CO 100 Assessment Committee Report

Revised September 25, 2015

The following is the current report on the assessment of Communication 100, Speech Communication, the required course which satisfies the core requirement for John Carroll University. This is the final assessment of CO 100 since the course is replaced by CO 125 this fall (2015).

Committee Members: The Assessment Committee for CO 100 is composed of all full time members of the Tim Russert Department of Communications and Theatre Arts who teach CO 100: Drs. Brossmann, Bruce, Schmidt and Mr. Nagy. Dr. Brossmann is the chair of this committee. Mr. Nagy is new to the committee. Dr. Miller has retired and Dr. Han chose to leave the committee as her position within the faculty has changed.

Transition Overview: The department is engaged in a transition away from CO 100, a two credit course that meets a requirement in the university's 20 year old core and CO 125, a three credit course that meets a foundation requirement in the university's new integrative core. This has serious implications for the current report as we have worked on both the conclusion of CO 100 and the preparation of CO 125.

As a point of clarification, there are two committees which have been working on the transition from CO 100 to CO 125, although there is significant overlap in membership. The department's CO 100 Assessment committee is responsible for this assessment report. That membership has agreed to stay active as the department's CO 125 Assessment committee going forward. In addition, the university has a Public Speaking subcommittee which oversees the role of public speaking within the university as it pertains to the new integrative core. Drs. Brossmann (chair) and Schmidt serve on that university subcommittee in addition to Dr. Kwan (chemistry). The university subcommittee oversees both CO 125 and the speaking within the major category. However, the department also oversees CO 125 as it is their course. The direct assessment of CO 125 is within the purview of the Tim Russert Department of Communication and Theatre Arts. The departmental assessment of CO 125 will be forwarded to the Public Speaking subcommittee and the Integrative Core Committee.

CO 100 Assessement Meetings: The Committee met on June 25, 2015 and again on August 10, 2015. Additionally, the committee met with the CO 125 faculty on June 15 and August 17, 2015.

CO 100 Overview: Historically, the department has established eight "Course Goals" for CO 100, based on the department and university missions, and these goals have been reviewed periodically. The most recent review and restatement of these goals was completed in three meetings during the early summer of 2012. Through correspondence with the members of the committee, a decision was made to continue to assess CO 100 through the lens established by the previous assessment report.

The goals were included in the CO 100 Packet which is distributed to all students as part of Blackboard. The department has formed a "Course Packet" which describes and summarizes assignments, includes sample outlines of speeches, incorporates forms available for analysis of speeches. The Course Packet

was published originally in hard copy through agreement with the publisher of the text book used. Rather than continue to have this information published and wrapped in shrink wrap, adding to the expense for the purchaser, this committee arranged to make the Course Packet available electronically. With the help of the Digital Learning Center, it is loaded onto Blackboard for each section at the start of each term. The Course Packet is revised regularly, adding more recent samples of outlines, and adjusting to the text book selected. Faculty and students access relevant parts, and download as needed. The Packet is composed by the members of this committee, and it is the property of the department. It is distributed without added charge.

As a general statement, CO 100 is completed by students in one of their first semesters. A typical section will enroll 18-20 students, primarily first year students, with a few second year students mixed in. Some students wait until their third or fourth year to take the course, but efforts are made in advising to decrease that number. Still, at the end of the Spring 2015 semester, more than 250 students had not completed CO 100. That number became very important since only one section of the course was offered in the summer. The remaining students are required to take CO 125 instead. Some students complete the course at other institutions each summer and transfer the credit to JCU.

Instructors in the course are largely, but not exclusively, adjunct faculty. Dr. Bruce regularly has a section or two; Drs. Brossmann and Schmidt have a section more rarely. Mr. Nagy teaches the course with some frequency and typically offers the summer course. Adjunct instructors meet late each August before Fall term classes begin. Given the changes for CO 125, adjunct faculty met twice this summer. The course goals as well as the need for a uniform approach to the class were discussed. Dr. Brossmann coordinated the instruction and is in contact regularly with all adjunct faculty on issues large and small. The entire assessment committee met with the adjuncts in June and a majority of the committee met with them in August.

