

**2016-2017 Yearly Assessment Report**  
**Composition and Public Speaking Program**  
**Department of Rhetoric and Language**  
**College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)**

**1. Identifying Information**

Name of Program: **Composition and Public Speaking Program, Department of Rhetoric and Language**

Type of Program (Major, Minor, Graduate Program, Non-Degree Granting): **Non-Degree Granting**

College of Arts and Sciences Division (Arts, Humanities, Sciences, or Social Sciences):  
**Humanities**

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**2. Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Rhetoric Program in the Department of Rhetoric and Language is to teach all University of San Francisco students to communicate effectively and ethically in academic, civic, and professional contexts. Through our classes, service, and co-curricular activities, we advance the Jesuit ideal of *eloquentia perfecta*--reason and eloquence in writing, speaking, and languaging--and guide our students as they learn to engage critically with the texts that influence their beliefs, values and actions.

Has this statement been revised in the last few years?

Yes, it was revised in Fall 2017

**3. (Optional) Program Goals:**

N/A

Have these goals been revised in the last few years?

#### **4. Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)**

Upon successful completion of the rhetoric program, students will be able to:

1. Explain and apply rhetorical concepts, theories, and principles in the process of analyzing various texts and rhetorical situations.
2. Produce research-driven written, oral, and digital communication that demonstrates awareness, knowledge, and application of rhetorical concepts.
3. Evaluate the ethics and effectiveness of their own and others' communication in academic, civic, and professional situations.
4. Articulate and interpret their own rhetorical/languageing choices and composing processes.

Have these PLOs been revised in the last few years?

Yes, in Fall 2017

#### **5. Brief Summary of Most Recent Assessment Plan**

We assessed how successful our Rhetoric 110/110N students are at research essay writing, specifically how well they achieve four of the course learning outcomes. Additionally, we developed pilot versions of Rhetoric 110/110N to assess how a formal speaking assignment in these courses would help students' writing, with the Institutional Learning Outcome #4 in mind: "Students communicate effectively in written and oral forms to interact within their personal and professional communities. (Written and Oral Communication)."

#### **6. Academic Program Review**

Date of the most recent Academic Program Review's External Reviewer Visit:  
Spring 2013

Date of most recent Action Plan Meeting:  
December 2013

Brief Summary of the most recent Action Plan:  
The Action Plan included developing a minor and/or graduate program in rhetoric. The Action Plan also included working to further integrate spoken and written rhetoric in our curriculum. And, the Plan emphasized the need to hire more full-time faculty (via national searches) who can teach and come up the ranks of service in the department to be prepared to take over key roles, such as program directors.

## 7. Methods

What did you do with regard to assessment of your program/department 2016-2017?

We assessed how successful our Rhetoric 110/110N students are at research essay writing, specifically how well they achieve the following course learning outcomes:

- Formulating Thesis/Primary Claim: Students learn to develop, in response to important civic and academic questions at issue raised in course readings and research, a specific contestable claim to serve as focus and governing principle of an argumentative essay.
- Arrangement/Structure: Students learn to organize papers on the whole-text and paragraph levels to facilitate reader comprehension and to meet the specific needs of different rhetorical situations.
- Development: Students learn to support their claims with sufficient, relevant, and credible evidence derived from reading and research (primary and secondary) and to acknowledge and address counter-arguments.
- Grammar and Style: Students learn to write in a mature and credible civic and academic manner by avoiding basic usage errors, using accurate punctuation, and employing stylistic strategies that improve clarity and concision, as well as to document reading and research in accordance with MLA.

Additionally, we developed pilot versions of Rhetoric 110/110N to assess how a formal speaking assignment in these courses would help students' writing and their ability to articulate their own strategic uses of oral and written rhetoric.

What were your questions?

- How well do our students meet the current Rhetoric 110/110N learning outcomes?
- How could we improve cognition and metacognition for Rhetoric 110/110N students by adding formal speaking assignments to formal writing assignments?

How are these questions related to your most recent Academic Program Review and/or Action Plan?

The Academic Program Review's External Reviewer Visit Report implored the Department of Rhetoric and Language to leverage its unique make-up throughout the rhetoric curriculum. In other words, they noted that very few departments house both writing and speaking and that we should work on ways of combining oral and written instruction more fully in our courses. Although the report did not specifically mention WOVE\*, since 2013, the WOVE movement has been growing in American university writing, rhetoric, and speaking programs.

\*WOVE stands for:

W – written

O – oral

V – visual

E - electronic

What PLOs are these questions related to?

2. Produce research-driven written, oral, and digital communication that demonstrates awareness, knowledge, and application of rhetorical concepts.

4. Articulate and interpret their own rhetorical/languageing choices and composing processes.

What direct (most important) and/or indirect methods did you employ?

