WCU GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

2015 PILOT PROJECT (Year 2)

General Education Goals Assessed:
  Goal #1: Students graduating from West Chester University will be able to communicate effectively.

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Lessons Learned from 2014 Pilot Project & Initial Plans for 2015 Assessment
  <u>Initial Action Plans.</u> Following the very successful implementation of a new general education assessment process in 2014 and very, very positive responses to that process from participating faculty, the original assessment team members outlined a variety of steps to be taken during the 2015 implementation cycle. Those steps were described in the 2014 annual report and included the following:
  <u>General Follow-Up</u>: Assessment Team members will need to be in contact with faculty participants over the next academic year to gather information about the precise ways in which they made changes to their general education courses. We will ask about changes to syllabi, assignments, and teaching methods. The results of this follow-up will be presented in next year's General Education Assessment Report.
  <u>Effective Written Communication</u>: Sub-group participants all expressed the desire to implement change in their writing emphasis courses. They planned to redesign multiple course assignments and they intended to focus class time directly on those areas identified as areas of weakness by our assessment results. They also hoped to be able to engage in this very same assessment process again, hoping to see improvement in student performance overall. They have all agreed to keep artifacts from their 2014-2015 classes for assessment purposes. Thus, the team recommends that the same participants be invited to participate in a repeat of this project. Following a series of norming sessions using the revised VALUE rubric during early summer (2015), participants will be asked to score artifacts in much the same way they did during last summer. Results of the 2014-2015 assessment process will be compared to the results of the 2014 assessment process. The VALUE rubric will be, if necessary, further revised and will then be made available for campus-wide implementation and for use in training instructors of writing emphasis courses. We request that participants be compensated for their participation at the rate of 2 summer credits.
  <u>Effective Oral Communication</u>: Members of this sub-group also expressed interest in redesigning course assignments and classroom procedures. They also expressed interest in continuing with the assessment project. Thus, the team recommends that this sub-group also be invited to participate in a repeat of this project. Norming and scoring procedures will be repeated. The VALUE rubric will be, if necessary, further revised. Results will be compared to previous results and plans for dissemination of assessment results and faculty development for instructors teaching courses that include significant oral communication components will be developed. Again, we request that participants be compensated for their participation at the rate of 2 summer credits.
  <u>Thoughtful Response to Diversity</u>: One of the most important lessons learned from the work conducted by the diversity sub-group was, quite simply, that the purposes and goals of our diverse communities courses are not well understood on this campus. Even those teaching the diverse communities courses differed significantly in terms of the degree to which they focused class activities and/or course assignments on issues of structural inequality or social justice. In some cases, faculty were surprised to learn that a focus on multiculturalism and/or an appreciation of difference wasn't the primary goal of our diverse

communities courses. In other cases, faculty clearly dealt with issues beyond multiculturalism in their classes but did not include assignments that would allow assessment of the multiple outcomes associated with this goal (i.e., ability to examine assigned issues from a diverse communities perspective, ability to demonstrate a reasoned openness to diversity, ability to evaluate the ideological, historical, and cultural causes of structural inequality, and ability to demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives of historically marginalized groups). Thus, the assessment team believes that a strong emphasis on faculty development around the goals of the diverse communities course requirement is needed. We propose to invite instructors of diverse communities courses across campus to participate in one or more of a series of workshops to be scheduled during the summer of 2015. These workshops will actively engage faculty in the development of appropriate assignments for their diverse communities courses, assignments that will allow students to demonstrate the specific outcomes associated with this general education goal. Thus, following participation in at least two workshops, participating faculty members will submit a revised syllabus that clearly incorporates all of the learning outcomes associated with the diverse communities designation and at least one course assignment description that permits appropriate assessment. We request that participants be compensated at a rate of $200 per two-hour workshop attended.

One Change to the Action Plan. The initial action plan for the assessment of a thoughtful response to diversity (Gen Ed Goal #5) was revised following additional discussion. During the same period of time that we were designing a new procedure for the assessment of the general education program, WCU was also committed to redesigning the general education program itself. A General Education Advisory Board, appointed by the Provost, was working with campus constituencies to develop a broader and more intentional program, one in which multiple pathways would allow students to meet general education requirements and goals with a set of theme-related courses. Each pathway would be required to meet all of the general education goals, including the development of a thoughtful response to diversity. Thus, new courses, developed to meet this general education goal, would need to be developed for each of the theme-based pathways. It was the intention of the General Education Advisory Board and General Education Faculty Director to conduct a set of summer workshops in which participating faculty would be involved in the preliminary development of some theme-based pathways and some specific courses within those pathways. Specifically, faculty were to be invited to participate in the initial development of courses to meet this general education goal across a variety of pathways. Given that these workshops would be specifically addressing, among other thing, the need to include assignments that would permit appropriate assessment of this general education goal, we decided to remove this goal from the Year 2 assessment cycle.

The action plans for both communication groups (written & oral communication) were implemented as initially proposed.

Assessment Plan & Timeline

1. Contact 2014 faculty participants to request participation during 2015 (Spring 2015).
2. Collect assessment artifacts by the end of the spring semester.
3. Collect feedback from faculty participants about changes made as a result of 2014 participation (Early Summer 2015).
4. Plan and implement summer assessment sessions (norming sessions, rubric revisions, etc., as described below) (Summer 2015).
5. Collect feedback about usefulness of 2nd round of participation and suggestions for next steps (Fall 2015).
6. Write up assessment results for each assessment group (Fall 2015).
7. Prepare an overall General Education Assessment report outlining the process, the results, the implications of the results, and next steps (Fall 2015).

