TO: ECC Members  
FROM: Jackie Lauer-Glebov  
DATE: January 6, 2004  
RE: Data on public speaking at Carleton

The data in Steve Davis’ attached report comes from surveys administered by Institutional Research (ACE Freshman survey, CSEQ, Senior Survey). We have done both the Freshman survey and the Senior Survey since and could add to the data points included in this report. Additionally, an alumni survey administered in 2001 to the Classes of 1979, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1989, and 1990 asks respondents the importance of and Carleton’s contribution to their ability to “communicate well orally.”

There are some very important limitations to the information we have on public speaking at Carleton. One, we have no student performance data (all our current data is self-reported). Two, the data we do have comes from a single question on a survey. Three, we have no baseline data and no standards for achievement.

As the committee considers the charge to give the public speaking sub-committee, there are two questions that should be kept in mind:

1. Are we interested in student performance or in student confidence or both?
2. What is our criteria for determining if students “know enough” about public speaking?
Institutional Background

In the spring of 1987, in response to an appeal by the CSA senate, the EPC undertook to study how the college might address students' perceived inadequacies in public speaking. By that fall, Frank Morral had formulated a proposal that included:

- Employing a consultant in speech and communication;
- Convening a meeting of Departmental Chairs to examine current practices;
- Creating a course in public speaking to be offered each year;
- Adapting present courses, creating new mini-courses to incorporate presentations.

By 1995, several of these proposals had been partially implemented. A five-week course on "The Arts of Oral Presentation" was taught annually in the English Department. Comps presentations more frequently involved an oral component. The goal of facility in public speaking was incorporated into the June 1995 "Plan for Assessment of Student Academic Learning," which envisioned continued progress: "The next step is to make sure that opportunities and some coaching are widely available through the curriculum so that no student will miss them entirely."

In 1997, the ECC reviewed this goal as part of the accreditation process. A report to the ECC noted that while the opportunities for public speaking had increased substantially in the last decade, there were still relatively few opportunities for formal presentations, with instruction, feedback, and the opportunity to repeat. The report further noted alumni dissatisfaction in the preparation they had received in this area.

The report made the following recommendations, which largely duplicated the recommendations of the 1995 Plan:

- Chairs should review current opportunities for public speaking in their departments.
- Instructors of freshman courses should be asked to include formal public presentations with formal evaluation, and the opportunity for repeats.
- Faculty should be asked to be explicit in their expectations, provide formal evaluation and the opportunity for repeats.
- Other public speaking training and opportunities should be encouraged and supported, including Career Center sessions and various student groups.
- The LTC should continue to provide source materials and occasional workshops.
- IR should report to the ECC the extent to which recent alumni surveys show improvement in this area.

The public speaking goal will be up for assessment in the academic year 2003-04.
Assessment of Current Abilities and Gains.

Carleton students enter college with little confidence in their ability to speak in public. Over the course of four years, they report increasing ability. However, the increases are not high relative to other focus areas. There has been little change over the last decade in self-reported gains. Carleton students do not stand out in reported abilities upon entering and gains at graduation when compared to students at similar institutions.

Self-Reported Abilities of Entering Students, 2001

In 2001, entering students had little confidence in their ability to speak in public (Graph 1). They rate their ability in this area near the bottom.

Gains Within One Class: The Class of 2001

Students reported gains in this area, but not comparable to the gains made in other areas. On the CSEQ, Carleton students reported average gains in speaking (Graph 2). Gains rise significantly and consistently by class (Graph 3). On the Senior Survey too, seniors reported average gains (Graph 4). A comparison of the freshman survey and senior survey results for the same group of students (Graph 5) also suggests improvement over four years. Divisional differences are not very significant (Graph 6). Arts/Literature and Math/Science seniors report greater gains than Humanities and Social Science seniors.

Change over Time

The self-assessed ability of entering students shows no clear trend over the last 10 years. It has ranged from a high of around 48% (who ranked themselves “Above Average” or “Top Ten Percent”) in the first assessment (1992) and again in 1999-2000 (Graph 2), to a low of 38% in 1998 (Graph 1). In 2001, the level has dropped down to around 45%. Reported gains for seniors in the class of ‘01 are higher than the class of ‘98, but not significantly(Graph 1a).

