Department of Rhetoric and Language

ASSESSMENT REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017 – 2018
REPORT DUE DATE: 10/26/2018

I. LOGISTICS & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. **Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).**

   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

   Name/Title/Email Address of Submitter:
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2. **Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? Kindly state "Yes" or "No." Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program.**

   No

Current Mission Statement

The mission of the Rhetoric Program and 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 literacy--and guide our students as they learn to engage critically with the texts that influence their beliefs, values and actions.

3. **Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2017?**

No changes made since last assessment cycle.

Current 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 choices and composing processes.

4. **Which particular Program Learning Outcome(s) did you assess for the academic year 2017-2018?**

In Fall 2017, we developed new RHET 103 learning outcomes and decided to pilot them in four (4) RHET 103 classes during Spring 2018. These learning outcomes intentionally included some attention to writing. We assessed 1) how well the students enrolled in these pilot classes achieve three of the four pilot learning outcomes and 2) how formal writing instruction in these pilot classes would help students' speaking. We did not specifically focus our efforts on a PLO; however, part of our efforts aligned with PLO #2: "Produce research-driven written, oral, and digital communication that demonstrates awareness, knowledge, and application of rhetorical concepts."

II.   METHODOLOGY

5. **Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s).**

Important: *Please attach, at the end of this report, a copy of the rubric used for assessment.*

Our assessment efforts were directed by our curriculum committee, as their charge includes researching and managing proposals for creating the curricular developments described above. Last year, the committee assessed new course learning outcomes for RHET 110/N. This year, the committee focused on a two part assessment effort:

> P1: New course learning outcomes for RHET 103
> P2: How formal writing instruction would help students' speaking

First, the curriculum committee formulated these pilot RHET 103 learning outcomes:

1. Use rhetorical strategies toward specific purposes in making and presenting written and oral products for public audiences.
2. Develop a style of oral delivery that is attentive to audience engagement and rhetorical situations.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the broader ethical dimensions in communication emphasizing accountability, judgment, and tolerance.
4. Writing throughout the speech communication process to reflect, analyze, and critique communication practices and events.

Second, for Assessment 1 (P1) we identified four instructors to use the pilot RHET 103 learning outcomes, agreed to a teaching process, and products for data collection. Specifically, the group of instructors decided to include a "significant" writing assignment with scaffolding. The type of writing assignment was left open (i.e. we did not prescribe what kind of writing assignment was to be included). We took this approach as we thought allowing for different kinds of writing assignments would best reflect what we expect to see in teaching generally (even in a class like RHET 103 that is traditionally standardized) not everyone assigns the same work. In the four pilot sections, instructors assigned rhetorical analysis papers, a research paper, and a news analysis paper. In addition, all instructors asked students to reflect on the pilot learning outcomes. (See Attachment).

At the end of Spring 2018 semester, we collected final speeches from pilot RHET 103 (video recordings). We developed an analytic rubric based on pilot RHET 103 learning outcomes #1, #2 and #3, and scored 21 speeches, which is about 25% of students enrolled in the pilot RHET 103 sections (we had each instructor submit five randomly selected student speeches from their rosters). Note: we did not assess pilot RHET 103 learning outcomes #4 as we realized that is not written in language that could be assessed. After a norming session, these speeches were then distributed among the six faculty assessors. Each speech got two ratings and a third if necessary.

Third, to address Assessment 2 (P2) we mirrored the Pilot RHET 110/N assessment last AY and conducted an anonymous online survey for all RHET 103 classes, including the Pilot RHET 103 classes. 66 pilot and 32 non-pilot students completed the survey. The survey comprised the following questions:

1. Describe how you use writing to prepare for a speech assignment in general?
2. Describe how you prepared for your most recent speech or presentation, whether for a class or some other purpose. What steps did you take to prepare?
3. (Pilot sections only) How did writing (assignments, reflections, etc.) affect your speeches later in the semester? Helped you do better? Worse? No impact? Explain.

The Pilot RHET 103 survey questions:

1. How well do our students enrolled in the pilot RHET 103 classes achieve #1, #2, & #3 of the pilot learning outcomes.
2. How does writing instruction in these pilot classes help students' speaking?

These questions were related to our 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.

The PLOs were related to the following questions:

P1 Relates to PLO: "Produce research-driven written, oral, and digital communication that demonstrates awareness, knowledge, and application of rhetorical concepts."

P2 Looks at a broader programmatic question, as it seeks to explore the success of our pilot RHET 103 learning outcomes that incorporate writing instruction.

To summarize, we used direct (assessment of student work product) and indirect (student surveys and reflections) methods. Direct (most important) and/or indirect methods of employment.

III. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

6. What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise?

Outcome	Average Score
LO#1	3.24
LO#2	3.08
LO#3	3.29

The table above are the results of our direct assessment exercise in evaluating student work products (i.e. speeches). The data shows, each of the learning outcomes on average scored "meets expectations" (3).

Indirect results from student surveys:

For the first question of the survey, "describe how you use writing to prepare for a speech assignment in general." Students were given 4 choices – outlining, brainstorming, reflection, and other – and were instructed to check all that apply. Comparing pilot and non-pilot responses:

- Students in the pilot RHET 103 choose outlining more than the brainstorming and choose reflection roughly twice as much as non-pilot sections.
- Students in non-pilot sections choose brainstorming more than outlining.