Participants & Collection of Artifacts

During the Spring 2015 semester, all faculty who had participated in the 2014 assessment of both written and oral communication (General Education Goal #1), were invited to participate in a repeat of that assessment process. All agreed to participate again. Unfortunately, not all faculty were teaching appropriately designated courses during the Spring 2015 semester but those who were provided artifacts in the same way as they had done the year before (by submitting them to a designated D2L site). A total of 17 faculty participated in 2015:

1. Written Communication – 11 instructors/7 different courses
   - 6 CAS, 2 CBPA, 1 CHS, 2 COE
   - 1 100-level, 3 200-level, 2 300-level, 1 400-level courses
   - 6 repeat courses taught by same instructor, 1 new course taught by one of original instructors
2. Oral Communication – 6 instructors/6 different courses
   - 2 CAS, 2 CBPA, 2 CHS
   - 6 400-level courses

Participant Feedback Following Year 1 Participation & Closing the Loop

Written Communication Assessment Group. An initial meeting was held with the written communication assessment group on June 5, 2015. At that meeting, discussion was focused specifically on what we learned from last year's process, what changes were made as a result of last year's experience, and what effect this faculty development experience might have had on student performance (if any). Faculty reported numerous lessons and numerous changes, including changes to the materials they made available to students, changes to the way they conducted writing instruction, changes to grading materials (i.e., rubrics), and many others. Participants were unanimously positive in their responses. They all believed that they were better teachers of writing (across the curriculum) as a result of their experience. Some sample responses to the question of what changed:

1. I revised my rubric for clarity, provided the rubric to students in advance, and frequently reviewed the rubric and the assignment for clarity.
2. This experience was eye-opening for me. I used the rubric as a guide to prepare students for writing their papers. I do more teaching of writing in class and provide more guidance about what is and what isn't acceptable. In short, I used this experience (and the VALUE rubric) to guide my class and to refine the class rubric.
3. Following this experience, I looked at my syllabus more seriously and spent more time in class discussing and modeling appropriate writing. I borrowed assignments from other participants that I believe helped my students.
4. I provided more guidance to students with regard to the identification of scholarly resources for inclusion in their papers. I spent more time meeting with students (1on 1) about finding appropriate sources. This all paid off. I believe students wrote better papers and made better connections between sources. I changed all of my lab rubrics and added writing to all assignments. I increased the amount of in-class time spent on peer-editing and review.
5. I worked with my GA to understand the rubric and she was able then to meet with students (in addition to my meetings with students) to discuss writing assignments, expectations, etc. At least 2/3 of my students met with my GA to discuss writing.
6. I focus a lot more on context and audience now than I did before. I make sure students think about who they're writing for.

With regard to changes needed across campus, participants made the following suggestions:

1. We need to use a common language across campus to describe the characteristics of good writing (e.g., use the words from the actual rubric when discussing with students in class). I saw improvement in student writing of lab reports when I did this.
2. We need to develop a set of consistent expectations for writing across the curriculum and provide development opportunities for faculty who teach such courses.
3. We need to think about "Writing as Learning" instead of "Learning to Write" as part of our curriculum. This might mean smaller (shorter) assignments but more of them to help students learn to really think through (analyze) what they're writing about.

One member of the assessment group took detailed notes of this meeting. She then provided an analytic memo of the themes that emerged from this group discussion. Themes included the usefulness of the collaborative process, faculty changes in strategies, faculty talk about what they continue to do or don't do, and narratives of student difficulty. This analytic memo is available in **Appendix A**. In addition, five members of the group provided written responses to the question of what changed. A compilation of those responses can be found in **Appendix B**.

Oral Communication Assessment Group. At the start of the 2015 assessment cycle, the Oral Communication group was asked to provide specific feedback regarding the effective teaching and evaluation of student oral communication skills that they believe should be provided to the wider university community. Feedback was consistent with several areas of the rubric:

1. ***Central Message (Main point, thesis, bottom line, take away):*** Emphasize the central message. Many student speakers don't seem to have a main point. Rarely is the reason for listening made important and many students just talk about a topic for several minutes.
2. ***Organization (Specific introduction, conclusion, and sequenced material within the body and transitions):*** Students need to be reminded to present a clear thesis and overview at the beginning of the presentation. Specifically, the audience must understand where things are headed throughout the presentation. Presenter must also give an appropriate conclusion restating the important results or points from the presentation.
3. ***Language (Vocabulary, terminology, and sentence structure):*** Overall we do well here but, when applicable, presenters need to ensure jargon is clarified so everyone understands what is being discussed.
4. ***Delivery (Posture, gestures, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness):*** Speak assertively and do not "swallow" the ends of sentences and no UP Talking, sentences should not sound like questions.
5. ***Supporting Material (Explanations, examples from relevant sources using citations when applicable):*** References should be integrated throughout, not just provided as a slide at the end. There should be some indication of the authority "Bookson characterized X in his research that supports Y".

Participants were also asked to comment on how their participation during year one of this pilot project has directly impacted their teaching of oral communication within their courses. Their responses included:

1. Allowed me to prepare a rubric that could be used by all faculty across the program in the scoring of student artifacts.

2. Now require citations of key sources be integrated throughout the presentation rather than a final slide demonstrating the references.
3. Became more conscientious of non-verbal cues such as eye contact and body language and brought this to the students attention.
4. Allowed more critical engagement in thinking about the how the university wide requirements directly relate to my course.
5. It has helped in being more critical when developing instructions for presentation assignments. I feel more prepared to evaluate students on this skill because I provide more detail to students about the expectations for oral presentations.

Summer Norming Sessions, Inter-Rater Reliability, and Final Scoring

During the early summer (May, June) each group worked on the development of inter-rater agreement. Scoring assignments were made by each assessment team leader and groups met multiple times to discuss both the scoring process and the resulting scores. As this process progressed, the written communication group made minor revisions to the rubric they were working with (beyond any revisions made the year before), revisions that provided better assessment of our own general education goals. They also renamed the performance levels for clearer differentiation (from Below Benchmark, Benchmark, Milestone, Milestone, Capstone to Below Basic, Basic, Emerging, Proficient, Exemplary) . This revised rubric, along with the rubrics used last year, is available in **Appendix C**.