Comparison with Other Institutions

Carleton seniors report the same abilities in oral communication as do their counterparts at three other COFHE schools (Graph 7). The self-reported ability level of entering students is comparable to Private Non-Sectarian Highly Selective Schools, but below that of other COFHE Co-ed schools (Graph 8).
Where Students Currently Gain and Demonstrate Competence in Public Speaking

The Comps Presentation

In 2001-2002, 43% of all seniors were in departments that required an oral presentation, primarily in the Math/Science Division (Graph 9). These presentations provide an opportunity to demonstrate competency in public speaking. They are not evaluated as presentations, and are rarely used as a basis for evaluating the comps itself.

In the spring of 2001, I surveyed seniors about the role of presentation in their comps. 81 students (about 19%) responded. About 20% said that they lacked or were uncertain that they had the skills needed to make a comps presentation. Students reported gaining competence in public speaking in a variety of ways (Graph 10).

Classroom Presentations

Classroom presentations are rarely if ever evaluated as presentations; there are few opportunities for the structured feedback and practice that leads to competence. Quality of presentations can be low.

Forensics

Carleton has three forensics organizations: Carleton Forensics Society (CFS: speech and debate), Mock Trial, and Model UN. These are important sites for practicing presentation skills. Several dozen students are involved in these organizations each year. The CFS and Mock Trial have staffed the SpeakEasy the last two years, a new support service for oral presentations.

Course in Major

Some of these courses, e.g. “Presentations Skills in Physics”, focus on presentation skills; others incorporate significant attention to presentation skills within a junior or senior seminar.

Research Presentation

Many students involved with Mellon or other research fellowships are required to make public presentations of their research findings. Professor Williams collaborates with The SpeakEasy to create practice opportunities for his Mellon Fellows.

Arts of Oral Presentation

The English Department offers two 5-week sections of this course each year.
Conclusion

Carleton College made significant gains in the 90s with the addition of a course in public speaking, increased opportunities for oral presentations, and the addition of a new support service: The SpeakEasy. Nonetheless, we could greatly strengthen Goal 2 of our assessment plan—"help students develop their ability to speak . . . effectively in English"—by enhancing our current opportunities and strengths:

- Increase the number of departments outside of the Math/Science division that make a public presentation part of the comps process;
- Increase the prevalence of classroom presentations;
- Enhance the quality and value of classroom presentations by building in rehearsal, feedback, and assessment;
- Support those extracurricular activities that develop presentation skills, in particular speech/debate, and theater/music;
- Develop more courses within majors that focus on communication within the major (like the Physics course "Presentation Skills in Physics);
- Build into the student research and fellowship award process some attention to the presentation skills that will enhance their capstone research presentations.

Most of these recommendations have been made before: in 1997, 1995, and 1987. Lacking has been a mechanism and structure for implementing these recommendations. I believe that there are grant-funded opportunities for providing this mechanism and structure. A grant-funded program should support, at a minimum, the following components:

- A teacher/consultant with expertise in rhetoric and oral communication across the curriculum;
- Technical and financial support for faculty members incorporating oral presentations;
- Logical and financial support to individual departments which make oral presentation a part of the comps process;
- Support for Carleton's forensics teams.
Self-Assessments Made by Carleton New Students
At the Point of Entry, 1992 through 2001

Year of Enrollment

Percent "Above Average" or "Top 10 Percent"
Senior Survey 2001:
Self-Reported Gains
Carleton Seniors, 1998 vs. 2001

Average Reported Degree to which Skill was Enhanced by Undergraduate Education

Think analytically and logically
Learn on my own
Write effectively
Understand myself
Synthesize and integrate info
Perform complex projects
Create original ideas/solutions
Broad knowledge in arts and sciences
Evaluate courses of action
Communicate effectively
Accomplish goals
Self-esteem/confidence
Lead and manage people
Awareness of social problems
Function as team member
Identify ethical issues
Appreciate the arts
Use quantitative tools
Understand scientific process
Read or speak foreign language
Understand role of science
Relate well to different races, nations, religions

Carleton Seniors, 2001
Carleton Seniors, 1998
College Student Experiences Questionnaire, 2001

