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**Ad Hoc Assessment (AHA) Subcommittee for Liberal Education Core (LEC) Outcome 2: Communication Final Report**

**Introduction**

The Ad Hoc Assessment (AHA) Subcommittee for Liberal Education Core (LEC) Outcome 2: Communication consisted of four members representing different departments. Members were Will Thomas (Co-Chair; Business), Jay Brown (Co-Chair; Science), Amanda Bemer (English), and Vicky Brockman (Social Science). Committee members requested assessment materials and artifacts from faculty in their respective departments for courses that address written and oral communication.

The AHA subcommittee created subdirectories on the university t: drive where various rubrics, artifacts, and assessment materials are stored. These include a rubric created by the AHA subcommittee that summarizes courses that assess this outcome, the Association of American Colleges and Universities AAC& U) rubrics for written and oral communication, and the rubrics approved by the Southwest Minnesota State University Faculty Association (SMSUFA). This final report summarizes the results of this assessment. The report is based on the information provided by the departments/programs summarized below.

**Results**

**A) Science Department**

**a) Biology Program**

**Assessment of Biology Program Student Learning Outcomes**

**in BIOL 487 Senior Seminar – capstone course**

We assess five program student learning outcomes (SLO) in our capstone Senior Seminar course. This assessment report summarizes student proficiency over four terms (S10, F10, S12, F12) and our program’s reflection and response. All five biologists work with students in this course and regularly discuss outcomes and improvements for the course. Summary figures of the results for each SLO and assessment rubrics are included below.

Most outcomes are assessed from student scores on sets of individual items in the grading rubrics for their poster/oral presentation and written paper. Class size for these four terms was 7 – 12, so one student accounts for 8 – 14% of the values. **We chose a proficiency benchmark of 85% for outcomes in this course**.

**SLO 1.1 - Demonstrate knowledge of scientific content, including core concepts and principles in biology**

Proficiency demonstrating content knowledge in their written paper was shown by 60-80% of the students. In 2010 proficiency was much lower (40-50%) in the poster than in the paper; this problem was resolved in 2012. We increased our already strong emphasis on this outcome, but students vary in their response. We work at keeping them on schedule, so they can find time to understand their topic thoroughly. This outcome includes answering the faculty questions at the poster; advisers could ask them more difficult questions in practice.

**SLO 3.1 - Demonstrate competency in data analysis including the preparation and interpretation of graphs and tables**

Proficiency demonstrating competency in this outcome was shown by 55-70% of students in their written papers. Great variation was seen in the posters: 26% - 78% proficiency depending on term, with more 2012 students proficient. We speak with the students even more than before about this important component of the presentation. Typically students lacking in this area have not availed themselves of their adviser’s assistance.

**SLO 4.1 - Demonstrate information literacy skills by ability to identify, locate, and evaluate biological information.**

Information literacy outcomes are assessed by research logs, annotated bibliography, and citation skills in poster and paper. 70-90% of the students were proficient in information literacy skills We reinforce these skills in many Biology courses and will continue to do this.

**SLO 4.2 - Demonstrate competency in communicating experimental findings or data interpretations both orally and in writing.**

Between 55-90% of the students were proficient in their oral and written communication over these four terms. Fewer students were proficient in communicating orally and in writing in the poster than in the paper, except F12 when 80% of students were proficient in both formats. The most important aspect is really understanding their topic well so they can communicate it. Some students persist in superficial coverage despite our warnings. We could perhaps be more blunt in showing them early what they’re neglecting so they better understand the expectations. However, we also try to instill confidence so they get through the process.

**SLO 5.1 - Use scientific evidence to evaluate biological and societal issues.**

Between 55-85% of students were proficient in evaluating the issues. Keeping students on schedule is important here too, since if they’re behind, they don’t leave enough time for this. Some students need more help thinking about the issues. We have an exercise in class on this; perhaps we can expand or revise it.

**Reflection**

There seems to be a slight trend of more proficient students in 2012 than 2010. However the class is so small that a couple extra students at either extreme makes a big difference.

We are generally satisfied with student performance, but we continue to push them for deeper understanding of their topics and more thoughtful evaluation. In 2008 we added more items to the rubric to strengthen these outcomes. Prior to 2010 we redesigned in-class activities to use mainly active learning techniques. This appropriately emphasizes the student’s responsibility in a capstone course.

We have seen some outstanding presentations and fewer awful ones. Some students need to be guided towards more manageable topics that better fit their experience. We’ve begun to do this more often. We have also recently changed the poster organization, combining Methods and Results, to improve the flow of the presentation which seems to contribute to improved communication.

**SLO 1.1 - Demonstrate knowledge of scientific content, including core concepts and principles in biology**

**SLO 3.1 - Demonstrate competency in data analysis including the preparation and interpretation of graphs and tables**

**SLO 4.1 - Demonstrate information literacy skills by ability to identify, locate, and evaluate biological information.**

**SLO 4.2 - Demonstrate competency in communicating experimental findings or data interpretations both orally and in writing.**

**SLO 5.1 - Use scientific evidence to evaluate biological and societal issues.**

The rubrics or grading forms we use for the poster presentation and the final paper are below.

**Seminar paper grading form**

**INTRO/BACKGROUND** \_\_\_\_\_ OF 10

**DATA:** DISPLAY \_\_\_\_\_ OF 5

USE, INTERPRET. \_\_\_\_\_ OF 10

**CRITIQUE** \_\_\_\_\_ OF 10

**CONCLUSION** \_\_\_\_\_ OF 5

**OVERALL**

ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_ OF 7

WRITING MECHANICS \_\_\_\_\_ OF 10

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE \_\_\_\_\_ OF 10

CLARITY/STYLE \_\_\_\_\_ OF 10

**LITERATURE CITED/BIB.**

FORMAT \_\_\_\_\_ OF 5

TEXT CITATIONS \_\_\_\_\_ OF 5

#, QUALITY OF SOURCES \_\_\_\_\_ OF 5

ANNOTATIONS \_\_\_\_\_ OF 3

**ABSTRACT** \_\_\_\_\_ OF 5

**TOTAL**  \_\_\_\_\_ OF 100

**GRADE** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ %

# Biology Seminar Evaluation Form Speaker \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Circle the most fitting rating within each category.

