

Summary of Speaking Across the Curriculum Faculty Survey Responses, Fall 2003  
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A web survey of Speaking Across the Curriculum (SAC) Faculty was conducted during the Fall 2003 semester. The intent of this survey was to provide sound information that could help faculty begin to identify areas of student weakness and develop ways of addressing those weaknesses. The web survey was designed to align with the eight competencies covered by the National Communication Association's (NCA) Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation Form. Additional questions were added to determine the types of teaching strategies faculty members were employing in their classes. The complete response form is included in Appendix A. Summarized results of this study follow. The results will be sent to faculty respondents as well as other SI faculty with discussion pointing out the areas that need attention as well as instructional suggestions for helping students. The results will also be used in the next round of faculty development workshops with an emphasis on instructional strategies.

#### Faculty Sample

Thirty-five faculty members were asked to complete the survey. Twenty-five (71% response rate) faculty members, representing 7 departments, responded to the survey. Most of the responses came from faculty teaching introductory speaking courses.

#### Student Competencies

The survey covered eight general competency areas. Faculty members were asked to think of their "class as a whole" as they responded to each competency area. Response options were Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Excellent, and Not Applicable. Each point on the rubric had a well-defined descriptive anchor (see Appendix B). Results are provided in Table 1. In general, the faculty's appraisal of student competencies was positive, with 68 to 96 percent of respondents rating their students as at least satisfactory in each area covered by the rubric.

These results should not be seen as commenting on the quality of our graduating students. Most of the responding faculty members were referring to students near the beginning of their academic careers. As such, this information should be interpreted as providing insight into the areas where our students face their greatest challenges as they develop as speakers. Looking at the results in those terms, we identified the three areas (Thesis, Physical Behavior, and Vocal Variety) with the largest proportions of unsatisfactory ratings. These three areas will receive additional attention in faculty development materials and in the planning for the next round of faculty workshops. These results point to the need for faculty understanding oral communication principles and for faculty utilizing instructional strategies to combat the weaknesses.

Identified Competency Areas

Thirty-two percent of responding faculty members indicated that their students were unsatisfactory at communicating their thesis (Comp 2 – Thesis). Based on the rubric, unsatisfactory responses are those in which the speaker does not “communicate a clear and identifiable thesis/specific purpose” and where the audience “may have difficulty understanding within the opening few sentences of the speech precisely what the speech is about.” Training will include videotapes of student presentations, showing how a clear thesis is critical for audience members. Videotapes illustrating contrasts in thesis clarity will emphasize the importance. Discussion will follow on instructional strategies.

Twenty-four percent of faculty members indicated that their students exhibited inappropriate physical behavior (Comp8 – Physical Behavior) during presentations. The rubric describes these students as failing to use appropriate “posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and dress” to the extent that it distracts “the audience from the speaker’s message.” Showing videotapes of students exhibiting inappropriate physical behaviors will help faculty understand the impact of nonverbal messages to enhance or distract from the verbal message. Discussion will follow regarding instructional strategies.

Twenty percent of faculty members indicated that their students failed to show proper vocal variety (Comp6 – Vocal Variety) when speaking. A student with unsatisfactory vocal variety is described by the NCA rubric as having “frequent weakness in controlling and adapting rate, volume, pitch, etc.” Showing videotapes of students lacking vocal expressiveness will emphasize the importance of effective vocal expression to hold attention. Discussion will follow regarding instructional strategies.

Table 1  
Faculty Appraisals of Student Competency

Competency	Total #	--% Responding to Option--			
		1	2	3	NA
Comp1 – Topic	25	4	68	24	4
Comp2 – Thesis	25	32	52	12	4
Comp3 - Supporting Material	25	8	76	12	4
Comp4 – Organization	25	16	64	16	4
Comp5 – Language	25	12	56	28	4
Comp6 - Vocal Variety	25	20	68	12	
Comp7 – Pronunciation	25	8	76	16	
Comp8 - Physical Behavior	25	24	56	20	

1 = Unsatisfactory

2 = Satisfactory

3 = Excellent

### Open-Ended Responses

The online survey also provided faculty with the opportunity to provide brief descriptions of what they perceived to be the most common student weaknesses. The question may have been too general to elicit concrete responses, but faculty answers supported the conclusions drawn from the student competencies section summarized above. Most often, faculty described students having problems with thesis development, speech disfluencies, and body language. Other student problems were mentioned, but no consistent or meaningful theme could be discerned across responses.

### Strategies for Overcoming Weakness

Faculty members were given the opportunity to indicate the strategies they used for overcoming student weaknesses. Results of this section are provided in Table 2. These results illustrate the strengths of the Speaking Across the Curriculum classes. One-on-one instructional techniques (e.g., Speaking Center, Conferences) were employed more often than less personal approaches (e.g., Web Resources).

To utilize the strategies information further exploration may be required. Why were no strategies employed by all of the instructors? Do differences in approach reflect different pedagogical orientations of the instructors or something else? Even an informal discussion of these questions could prove informative to the SAC faculty.