Participants did make some suggestions and/or observations about this year's process, compared to that of last year. Comments made by the Written Communication group include:

1) Scoring was easier this time.
2) Papers seem better (across all classes and disciplines) than last year.
3) For the purposes of general education assessment, we might consider dropping the Disciplinary Conventions dimension. This continues to be the hardest dimension to assess.

RESULTS: WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Training and norming sessions occurred early in the Summer of 2015. Artifacts from each of the included writing emphasis courses were utilized during training sessions and for out-of-session scoring. Following these sessions, all remaining artifacts (135) were randomly assigned to coders for final scoring. Each artifact was assigned to two coders (1 primary, 1 secondary). All 135 artifacts were scored by both coders for 4 of the 5 dimensions included on the VALUE rubric. Only 126 were scored for the dimension of Sources & Evidence (as sources and evidence were not included in the requirements for one class).

Given this methodology, a total of 666 pairs of ratings were collected. Agreement was assessed by measuring the number/percentage of rating pairs that differed by no more than 1 point on the associated 5-point rating scale (0-4).

Score Differences/Rater Agreement: Score differences are summarized below.

| Difference	Context & Purposes	Content Development	Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	Sources & Evidence	Control of Syntax & Mechanics
0	65	62	60	56	64
1	63	66	69	65	66
2	7	7	6	5	5
3	0	0	0	0	0
Total	135	135	135	126	135
% Within 1 Rating Point	94.81%	94.81%	94.07%	96.03%	96.30%

Frequency of score differences within 1 rating point are highlighted. Perfect agreement between coders was achieved for 307 of the 666 score pairs (46.10%). **Agreement within one rating point was achieved for 636 of the 666 score pairs (95.50%)**. This represents some improvement over the agreement reached by the same coders in 2014 (43.60% for perfect agreement; 91.50% for agreement within one point).

Final Scores: As was done during the initial pilot project, primary coder ratings were assigned as final ratings for each of the five dimensions for the 135 artifacts when the two coder scores were within one rating point of each other. When discrepancies greater than one rating point occurred, a third coder determined the final ratings. Note that rating levels are different from those used last year (Below Benchmark, Benchmark, Milestone, Milestone, Capstone).

Rating	Context & Purposes	Content Development	Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	Sources & Evidence	Control of Syntax & Mechanics	Overall
Below Basic (0)	0	0	0	2 (1.59%)	0	2 (0.30%)
Basic (1)	2 (1.48%)	2 (1.48%)	4 (2.96%)	3 (2.38%)	1 (0.74%)	12 (1.15%)
Emerging (2)	30 (22.22%)	43 (31.85%)	47 (34.81%)	30 (23.81%)	42 (31.11%)	192 (28.83%)
Proficient (3)	87 (64.44%)	73 (54.07%)	70 (51.85%)	73 (57.94%)	84 (62.22%)	387 (58.11%)
Exemplary (4)	16 (11.85%)	17 (12.59%)	14 (10.37%)	18 (14.29%)	8 (5.93%)	73 (10.96%)
Total	135	135	135	126	135	666

Two ratings fell below basic level, both in the use of Sources & Evidence dimension. All but 14 of the 666 ratings were at **Emerging level or higher (97.90%)**. Across all five rubric dimensions, the greatest percentage of scores were at the Proficient level (58.11%), with 28.83% at the Emerging level, and 10.96% at the Exemplary level. Data are presented below in chart format for visual comparison.

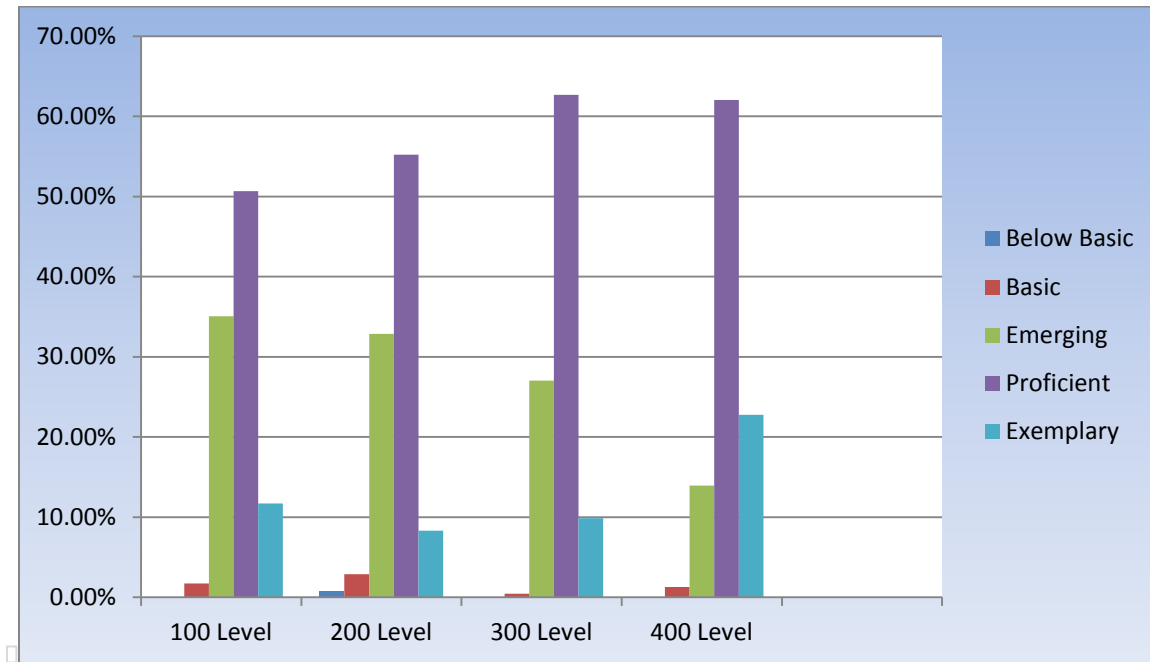**Written Communication Ratings
All Dimensions, All Courses**
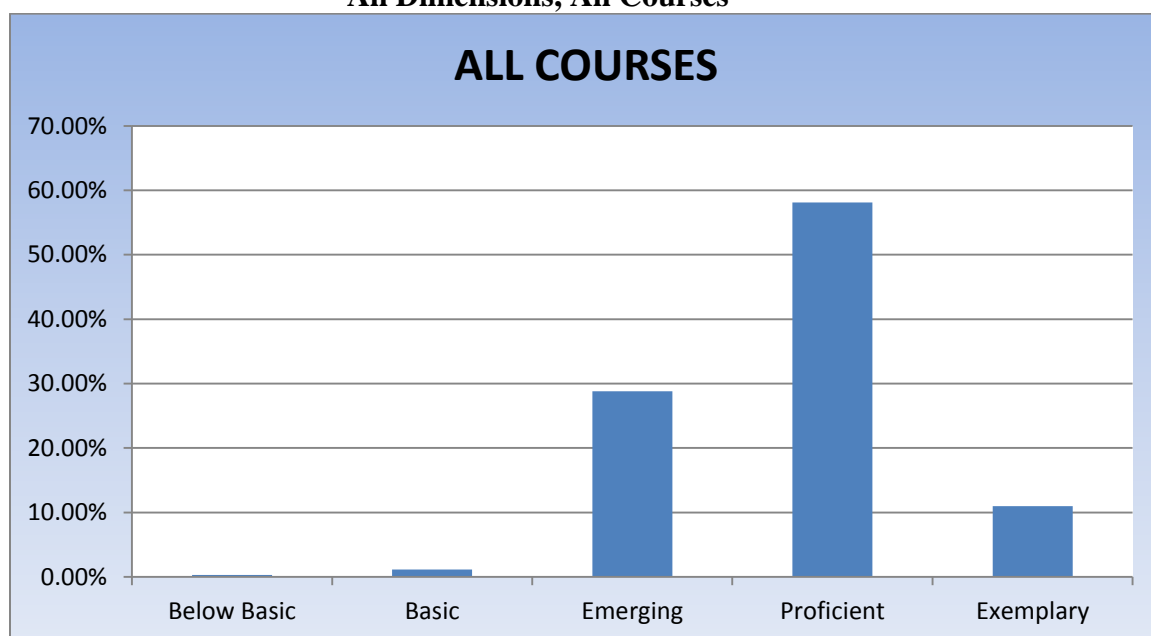
Final Scores by Course Level: Given the developmental nature of the Value rubric, the ratings were divided by course level (100 – 400 level), across all dimensions combined.