# Introduction and Background:

# A. clear, understandable very hard to follow

5 4 3 2 1

# B. explicitly stated key issue no key issue stated

5 4 3 2 1

# C. thorough background little background info

5 4 3 2 1

# Experimental Evidence:

# D. appropriate primary sources inappropriate sources

5 4 3 2 1

# E. detailed description of exps. ~no description of exps.

5 4 3 2 1

# F. clearly understood exps. didn’t understand exps.

5 4 3 2 1

**G.** explained results clearly poor explanation of results

5 4 3 2 1

**Presentation of Data (Figures):**

**H.** figures described clearly confusing poor description

5 4 3 2 1

**I.** figures large, clear figures messy, small, unclear

5 4 3 2 1

**Critique & Conclusion:**

**J.** evaluated strengths/weaknesses of articles no evaluation of articles

5 4 3 2 1

**K.** clear evidence-based conclusion no conclusion

5 4 3 2 1

**L.** full discussion of significance no discussion of significance

5 4 3 2 1

**Response to Questions:**

**M.** poised thoughtful response poor response

5 4 3 2 1

**Overall presentation:**

**N.** well-organized hard to follow, disorganized

5 4 3 2 1

**O.** appropriately difficult topic superficial coverage/topic

5 4 3 2 1

**P.** careful preparation of poster careless preparation of poster

5 4 3 2 1

**Q.** displayed complete knowledge of topic insufficient knowledge of topic

5 4 3 2 1

**Speaking:**

**R.** good volume and speed inappropriate volume, speed

5 4 3 2 1

**Citations:**

**S.** cited sources correctly in writing lack of written citations

5 4 3 2 1

**T.** verbally cited main articles correctly lack of verbal citation

5 4 3 2 1

**Comments and notes:**

**b) Chemistry Program**

Two courses serve as capstone assessment for (LEC) Outcome 2: Communication in the Chemistry Program. The courses are Senior Seminar (CHEM 420-01) or Advanced Laboratory (CHEM 470-01). The students can select either course for their capstone experience. The only difference between the two courses is that CHEM 470-01 contains an additional laboratory research component in the final grade. Students write formal papers on their topics and give oral presentations on campus.

Both courses cover SLOs approved by the program. These are 1) SLO 1.1: Demonstrate understanding of chemistry concepts, 2) SLO 3.1: Demonstrate competence in data analysis, including the preparation & interpretation of graphs & tables. 3) SLO 3.2: Demonstrate competence in the analysis of various chemical spectra, 4) SLO 4.1: Effectively use information-gathering techniques in scientific inquiry, 5) SLO 4.2: Communicate experimental findings or data interpretations both orally & in writing, including the proper use of chemical nomenclature and language, use of American Chemical Society Style Guide for style and citation formatting. The above SLOs were evaluated using pre- and post-assessment of in-class training sessions, graded homework assignments, evaluation of written papers, and approved rubrics for the oral presentations.

Reflection: The students needed training on American Chemical Society (ACS) primary literature searches, drawing molecular structures using ChemDraw software, and required several revisions to correct chemistry errors in their written papers and oral presentations. The course schedule will be updated in the future to accommodate additional training and revisions of course materials. A spreadsheet was established to keep track of future changes to the course schedule and student learning outcomes. See t:drive and materials below for supporting documentation.

**SMSU Oral Communication Rubric for**

**Chemistry Seminar Stacked with Advanced Lab CHEM 420/470; Spring 2015**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Speaking Competencies** | **Advanced** | |
| I. Invention: Effective selection, restriction, research and focus of topic appropriate to audience and purpose. |  | |
| A. Determine the purpose of oral discourse. | Demonstrates extensive knowledge of the various purposes for and contexts of discourse and the similarities and differences among them. Articulates a clear purpose for the discourse and masterfully relates it to the topic and context.  Students understand the purpose/importance of the oral presentations for grades, meetings, interviews, etc. | |
| B. Choose a topic and restrict it according to the purpose and the audience. | Demonstrates the ability to choose a subject that is relevant to the speaker’s role, knowledge, concerns and interests. Selects subjects which are creative, unique and appropriate for their audience. Narrows the topic adapting it to the purpose and time constraints for communicating. Develops and adapts clear thesis appropriate to the purpose, topic, and context of the presentation.  Yes – The students are given clear objectives, requirements, direction, and re-direction as they select a topic of interest. Few attempt to circumvent or argue the advice given in the course orientation and assignment. | |
| C. Locate and evaluate information resources effectively. | Utilizes and synthesizes information from a variety of primary and secondary sources; evaluates its relevance to the topic or working thesis; evaluates the credibility and quality of sources; sifts, evaluates, and selects useful content making connections across sources and developing new insights; and determines the need for further research.  Yes – The primary literature search training provided in the course is assessed with an assignment to determine mastery of the material. | |
| D. Utilize appropriate and adequate supporting material. | Demonstrates understanding of the available forms of support and provides appropriate support for assertions in the presentation. Uses effective forms of visual aids as support in appropriate ways in order to reinforce the message and not detract from it. Incorporates clear and comprehensive oral documentation of supporting material. Evaluates quality of supporting material and chooses support for maximum effect on topic, audience, context and purpose.  Yes - The Writing Center is recommended and weekly reviews of the developing presentations are provided throughout the semester by using group feed-back cards. | |
| **Speaking Competencies** | | **Advanced** |
| E. Utilize effective audience analysis in preparation. | | Shows evidence of audience analysis and uses it to select and adapt the topic to the audience, develop thesis, guide language choices, and plan the presentation.  The course orientation emphasizes that audience are the students attending the presentations in addition to the faculty who are grading the presentations using an established grid. |
| F. Work effectively in a group context to complete the invention process. | | Achieves the outcomes above while working in a small group context.  Yes- A small group format was adopted for practice presentations which feedback from the instructor and peers using feed-back cards. |
| II. Organization: Demonstration of the necessity of sound structural elements in effective discourse. | |  |
| A. Utilize suitable and effective organizational strategies. | | Utilizes an organizational pattern (e.g. topical, spatial, chronological, problem-solution, etc.) appropriate to purpose, develops main and supporting points based on audience prior knowledge and interests; uses effective transitions; develops an introduction that engages audience attention and previews presentation content; and develops a conclusion that summarizes main ideas, restates thesis, leaves a strong impression on the audience, and is coordinated with the introduction and general purpose of the speech.  Students are required to use the organizational pattern established for the course and discussed during the course orientation. The organization of the presentations are revised as students practice their presentations on a weekly basis. |
| B. Provide effective transitions. | | Uses creative and consistent transitions (signposts, internal summaries, previews, spotlights, bridges) to unify the message of the speech resulting in the intended goals/purpose of the presentation.  Yes – students are required to provide summaries at the conclusion of their presentations. |
| C. Work effectively in a group to organize a presentation. | | Achieves the outcomes above while working in a small group context. Extensive coordination of individual contributions that results in a well-integrated presentation.  The course is organized in a small group format as the students practice their presentations. Feed-back cards from peers and instructor are used to provide direction as the presentations develop throughout the semester. |