For assessment of CO 100, the committee—with the agreement of the department—requires that the third and final speech in the course, the persuasive speech, is recorded. (Some instructors record more than one speech, at their option, and then make the speeches available through our LMS for review by each student.) Difficulties in recording speeches which were reported in the 2013 report became worse in the 2014. In fact, Dr. Brossmann removed the requirement to record speeches during the Fall 2014 semester because the system became inoperable. Short term solutions included a review of Information Technology Services' system (a mistake was found that was responsible for some of our problems), new technology guides were written (and twice revised) for the CO 100 faculty, and the process of uploading speeches from the server to the LMS was shortened to make it easier on the CO 100 faculty. Dr. Brossmann joined the university's Learning Management Software search committee and also the IT Academic Steering Committee. Both committees are dedicated to improving the use of technology in the classroom generally, and the importance of assessment of CO 100/125 has become a priority. The university changed its LMS from Blackboard to Canvas and is currently reviewing its choice of video stream servers. A key factor in both decisions is to find a service which makes the recording of speeches for assessment smooth and the display of video for student access easy. Although there have been major improvements in this regard, the system is not where we want it to be. Nonetheless, the recording of speeches has been much easier in the last year.

Method: The Assessment Committee meetings mentioned above resulted in these steps:

1. The Committee agreed to continue to use the National Communication Association's The Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation Form. NCA is the major professional association for the field of communication and, over the years, it has produced and verified the reliability and validity of this form (www.natcom.org/assessmentresources/). The most recent Form, 2007, focuses on eight "competencies", which directly include all but one of the goals/objectives for CO 100. The CO 100 goal of developing listening cannot be readily assessed through observation of speeches. Instead the committee insured that all sections use written assignments, such as critiques of speeches, to achieve this goal. The assessment committee pilot tested the Form in its June 25 meeting and found the form to be able to be applied consistently by each faculty member. The Form allocates ratings for the speech and speaker as Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, or Excellent.

2. In June, Dr. Brossmann reviewed each of the sections of CO 100 taught during Fall 2013, Spring 2014 and Spring 2015. The previously mentioned complications made a review of Fall 2014 impossible. The other semesters yielded section counts of 24, 22 and 22 courses per semester. A total of 40 persuasive speeches (the final speech in each class) were randomly selected and distributed on flash drives, with 10 speeches on each. Committee members randomly selected a flash drive and evaluated those speeches.

3. The members used time during the summer to complete their evaluations. They returned their evaluations to Dr. Brossmann via email by the first week in August. Dr. Brossmann compiled the results and presented the data to the committee.

4. On August 10, the Committee met again. Three of the 40 speeches were not evaluated due to technical difficulties specific to sound. A total of 37 persuasive speeches were assessed. The data are available at the end of this report. Put simply, the data were examined in two ways. First was a simple percentage of scores in each of the three categories (unsatisfactory, satisfactory and excellent) for each of the eight criteria. Second was a numerical comparison in which unsatisfactory marks were scored as 0, satisfactory as 1 and excellent as 2. The data were discussed by the committee and the conclusions we reached are listed in the next section.

Results:

1. The committee was concerned with students' ability to choose and narrow a topic. The combination of satisfactory and excellent only reached 75% and unsatisfactory scores were 50% more likely than excellent scores. The two issues that were raised as problems were choosing topics which don't require persuasion and not tailoring speeches to the audience. It is important to note that 75% of the speakers did reach that satisfactory level and a number were truly excellent, but the committee was concerned.

2. The committee was satisfied with communication of thesis & specific purpose. Excellent scores were almost 50% more frequent than unsatisfactory scores and the combination of satisfactory and excellent reached 81%. We would like to see that number climb higher, but were satisfied.

3. The committee was **very** concerned with supporting material. This was the only category in which unsatisfactory score were the most common. This seems to reflect a divide between the adjunct faculty, several of whom have argued that simply getting speakers to stand in front of an audience and speak is a worthy goal, and the assessment committee who believes strongly that content, audience analysis and delivery are all extremely important goals. The committee found examples of students who did an excellent job of supporting their claims with quality evidence. However, there were also too many instances in which speakers did not provide support, did not cite sources, did not establish credibility for their sources, used clearly unqualified sources, used old evidence or didn't use evidence to demonstrate the need, desirability or feasibility of change. Those who did an excellent job truly stood out.

4. The committee was very concerned with organization. Unsatisfactory scores were present 43% of the time. In contrast, excellent organization was noted only 5% of the time. The common issues were students who failed to get to their thesis or their desired response in a reasonable time. Additionally, too few used a discernible pattern other than topical, which is frequently not the best pattern for a persuasive speech.