**Ratings Across All Dimensions (Combined) By Course Level**

Rating	100 Level	200 Level	300 Level	400 Level	All Courses
Below Basic (0)	0	2 (0.72%)	0	0	2 (0.30%)
Basic (1)	2 (1.74%)	8 (2.89%)	1 (0.43%)	1 (1.27%)	12 (1.80%)
Emerging (2)	27 (35.06%)	91 (32.85%)	63 (27.04%)	11 (13.92%)	192 (28.83%)
Proficient (3)	39 (50.65%)	153 (55.23%)	146 (62.66%)	49 (62.03%)	387 (58.11%)
Exemplary (4)	9 (11.69%)	23 (8.30%)	23 (9.87%)	18 (22.78%)	73 (10.96%)
Total	77	277	233	79	666

The distributions of ratings are quite similar at the four different course levels, with Proficient ratings being the most common and Emerging ratings the next most common until the 400 level, when Exemplary ratings become more common than Emerging. We do not see any dramatic changes in the percent of any of the ratings across the four course levels. Nonetheless, statistical analyses do suggest a significant relationship between ratings and course level [$\underline{X}^2(12) = 30.72$, $\underline{p} < .01$]. From the charts presented on the next page, it is clear that the percent of Proficient ratings does increase by course level for the most part. We also see a reduction in the percentage of Emerging ratings as course level increases and an increase in the percent of Exemplary ratings across course level (at least from 200 level to 400 level), with the highest percentage at the 400 level, as should be expected. In an attempt to learn more about the nature of this relationship, an exploratory Analysis of Variance procedure was conducted (exploratory because ANOVA is typically not recommended for use with qualitative data). The results suggest a significant difference in the average rating across all dimensions [$\underline{F}(3,662) = 7.734$, $p < .001$]. Post-hoc tests show that the mean rating at the 400 level (m=3.06, Proficient +) is significantly higher than the mean rating at any of the other levels (m = 2.82 at 300 level, m = 2.68 at 200 level, m= 2.71 at 100 level). Other differences approach statistical significance.