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| **Speaking Competencies** | **Advanced** |
| III. Delivery: Transmit the message by using delivery skills suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience. |  |
| A. Demonstrates vocal variety and appropriate diction. | Uses appropriate and natural vocal variety (i.e. rate, pitch, volume, quality/tone), vocal pauses where and if appropriate to establish his/her credibility and contribute to the effectiveness of the presentation. Achieves congruence between verbal and nonverbal elements of the message. Speaks clearly with appropriate and proper articulation, pronunciation and enunciation. |
| B. Demonstrate nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message. | Uses appropriate kinesic elements and clothing to enhance the effectiveness of the presentation; adapts these to audience feedback during the presentation; achieves congruence between verbal and nonverbal elements of the message.  Kinesthetics are discussed during the first month or class and the students are given an assignment to assess mastery of the concept. |
| C. Manage communication anxiety effectively. | Anticipates and prepares for communication anxiety, recognizes specific symptoms signaling communication anxiety, and selects specific strategies to manage that anxiety and channels anxious energy to heighten communicative effectiveness.  Strategies are discussed throughout the semester and students are encouraged to practice their talk in the large auditorium where the final prevention will take place. Other strategies (such as showing up early and checking the audio/visual) are required and points are deducted if not followed. |
| D. Utilize presentation aids effectively. | Skillfully uses appropriate mode of presentation to enhance message effectiveness; utilizes variety of audio-visual presentation aids as supporting material and adapts their use to the needs of presentation.  Audio/visual techniques such as PowerPoint, smart board/chalk board work, demonstrations, and document projection are all discussed and practiced by the students throughout the semester. |
| E. Work effectively in a group to deliver a presentation. | Achieves the outcomes above while working in a small group context. The result is a coordinated and integrated presentation that involves all members in a synergistic way with members referring to each other’s components, etc.  The small group format of the course emphasizes all the above as students practice their presentations throughout the semester to prepare for the final talk which is open to the university. |
| IV. Style/Language Use: Employ language appropriate to the designated audience and purpose. | Employs precise vocabulary, compelling verbs, figurative language (e.g. metaphors, sensory images, etc.) and rhetorical devices (e.g. rhetorical questions, parallelism, coordination, subordination, repetition, etc.) to establish credibility and authority, suggest an attitude toward the subject matter, clarify ideas, and appeal to the audience’s interests.  Clichés and metaphors are discouraged in CHEM 420/470. The students are instructed to be as precise as possible and prepare to explain in a different light without clichés or metaphors. Metaphors are to be used for those without a scientific background, which is not the target audience for this course. |

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| **Listening Competencies** | **Advanced** |
| I. Listen for literal comprehension (Active Listening) | Monitors listening and makes physical and cognitive adjustments to maintain engagement through active listening. Uses a variety of strategies to enhance comprehension and recall of complex messages (e.g. listening for contextual clues, interpreting figurative language, interpreting nonverbal cues, listening to distinguish among main ideas and details, listening for transitions, noting sequence and organization of ideas, extending speaker’s ideas based on prior knowledge and personal experience, determining need for further information or research, visualizing, summarizing and synthesizing). Evaluates effectiveness of selected strategies.  Students are rated on the above using an established grid given to the faculty who are evaluating the presentations. |
| II. Listen for critical comprehension (Critical Listening). | Attends with an open mind. Monitors the progression of an argument and uses a variety of strategies to analyze and critique a message (e.g. listening to critique main ideas and arguments, distinguishing facts, opinions and inferences; evaluating the connections between claims and supporting evidence; evaluating evidence for timeliness, relevance and credibility; identifying logical (logos), authoritative (ethos) and emotional (pathos) arguments and evaluating their effectiveness (noting logical fallacies). Analyzes speaker credentials, language use, preparation, and delivery to determine speaker effectiveness. Frames and determines appropriate verbal and nonverbal feedback to the speaker’s message. Is able to synthesize the speaker’s ideas and connect with the message.  Scientific rather than emotional arguments are graded in this course. The presentations are rated based on the Chemistry content and not the emotional connection the speakers have to a selected topic. This is no score on the evaluation grids for emotional connection. |
| III. Manage barriers to effective listening. | Analyzes internal variables that can pose barriers to effective listening; monitors and adjusts the use of a variety of appropriate and effective strategies to manage them prior to listening and while listening to prevent misinterpretation and distortion. Analyzes how language represents and constructs how listeners perceive messages. Anticipates and prepares for external variables that may pose barriers to effective listening; determines and employs effective strategies to prevent or overcome them.  Students are rated on their performance during the question/answer section of their presentations using an established grid given to the faculty reviewers. |