Table 2  
Strategies for Overcoming Weaknesses

<u>Strategies</u>	<u>%</u>	
	<u>Total #</u>	<u>Using</u>
Speaking Center	25	64
Conferences	25	56
Coaching	25	56
Articulating Specific Goals	25	56
Peer Coaching	25	48
Videotaping	25	44
Practice Outside Class	25	40
Workshops	25	32
Assess Speaker by Video	25	24
Other	25	24
Assess Speaker Outside	25	20
Web Resources	25	4

## Appendix A

### Speaking Across the Curriculum Faculty

We appreciate your help. Your participation in this survey will help us strengthen the Speaking Across the Curriculum program by helping us identify common student weaknesses. Your responses are completely anonymous.

This survey is based on the National Communication Association's Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation Form. In responding to this survey, think about your class as a whole. How would you have rated the majority of your students using this tool? As you consider each competency, you can find a detailed description of how to apply the rating scale by clicking on the associated hyperlink. A new window will open with the description. Close that window when you are ready to return to the survey.

Competency	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent	NA
<a href="#">One</a> Chooses and narrows a topic appropriate for audience and occasion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Two</a> Communicates the thesis/specific purpose in a manner appropriate for audience and occasion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Three</a> Provides appropriate supporting material based on the audience and occasion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Four</a> Uses an organizational pattern appropriate to topic, audience, occasion and purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Five</a> Uses language that is appropriate to the audience, occasion and purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Six</a> Uses vocal variety in rate, pitch and intensity to heighten and maintain interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Seven</a> Pronunciation, grammar and articulation appropriate to the designated audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Eight</a> Uses physical behaviors that support the verbal message	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In this next section, we would like to address teaching strategies. One of the goals of a speaking-intensive course is to improve a student's oral communication skills. When you have recognized a weakness in students' skills, what strategies have you employed to help? List one or two common weaknesses and then check the relevant strategies.

**Common student weaknesses:**

**Strategies for overcoming weaknesses:**

- Conferences
- Visits to the Speaking Center
- Individual coaching
- Videotaping with follow-up coaching
- Requiring practice outside class
- Emphasizing web resources
- Peer coaching
- Assessing speakers by videotapes
- Assessing speakers outside the classroom
- Workshops from the Speaking Center
- Articulating more specific goals for communication skills
- Other

To avoid being contacted about this survey again you can provide your name in the space below. Your name will not be associated with your specific answers. If you do not provide your name you may receive reminders about this survey.

## Appendix B

### **Eight Public Speaking Competencies and Criteria for Assessment**

#### **Competency One**

Chooses and narrows a topic appropriately for the audience and occasion.

*This competency addresses evidence of preparation, practice, and attention to the audience.*

##### **Excellent**

The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are exceptionally appropriate for the purpose, time constraints, and audience (The speaker's choice of topic reflects unusually insightful audience analysis, stays within the time limit and is consistent with the purpose)

##### **Satisfactory**

The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are appropriate for the purpose, time constraints, and audience.

(The speaker's choice is a reasonable choice for the time limitations of the speech, is generally consistent with the purpose, and reflects appropriate analysis of a majority of the audience.)

##### **Unsatisfactory**

The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are not appropriate for the purpose, time constraints, or audience.

(The speaker's choice is inconsistent with the purpose, the topic cannot be adequately treated in the time limitations of the speech, and there is little or no evidence of successful audience analysis.)

#### **Competency Two**

Communicates the thesis/specific purpose in a manner appropriate for the audience and occasion.

*This competency addresses specific aspects of the introduction: gaining attention of the audience, making the topic clear to the audience, making a clear connection between the audience and the topic, previewing main points, and providing a clear transition from the introduction into the main body.*

##### **Excellent**

The speaker communicates a thesis/purpose that is exceptionally clear and identifiable. (Within the opening few sentences, the audience knows precisely what the speech is about.)

##### **Satisfactory**

The speaker communicates a thesis/specific purpose that is adequately clear and identifiable. (At least a majority of the audience should understand clearly, within the opening few sentences of the speech, precisely what the specific purpose/thesis of the speech is.)

##### **Unsatisfactory**

The speaker does not communicate a clear and identifiable thesis/specific purpose. (A majority of the audience may have difficulty understanding within the opening few sentences of the speech precisely what the speech is about.)

#### **Competency Three**

Provides supporting material appropriate to the audience and occasion.

*This competency addresses the use of supporting material; crediting of sources; credibility of sources; quantity, quality and relevance of evidence; and the quality, introduction, and use of visual aids.*

##### **Excellent**

The speaker uses supporting material that is exceptional in quality and variety. (Supporting material is unarguably linked to the thesis of the speech; it enhances the credibility of the speaker; it proves the argument; and it provides clarity and interest.)