## Written Communication Ratings Within Course Levels

Written Communication Ratings Across Course Levels
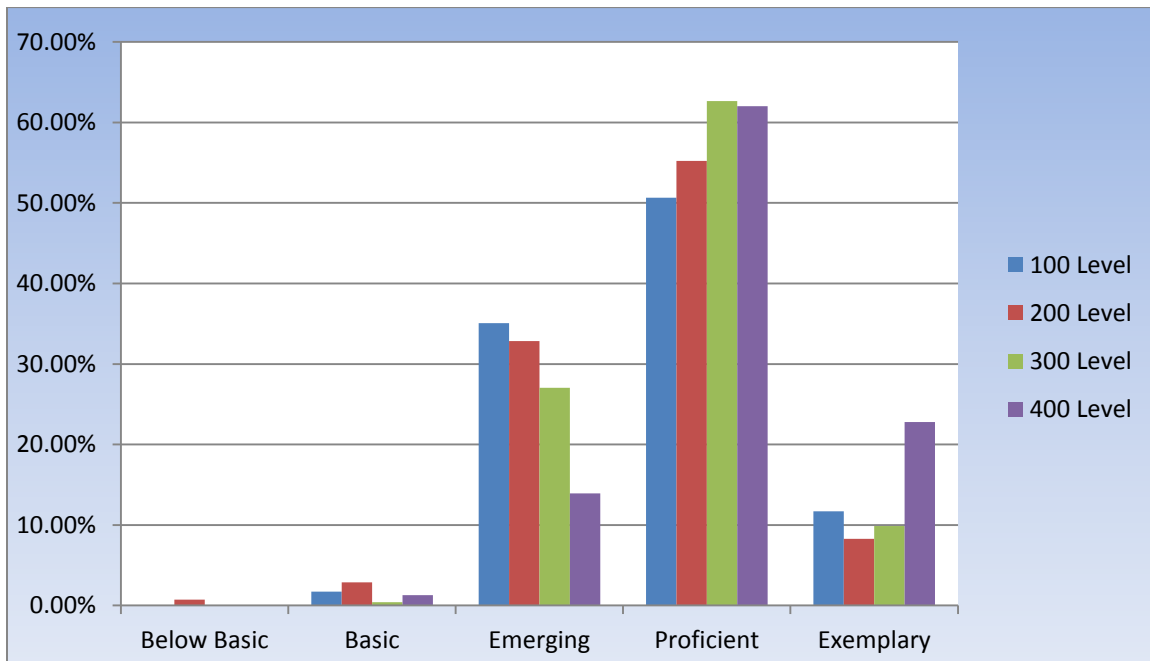
Chi-square analyses also suggest a significant difference in the ratings when comparing lower-level (100 & 200) courses to upper-level (300 & 400) courses [$\underline{X}^2$ (4) = 15.96, $\underline{p}$ < .01]. The chart below demonstrates a reduction in the percentage of scores at or below the Emerging level and an increase in the percentage of ratings at or above the Proficient level. This is exactly what one would expect if student writing is improving as they move through the General Education & Major curriculums.

Written Communication Ratings in Lower- & Upper-Level Courses
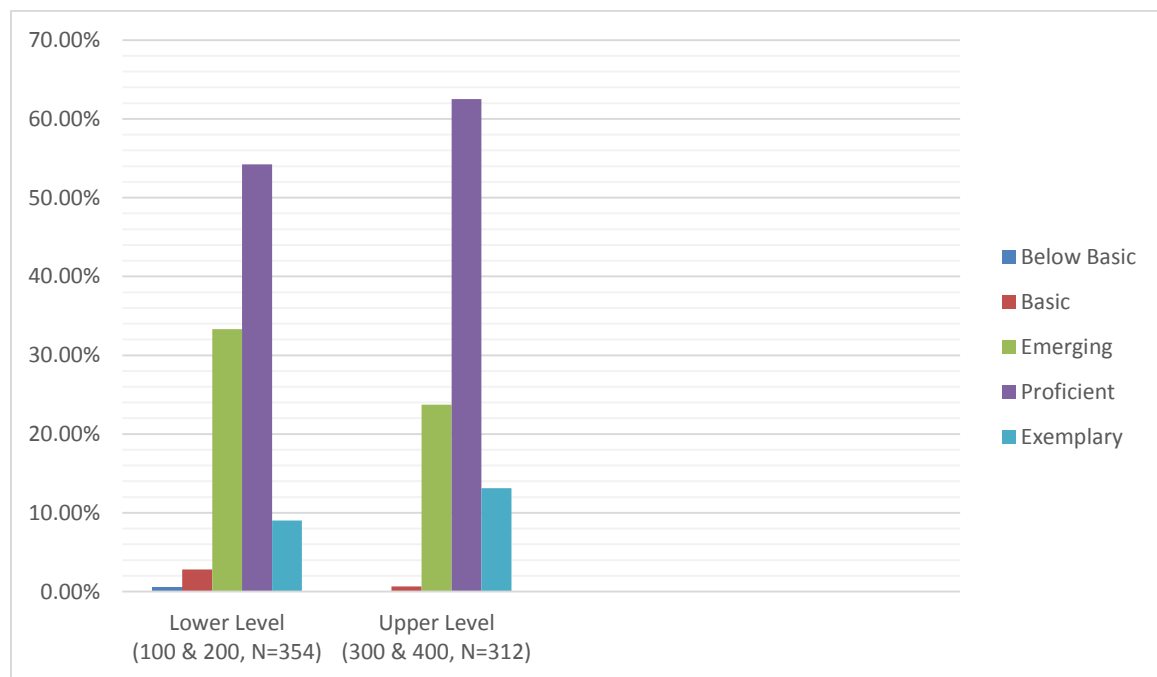
Conclusion: It appears that student writing skills are improving across course levels, at least with regard to overall percentage of ratings at each level. It is also true that across all dimensions and across all course levels, the majority of students are performing at the Proficient level or above.

Individual Dimensions: Might there be performance differences in one or more of the individual dimensions? A series of paired-samples t-tests (again, exploratory due to ordinal nature of data) suggests that there are a few significant differences in performance across dimensions (collapsed across all course levels). Specifically, students receive higher ratings in the dimension of Context & Purposes (m = 2.87) than in the dimension of Genre & Disciplinary Conventions (m= 2.67) and the dimension of Syntax and Mechanics (m=2.73). Furthermore, students receive higher average ratings in the use of Sources and Evidence (m=2.81) than in the application of Genre & Disciplinary Conventions (m=2.67). In addition, ratings across dimensions are significantly and positively correlated (with $\underline{r}$'s ranging from .238 to .498) suggesting, of course, that students who score well on one dimension tend to score well on all dimensions. Students who score poorly on one dimension tend to score poorly on all dimensions.

Might there be differences in dimension scores across course levels? Our sample size is small for such a comparison but the tables below show the distribution of ratings for each of the five dimensions of the rubric at each of the course levels. The charts below those tables display the same information as above (i.e., the frequency of ratings within and across course levels) but for each individual dimension.

Chi-Square analyses suggest no significant differences in ratings by course level within any one dimension. An exploratory Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) also suggests no significant differences in the average ratings within dimensions across course levels.

