

**The Community College of Baltimore County**  
**Learning Outcomes Assessment for SPCM 101**  
**Executive Summary Submitted by Anne Chamberlain, Donna Rongione and Precious Stone**

**Stage 1: Designing and Proposing a Learning Outcomes Assessment Project**

SPCM 101, Fundamentals of Speech Communication, provides an introduction to the study of communication. As stated in the Common Course Outline and college catalog, “The course covers a variety of communication patterns, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, cross-cultural, group, and the development of public speaking skills.” The course objectives as stated in the Common Course Outline and the course’s major topics (Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Cross-Cultural, Small Group, and Public Communication) were assessed. The Speech discipline developed and ran its GREATS and LOA projects concurrently during 2003/2004 assessment period. The GREATS assignment was an evaluation essay that asked students to critique a speech presentation, including its setting, circumstances, purpose, and audience demographics. The assignment was designed to cover and assess the six General Education Criteria of the GREATS project.

In Spring 2003, a three member team of SPCM 101 faculty from each campus designed a 25 question multiple choice test to be given as pre and post-tests during a semester. The team designed the test based on the objectives and major topics in the Common Course Outline for SPCM 101. The team took into consideration the fact that each campus used a different text for the course. After closely reviewing each text, the team designed a test that would be broad enough in scope to account for any differences in presentation of common course material, yet specific enough to measure the actual objectives and major topics. The number of questions on the test was intended to insure it could be completed in any section of SPCM 101 without going over the shortest allotted class period of 50 minutes.

Team members sought external validation for the test but did not receive the validation until after the initial round of testing had begun. The team agreed with many of the consultant’s comments but decided not to change the test for the 2007 testing period as any changes would make data comparisons difficult. If a similar LOA is to be done in the future, the team does recommend changes.

**Stage 2: Implementing the Design and Collecting and Analyzing the Data:**

During the 2003/2004 period when the SPCM 101 LOA initially ran, data indicated that 80% of the students enrolled in SPCM 101 passed the course with grades ranging from A to D. Twelve percent of the students failed the course. Eight percent of students withdrew from the course.

The mean pre-test score on the test for all three campuses was 16.96. The mean post-test score was 18.73. For African American students, the pre-test mean was 16.49, and the mean post-test score was 18.50. For white students, the pre-test mean was 18.24, and the post-test mean was 19.09. African American males had the most significant increases from pre-test to post-test scores with a mean score of 15.81 on the pre-test and a mean score of 18.57 on the post-test. Every group made gains in pre-test to post-test scores.

For additional details regarding the first round of testing for the SPCM 101 LOA, please refer to pages 71 to 76 of the “Learning Outcomes Assessment Annual Report, Executive Summary.”

<http://www.ccbcmd.edu/media/loa/loa2005.pdf>

In Fall 2003, SPCM 101 students received the following mean scores on the GREATS Common Graded Assignment: Content – 3.17, Communication – 3.18, Critical Thinking – 3.28, Technology – 2.90, Cultural Appreciation – 2.01, and Independent Learning – 3.29.

**Stage 3: Redesigning the Course to Improve Student Learning**

It is important to note that during the period between the first assessment and the final assessment, both the college and the SPCM 101 discipline experienced change and reorganization. One of the most significant changes to have an impact on SPCM 101 is the unification of the three campuses’ disciplines into one college

discipline. The speech discipline now resides in the recently created Communication Arts Department. The college-wide approach to SPCM 101 has proven beneficial in that faculty members from all campuses are working with the course as a team and can more easily share curriculum-related information. There has also been an increase in adjunct faculty development. This includes greater opportunities for communication with and among adjuncts and a process of gathering and sharing activities and strategies with adjuncts.

Changes to SPCM 101 and departmental/discipline changes addressed not only the SPCM 101 LOA results, but also the department's commitment to the quality of SPCM 101. As part of the Speech discipline's ongoing efforts to maintain quality and enhance the effectiveness of student learning in SPCM 101, the following changes and initiatives have been implemented:

- Textbook review and the adoption an approved list of three texts for faculty members and a single text for adjuncts.
- Ongoing involvement with Learning Communities, including SPCM 101 with ENGL 101, ENGL 052 and ESOL 052.
- Adoption of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) by some faculty. Three faculty members (one from each campus) took part in the college's CRP workshop. CRP relates specifically to the Achievement Gap. The faculty who participated in the CRP workshops have implemented CRP practices in their own classes and have shared their strategies with other faculty members.
- Dr. Sheldon Metcalfe produced a CD-Rom with videotaped examples of various student presentations to be used as a supplement in the classroom.
- Increased communication with and development opportunities for adjunct faculty.
- Ongoing review of the SPCM 101 Common Course Outline and the way in which objectives are being met by faculty.
- Sharing of information across the campuses related to recent findings in the field of communication.

