

## **Oral Communication: Emerging**

### *Define and operationalize the Oral Communication Competency at BYU-H*

The Oral Communication Competency Group at BYU-H was formed in the Fall of 2015. It was formed by first appointing a faculty member to be the lead of this group and then making a university wide announcement for anyone that wanted to be involved. A group of five faculty members was ultimately formed from four different disciplines across campus to create a committee. In order to help train the newly appointed committee to perform the appropriate tasks assigned to them, the University provided support and funding for the faculty lead to attend multiple WASC educational programs (i.e. The Big Five Addressing Core Competencies and Assessment 201: Advanced Topics in Assessment).

A previous oral communication rubric for BYU-H was found on file. The committee reviewed this rubric along with other oral communication/presentation rubrics from across campus (i.e. course rubrics, and the campus speech center rubric), examples from WASC, and others found online (e.g., Association of American Colleges and Universities). After reviewing these documents, the previous oral communication rubric on file was revised.

The revised rubric continued to be improved as the committee met together weekly. This was done while viewing previously recorded student oral presentations, live presentations, and publically available presentations. As the rubric was firmly established, the committee evaluated previously recorded student oral presentations to test the committee's inter-rater reliability. The inter-rater reliability between raters was determined acceptable by the committee with a significant Average Measures Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) of .877 with a 95% confidence interval from .806 to .921,  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 78$ .

In order to collect artifacts for students at or near graduation, a university wide announcement was sent from the University's Academic Vice President, John Bell. This announcement invited faculty members to allow the institution's assessment and accreditation team to come into their classes and record student presentations. Priority recordings were made for courses at the sophomore level (associate) and senior level (bachelor).

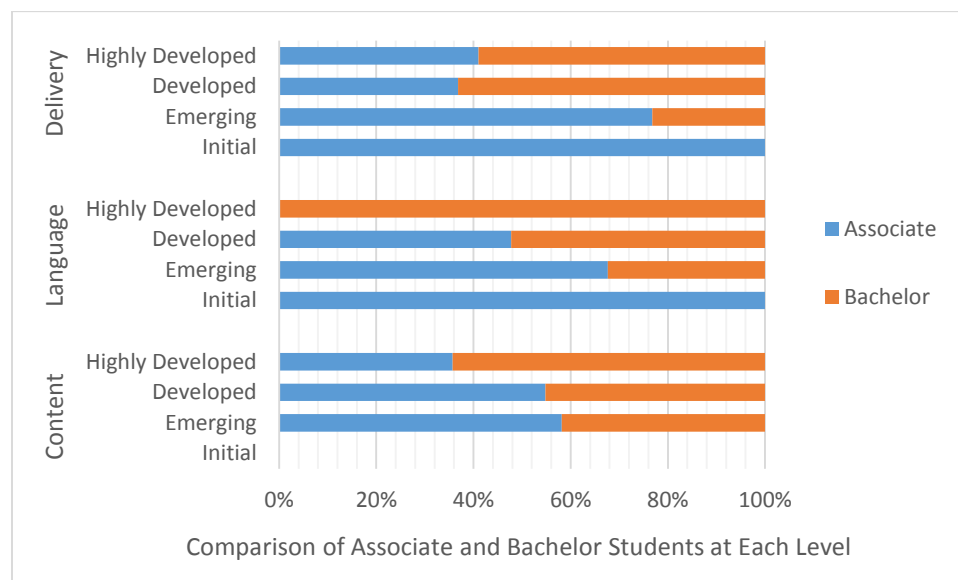
#### *Direct evidence of student learning*

Direct evidence of student learning was measured by the evaluation of recorded oral presentations (N = 98). The oral presentations were evaluated in three sections according to the rubric (i.e. Content, Language Use, and Delivery). Each section used a four point scale (1 = Initial, 2 = Emerging, 3 = Developed, 4 = Highly Developed). Nearly all evaluations (275 out of 294, 94%) received the same score or were within one point (94%) and the average absolute difference in rating by the raters was less than one.

Approximately 86% of associate level students evaluated for their content in the oral communication were rated at *developed* (66%) or *highly developed* (20%). Approximately 90% of near bachelor level students were rated at *developed* (54%) or *highly developed* (35%), demonstrating a trend for students to move from *developed* to *highly developed* between their sophomore and senior years in ability to present content.

While a little over one third (39%) of associate level students evaluated for their language use in oral communication were *initial* (2%) or *emerging* (37%), almost two-thirds were rated at *developed* (61%). Approximately 83% of near bachelor level students were rated at *developed* (67%) or *highly developed* (16%). This demonstrates that a significantly larger portion of near bachelor level students could communicate a higher level language use in oral communication compared to associate level students ( $p = .010$ ).

Just over half of the associate level students were evaluated as *developed* (44%) or *highly developed* (7%) for the delivery component of their oral communication evaluation. Near bachelor level students that were evaluated as *developed* (75%) or *highly developed* (11%) totaled 86%. A significantly higher portion of near bachelor level students were evaluated higher, demonstrating evidence of student learning between associate and near bachelor levels ( $p = .002$ ). See Figure 1 for side by side comparisons between associate level and near bachelor level percentages.