100 Level Courses (1 course)

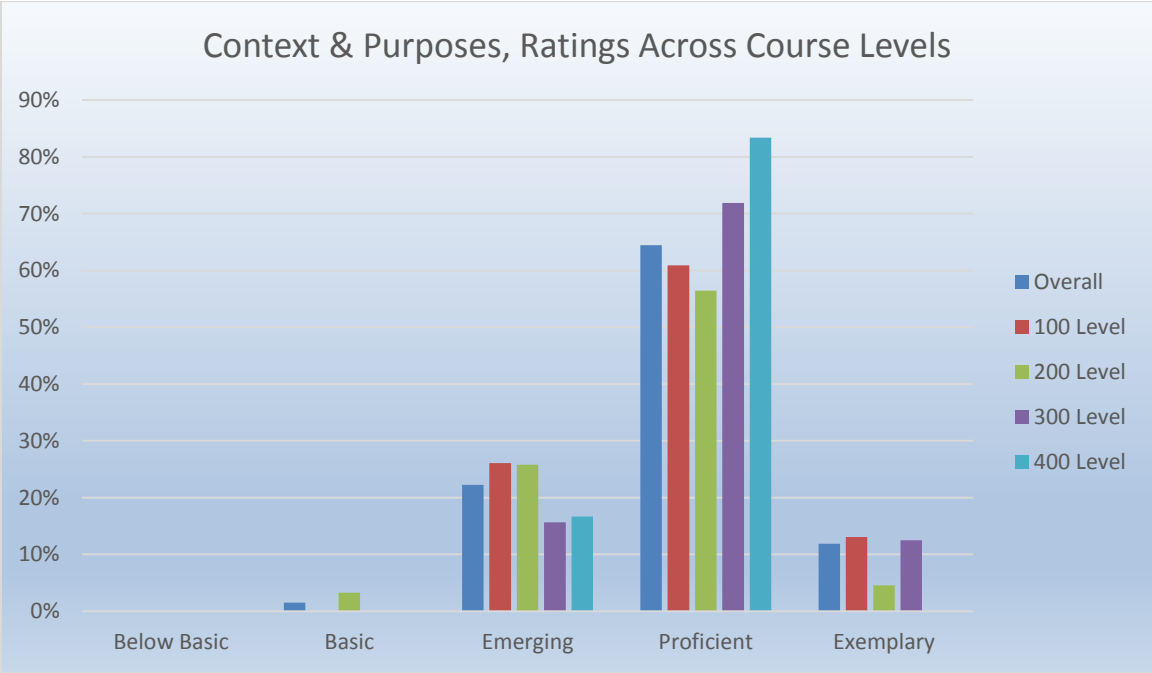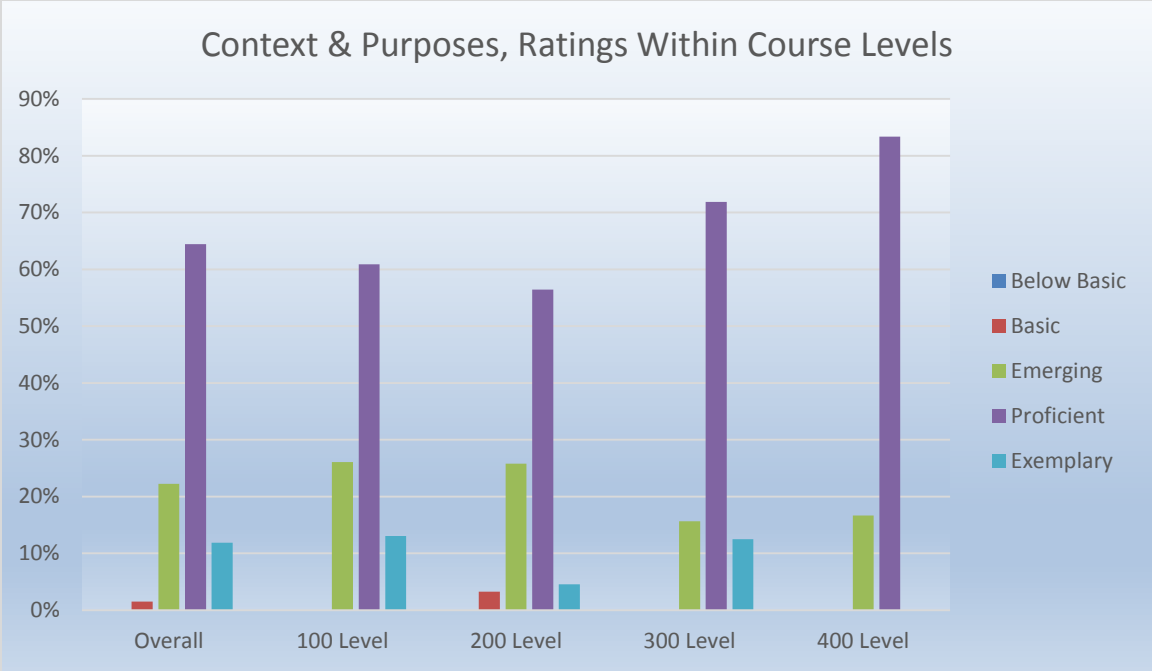| Rating	Context & Purposes	Content Development	Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	Sources & Evidence	Control of Syntax & Mechanics	All Dimensions
Below Basic (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Basic (1)	0	1 (4.35%)	0	1 (4.35%)	0	2 (1.74%)
Emerging (2)	6 (26.09%)	7 (30.43%)	10 (43.48%)	9 (39.13%)	8 (34.78%)	40 (34.78%)
Proficient (3)	14 (60.87%)	12 (52.17%)	10 (43.48%)	11 (47.83%)	13 (56.52%)	60 (52.17%)
Exemplary (4)	3 (13.04%)	3 (13.04%)	3 (13.04%)	2 (8.70%)	2 (8.70%)	13 (11.30%)
Total	23	23	23	23	23	115