#### **Stage 4: Implementing Course Revisions and Reassessing Student Learning**

During the Spring 2007 SPCM 101 LOA, data indicated that 74% of the students enrolled in SPCM 101 passed the course with grades ranging from A to D. Fourteen percent of the students failed the course. Ten percent of students withdrew from the course. Eight-tenths of one percent of students received Incompletes.

The mean pre-test score on the test for all three campuses was 16.52. The mean post-test score was 17.57. For African American students, the pre-test mean was 15.62, and the mean post-test score was 16.71. For white students, the pre-test mean was 17.41, and the post-test mean was 18.30. African American males did not have the same significant increases from pre-test to post-test scores during this round of testing. For African American males, there was a mean score of 15.11 on the pre-test and a mean score of 16.26 on the post-test.

During the Spring 2007 round of testing, each demographic group made gains from pre-test to post-test. However, the gains were not as significant as the gains made in the 2003/2004 round of testing. Students in the Spring 2007 round of testing had slightly lower pre-test scores than students in the 2003/2004 round of testing. Of further note is the fact the post-test completion rate was not as high as expected. Approximately 20 out of more than 80 sections of SPCM 101 turned in pre-tests, but did not turn in post-tests.

The SPCM 101 LOA team is concerned about the significant drop in participation from pre-test to post-test in the 2007 round of testing. The participation drop seemed to occur primarily in sections taught by adjuncts. A possible explanation is the fact that the discipline and department were in the midst of organizational and administrative changes during the testing period. It is possible that some adjuncts did not fully understand the importance and requirement of following through with the post-test.

In Fall 2006, 96% of the students in the SPCM 101 sections that participated in GREATS passed the course. The Common Graded Assignment received the following mean scores: Content Knowledge – 3.00, Written Communication – 3.38, Critical Thinking – 3.22, Technology – 2.98, Cultural Appreciation – 2.47, and

Independent Learning – 3.38. In most of the categories, SPCM 101 students scored a bit lower than students in the other courses participating in the Fall 2006 GREATS assessment. Of note are the lower scores in Technology as a Learning Tool and Cultural Appreciation. Speech faculty will review the design of the instrument as it may need to be more specific in assessing students' experience with and understanding of technology and culture.

### **Stage 5: Final Analysis and Results**

Based on the findings from the 2003/2004 & Spring 2007 SPCM 101 LOAs, students in the course are showing gains from pre-test to post-test. The gains seen in the 2003/2004 round of tests were more significant than the gains seen in Spring 2007.

Based on the Fall 2003 and Fall 2006 GREATS data, there were modest increases in the areas of Communication, Technology, and Independent Learning. There was a notable increase in the area of Cultural Appreciation. The areas of Content Knowledge and Critical Thinking had modest declines.

During the period from the first assessment to the second assessment, CCBC and the Speech discipline experienced important changes. The most significant change has been the further unification of the departmental structure in the college. As has been the case with all of CCBC, the Speech discipline now operates as a college-wide discipline rather than as separate campus disciplines. Additionally, SPCM 101 is now part of the recently formed Communication Arts Department within the School of Liberal Arts.

Review of textbooks and changes to the textbook policies for adjuncts have been designed to insure that adjuncts, particularly new ones, are covering the goals, objectives, and major topics of the course. Learning Communities that pair SPCM 101 with courses in English and ESOL continue to run successfully.

The results of the SPCM 101 LOA project show that there has been some movement with the Achievement Gap, but there is still room for improvement. Faculty participation in the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy workshop has had the aim of further addressing the Gap.

Currently, the following initiatives are underway in SPCM 101 with the goal of improving student learning:

- On-going development of adjuncts. Currently, the Speech Coordinator prepares materials for adjuncts, conducts orientations with them, mentors them, and encourages communication and the sharing of strategies.
- The SPCM 101 textbook committee recently reviewed the texts currently in use as well as several additional texts. Texts were examined with close attention to the way in which they address the goals, objectives, and major topics of SPCM 101. Committee members also paid attention to the coverage of intercultural communication and technology in the texts. The texts selected by the committee have significant coverage of these issues.
- The Department Chair and Speech Coordinator have encouraged faculty members to review the Common Course Outline for SPCM 101 and insure that its content is being addressed in similar ways on all campuses.
- Continued development of Learning Communities with SPCM 101 and other disciplines.
- Offering faculty and adjuncts guidance on incorporating culture more fully into the course. Several full-time SPCM 101 faculty have taken the workshop on Culturally Responsive Instruction; one full-time faculty member is a facilitator of the workshop. These faculty members can share their strategies and experiences with their full-time and adjunct colleagues.
- On the technological side, the smart classrooms have helped tremendously in terms of being able to infuse technology into the curriculum. Many full-time and adjunct faculty members have incorporated WebCT into their classes. Recent equipment purchases for the discipline are also intended to enhance classroom technology use.
- All sections of SPCM 101 are required to assign presentations using multimedia technology.