##### **Satisfactory**

The speaker uses supporting material that is appropriate in quality and variety. (Supporting materials is logically linked to the thesis of the speech; it adds interest and clarity to the speech.)

##### **Unsatisfactory**

The speaker uses supporting material that is inappropriate in quality and variety. (Supporting material is only vaguely related to the thesis of the speech; sources are not cited; visual aids are too small and/or poorly introduced and used. Ideas are not developed in an interesting, clear manner.)

**Competency Four**

Uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the topic, audience, occasion, and purpose.

*This competency addresses a clear organizational pattern, a clear organizational structure, transitions, summary of points, and a definitive final statement.*

**Excellent**

The speaker uses an exceptional introduction and conclusion and provides an exceptionally clear and logical progression within and between ideas. (The introduction clearly engages the audience, the body of the speech reflects superior clarity in organization, and the conclusion clearly reflects the content of the speech and leaves the audience with an undeniable message or call to action.)

**Satisfactory**

The speaker uses an appropriate introduction and conclusion and provides a reasonably clear and logical progression within and between ideas. (The introduction and conclusion reasonably meet the criteria for effectiveness; there are minor weakness in the organization. Progression between ideas is clear.)

**Unsatisfactory**

The speaker fails to use an introduction or conclusion and fails to provide a reasonably clear and logical progression within and between ideas. (The speaker does not engage the audience in the introduction, does not clearly lead the audience through the body of the speech, and fails in the conclusion to leave a majority of the audience with a clear message or call to action.)

**Competency Five**

Uses language appropriate to audience and occasion

*This competency addresses appropriate bias-free language, level of formality (no slang), reflexivity (inappropriate attention to speaker or occasion), and verbal fillers (like, you know).*

**Excellent**

The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear, vivid, and appropriate. (The speaker chooses language that enhances audience comprehension and enthusiasm for the speech, while adding a measure of creativity that displays exceptional sensitivity by the speaker for the nuances and poetry of meaning.)

**Satisfactory**

The speaker uses language that is reasonably clear, vivid, and appropriate. (The speaker chooses language that is free of inappropriate jargon, is nonsexist, is nonracist, etc.)

**Unsatisfactory**

The speaker uses unclear or inappropriate language. (The speaker chooses inappropriate jargon or language which is offensive.)

**Competency Six**

Uses vocal variety in rate, pitch, and intensity (volume) to heighten and maintain interest appropriate to the audience and occasion

*This competency addresses vocal presentation: rate, expressiveness, pitch, intensity, and volume.*

**Excellent**

The speaker makes exceptional use of vocal variety in a conversational mode. (The speaker uses his/her voice so that he/she is easily heard by all audience members, enhances the message through variations in pitch, and speaks at a rate that holds the attention of the audience.)

**Satisfactory**

The speaker makes acceptable use of vocal variety in a conversational mode. (The speaker shows only occasional weakness in rate, volume, pitch, etc., thereby not detracting significantly from the overall quality or impact of the speech.)

**Unsatisfactory**

The speaker fails to use vocal variety and fails to speak in a conversational mode.

(The speaker shows frequent weakness in controlling and adapting rate, volume, pitch, etc., resulting in an overall detracting from the quality or impact of the speech.)

**Competency Seven**

Uses pronunciation, grammar, and articulation appropriate to the audience and occasion.

*This competency addresses correct pronunciation of words, correct grammar, articulation (shaping words clearly and distinctly), and fluency of delivery.*

**Excellent**

The speaker has exceptional articulation, pronunciation, and grammar. (The speaker exhibits exceptional fluency, properly formed sounds which enhance the message, and no pronunciation or grammatical errors.)

**Satisfactory**

The speaker has acceptable articulation, with few pronunciation or grammatical errors. (Most sounds are properly formed; there are only minor disfluencies and a few minor errors in pronunciation and grammar.)

**Unsatisfactory**

The speaker fails to use acceptable articulation, pronunciation, and grammar. (Disfluencies interfere with the message, and frequent errors in pronunciation and grammar make it difficult for the audience to understand the message.)

**Competency Eight**

Uses physical behaviors that support the verbal message.

*This competency addresses the nonverbal support of the presentation: eye contact with audience, good use of note cards, use of lectern, appropriate appearance, appropriate use of gestures, appropriate use of movement, and facial expression.*

**Excellent**

The speaker demonstrates exceptional posture, gestures, bodily movement, facial expressions, eye contact, and use of dress. (The nonverbal behaviors and dress consistently support the verbal message and therefore enhance the speaker's credibility throughout the audience.)

**Satisfactory**

The speaker demonstrates acceptable posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and use of dress. (The nonverbal behaviors and dress generally support the message, with minor inconsistencies that neither significantly distract from the speaker's credibility with the audience nor interfere with the message.)

**Unsatisfactory**

The speaker fails to use acceptable posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and dress. (The speaker's nonverbal behaviors and dress are incongruent with the verbal intent and detract from the speaker's credibility with the audience as well as distracting the audience from the speaker's message.)