200 Level Courses (3 courses)

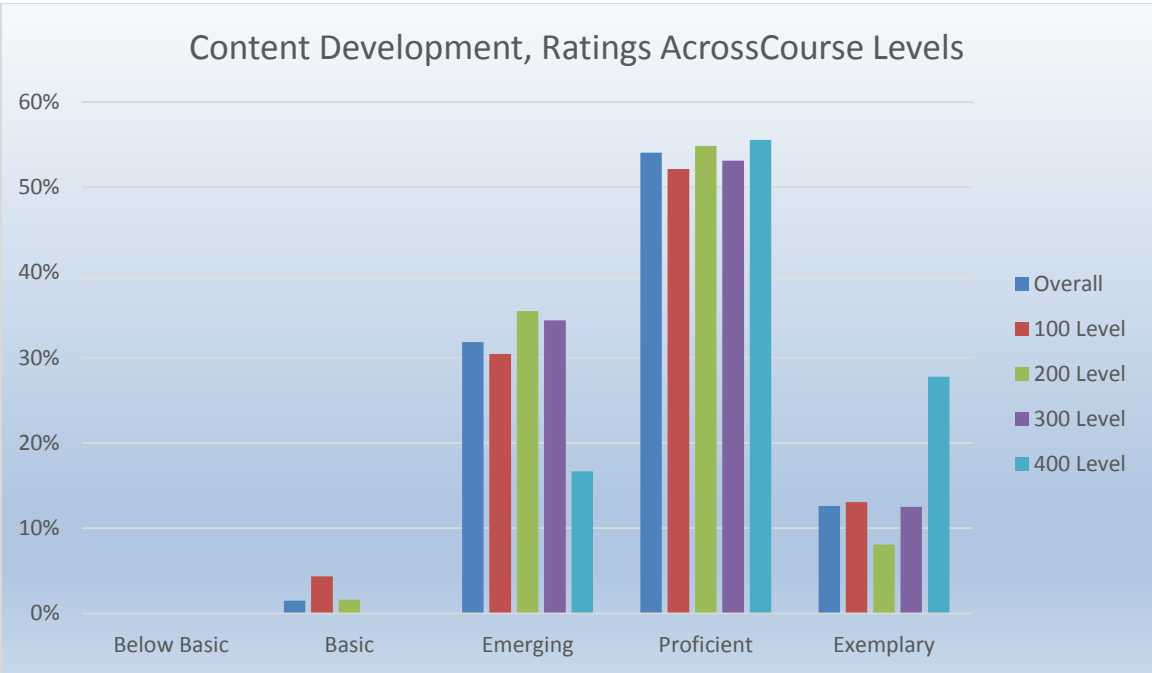| Rating	Context & Purposes	Content Development	Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	Sources & Evidence	Control of Syntax & Mechanics	All Dimensions
Below Basic (0)	0	0	0	2 (3.23%)	0	2 (0.65%)
Basic (1)	2 (3.23%)	1 (1.61%)	2 (3.23%)	1 (1.61%)	0	6 (1.94%)
Emerging (2)	16 (25.81%)	22 (35.48%)	22 (35.48%)	12 (19.35%)	18 (29.03%	90 (27.74%)
Proficient (3)	35 (56.45%)	34 (54.84%)	32 (51.61%)	36 (58.06%)	41 (66.13%)	178 (57.74%)
Exemplary (4)	9 (4.52%)	5 (8.06%)	6 (9.68%)	11 (17.74%)	3 (4.84%)	34 (11.94%)
Total	62	62	62	62	62	310