Selected data on student self-reported gains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Gain</th>
<th>Average Gain *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad general education</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning on one's own</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing ideas</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding myself</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills for professional career</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking analytically</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing effectively</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values &amp; ethical standards</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting to change</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of other philosophies</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting along with others</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking effectively</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using computers/info. tech</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career information</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functioning as a team member</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about world</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding history</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing quantitative problems</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of art/music/drama</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance with literature</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding science</td>
<td>2.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding new technology</td>
<td>2.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal health habits &amp; fitness</td>
<td>2.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consequences of science, tech.</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational preparation</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Highest = 4.0; Lowest = 1.0

1. Speaking effectively vaerges a self-reported gain of about 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.
2. It appears to be an area where students report roughly average, or median gains, perhaps a bit above the average. Not our area with the greatest self-reported gains, but neither is it at the low end.
Average Gains, By Class Year

- Freshman: 3.09
- Sophomore: 3.17
- Junior: 3.22
- Senior: 3.34

Average Gain
Senior Survey 2001:
Self-Assessment of Abilities
**Freshman Survey 1997 and Senior Survey 2001:**
Self-Assessment of Abilities
(Based on Only Those with Responses Both as Freshmen and as Seniors)
Senior Survey 2001:
Self-Reported Gains by Division of Major (contd.)

[Bar chart showing self-reported gains for different skills and divisions.]

- Arts and Lit.
- Humanities
- Social Sciences
- Math and Sciences
Student Self-Assessment at the Point of Entry: "Public Speaking"
Carleton New Students and Averages for Comparison Schools
1992 through 2001

Percent "Above Average" or "Top 10 Percent"

Year of Enrollment

- Carleton
- COFHE Co-ed Colleges
- Priv Non-Sect V Hi Sel

Office of Institutional Research
CIRP-Self-Ratings.xls, PublicSpeaking1
5/27/2002
Divisions In Which Students are Required to Make Comps Presentations

- AL: 6%
- Hum: 6%
- SS: 10%
- M/S: 21%
- Not required: 57%

N=503
Where Students Acquire Comps Presentation Skills

- Classroom Presentations: 8%
- Forensics: 7%
- High School: 4%
- Course in Major: 11%
- Research Presentation: 14%
- Theater/Music: 11%
- Arts of Oral Presentation: 8%
- Work/Internship: 4%
DATE: May 23, 1997

TO: Dean Shelby Boardman and Members of ECC

FROM: Brian Etkin and Diethelm Prowe

RE: Assessment of public speaking at Carleton

There has been a good deal of concern over the years, voiced especially by former and present students, that Carleton students are not getting sufficient training in public speaking and/or opportunities for public speaking in classes. In response to this concern, the Educational Policy Committee, the predecessor of ECC, not only issued a major appeal to faculty to stress public speaking in their classes and senior comprehensives, but also took several concrete steps such as the creation of a couple of public speaking courses (at first taught by a visiting professor), offering a workshop for faculty (run by a visiting expert), and asking all departments to discuss ways to include public speaking units in their courses. The 1995 Assessment document ("A Plan for Assessment of Student Academic Learning," June 1995) echoed this policy by assuring the continuation of four sections of a course on oral presentation under the auspices of the English Department (taught recently by Frank Morral and Deborah Appleman) and promising: "The next step is to make sure that opportunities and some coaching are widely available throughout the curriculum so that no student will miss them entirely. Over the next few years, we will proceed by encouraging the faculty to incorporate oral presentation elements into courses, by offering mini-workshops through the Learning and Teaching Center, and by disseminating information about methods used successfully in some departments so that others can emulate them." (p. 4)

Concrete steps have been taken by the Administration and departments to meet these commitments. There is no question, as the attached documentation shows, that public speaking opportunities in Carleton courses have increased substantially since the Educational Policy Committee initiative a decade ago. Parallel increased efforts by the Career Center have also yielded impressive results (see documentation). Interestingly, Carleton students have also scored major successes in extra-curricular speaking ventures through the Speech and Debate team (re-founded about eight years ago) and the Model UN competition most recently. New groups like the incipient mock trial team may also reflect an increased awareness of public speaking in the student community. Finally, Carleton’s governance system and high level of extra-curricular involvement continue to offer rich opportunities for development of oratory skills. Yet it is equally clear that public speaking remains a weak spot in the Carleton curriculum and in the skills that our typical graduate takes with him/her into the “real world.”