**Writing Rubric Adopted by SmSUFA on November 8, 2012 for CHEM 420/470**

| **Rubric\*** | **Fourth-Year Outcome:**  **Accomplished Competencies** |
| --- | --- |
| **Purpose and Audience** | The writing meets the requirements of the assignment, engages the audience, and demonstrates a proficient facility with audience and purpose appropriate for the particular discipline and/or genre for which the student is writing.  Yes – Writing met the requirements outline in the American Chemical Society (ACS) Style Guide 2014. This was the criterion used in both revising and grading the formal papers. |
| **Main Idea** | The writing is clear and focused; reader can easily understand the main idea (e.g., thesis, focus, hypothesis, research question, etc.). The manner in which the main idea is presented in the text demonstrates proficiency with the expectations of the discipline and genre.  Yes – Students were required to search the primary chemistry literature to form the basis of their formal papers. This provided the expectations of the discipline and genre. Papers were graded for chemistry content. |
| **Development and Support** | Supporting details are suitable to purpose and audience; material drawn from external sources is synthesized and integrated into the text.  In addition, the writing exhibits a proficient command of the subject matter that reveals an adept demonstration of the student’s ability to relate disciplinary content to practical examples and applications. The student uses sound reasoning and provides a comprehensive analysis of details, facts and concepts demonstrating the student’s proficiency in his/her field of study.  Yes – Supporting details for the introduction section of formal papers were obtained from the primary chemistry literature. Footnotes citing the literature were checked for accuracy. |

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| **Organization** | Organization is clear and coherent; order and structure are present; clear sequencing and paragraphing; developed introduction and conclusion. In addition, the student demonstrates a proficient understanding of how to appropriately organize his/her work for the particular discipline and/or genre in which he/she is writing.  Yes – The papers were organized by the ACS Style Guide noted above. |
| **Style** | The writing is clear and language use is precise. The student makes proficient use of language in a way that is appropriate for the particular discipline and/or genre in which the student is writing.  Unclear and imprecise language were corrected throughout the semester and during revisions for the formal papers. |
| **Conventions** | The writing demonstrates proficiency and fluency in the use of the conventions of Standard Written English (essentially error-free) in a manner that is sensitive to genre and rhetorical situation.  The proficiency and fluency Standard Written English was part of the revision/grading forces for the formal papers written by our seniors. |

Reflection: The students needed training on American Chemical Society (ACS) primary literature searches, drawing molecular structures using ChemDraw software, and required several revisions to correct chemistry errors in their written papers and oral presentations. The course schedule will be updated in the future to accommodate additional training and revisions of course materials. A spreadsheet was established to keep track of future changes to the course schedule and student learning outcomes.

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| **Chemistry Seminar (CHEM 420/470) Spring 2015 Assessment** | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1) Pre- and 2) post-assessment questions.  **Note:** Spring 2015 was first semester using new format. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Question 1: Percentage of students with ACS database search experience | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  |
| No students (0%)  Question 2: Percentage of students with molecular drawing experience | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |

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| No students (0%)  No students (0%)  Question 3: Preparation of a demonstration (kinesthetics) | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  |
| No students (0%)  Question 4: Formal chemistry oral presentation free of errors | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |
| No students (0%)  Question 5: Formal chemistry paper free of errors  No students (0%) | | | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Reflection**  Our students rarely have molecular drawing experience prior to Chemistry Seminar. Training was provided in class and experience gained by completing homework assignments and PowerPoint presentations. Most students have experience with data bases such as Science Direct but rarely use the ACS Journal search engines. Training was provided in class and experience gained by completing the assigned homework and formal paper. Most students initially use text/figures that were too small to see in PowerPoint Presentations. Problem was corrected during revisions and practice sessions. The class participated in the revision process and provided oral and written feedback during and after practice presentations. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  |

**C) English Department**

The English Department has completed assessment cycles in its composition courses and the Bachelor of Arts in Professional Writing & Communication (PWC). Assessment is in the planning stages for the BA in Literature/Creative Writing. This report discusses the completed assessment cycles for composition and PWC.

*Composition Courses*: The Department of English has conducted assessments on the following LEP courses: English 151: Academic Writing (Spring 2014), and English 251: Writing in Professions (Spring 2015). The remedial writing course, English 100: Introduction to Academic Writing is also a part of this assessment cycle (Fall 2014). Results from the assessment of these composition courses vary.

English 100 students show strengths in all areas of the LEP writing rubric (the writing rubric includes: purpose/audience, main idea, development/support, organization, style, conventions, and citing). English 151 students continued the trend of surpassing goals, with averages in all areas indicating higher-than-expected achievement. However, English 251 results showed a large dip, with averages in each area coming in at about the same level as the English 100 student averages. Please see attached infographic for more information.

Reflection: The department feels that this worrisome low average in second-year writing students has a few causes. The class cap in English 251 was set to 30 students, much higher than the 27-student cap for English 151. When we consider that the course is only 3 credits, while English 151 is 4 credits, we see that students in the second-year writing course have much less personal attention from instructors, which we feel is at least partially at fault for the low average. Rater disparity is another possible cause—review of the ratings suggested that raters interpreted the rubric differently. This led to a rubric revision that clarifies the “citing” and “conventions” sections. This revision will come before SmSUFA in the fall for approval.

*Professional Writing & Communication (PWC) Courses*: The PWC major has conducted two portfolio assessments of its capstone students (English 492: Theory & Practice of Professional Writing). These portfolio assessments encompass skills and documents from all the previous courses majors have taken and take the form of a website with an accompanying video presentation. The rubric used for this assessment includes an integration of the PWC outcomes and appropriate LEP outcomes. The revised rubric, listed in the first column of Figure 1, was used for the first time in April 2015 to assess PWC portfolios. Drs. Henning and Bemer were the sole raters for the second round of portfolios. More raters will be needed for the next assessment. It was discovered in this assessment that while most majors are meeting most PWC learning outcomes at the benchmark level, the LEP outcomes added to the rubric were largely not observed or had strong rater disparity (see Figure 1: PWC Portfolio Scores from April 2015 in attached document).

