Honolulu Community College adheres to the ACCJC standard that students enrolled in the Associate of Arts program develop oral communication skills. Courses qualifying for the Speech Requirement (SR) designation are reviewed by the Speech Requirement Board and periodically assessed to ensure that the classes meet the hallmarks associated with the SR designation. The SR hallmarks are as follows:

1. Each student will conduct or participate in a minimum of three oral communication assignments or a comparable amount of oral communication activity during the class. In addition, at least 40% of the final grade for a 3-credit course will be a function of the student's oral communication activities.

2. Each student will receive explicit training, in the context of the class, in oral communication concerns relevant to the assignment or activity.

3. Each student will receive specific feedback, critiquing, and grading of the oral communication assignments or activities from the instructor.

4. If instructor feedback primarily involves individual or paired students, enrollment will be limited to 20 students. If instructor feedback primarily involves groups of students, enrollment will be limited to 30 students.

In Fall 2011, two courses applied for the SR designation: Speech 253 Argumentation and Debate and Speech 181 Introduction to Interpersonal Communication. Both applications were reviewed by the Speech Requirement Board and were certified in December 2011 and January 2012, respectively.

Karadeen Kam-Kalani (Speech Requirement Board Chair), Douglas Raphael (SR Board), and David Fink (Research Assistant) coordinated the administration of the Fall 2011 SR Evaluation. All courses with the SR designation completed the SR evaluation at the end of the Fall 2011 semester. A total of 16 classes (201 students) completed the evaluation.

As part of the assessment, students were asked to indicate the percentage of course material that was devoted to oral communication activities. Results indicated that 87.2 percent of respondents perceived that over 40 percent of course activities were dedicated to developing speech communication skills. This provides evidence that, in general, speech instructors are exceeding the hallmark of requiring at least 40 percent of the course grade to be devoted to oral communication activities.
The data measuring the degree to which student perceived that SR courses fulfilled the goals of oral communication training also provides evidence that the SR hallmarks are being fulfilled. Five items were assessed using a 5-point interval scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). Ninety four percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that the speech communication assignments covered in their SR course related to the course content ($M=4.55$). Eighty nine percent of students reported being more comfortable participating in communication activities ($M=4.34$). Ninety percent of students felt that their instructor provided sufficient oral training to complete oral communication assignments ($M=4.44$). Eighty nine percent reported feeling more competent to meet the speech communication demands in their proposed profession/career ($M=4.34$). Finally, ninety three percent of students indicated that their instructor provided them with specific feedback, critique, and grades for their speech communication activities ($M=4.54$).

The degree to which students perceived improvement in various aspects of their speaking skills was also assessed using 4-point interval scales (1=No Improvement, 4=Tremendous Improvement). On average, students reported significant to tremendous improvement in their ability to choose and narrow a speech topic (84.1%, $M=3.16$), conduct research and demonstrate information gathering techniques (87%, $M=3.29$), select and use an appropriate organizational format (89%, $M=3.34$), demonstrate effective listening techniques (91%, $M=3.35$), demonstrate the effective use of visual aids (85%, $M=3.18$), demonstrate the principles of effective verbal communication (92%, $M=3.32$), demonstrate the principles of effective nonverbal communication (91%, $M=3.35$), and adapt their communication styles (89%, $M=3.26$). These data provide further support for the efficacy of SR courses in helping students to develop requisite oral communication skills.

Students’ proficiency in achieving the student learning outcomes for Speech 151 is assessed using embedded exam questions. Two SLOs are tested per semester on a rotating basis. At the end of a two-year period, each of the eight SLOs assessing concepts or theories of communication will have been tested. In Spring 2011, SLOs 13 and 14 were tested, and all sections except for the sections of one instructor achieved a 70 percent or higher correct response rate for these two SLOs. Based on the assessment results, the instructor who did not achieve the goal intends to focus more class time and attention to addressing these learning outcomes. In Fall 2011, SLOs 11 and 12 were tested. All sections were able to achieve the target proficiency rate of 70% with a 76 percent or higher correct response rate. These results provide further validation that course SLOs are being met and the goals of the SR are being fulfilled.

To ensure consistency in grading standards for speech performance across course sections, speech instructors evaluated the speech performances of students in another instructor’s class in Spring 2011. Each instructor used his or her own grading evaluation form based on the criteria for evaluation indicated on the SR
application. Overall, it was determined that instructors have been grading fairly consistently. On average, grade results for individual student performances were within three to five percentage points of one another (see Speech Department Meeting Minutes, August 15, 2011 for a table summary). To help standardize grades even further, a departmental rubric was developed in Fall 2011 with the input of all speech faculty. Speech faculty are currently using this rubric to ensure that grades are being assigned fairly and consistently across all SR course sections.

In addition to courses certified by the Speech Requirement Board, HCC also offers Speech 50 “Working with Clients” for students in the Cosmetology Program. In order to assess the Speech 50 SLOs, instructors require students to take quizzes and perform four speaking exercises. The speaking exercises include informative speeches, telephone interviews, employment interviews, and impromptu speeches. Tracking of the SLOs is done with the impromptu speech. In Fall 2011, 10 of the 18 students received a 90% or better on the impromptu speech, 7 students received between 80% - 89%, and one student received a grade between 76 - 79%. Cosmetology students must receive a course grade of a “B” or better in order to receive credit for the course. In Fall 2011, 17 of the 18 enrolled students earned a “B” or better. These figures provide some evidence that the SLOs are being met by the instructor.

These abovementioned findings provide evidence that HCC Speech Requirement courses meet or exceed the SR hallmark expectations. Furthermore, 70 percent or more of students were able to achieve proficiency on the SR course SLOs. Instructors have also demonstrated comparable grading standards across SR course sections. These results provide evidence that HCC’s Speech Requirement courses have been successful in meeting accreditation standards and ensuring that students receive necessary training in the development of their oral communication skills.