### *Indirect evidence of student learning*

Indirect evidence of oral communication was measured using three evaluations (i.e. Alumni Questionnaire-AQ, 2014 Graduate Student Survey of Core Competencies-GSS, and the 2013 National Survey of Student Engagement -NSSE).

Responses from the AQ evaluation (N=288) demonstrated 94% of alumni could “communicate effectively in both written and oral form, using integrity, good logic and appropriate evidence” at a *Good* (18%), *Very Good* (39%), or *Excellent* (37%) level. Levels of performance were quantified using a Likert scale from 1 *Very Poor* to 6 *Excellent*. Average

levels were similar for Males (5.10) and Females (5.00), Married (5.07) and Single (4.98), Returned Missionaries (5.09) and Non-Missionaries (4.96), and among the colleges of Math and Science (5.02), Language, Culture and Arts (5.11), Human Development (5.02), and Business, Computing and Government (5.03). Although not significant, the largest differences in self-reported oral communication scores trended among the type of student being domestic (4.98), international (5.04), and IWORK (5.38).

The GSS for core competencies indicated 93% of recent graduates self-reported being able to “communicate effectively in both written and oral form” at a *Good* (30%), *Very Good* (34%), or *Excellent* (29%) level.

The results from the NSSE included responses from seniors indicating 1 *Never*, 2 *Sometimes*, 3 *Often*, 4 *Very Often*. Ninety-nine percent of respondents indicated that during the current school year they ask questions or contribute to course discussion in other ways *Sometimes* (23%), *Often* (35%), or *Very Often* (41%). When asked about how often they give a course presentation, 96% of students reported *Sometimes* (29%), *Often* (37%), or *Very Often* (30%). Using the quantitative response scores, Non first-generation students reported asking questions or contributing to class discussion significantly more than First-generation students (3.29 compared to 3.00, respectively). Domestic (3.41) and Non-Iwork (3.21) students also reported asking questions or contributing to class discussion significantly more than their international (2.82) and Iwork (2.93) counterparts. When disaggregating ethnicity, White students (3.52) averaged the highest frequency of asking questions and contributing to course discussion while Pacific Islanders (2.76) and Asians (2.83) reported the lowest averages. Similarly, those from the Mainland scored highest (3.47) while those from the Pacific (2.83) and

Asia scored lowest (2.77). Finally, 62% of respondents recognized their knowledge, skills, and development to clearly and effectively speak had to do with their experience at BYU-H.

### *Responses to assessment findings and evaluations of process*

The evaluation process to collect direct evidence of oral communication helped to begin a culture of assessment on campus. All faculty who were interested were invited to participate in this process in at least two ways. First, they were invited to be a part of the oral committee assessment team and second, to allow the assessment team to record or submit recordings of class presentations. The acceptance of faculty to allow for recordings to take place was greater than the ability to record all presentations at some times. Thus, priority to record presentations was given to courses best representing at or near graduation for associate or bachelor levels. Overall, more than a dozen classes participated in recordings.

Several ideas to help improve the quality and quantity of recordings include 1) Have the presenter use a microphone to improve sound quality 2) Make more frequent recordings of presentations (e.g., every semester, rotate recordings through colleges, and instructors willing to record and upload recordings onto the university's learning management system-LMS) 3) Give direct feedback to the teachers from their own students' recordings 4) Increase availability and feasibility to record presentation (e.g., provide more equipment for recording, equip rooms throughout campus to make recording presentations easier and a standard).

The assessment findings indicated both direct and indirect evidence of oral communication success at BYU-H. This success was demonstrated through high percentages of developed and highly developed students in content, language use, and delivery of oral communication. However, among these areas of oral communication language use and delivery

scored lower than content. This indicates that students can present content, but more time could be spent teaching them specific language use and delivery skills to improve oral communication.

In addition, indirect evidence demonstrated almost all students self-reported participating in class discussions during their education and having a good or better ability to orally communicate effectively after graduation. However, because Pacific Island and Asian students scored the lowest on participation, special effort could be made in the classroom to improve the participation of these ethnicities. Reviewing the literature and conducting research by faculty and administration may help better understand best practices to improve participation for these specific cultures. An emphasis should also be made on improving the students' experience at BYU-H to help them recognize and apply the skills necessary to speak more clearly and effectively.

#### *Measurement of Oral Communication Competency at or near graduation*

Direct evidence of oral communication was obtained from evaluating recordings of student presentations in courses at or near the associate and bachelor levels. Higher scores from near bachelor level courses compared to associate level courses imply greater success in oral communication is obtained through continuing education through to a bachelor's degree while at BYU-H.

#### *Changes we have made in response to these data*

In order to improve the ability to gather a greater number of oral communication artifacts, more recording equipment has been purchased. In an attempt to improve oral communication at BYU-H, a new course on the university's LMS now houses all the documentation for oral communication. By making this information more available, it is anticipated to help grow the culture of performance and assessment for oral communication.