Some Possible Direct Methods (pick >1 and *briefly describe*):

- a. Published (Standardized) Test (e.g., Major Field Test)
- b. Class Tests & Quizzes with Embedded Questions
- c. Class Presentations
- d. Off-Campus Presentations (NGOs, clients, agencies, etc.)
- e. Research Projects Reports
- f. Case Studies
- g. Term Papers
- h. Portfolio
- i. Artistic Performances, Recitals & Products
- j. Capstone Projects
- k. Poster Presentations
- l. Comprehensive Exams
- m. Thesis, Dissertation
- n. Pass Rates on Certification or Licensure Exams
- o. Group Projects
- p. In/Out-of Class Presentations
- q. Competency Interviews (e.g., oral exams)
- r. Simulations
- s. Juried Presentations
- t. Other

g. Research papers were collected from all sections (pilot and non-pilot) of Rhetoric 110 and Rhetoric 110N in Spring 2017. We developed an analytic rubric based on course, pilot, and program learning outcomes, and we scored 99 randomly-sampled essays (49 essays from pilot sections and 50 from non-pilot sections).

Some Possible Indirect Methods (*briefly describe*):

- a. Student Survey
- b. Student Interview
- c. Focus Groups
- d. Reflection Sessions
- e. Reflection Essays
- f. Faculty Survey
- g. Exit (end of program) Survey

- h. Exit (end of program) Interview
- i. Alumni Survey
- j. Employer Survey
- k. Diaries of Journals
- l. Data from Institutional Surveys (e.g., NSSE, SSI, GSS)
- m. Curriculum/Syllabus Analysis
- n. Other

a. In Spring 2017, students in all sections (pilot and non-pilot) were asked to take an anonymous online survey about their essay writing processes. The survey asked them to discuss their process of preparing to write research essays in general and to explain how (if at all) they used oral rhetoric in the process of research writing. Eighty-one pilot and 56 non-pilot students completed the survey, data from which was analyzed in Spring 2017. The survey was comprised of the following questions:

1. Describe how you use oral communication to prepare for a writing assignment in general?
2. Describe how you prepared for your most recent writing assignment, whether for a class or some other purpose. What steps did you take to prepare?
3. (Pilot sections only) How did the formal speech assignment affect your essays due later in the semester? Explain.

e. In the three pilot sections of Rhetoric 110 and the three pilot sections of Rhetoric 110N, students were assigned to write a reflection essay on their learning in general and on the speaking-writing connection in particular. These essays were analyzed in Spring 2017.

m. In Fall 2016, we analyzed our Rhetoric 110 and Rhetoric 110N curriculum and developed a pilot version of the course, with a syllabus, assignments, and scaffolding. Specifically, we created a formal speaking assignment and integrated it into the pilot syllabus. We used the cornerstone concept of Jesuit rhetoric, *eloquentia perfecta*, to provide students with a theoretical umbrella for oral and written rhetoric.

## 8. Results

What were the direct data results?

First and foremost, the direct data shows that the students in Rhetoric 110 and Rhetoric 110N are performing at a “good” level (3 on a scale of 4) for four of the six learning outcomes in the course. The 99 essays were distributed among the eight members of the Assessment Committee, and each essay got two blind reads. We used the following criteria to assess the research essays from Rhetoric 110 and Rhetoric 110N (See Appendix A for full rubric):

4. Excellent
3. Good
2. Adequate
1. Insufficient

This brief chart shows the results:

Learning Outcomes:	Forming a Claim (Course LO #2) (enter PLO)	Organizing (Course LO #3) (enter PLO)	Selecting Evidence (Course LO #4) (enter PLO)	Analyzing Evidence (Course LO #4) (enter PLO)	Crafting Sentences (Course LO #5) (enter PLO)
Pilot Sections	3.30	3.04	3.23	2.95	3.02
Non-pilot Sections	3.30	3.04	3.22	2.95	3.03

In setting up this version of the pilot, we were influenced by a study conducted by Kimo Ah Yun, Cassie Costantini, and Sarah Billingsley (2012) at Sacramento State University in California. They studied just over 600 students enrolled in composition classes and found that the essays of the students who had previously taken a public speaking course scored better on two of their five assessment criteria

- Structure (organization)
- Control of syntax

Our assessment showed no statistical difference between pilot and non-pilot sections, but the analysis of the indirect data adds a dimension that points to the value of the pilot curriculum.

#### What were the indirect results?

For the **first question** of the survey “How did you use oral communication to prepare for writing assignments?” students most frequent responses were:

1. Talking to peers
2. Reading their own writing aloud
3. Conferencing with professor

#### Note:

These answers were very consistent in pilot and non-pilot sections and represent the Department of Rhetoric and Language’s pedagogical philosophy quite well, in which faculty are encouraged to conference with students and foster peer workshopping.