Reflection: The PWC program has made good progress in the area of assessment, continued work and progress is needed in the area of student learning outcomes assessment. It is recommended that the following tasks, listed in order of importance, be completed in the next two years:

1. The program should develop an assessment measure that focuses on the work of English 360 students as that work relates to information literacy and communication LEP goals (English 360: Scientific & Technical Writing, is the core communication for many majors across campus).
2. The program should come up with a list of the types of documents all PWC majors should include in their portfolios to ensure that all learning outcomes can be observed.
3. Before the next portfolio reading, rater norming for the LEP outcomes should be more rigorous.
4. The program needs to develop an assessment rubric for the portfolio video that students in the major have produced. These videos should then be assessed.
5. The program needs help from others to assess portfolios created in the capstone course.
6. The program needs to review its assessment material located on the t-drive to make sure it stays current. This review should occur once a semester.

**D) Speech Communication Program**

The Speech Communication program housed in the department of Fine Arts and Communication has been routinely assessing oral communication in both the first-year required course, Essentials of Speaking and Listening, and in its major as a whole. This section summarizes assessment data that were reported in the department of Fine Arts and Communication’s last annual report. More assessment data are available in previous annual reports. What follows is exactly what was reported in the department’s FY 2014 annual report:

In 2013-14 the **Speech Communication Program** continued a number of assessment initiatives to collect data to measure achievement of student outcomes. The program’s assessment efforts occurred in three primary areas: 1) the majors offered within the program; 2) the LEP communication requirement SPCH 110 Essentials of Speaking and Listening; and 3) the College Now Program.

1. Program Assessment of Majors: The assessment plans for the four majors offered by the program are available on the T-drive for access. The primary means of gathering assessment data is through the Senior Seminar Course through a variety of instruments and assignments. They are as follows:
   1. Senior Portfolios: In the Senior Seminar course, students are required to compile a portfolio of their work throughout their years of study. This portfolio is reviewed by the instructor of the course and assessed on a Credit/No Credit basis. All students who completed the course this year (four were given incompletes because they will not finish until December 2014) earned credit on this measure.
   2. Senior Presentations: In the Senior Seminar course all students are required to do a 10 minute oral presentation of their choosing and are evaluated by a jury of three faculty members using a standard evaluation form that corresponds with the Program’s LEP oral communication rubric. In order to achieve credit on this required assignment, they must get a satisfactory evaluation from two of the three reviewers. In the event that a student does not receive a satisfactory assessment, the student is informed of what aspects were deficient and is required to repeat the presentation. This year four (4) students were assessed as unsatisfactory through this process and were therefore required to repeat their performances after correcting their weaknesses. Following the repeat, all students in the course were assessed as satisfactory.
   3. Senior Project Poster Sessions: As a requirement of the course all students must complete an original and creative project and present the findings/outcome of that project to the faculty and other students in a posters session format. Each student’s poster and presentation is evaluated by at least three faculty members in the program and must receive a satisfactory rating from at least two faculty members in order to be assessed as meeting programmatic competencies. This year 17 of the 18 students were assessed as meeting minimum competencies. The remaining student was required to address deficiencies in his project and subsequently passed.
   4. Senior Exit Surveys: Students in the Senior Seminar course complete senior exit surveys to assess their perceptions of the program, faculty, curriculum and their readiness for a career. The survey gathers both open-ended responses from students and objective evaluations based on a 7-point likert-type scale. The results of this survey indicate a general satisfaction with the programmatic offerings and a confidence that the program has prepared them for their chosen career. The open-ended comments indicated a desire to have more public relations courses, the value of co-curricular activities and a general appreciation for their required coursework.

This year, at the instructor’s (Dr. Hope) discretion, the surveys were distributed via e-mail and students were asked to return them to the departmental secretary either in person or via e-mail to preserve anonymity. This method of administration proved problematic and resulted in a poor response rate. At the preparation of this report, only 8 of the 18 students in the course had turned in a completed survey. A summary of the surveys would be included in this report, but continued efforts are underway to get more of the surveys completed.

e. Analysis of Data and possible Action: The chart below is a summary of the assessment data, analysis and possible program action as a result of assessment.

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| **Assessment** | **Results** | **Analysis of Data** | **Program Action** |
| **8-10 minute performance Presentation** | Of the 18 students in the class, 14 achieved a minimum of at least a lower level “Advanced” on the standard oral communication rubric. Only four were required to repeat after addressing deficiencies. They all passed on the redo. | Curriculum is preparing students with sound instruction in oral communication skills. Deficiencies were primarily related to delivery and preparation components (practice, rehearsal, etc.) | No change needed at this time. |
| **Portfolio** | 14 students successfully completed the portfolio and accompanying presentation. 4 of the students were given incompletes as they will not complete all the required coursework until the end of Fall 2014. | 1. Students are demonstrating development of key outcomes.  2. The compilation of the portfolio seems problematic in that physical copies of work are difficult to store consistently.  3. Students are not seeing the necessity of creating and maintaining a portfolio. | 1. Move to completely electronic portfolios in the future. Explore online portfolio management systems (cost involved).  2. Splitting the Senior Seminar course into two courses: a 2 cr. senior course and a 1 cr. sophomore course to introduce portfolio creation and it’s importance earlier in the curriculum will help to address this.  3. Consider redesign of portfolio components so that they are more pragmatic and focused toward job searching/employment. |
| **Senior Project and Poster Session** | 17/18 students successfully completed the project and presentation. One student was found deficient and was asked to increase the rigor of his project. Some students struggled with securing a topic and many had problems with accessing scholarly research resources to complete their projects. | 1. Students are lacking some skills in journal and scholarly publication access.  2. Some students lack initiative to choose and focus a subject of study independently. | 1. Creation of a 1 cr. sophomore seminar course to provide basic information literacy instruction regarding scholarly publications in the discipline.  2. Require sophomore seminar students attend and critique the senior portfolio presentations so they have models of sound subject choice and project focus. |
| **Exit Survey** | Raw Data from these surveys has not yet been compiled. To date, only 8 of the 18 students have returned a survey. | Distribution of the survey via email after the course was nearly over is not an effective means of administration. It results in inadequate response rates. | As this course rotates among the faculty of the program, it is important to make sure the survey is administered in a consistent way. In prior years the survey was completed on D2L and in class. These methods ensured 100% response rates. These methods need to be used consistently. This year the instructor had not taught the course before and neglected to remember the exit survey component of the course until it was nearly too late to administer it. |

