Results of O-Focus Assessment. Results of the O-Focus assessments taken by students enrolled in all sections of Speech 151 courses were discussed. On the assessment survey, students were asked to indicate the percentage of course material that was devoted to oral communication activities. Results showed that 50.4% of all students who took Speech 151/251 felt that 41-75% of course material for Speech 151 was devoted to oral communication activities, and 48% felt that more than 75% of the course focused on oral communication activities. Together, 98.4% of students who took Speech 151/251 in the Fall 2008 semester felt that over 40% of Speech 151 courses focused on oral communication activities. This provides encouraging evidence that Speech courses are exceeding the 40% hallmark for oral communication activities in O-Focus courses.

The data measuring the degree to which students perceived that Speech courses fulfilled the goals of oral communication training is also encouraging. Five scale items were assessed using a 5-point interval scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). Students reported strong agreement that oral assignments related to the course content ($M=4.67$), that they were more comfortable in oral communication activities ($M=4.54$), that the instructor provided sufficient oral training ($M=4.51$), and that the instructor provided specific feedback ($M=4.60$). They also agreed that they felt more competent in meeting oral demands in their future careers ($M=4.44$).

The degree to which students perceived improvement in various aspects of their public speaking skills was also assessed with 4-point interval scales (1=No improvement, 4=Tremendous improvement). On average, students reported significant improvement in the following areas: choosing a topic, organizing information, providing strong support, better use of language, the ability to use vocal expressiveness, ability to adapt to an audience, competence in interpersonal communication, ability to handle visual aids, ability to use body language effectively, ability to eliminate nervous body language, ability to sustain eye contact, ability to assess/critique the presentations of others, ability to maintain poise, and competence in small group discussion. Mean scores on the assessment items ranged from 3.12 to 3.35. These results also provide encouragement that the Speech 151/251 courses have been successful in improving students’ public speaking abilities. See Table for mean scores on each of the scale items.
Finally, the degree to which students perceive they can exhibit the course student learning outcomes after having taken the Speech course was also assessed using 17 items measured on 5-point interval scales (1=Very Low, 5=Very Good). The mean scores on each of these items ranged from 4.05 to 4.21. Students were confident in their ability to: describe the communication process, explain self-identity, exercise effective listening skills in interpersonal, group, and public situations, assess language and body language, explain principles of interpersonal communication and conflict management strategies, demonstrate principles of effective small group communication, identify effective leadership styles, choose/narrow speech topics, develop clear organization for presentations, demonstrate effective delivery skills and adapt to various interpersonal, small group, and public speaking situations. The data suggests that the student learning outcomes set forth in Oral-Focus courses are sufficiently being met. See Table for mean scores on each of the assessment items.

II. Future Steps to Maintain and Improve the O-Focus. An observation of the data measuring student perceptions of the degree to which O-Focus courses fulfilled oral communication goals reveals that students felt less confident in their ability to meet the oral demands of career goals than in any other area. To address this issue, instructors will be encouraged to make direct applications of speech scenarios to “real world” and future career contexts in which speech are an integral part. Students will also be encouraged to select speech topics in their respective academic or technical fields so that the application of effective presentation skills in each specific context will become more evident.

Students also reported the least levels of improvement in the areas of selecting an appropriate speech topic, and in maintaining poise and eliminating nervous body language. Requiring students to select a topic in their academic/technical field rather than selecting topics at random will help students to narrow the infinite range of topics that are available to them. Nonverbal behaviors, on the other hand, have typically been the biggest challenge not only for students, but also for any person giving public presentations. Instructors will be encouraged to create more opportunities for students to receive ample practice in physical delivery. Theoretically, practice is most essential to mastering verbal and nonverbal delivery.

III. Changing the Course Description for Speech 151 in the Course Catalog. The O-Focus board has decided to delay changing the catalog course description for Speech 151 due to the possibility of eliminating the O-Focus requirement from the HCC catalog and reinstating it as a graduation Speech Requirement. Due to the confusion regarding transfer of lower-division O-Focus credit to UH Manoa, it has been suggested that HCC removes the O-Focus requirement and replaces it with a Speech requirement for graduation with the AA degree. A curriculum change form will be filled out and submitted to the Committee for Programs and Curricula (CPC).