In RHET 103 classes, writing outlines is a significant part of the speech making process. Typically, students research and prepare full-sentence outlines that they turn into speaking notes or and keyword outline that are used during a speech presentation. It is interesting that non-pilot RHET 103 students identified brainstorming over outlines.

The second question of the survey, "Describe how you prepared for your most recent speech or presentation, whether for a class or some other purpose. What steps did you take to prepare?" asked students to write out answers.

Generally, the non-pilot sections described a combination of writing and speaking practices:
- Outlining
- Researching
- Speech practice (including appointments at the USF Speaking Center)
- Brainstorming
- Script writing

The pilot sections described much of the same processes, yet their responses highlighted more attention to practice.

The third question of the survey, "How did writing (assignments, reflections, etc.) affect your speeches later in the semester? Helped you do better? Worse? No impact? Explain, was asked only of the pilot sections. Their responses overwhelmingly suggest a positive connection between writing and speaking to both greater and lesser degrees. Some students responded that writing had no impact, but no one answered in the negative. We noticed a few common remarks:

- Many students recognized a positive impact on their speeches and writing reflections.
- Some students claimed that writing helped them to see common mistakes or weaknesses, make adjustments to outlines, and help focus speech topics.

In addition to the student surveys, the data from the student reflective essays reinforces the value of the combined writing-speaking pilot curriculum. The four instructors chose to have students reflect on LO #3: "Demonstrate an understanding of the broader ethical dimensions in communication emphasizing accountability, judgment, and tolerance." While each instructor adjusted the reflection prompt to best suit their classes the main idea was for students to think about more directly (and actively) how they connected this learning outcome not only to their classwork, but also to their experiences outside of RHET 103 such as discussing current events or in making rhetorical choices in future contexts - professional, academia, civic.

Below are some of the main areas across the four Pilot RHET 103 sections that students wrote about in their reflective essays:
1. Self-awareness/ownership of ideas and perspectives.
2. Connections between public speaking skills and the "real world."
3. Recognition of ethical challenges in their own and other's speeches (i.e. choice of topics; citing sources; speaking honesty; listening to others).
4. Increased level of confidence when speaking in front of others.

Overall, the results were not really surprising to us: we've combined writing and public speaking in a number of courses, and we expected to find benefits to students.

The combining of written and oral communication instruction is not new. For the past years, we have offered a combined 2-semester written and oral communication class (RHET 130/131) and have observed from students and faculty the benefits of this kind of learning environment. We expected the direct data results to reveal most student work products "meeting expectations," which they did for the three pilot RHET 103 Learning Outcomes assessed. The indirect data also met with our expectations as students made connections between the ethical dimensions of their coursework and the world "outside."

Furthermore, the results indicate that the pilot RHET 103 outcomes fit well with our curricular vision and represent what we want students to learn and (hopefully) carry forward in other classes at USF, the workplace, and civic/political/social situations. They also confirm that the larger curricular changes we are working on are on the right path and serving students.

IV.   CLOSING THE LOOP

7.   Based on your results, what changes/modifications are you planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome?

The Department of Rhetoric and Language voted on new student learning outcomes for Rhetoric 103 in September 2019. The Department of Rhetoric and Language will train faculty on the student learning outcomes for Rhetoric 103 in Spring 2019.

Our larger goals include proposing a modified sequence for Rhetoric 110/110N and Rhetoric 103. Specifically, a formal writing assignment will be required in all Rhetoric 103 classes as of Fall 2019. 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 2019.

The Department of Rhetoric and Language voted on new student learning outcomes for Rhetoric 103 in September 2019.

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.

8.   What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report

The Department of Rhetoric and Language Assessment results since 2015, along with the expert recommendations of the outside reviewers, have led the department 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.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS – Rubric used for direct assessment in P1: Assessment of Pilot RHET 103 Learning Outcomes

A1. Public Speaking Rubric				
Criteria	**Performance Standards**			
	Exceeds Expectations (4)	**Meets Expectations (3)**	**Needs Improvement (2)**	**Below Expectations (1)**
LO #1 Use rhetorical strategies toward specific purposes in making and presenting written and oral products for public audiences.	Uses rhetorical strategies toward specific purposes in making and presenting written and oral products for public audiences in inventive and insightful ways.	Uses rhetorical strategies toward specific purposes in making and presenting written and oral products for public audiences in appropriate ways.	Uses few rhetorical strategies in minimal ways toward specific purposes in making and presenting written and oral products for public audience.	Ignores the use of rhetorical strategies toward specific purposes in making and presenting written and oral products for public audiences.
LO #2 Develop a style of oral delivery that is attentive to audience engagement and rhetorical situations.	Demonstrates a style of oral delivery that is extemporaneous, dynamic and attentive to audience engagement and rhetorical situation.	Demonstrates a style of oral delivery that is adequate to audience engagement and rhetorical situation.	Demonstrates inconsistent levels of extemporaneousness or audience engagement in the rhetorical situation.	The style of oral delivery lacks extemporaneousness, clarity, fluency and accuracy.
LO #3 Demonstrate an understanding of the broader ethical dimensions in communication emphasizing accountability, judgment, and tolerance.	Demonstrates sophisticated ethical dimensions in comm-unication emphasizing accountability, judgment, and tolerance.	Demonstrates an understanding of the broader ethical dimensions in communication emphasizing account-ability, judgment, and tolerance.	Demonstrates little understanding of the broader ethical dimensions in communication emphasizing accountability, judgment, and tolerance.	Demonstrates no understanding of the broader ethical dimensions in communication emphasizing accountability, judgment, and tolerance.