1. LEP/SPCH 110 Essentials of Speaking and Listening Assessment: The program has a comprehensive plan for assessing the LEP offering SPCH 110 Essentials of Speaking and Listening. This year, the program gathered data through a variety of measures to assess whether competencies are being met in this course.
   1. Course Exit Surveys: Continuing with a pilot project that was conducted in the Spring of 2012, the program completed course exit surveys in all sections of the course in the Fall of 2012 and the Spring of 2013. The surveys were a means of ascertaining the consistency of course requirement delivery and student perception of the course meeting its competencies. The first 6 items on the survey were questions to ascertain if assignment and other requirements were present in each section. In both Fall and Spring, data from these items supported confirmed all sections of the course had fulfilled the course assignment requirements. A statistical summary and means of the remaining items, designed to gauge student perceptions of course outcomes, appear below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fall 2013 SPCH 110 Student Exit Survey Responses (Count=142)** | | | | | | | |
|  | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **No Opinion** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | **Blank** | **Mean** |
| Assigned Value for mean: | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |  |  |
| 7. I feel the attendance policy for this course was handled fairly. | **76** | 36 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 1.55 |
| 8. In this course I developed critical thinking skills. | 43 | **65** | 24 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 2.08 |
| 9. This course improved my ability to select an effective topic for a speech. | 54 | **59** | 17 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 1.74 |
| 10. In this course I learned how to effectively organize a speech. | **78** | 47 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 1.66 |
| 11. This course improved my research abilities. | 46 | **50** | 32 | 11 | 3 | 0 | 2.11 |
| 12. In this course I developed effective critical listening skills. | **46** | 42 | 26 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 1.70 |
| 13. This course taught me how to analyze the audience and occasion of a speech. | **62** | 55 | 17 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1.71 |
| 14. As a result of this course, my delivery skills improved. | **63** | 58 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1.71 |
| 15. The textbook used in this class was helpful in meeting the objectives of this class. | 35 | **49** | 35 | 16 | 7 | 0 | 2.37 |
| 16. As a result of this course, I am a more confident speaker. | **51** | 48 | 26 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 1.98 |
| 17. This course was a worthwhile part of my studies at SMSU. | **57** | 45 | 22 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 1.96 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Spring 2014 SPCH 110 Student Exit Survey Responses (Count=131)\*** | | | | | | | |
|  | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **No Opinion** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | **Blank** | **Mean** |
| Assigned Value (for means) | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | - |  |
| 7. I feel the attendance policy for this course was handled fairly. | **89** | 27 | 12 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1.45 |
| 8. In this course I developed critical thinking skills. | 51 | **62** | 14 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1.77 |
| 9. This course improved my ability to select an effective topic for a speech. | **67** | 49 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1.65 |
| 10. In this course I learned how to effectively organize a speech. | **86** | 38 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1.41 |
| 11. This course improved my research abilities. | **48** | 55 | 22 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1.89 |
| 12. In this course I developed effective critical listening skills. | **55** | **58** | 15 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1.72 |
| 13. This course taught me how to analyze the audience and occasion of a speech. | **59** | 64 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.60 |
| 14. As a result of this course, my delivery skills improved. | **70** | 48 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1.61 |
| 15. The textbook used in this class was helpful in meeting the objectives of this class. | 49 | **48** | 22 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1.99 |
| 16. As a result of this course, I am a more confident speaker. | **61** | 41 | 21 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1.82 |
| 17. This course was a worthwhile part of my studies at SMSU. | **58** | 54 | 11 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1.75 |
| \*Two sections were missing at the time these statistics were compiled. | | | | | | | |

In addition to these 17 items, students were also given the opportunity to share open-ended responses to the program on two questions: 1) things they found particularly helpful and 2) ways to improve the course in future offerings. At the time of this report, these comments had not been compiled.

* 1. Pre- and Post-test: In both the Fall and Spring terms a pre-test and post-test was administered in all sections of SPCH 110 Essentials of Speaking and Listening. The test consisted of 25 multiple choice questions on a variety of communication topics relative to the competencies of the course.

Fall 2013:

In the Fall of 2013, 196 students completed the pre-test and 139 students completed the post-test. On the pre-test, the mean score on the exam was a 57.37% and on the post-test, the student mean improved to a 62.35%. While this increase is not significant, it does point out an overall increase in student knowledge of communication theory and practice.

Item analysis revealed several areas where students are increasing their command of core concepts. Some examples of items where student responses improved dramatically from pre- to post-test appear in the charts below. All data in the charts below are in percentages of responses for each item of the multiple choice question.

Some items that did not show improvement are areas of concern. The program will discuss these and consider changes in curriculum delivery, if needed. Some of these items include:

Poorer performance on this question may indicate that the course is not doing as good a job teaching the type of supporting materials and how to distinguish them. An additional explanation may be that the question is worded in a confusing manner. If this is not a result of poor wording of the question, this may be an area to address with targeted instruction.

Post-test performance on this question is disappointing because it actually went down after instruction. This may be due to the fact that over-emphasis is placed on the role of transitions in moving from main point to main point at the expense of transition use in other areas of the speech.

Minimal improvement on this item from pre- to post-test may indicate that not enough time is spent in the course on effective group communication and the value of conflict, when managed properly, in group deliberation.