In order to take stock of how we are doing on this issue, we spoke with key faculty and administrators involved in the issue, mainly Frank Morral (LTC and teacher of speech courses), David Davis-Van Atta (Institutional Research Director), and Ann Ness (Career Center). For the primary survey on the practical impact and effectiveness of public speaking in the curriculum, we went to the consumers through the Student Departmental Advisors, who are as broadly in touch with the majors in their departments as anyone. We asked them the following questions specifically regarding the quantity and quality of public speaking opportunities: How well are we doing at this point, in your view and in the view of fellow students in your department? How satisfied are you with the results? What improvements do you and your fellow students in your department suggest? What kinds of speaking opportunities, and chances to have speaking critiqued and/or evaluated formally should there be in your department and beyond? Where would this best be done - in freshman courses, senior seminars, comprehensives or elsewhere?

We had an excellent response rate and generally very thoughtful comments. A strong consensus emerged on two basic points: (1) There are a number of opportunities for formal oral presentation in all departments (the particular response we received from Psychology did not tell us, but other information does); and (2) there is still significant need for improvement in all departments, except perhaps in Biology and Physics, which have remarkably complete programs in place. Oral presentations are most common as part of senior comprehensives across the disciplines and, somewhat less so, in advanced research seminars. A number of
Freshman seminars also include brief presentations, but not as consistently as at the senior level. Formal evaluation on the quality of oral delivery per se is still not common. Similarly opportunities for a second try in the same setting are rare; these would encourage students to apply suggestions from the first presentation.

These survey results as well as earlier conversations with Morral, Ness, and Davis-Van Atta brought us to the following conclusions. We should mention that the Institutional Research Office's alum surveys, which identified preparation in public speaking as the main weak spot in Carleton's educational program, do not yet reflect the major improvements of the last years.

(1) While opportunities for formal presentations in the Carleton curriculum have grown very significantly in recent years, public speaking has not yet become as firm and conscious a part of the educational expectations and "culture" as other critical basic skills like writing, research, and analytical thinking.

(2) Generally freshmen and sophomores get fewer opportunities for public speaking than do juniors and especially seniors in advanced seminars, comprehensives, and in Career Center workshops (which are also open to underclassmen).

(3) Formal evaluation, feedback, and specific pointers on techniques of effective oral presentation are still quite rare. This means that especially the weaker speakers may never become aware of their particular problems and not have a realistic chance to improve.

(4) Like re-writes in writing, opportunities for more than one oral presentation in the same course setting are invaluable. There are still only very few such opportunities.

We therefore recommend the following ECC action:

(1) In lieu of a formal speech requirement, ECC asks the Dean of the College ask the chairs of all departments and studies programs to review with faculty and DCCs (or equivalent) in their departments whether the public speaking opportunities are adequate and effective, and how they might be expanded and improved. Departments should pay special attention to oral presentations in freshman courses and to formal feedback to students. Such an initiative by the Dean should be repeated at regular intervals, perhaps every four to five years. It should also remain a part of department reviews.

(2) Instructors of freshman courses, especially freshman seminars, should be asked to include formal public presentations with formal evaluation and opportunities for second presentations in the same setting.

(3) Faculty should generally be asked to be explicit in their expectations for formal speaking and to provide students with formal evaluations afterwards, followed by opportunities for second presentations in the same setting whenever possible.

(4) Other public speaking training and opportunities should be encouraged and supported, including the Career Center sessions and the various student groups that stress public presentation—to strengthen the place of public speaking in Carleton's culture.

(5) The Learning and Teaching Center has been providing source materials and occasional workshops in this area. These should continue to be available.

(6) At the next opportunity, the Office of Institutional Research should report to ECC to what extent recent alumni surveys are showing an improvement in this area of the Carleton curriculum.

Attachments:
Survey of Student Departmental Advisors
Career Center Report