

COMMUNICATE

For the 2013-2014 academic year, the Assessment for Improvement Committee selected the Communicate outcome as a focus. Our primary emphasis was on oral communication, but we also spent some time on reading.

Rationale:

Over the last ten years, we have had a significant focus on writing, mainly through the LSFY program and our work with MALLA group. Rubrics have been developed and disseminated. Papers have been assessed. As recently as spring 2013, the Dean's Office sponsored a workshop featuring writing expert Paul Hanstedt of Roanoke College at which over 60 faculty participated. The AIC wanted to bring a similar focus to other dimensions of the outcome.

Over the years, our alumni surveys have revealed that our graduates feel less prepared to publically present ideas than they do.

In the winter and spring of 2013, we asked all faculty supervising senior inquiry to evaluate the oral presentations of these project using the AAC& U Oral Communication Value Rubric. Ninety-nine students were evaluated from nine different departments. The results indicated that students were not reaching the capstone level in any of the dimensions.

What we did:

During the fall, 2013 faculty retreat, we hosted a session to discuss the oral communication abilities of our students. Twenty-seven faculty attended. At that session we shared the results of the spring 2013 senior presentation assessment, and asked faculty for their input. They indicated that they felt uncomfortable providing instruction in public speaking and that oral presentations are not taken seriously by students and consequently little effort is spent in preparation and practice.

The AIC then worked to refine the AAC&U rubric to better fit the needs of our students. The modified rubric and a corresponding grading rubric were circulated to faculty in the winter term.

The AIC also sponsored a faculty workshop in January 2014. The workshop featured experts on speaking and reading who worked with faculty on crafting assignments and assessments. Forty faculty and staff attended this session. Feedback indicated that participants found it helpful.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, the Reading Writing Center sponsored several help sessions for students who were preparing class presentations, and the Office of Student Life sponsored a series of "TED" talks to draw student attention to the importance of oral communication.

What has happened:

At the end of winter and spring terms of 2015, we again asked instructors to evaluate the oral presentations of their senior inquiry projects. In this instance, 64 students from 8 departments were assessed. Overall, we saw improvement in four of the five criteria on the AAC&U Oral Communication VALUE rubric.

Year	Organization	Lang./Credibility	Delivery	Support	Overall
2013	3.39	3.08	3.10	2.96	3.15
2015	3.36	3.31	3.39	3.28	3.34

What we have yet to do:

We need to continue developing and disseminating rubrics.

We need to find ways for faculty to share assignments and assessments.