After reviewing data from the pre- and post-tests, it appears that some questions may not be as valid as the program would like. The wording of some questions may have confused some students and this could have impacted validity on these items. These questions will be reviewed and reworded if necessary.

Spring 2014:

In the Spring of 2014, the pre-test was administered to 137 students and the mean on the instrument was a 57.69%. At the end of the course, the test was administered again, this time to 134 students. The mean on the post-test was a 66.75%. This was a significant increase in the mean scores, supporting the conclusion that students’ knowledge of basic communication concepts is enhanced as a result of completing the course.

An item analysis of the performance on specific questions reveals that same items noted on the Fall 2013 results deserve closer scrutiny. It also reinforces the notion that some of the questions may be worded in a way that is either confusing or not a valid measurement of the outcomes for the course. This will be explored before the instrument is used again.

* 1. Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA): One student outcome of the SPCH 110 Essentials of Speaking and Listening course is to equip students with skills to manage communication anxiety. In order to assess progress on this goal, the program is experimenting with the administration of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) in a pre- and post-test format. The PRCA-24 instrument is the most widely used measure of communication apprehension (CA). It consists of 24 scenario items to which students respond on a 5 point likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. It is highly reliable and has a very high validity. It yields sub scores in four contexts of communication: public speaking, dyadic (interpersonal) interaction, small groups, and large groups (meetings). Overall scores on the PRCA can range from 24 to 120 with an average of 65.5, based on a normed study of 40,000 college students. The higher the score the higher the individual’s level of CA. The program first piloted collection of assessment data in the Spring of 2013. Preliminary results supported the conclusion that completion of the course reduces communication apprehension in all four of the contextual areas as well as the overall CA score.

This academic year, the instrument was administered in as many sections of the SPCH 110 course as possible in both the Fall and Spring terms. The means of the overall CA score and sub scores of the respondents both pre- and post-course are presented in the charts below. In Fall 2013, 194 students completed the instrument at the beginning of the course and 137 completed it at the end of the course. The lower number is due to one section of the course (25 students) not completing the instrument and general student attrition in the course.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fall 2013:** Means of 194 (pre-) and 137 (post-course) scores of students enrolled in SPCH 110 on the PRCA | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Overall CA Score** | | **Small Group Subscore** | | **Meetings Subscore** | | **Interpersonal Subscore** | | | **Public Speaking Subscore** | |
| Pre- | Post- | Pre- | Post- | Pre- | Post- | Pre- | Post- | Pre- | | Post- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |
| 68.94 | 65.01 | 15.42 | 14.55 | 17.22 | 15.78 | 16.05 | 15.46 | 20.26 | | 19.22 |

The scores from Fall 2013 are represented graphically in the chart below. It illustrates that the overall CA rate and all the sub scores decreased significantly (from at or above the national average to below with the exception of the interpersonal sub score).

In the Spring of 2014, 136 students completed the instrument at the beginning of the course and 133 completed it at the end of the course. Results were similar to the Fall scores, indicating that student perceptions of their apprehension in a variety of communication situations decreased significantly as a result of completing the course.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Spring 2014:** Means of 136 (pre-) and 133 (post-course) scores of students enrolled in SPCH 110 on the PRCA | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Overall CA Score** | | **Small Group Subscore** | | **Meetings Subscore** | | **Interpersonal Subscore** | | | **Public Speaking Subscore** | |
| Pre- | Post- | Pre- | Post- | Pre- | Post- | Pre- | Post- | Pre- | | Post- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |
| 67.18 | 63.72 | 15.34 | 14.57 | 16.76 | 15.69 | 15.52 | 14.87 | 19.56 | | 18.59 |

These scores show a decrease in the overall CA score of over 3 points. In addition, all of the sub scores showed marked reductions in apprehension. While the reduction of the public speaking sub score in both the Fall and Spring terms was only a bit more than one point, the reduction did bring the composite score from a level above the national average before the course to below the national average after completion of the course. This suggests that the course does empower students with techniques for coping with their apprehension and channeling it in a positive way.

1. College Now SPCH 110 Essentials of Speaking and Listening Assessment: To ensure that the sections of SPCH 110 that are offered through the College Now program are meeting the competencies for the course as it’s delivered here on campus, a number of measures have been put into place.
   1. First, the program continues to maintain the Speech Communication resources page on the College Now website. This page provides valuable curriculum information, lesson plans, examples of speeches, etc. College Now instructors and supervisors are encouraged to submit materials for possible sharing on the page and some have done so.
   2. The College Now supervisors randomly review assignments and speeches from sites to ensure grading rigor and competencies are at the level required by the course in it’s traditional offering.
   3. The program administers the same Course Exit Survey in College Now sections of the course as is used in the on-campus sections of the class. This survey has been designed to gather data on course delivery consistency as well as student perceptions of course competencies. This survey was first made available in the Fall of 2012 through Survey Monkey on the College Now website. While there is no mechanism to require completion of the survey, supervisors are encouraged to have their students complete it at the end of the course. As of May 20, 2014, 93 responses had been received. It is believed that the majority of these are from the Fall 2013 term as many of the Spring term sections of the course had not yet concluded by this date. While the program has not yet reviewed the results, a composite of the data is included here.

Items 1-6 on the survey ascertained whether assignments and requirements of the course were completed. Of the 93 respondents, 100% reported that they had been required to deliver all the speeches required in the syllabus for the course. In addition, 100% reported that they were required to utilize a visual aid in one of their speeches. One (1) student responded “NO” to question #4 “In this course I was given the opportunity to participate in at least one informative group presentation.” When students responded “NO” they were asked to provide an explanation in an additional item but this student did not provide an explanation. Two (2) students responded “NO” to question #6 “In this class, for the speeches delivered with notes, I was required to limit myself to not more than two 3x5 notecards with limited notes written on one side only. The explanation these students provided included the following:

* + - *“We had notes available for our impromptu speech with no limitations whatsoever.”*
    - *“Our instructor let us use outlines on our group and extempt speeches”*

These responses are cause for some concern and will warrant investigation as to instructor practices and how well the logistic requirements of the syllabus and curriculum are being met.