5. The committee was very satisfied with use of language. Excellent scores doubled unsatisfactory scores. Satisfactory and excellent scores combined to represent 92% of students in the data.

6. The committee was very satisfied with vocal variety. Excellent scores doubled unsatisfactory scores. Satisfactory and excellent scores combined to represent 95% of students in the data.

7. The committee was satisfied with pronunciation, grammar and articulation. The combined satisfactory and excellent reached 89% and unsatisfactory was only 11%.

8. The committee was very concerned with physical delivery. Unsatisfactory scores represent 43% of the sample; while excellence was identified in only 8%. The committee was concerned with speakers who read speeches or their visual aids, speakers who were inanimate and those who engaged in distracting, repetitive motions.

Action:

Given that the shift from CO 100 to CO 125 starts with the current semester, all subsequent action takes place within the CO 125 framework.

1. This data, including specific concerns, was shared with all CO 125 faculty at the August 17, 2015 meeting. The faculty were informed that that assessment committee was looking for a stronger commitment to developing strong delivery, using and accurately citing timely and qualified sources, and organizing speeches more effectively.

2. Major changes have been implemented for CO 125, many of which reflect the concerns of both the current and previous assessment of CO 100. Those changes include, but are not limited to:

> a. the shift from a two-credit to three-credit class, providing more time for instruction, speaking and critique;

b. the reduction in class size from a maximum of 20 to a maximum of 18, which also provides more time for instruction, speaking and critique;

c. the inclusion of the argumentative, informative and persuasive speeches as university core requirements and the addition of a fourth speech, left largely to the instructor's prerogative;

d. the inclusion of new material and links for finding and assessing sources from a variety of sources, including academic, news, government, think tanks, activists and others;

e. the inclusion of a new distance-speaking requirement in which speakers deliver their argumentative speeches from one classroom to another over the internet; and

f. the inclusion of a bring-your-own-device requirement for controlling visual aids in the persuasive speech.

3. Major changes have also been implemented for the assessment of CO 125. These are:

a. modifying the NCA evaluation form to add items about visual aids and ethics;

b. continuing the current assessment process using the new instrument;

c. creating and using rubrics for assessing the argumentative, informative and persuasive speeches; these rubrics may also be used for grading and are designed within Canvas so that instructor evaluations on the relevant criteria will be sent to the Director of Public Speaking on a seven-point scale;

d. crafting and distributing a survey to all CO 125 faculty at the end of the semester which seeks their perceptions of their classes performance according to the 10 items used in the assessment rubric;

e. triangulating that data so that we have the instructors' perceptions after the completion of the course, their evaluations of each students' three core required speeches and the assessment committee's assessment of a randomly selected collection of persuasive speeches.

It is hoped that this triangulation of data will provide a more complete view of the course's successes and will allow clear insight into areas in which the faculty and the assessment committee agree or disagree. All of the data will be provided to the assessment committee for review and their report will be shared with the CO 125 faculty as part of the continuing process of assessment.

4. Significant work has been done in instructing the CO 125 on how to use Canvas, record speeches, upload them, and using the new rubrics. This instruction took place in both summer meetings and in dozens of one-on-one interactions with faculty as they learn the new systems and rubrics. These are new components for all faculty and we've significantly increased adjunct faculty due to two factors: adjunct faculty now fulfill their six hour commitment by teaching two classes instead of three and class size has been reduced by approximately 10%.

5. The CO 100 Assessment Committee also met with the department chair, Dr. Mary Beadle, to discuss criteria for transfer credit. The core issue concerns transfer credit for equivalent courses which may not be equivalent due to our use of technology (Skype speech and bring your own device speech) and other changes which distinguish our CO 125 course from its predecessor and the courses of other universities.

6. Two major changes have been made to the policy for those who wish to test out of CO 125. We have returned to an earlier policy that students who wish to test out must have taken a public speaking course somewhere else, such as in high school. While keeping the standard for passing the written exam portion of the test out at 70%, the standard for being credited with the speaking component has been returned to a level of B- or above.

