ORAL COMMUNICATION: MASTERING THE SPOKEN WORD  FALL 2007  Executive Summary

RESEARCH DESIGN

Honolulu Community College adheres to the WASC expectation that students enrolled in the Associate of Arts Program develop oral communication skills.

As a consequence, when UH-Manoa (the university to which the majority of HCC students transfer) adopted an Oral Communication Focus requirement as part of their revised (2001) general education requirements, HCC quickly incorporated the requirement as part of the A.A. Degree expectations.

Courses qualifying for the “O” (Oral Communication) Focus designation are reviewed by the O-Focus Board and then periodically assessed to assure that the classes meet the “hallmarks” associated with the designation:

Each student will conduct or participate in a minimum of three oral communication assignments or a comparable amount of oral communication activity during the course. . .
.at least 40% of the grade (3 credit course) will be a function of the student's oral activities. . . will receive explicit training, in the context of the class, in oral communication concerns relevant to the assignment or activity. . . will receive specific feedback, critiquing, and grading of the oral communication assignments or activities.

David Cleveland (HCC Assessment Researcher), Karadeen Kam (O-Focus Chair), and David Fink (Research Assistant) coordinated the administration of the Fall 2007 O-Focus Evaluation.

All (100%) of HCC Fall 2007 O-Focus completed the evaluation (117 student respondents) - compared to a UH-Manoa response rate of just 53%.

FINDINGS

HCC O-Focus Classes Far Exceed O-Focus Hallmark Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O-FOCUS HALLMARK EXPECTATION</th>
<th>HCC O-FOCUS FINDINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximately 71% or more of this course is dedicated to oral communication activities</td>
<td>79% of respondents report that more than 71% of course focused on oral communication. Comparison: At UH-Manoa only 55% report that their course was 61% or more of the course focused on oral communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral assignments related to the course content</td>
<td>90% Strongly Agree/Agree; UHM = 96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More comfortable in oral communication activities</td>
<td>89% Strongly Agree/Agree; UHM = 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor provided sufficient oral training</td>
<td>91% Strongly Agree/Agree; UHM = 81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more competent in meeting oral demands in my career</td>
<td>89% Strongly Agree/Agree; UHM = 86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENTS REPORT A WIDE RANGE OF ORAL COMMUNICATION ASSIGNMENTS DISCUSSED:
(some examples follow)

You learn about more effective methods to communicate, and give speeches. . . When we weren't making speeches we were learning how to make speeches or preparing for our next speech. . . interviewing, preparing speeches, interpersonal relationships, communication in various life situations, current events speech, group speech, group discussions, brainstorming as a group, listening skills, taking notes.

COMMENTS VERIFY STUDENT ORAL COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

Prepare and deliver speeches in an extemporaneous manner, . . . types of communication styles, types of communicators, communication variances, individual speech, evaluating self and others, culture issues and communication, gender differences and communication, intrapersonal communication, use of visual aids, speech outline, body language, voice, delivering the speech, lots of communication. . .

To prepare an outline and Powerpoint to impact a great speech. . . Very effective practice!
STUDENTS REPORT MAJOR PUBLIC SPEAKING LEARNING GAINS

Respondents reported significant improvement in every public speaking learning outcome area. The bar graph below documents these gains by displaying student responses by rank ordered mean values.

Perhaps the most insightful finding from this area comes from a comparison of the data to the Spring 2007 data. Scores on all of these area IMPROVED - for example the lowest scoring Spring 2007 item - Eliminating Nervous Body Language - improved from a mean value of 3.96 to a mean value of 4.39.

Figure 6: THE DEGREE TO WHICH THIS COURSE HAS HELPED TO IMPROVE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

SORTED BY MEAN VALUES - Improved poise/confidence during a presentation (4.51) received the highest score, while Improved choosing an appropriate topic for a specific audience received the lowest (but still very respectable) score (4.12)

(ALMOST ALL RESPONDENTS REPORT IMPROVEMENT IN SPECIFIC PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

Students were asked whether they improved public speaking skills in sixteen different areas. Over 90% of respondents replied yes to all but one of these items. 99.1% reported that they were now able to much more clearly organize an oral message.)
CONCLUSION

These findings verify that HCC O-Focus classes meet or exceed the O-Focus “Hallmark” expectations; These findings are consistent with the previous academic year. Independent validation of the success of the HCC oral communication development effort is found in the Spring 2007 A.A. Graduate study which reports that 94% of survey respondents rate their effective speaking skills as Good or Excellent.

Recommendations:

O-Focus faculty should review these findings and discuss/develop/implement strategies to further improve student learning outcomes in their classes. Also, consider revising the survey instrument by changing the yes/no response scale for areas improved to a five point scale strongly disagree to strongly agree in order to better gauge perceived improvement.

When UH-Manoa developed and implemented the “O” Focus requirement, HCC quickly changed its Speech - Oral Communication requirement to match the UH-Manoa “O” Focus requirement/hallmarks.

UH-Manoa has since modified the “O” Focus requirement to limit “O” Focus designation to classes offered at the upper division (300 & 400) levels. HCC has retained its “O” requirement and hallmarks despite the fact that students can no longer fulfill UH-Manoa graduation requirements with our Oral Communication designated classes. This also causes some degree of difficulty for students who transfer from UH and non-UH campuses that do not require/offer “O” designated classes. At this point, the Oral Communication Committee might consider reverting back to an Oral Communication/Speech requirement which would reduce confusion about the transferability of the HCC “O” while, simultaneously, reducing problems for students who transfer to HCC from other colleges.