From the student perception questions, the following data was collected:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2013-14 SPCH 110 College Now Student Exit Survey Responses (Count=93)** | | | | | | |
|  | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **No Opinion** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | **Mean** |
| Assigned value for means: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| 7. I feel the attendance policy for this course was handled fairly. | **64.5%**  **(60)** | 33.3%  (31) | 1.1%  (1) | 0%  (0) | 1.1%  (1) | 1.40 |
| 8. In this course I developed critical thinking skills. | 51.61%  (48) | **31.18%**  **(29)** | 9.68%  (**9**) | 4.30%  (4) | 3.23%  (3) | 1.76 |
| 9. This course improved my ability to select an effective topic for a speech. | **56.99%**  **(**53**)** | 34.41%  (**32**) | 5.38%  (5) | 2.15%  (2) | 1.1%  (1) | 1.56 |
| 10. In this course I learned how to effectively organize a speech. | **63.04%**  **(58)** | 28.26%  (26) | 6.52%  (6) | 1.1%  (1) | 1.1%  (1) | 1.47 |
| 11. This course improved my research abilities. | **51.61%**  **(48)** | 36.56%  (34) | 9.2%  (7) | 2.15%  (2) | 2.15%  (2) | 1.67 |
| 12. In this course I developed effective critical listening skills. | 47.31%  (44) | **35.48%**  **(33)** | 10.75%  (10) | 5.38%  (5) | 1.1%  (1) | 1.77 |
| 13. This course taught me how to analyze the audience and occasion of a speech. | 52.69%  (49) | **35.48%**  **(33)** | 8.60%  (8) | 2.15%  (2) | 1.1%  (1) | 1.63 |
| 14. As a result of this course, my delivery skills improved. | **62.37%**  **(58)** | 29.03%  (27) | 4.30%  (4) | 2.15%  (2) | 2.15%  (2) | 1.52 |
| 15. The textbook used in this class was helpful in meeting the objectives of this class. | **35.48%**  **(33)** | 32.26%  (30) | 19.35%  (18) | 4.30%  (4) | 8.60%  (8) | 2.18 |
| 16. As a result of this course, I am a more confident speaker. | **65.22%**  **(60)** | 20.65%  (19) | 6.52%  (6) | 6.52%  (6) | 1.1%  (1) | 1.46 |
| 17. This course was a worthwhile part of my studies at SMSU. | **58.06%**  **(54)** | 24.73%  (23) | 8.60%  (8) | 1.3%  (2) | 6.52%  (6) | 1.74 |

This data reveals that the majority of student perceived that the student outcomes of the course had been met by the design and delivery of the course. Not surprisingly, the students expressed dissatisfaction with the textbook and its appropriateness for the course. Textbooks are frequently rated as low on surveys such as this. When compared with data collected in on-campus sections of the class, the similarities suggest that the students in the high school classroom are getting a similar experience to those in the university one. This graph compares means from the College Now surveys with those of on campus surveys from Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 combined. Note that the lower the score (or bar in the graph), the more favorable a student perception.

Most of the item means are very similar between on-campus and College Now sections with a couple of exceptions.

Those that have a larger discrepancy, such as item #11 and #16 may be due to contextual factors. Item #11 refers to how students perceived the course helping them to improve their research abilities. The on campus students’ perceptions on this are much lower than the College Now students. This may be due to higher amount of contact hours that the high school instructors have that allows them to be more comprehensive with their research instruction. This does suggest an investigation of how we teach research skills in the on campus sections may need to be redesigned. Item #16 asks for students’ perceptions on whether or not they are a more confident speaker as a result of this course. Once again, College Now students tended to agree more strongly with this statement. This might suggest that the College Now classroom, being situated in the high school and made up of long-term cohorts of students, may provide a more comfortable atmosphere for coping with communication anxiety. The additional contact hours and more opportunities for speaking exercises may also contribute to this perception.

Another item in the comparison is also worthy of note. Item #12 asked students to respond to the statement, “*In this course I developed effective critical listening skills.”*  This was the only item where the on-campus students’ mean was lower (more favorable) than the College Now students’ mean. This may suggest that the on-campus sections of the course are doing a better job in meeting the critical listening outcomes of the class. It may suggest a need for a more concerted effort and concentration on the listening aspects of the course in the College Now offerings.

With respect to the open-ended responses, 66 of the 93 College Now students responded to the question “What aspects of the course did you find particularly helpful?” and 54 of the students responded to the question “What aspects of the course could be improved upon future offerings? A complete list of the open-ended responses is available upon request. The program had no time to analyze these responses to drawn any conclusions.

* 1. Future Assessment Plans for College Now are Problematic: As time and logistics permit, the program would like to do further data collection in College Now sections that could be correlated with on-campus assessment efforts. These might include a pre-test and post-test, pre- and post-administration of the PRCA in the course and evaluations of student work. Unfortunately, time and load has not permitted this data collection in the past and a new compensation model for College Now has increased load for this supervision even more. It is unlikely that there will be sufficient time for collection of additional assessment data in the future if compensation is not restored. The program fears that even current data collection and analysis will have to be sacrificed due to the reduced compensation.

**Conclusions**

The AHA subcommittee for LEC Outcome 2: Communication reports assessment is occurring at varying degrees at SMSU. Some programs within the various departments have connected their assessment to approved student learning outcomes (SLOs). Some programs have an established assessment history for Outcome 2: Communication while others recently began their formal assessment. These observations were made based on information entered into a rubric created by the AHA subcommittee, Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) rubrics for oral and written communication, and the rubrics for oral and written communication approved by the Southwest Minnesota State University Faculty Association (SMSUFA). The programs noted above provided reflection on their assessments and outlined future revisions as necessary. Please see individual course assessments, support materials, and the various rubrics for documentation (T:\AHA\_Teams\2\_Communicate\_Effectively).