sections tested between the Informative and Persuasive Speeches. Still, our goal is to see average scores on the Persuasive Speeches be no lower than 80%. While it is encouraging to see improvement from the first to the second speech, we will also look at each of the five criterion of the rubric to get more specific data.

### **INFORMATIVE/PERSUASIVE SPEECH COMPARISON DATA ON RUBRIC'S INDIVIDUAL CRITERIA**

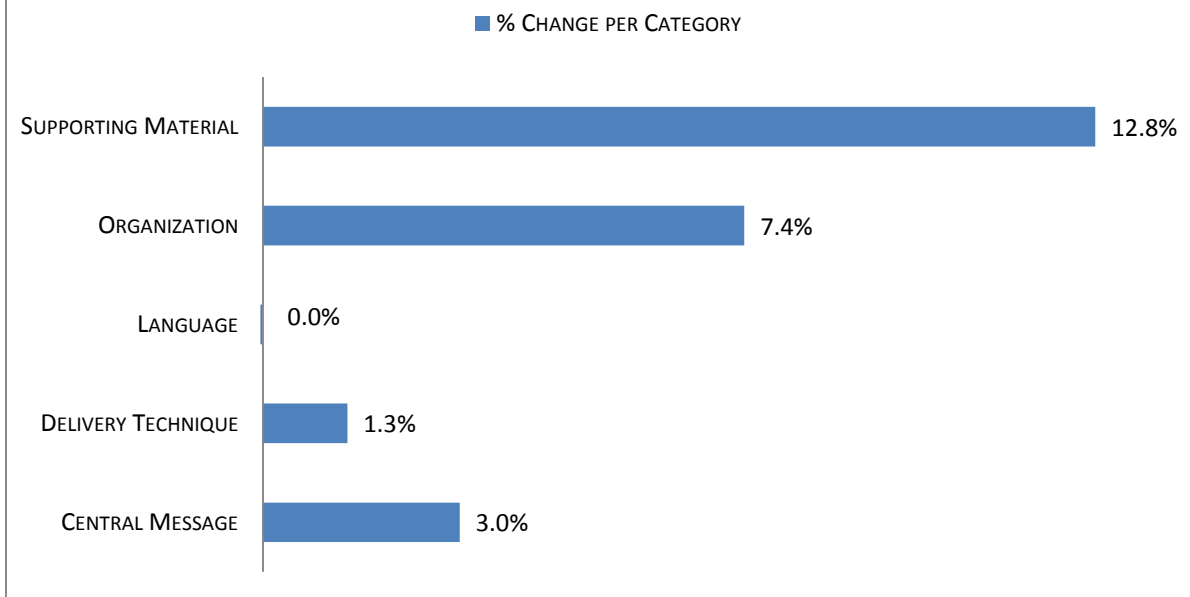
The Oral Communication Rubric is based on a five-point scale. Each of the five speaking categories are weighted equally on this five-point scale. The categories are as follows: Central Message, Delivery Technique, Language, Organization, and Supporting Material. For specific descriptions of each category, see *Appendices B* and *C*.

Table 4 displays the average grade per category for both the Informative and Persuasive Speeches. Table 5 displays the percent of change for each category, and Table 6 shows the overall student improvement (by percentage) from the first to the second speech.

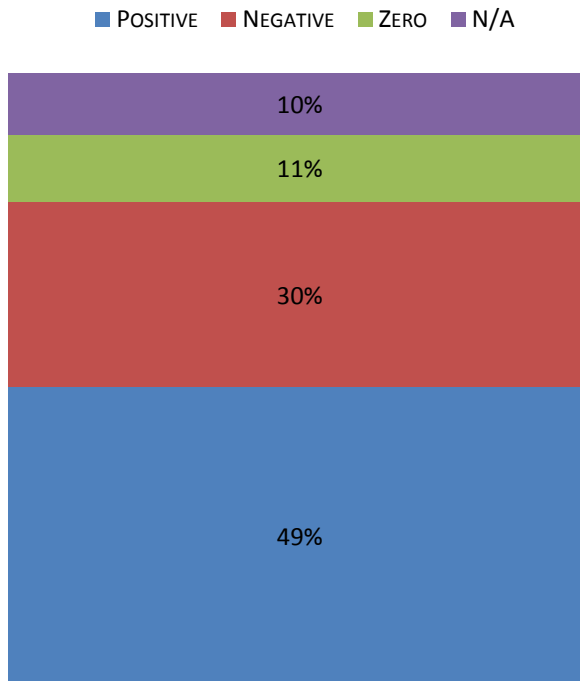
**TABLE 4:  
AVERAGE GRADE PER CATEGORY**



**TABLE 5: PERCENT CHANGE BY CATEGORY**



**TABLE 6: OVERALL STUDENT IMPROVEMENT FROM INFORMATIVE SPEECH TO PERSUASIVE SPEECH**



**Interpretation and Analysis of Assessment Results: Specific Rubric Categories**

According to Table 4, the average scores on a five-point scale range from 3.4 to 4.7. The average scores improve from the Informative to the Persuasive Speeches in each category, except for “Language,” remaining the same at 4.7. The lowest—or weakest area is in the category, by average score, is “Supporting Material.” This result is not surprising to either me or the Graduate Teaching Assistants that this is the weakest area for students. We used anecdotal data to determine this five years ago. At that time I integrated additional information into two separate lectures on public speaking regarding developing and citing source material. I am pleasantly surprised to note that it showed the greatest amount of improvement, so perhaps the revisions and additions to the lectures made a difference. We won’t be able to verify this, however, until we have more than this baseline data.



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### **Recommendations for Improvement**

Overall, the students' performances in oral communication in Spring 2015 assessment were satisfactory. The rubric was effective in generating a total score. The process of sampling the 108 students was adequate, but in the future we aim for a sample total of 150-200 students.

To prepare for the (2015-16) assessment, the following actions will be completed:

1. We will continue to attempt to strengthen students' skills in the area of "Supporting Material." We will do this by developing in-class exercises to accompany the additional lecture material.
2. To continue to make improvements in the other four areas, we will develop in-class exercises for each of these areas to accompany the lecture material.