7. The committee has discussed options for adding a fifth member to the committee for the next evaluation.

8. For clarification purposes, the department's CO 100 assessment team was tasked with assessing current efforts in CO 100. The university's public speaking subcommittee was largely responsible for drafting the rubrics which will be used for the assessment of CO 125 and the new "speaking within the major" requirement (which is **not** directly relevant to this assessment report). As noted, there is significant overlap in committee membership, with 2/3 of the university's subcommittee also sitting on the department's CO 100 assessment committee. The university's subcommittee met almost weekly during the 2014-15 academic year and drafted the rubrics which will be used to assess CO 125. Previous data from CO 100 assessment were vital to the process of creating new rubrics and a modified assessment process. That process and those rubrics were shared with and supported by the department. Future assessment of CO 125 remains within the purview of the Tim Russert Department of Communication and Theatre Arts and their findings will be sent to both the university's public speaking subcommittee and the integrative core committee.

The new rubrics are not attached since they are designed for CO 125 and were not used in the assessment of CO 100. However, given that their creation is grounded in the CO 100 assessment process, I will be happy to provide them upon request.

Sincerely,

Brent Brossmann, Chair
CO 100 Assessment Committee
Tim Russert Department of Communication & Theatre Arts

Appendix 1: NCA Competent Speaker Form

Course: 100 Semester:_____   Assessment Date:_____

PRESENTATIONAL COMPETENCIES   RATINGS

	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent
Competency One: Chooses and narrows a topic appropriately for the audience & occasion			
Competency Two: Communicates the thesis/specific purpose In a manner appropriate for the audience & occasion			
Competency Three: Provides supporting material appropriate for the audience & occasion			
Competency Four: Uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the topic, audience, occasion, & purpose			
Competency Five: Uses language appropriate to the audience & occasion			
Competency Six: Uses vocal variety in rate, pitch, & intensity (volume) to heighten & maintain interest appropriate to the audience & occasion			
Competency Seven: Uses pronunciation, grammar, & articulation appropriate to the audience & occasion			
Competency Eight: Uses physical behaviors that support the verbal message			

General Comments: Summative Scores of Ten Competencies:_____

Appendix 2: Percentages of USE Responses for Persuasive Speeches

PRESENTATIONAL COMPETENCIES   **RATINGS**

Unsatisfactory Satisfactory Excellent

Competency	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent
Competency One: CHOOSES AND NARROWS A TOPIC APPROPRIATELY FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	24%	59%	16%
Competency Two: COMMUNICATES THE THESIS/SPECIFIC PURPOSE IN A MANNER APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	19%	54%	27%
Competency Three: PROVIDES SUPPORTING MATERIAL (INCLUDING ELECTRONIC AND NON-ELECTRONIC PRESENTATIONAL AIDS) APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	43%	41%	16%
Competency Four: USES AN ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN APPROPRIATE TO THE TOPIC, AUDIENCE, OCCASION, & PURPOSE	41%	54%	5%
Competency Five: USES LANGUAGE APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	8%	76%	16%
Competency Six: USES VOCAL VARIETY IN RATE, PITCH, & INTENSITY (VOLUME) TO HEIGHTEN & MAINTAIN INTEREST APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	5%	84%	11%
Competency Seven: USES PRONUNCIATION, GRAMMAR, & ARTICULATION APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	11%	81%	8%
Competency Eight: USES PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT THE VERBAL MESSAGE	43%	49%	8%

Appendix 3: Weighting of USE Responses for Persuasive Speeches

Competency One: CHOOSES AND NARROWS A TOPIC APPROPRIATELY FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	0.97
Competency Two: COMMUNICATES THE THESIS/SPECIFIC PURPOSE IN A MANNER APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	1.08
Competency Three: PROVIDES SUPPORTING MATERIAL (INCLUDING ELECTRONIC AND NON-ELECTRONIC PRESENTATIONAL AIDS) APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	0.73
Competency Four: USES AN ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN APPROPRIATE TO THE TOPIC, AUDIENCE, OCCASION, & PURPOSE	0.65
Competency Five: USES LANGUAGE APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	1.08
Competency Six: USES VOCAL VARIETY IN RATE, PITCH, & INTENSITY (VOLUME) TO HEIGHTEN & MAINTAIN INTEREST APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	1.05
Competency Seven: USES PRONUNCIATION, GRAMMAR, & ARTICULATION APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION	0.97
Competency Eight: USES PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT THE VERBAL MESSAGE	0.65