For the **second survey question** “Describe how you prepared for your most recent writing assignment” students most frequent responses were:

1. Researching and reading
2. Outlining
3. Conferencing with professor
4. Talking with peers
5. Considering audience/rhetorical situation

#### Note:

The two most frequent responses are fairly traditional non-oral preparation:

1. Researching and reading
2. Outlining

The next two are both oral activities:

3. Conferencing with professor
4. Talking with peers

Taken together, responses 1-4 show the value of using both speaking and writing to prepare research essays.

The fifth most frequent answer is of note for its link to our proposed program goal regarding metacognition ([insert actual language once it is decided upon])

5. Considering audience/rhetorical situation

For the **third survey question**, “How did the speech assignment affect your essays later in the semester? Helped your essay become better? Worse? No impact?” the most frequent answers were:

1. Research
  - Provided a foundation for paper research
  - Identified holes in their research
  - Expanded and/or focused their research
2. More audience awareness
  - Explicit feedback from live audience
  - Tacit feedback from live audience
3. Improved organization
4. Personal Improvement
  - Confidence
  - Opportunity to be creative
  - Reduction in stress/time management

In addition to the student surveys, the data from the student reflective essays shows the value of the combined writing-speaking pilot curriculum. Specifically, students articulated how writing was improved when it was tied to a speaking assignment in the same class. The student comments are categorized below:

#### Research Abilities

“When I listened to my classmate’s speech, they mentioned a lot of research results and truthful data for giving the evidence to audiences. That is a very effective method for a writer to make sense for their readers because the data and research results are the most convictive quote and resources to support the topic. After that, I search these resources on the internet and also in some books which are relevant to my topic.”

#### Organization

“The speeches really helped me structure my essay overall. It gave me a much more clear idea of which points I needed to hit to make my argument stronger. The speech outline helped me organize my thoughts and group together my evidence for my argument and ‘facilitate reader comprehension.’ The storytelling also fueled my spirit to want to write about my topic, because essentially, being passionate about the topic is what drives a good argument.”

## Confidence

“Before, doing speeches was what does gave me butterflies but, now I’m less scared and can properly present my ideas in a clear manner. Also I feel that I have a lot of confidence not only for writing but also for speaking because I’ve learned that it’s okay to make mistakes. And it doesn’t have to be perfect for a first draft. Therefore, I was able to fully revise my mistakes and make my essay and speech something that I was proud of.”

“Having to pick a certain person’s story to tell for the speech assignment really struck a cord with me. I felt I better connected with people in our class, showing my vulnerability in writing and my own emotional feelings. I saw what a lot of people have been through and how strong they are now, it reflected in their writings as well as my own. I could also reflect on my growth as a writer as I began to slowly deal with the effect my PTSD topic has had on me personally. As I grow more confident in my feelings and emotions, my writing grows as well.”

### What surprised you?

Honestly, the committee was not surprised. The quality of instruction/student achievement in Rhetoric 110 and Rhetoric 110N matches past assessment results.

### What aligned with your expectations?

The indirect assessment we did in both AY 2015-2016 and in AY 2016-2017 show significant gains in metacognitive awareness, which we expected and desired. The following passage from current rhetorical scholarship: 1) explains difference between writing skills and meta-rhetorical awareness, and 2) implicitly confirms the value of using reflective surveys as a means of assessing students’ metacognitive knowledge of their own rhetorical choices:

“Do you know your knowledge?” asks Samuel Taylor Coleridge, trying to point out the difference between knowing what we know and knowing that we know (emphasis added). The first calls upon cognition while the second requires metacognition. . . . For those of us who teach writing, the objective is not just to have our students produce effective writing—that is, to respond in logical and thoughtful ways to the question posed. We also want our students to demonstrate consciousness of process that will enable them to reproduce success. Metacognition is not cognition. Performance, however thoughtful, is not the same as awareness of how the performance came to be (Tinberg, as cited in Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015, p. 75).

### What do you understand these results to mean?

Quite notable is the fact that students in the pilot sections named the ability to consider the audience and/or the “rhetorical situation” at a much higher rate than did the students in the non-pilot section, showing the potential value of a combined oral/written rhetoric class in

fostering the kind of meta-rhetorical thinking that is transferable to other classes (Wardle 2007). In short, we understand the pilot curriculum to be successful and preferable to our current “separated” curriculum.

What are the implications of the data?

The implications are that the Department of Rhetoric and Language will move forward with curriculum revision.

## 9. Closing the Loop

What might you do as a result of these assessment results? What curricular or programmatic changes might you implement?

Possible Closing(s) of the Loop(s) (pick >1 and *briefly describe*):

- a. Revision of PLOs
- b. Changes in pedagogical practices
- c. Revision of program course sequence
- d. Revision of course(s) content
- e. Curriculum Changes (e.g., addition and/or deletion of courses)
- f. Modified program policies or procedures
- g. Designed measurement tools more aptly suited for the task
- h. Improved within and across school/college collaboration
- i. Improved within and across school/college communication
- j. Revised student learning outcomes in one or more courses
- k. Modified rubric
- l. Developed new rubric
- m. Developed more stringent measures (key assessments)
- n. Modified course offering schedules
- o. Changes to faculty and/or staff
- p. Changes in program modality of delivery
- q. Other

c. The assessment efforts of AY 2015-2016 and AY 2016-2017, along with the expert recommendations of the outside reviewers, have led the Department of Rhetoric and Language to propose that students take one Rhetoric course (110/N or 103) in their first year and one Rhetoric course (110/N or 103) in their second year in order to sustain their oral and written communication skills and be better prepared to deploy them in all of their major, minor, elective, and core classes.

d. The assessment efforts of AY 2015-2016 and AY 2016-2017, along with the expert recommendations of the outside reviewers, have led the Department of Rhetoric and Language to revise the course content for Rhetoric 110/N and Rhetoric 103. Specifically, a formal speech will be required in all Rhetoric 110/N classes as of Fall 2018 and a formal writing assignment will

be required in all Rhetoric 103 classes as of Fall 2018. To ensure that all Rhetoric faculty are prepared to teach these revamped courses, the Department of Rhetoric and Language will provide extensive professional development throughout the Spring 2018 semester, beginning with a paid training session for all Rhetoric adjunct faculty in January 2018. (Thank you, College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Office!)

j. The Department of Rhetoric and Language will vote on new student learning outcomes for Rhetoric 110/110N in December 2017. The Department of Rhetoric and Language will vote on new student learning outcomes for Rhetoric 103 in Spring 2018.

Have you or will you submit any course or program change proposals as a result of these results?

Yes.

The Department of Rhetoric and Language will vote on new student learning outcomes for Rhetoric 110/110N in December 2017. The Department of Rhetoric and Language will vote on new student learning outcomes for Rhetoric 103 in Spring 2018.

The Department of Rhetoric and Language will also propose a modified sequence for Rhetoric 110/110N and Rhetoric 103.

In future years—after more assessment—the Department of Rhetoric and Language will propose significant changes to our Core A2 courses, and, eventually, to the Core A1 and A2 learning outcomes.

Appendix A: Direct Assessment Rubric

<b>Criteria (The writer and/or finished product demonstrates...)</b>	<b>Excellent 4</b>	<b>Good 3</b>	<b>Adequate 2</b>	<b>Insufficient 1</b>
<b>Thesis-driven (thread throughout)</b>	A focused, clear, contestable claim, which sets up what the paper provides (with a steady thread throughout).	A contestable claim but not as focused or clearly stated claim (that has an uneven thread throughout the essay).	A claim that is not focused, explicit, or contestable or does not match the main idea reflected throughout the essay.	Does not have an explicit claim or focused main idea that drives the essay.
<b>Organization/structure (includes order, flow, transitions, paragraph structure)</b>	Information presented in a logical order for the given audience. Transitions between ideas and paragraphs are smooth	Somewhat logical order and flow of ideas, but inconsistent transitions between and/or within paragraphs.	A need for an improvement in the order and flow of ideas, and transitions between and/or within paragraphs.	Order and flow of ideas are not clear or coherent.
<b>Evidence (use of sources)</b>	Relevant and credible evidence appropriate to the rhetorical task, from secondary and/or primary sources.	Relevant and credible evidence mixed with evidence that lacks credibility in the rhetorical situation or lacks relevance to the topic	Majority of evidence lacks credibility in the rhetorical situation or lacks relevance to the topic	A lack of sufficient, relevant and credible evidence
<b>Analysis</b>	Thorough interpretation of evidence to produce well-reasoned, logic-driven content that may include addressing counterarguments	Interpretation of evidence is present but inconsistently thorough, both making and missing well-reasoned points	Poorly reasoned interpretation of evidence, possibly including counterargumentative evidence	A lack of interpretation of evidence

<b>Sentence structure/Style</b>	Frequent use of stylistic features such as sentence variety, word choices appropriate for audience, literary devices used to convey meaning, and economical language use.	Some use of stylistic strategies for clarity and concision.	Infrequent use of stylistic strategies for clarity and concision, affecting the comprehension of ideas.	A lack of stylistic strategies and clarity in the phrasing of ideas.
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