300 Level Courses (2 courses)

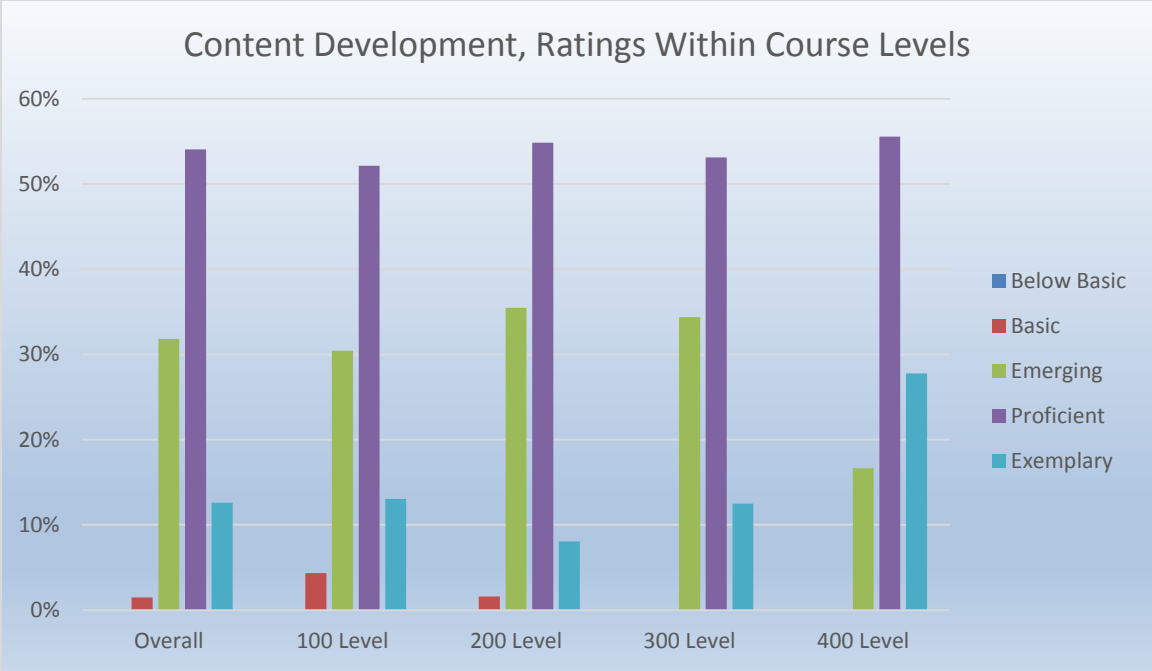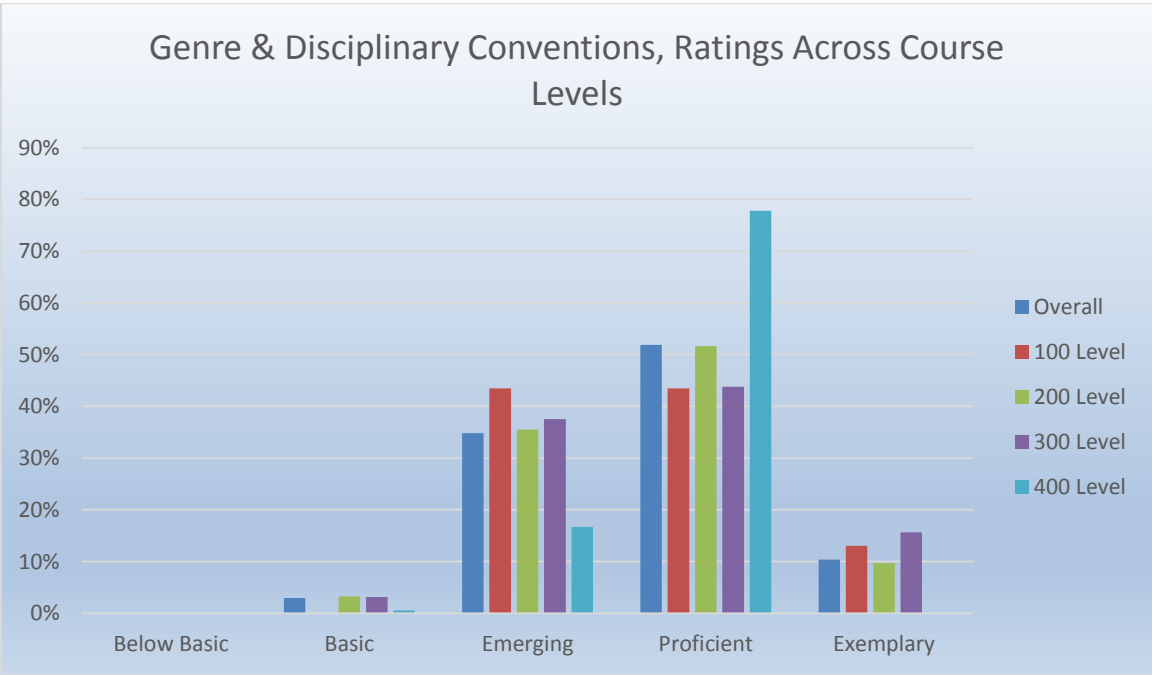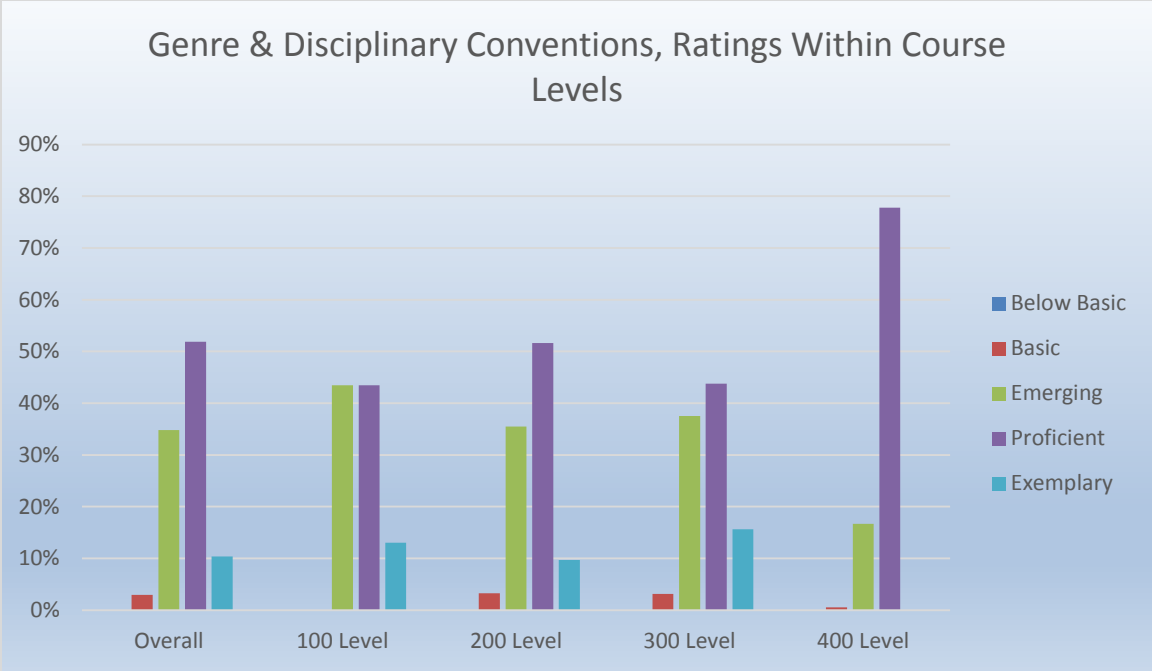| Rating	Context & Purposes	Content Development	Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	Sources & Evidence	Control of Syntax & Mechanics	All Dimensions
Below Basic (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Basic (1)	0	0	1 (3.13%)	0	0	1 (0.66%)
Emerging (2)	5 (15.63%)	11 (34.38%)	12 (37.50%)	5 (21.74%)	11 (34.38%)	44 (29.14%)
Proficient (3)	23 (71.88%)	17 (53.13%)	14 (43.75%)	15 (65.22%)	18 (56.25%)	87 (57.62%)
Exemplary (4)	4 (12.50%)	4 (12.50%)	5 (15.63%)	3 (13.04%)	3 (9.38%)	19 (12.58%)
Total	32	32	32	23	32	151

400 Level Courses (1 course)

Rating	Context & Purposes	Content Development	Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	Sources & Evidence	Control of Syntax & Mechanics	All Dimensions
Below Basic (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Basic (1)	0	0	1 (0.56%)	1 (0.56%)	1 (0.56%)	3 (3.33%)
Emerging (2)	3 (16.67%)	3 (16.67%)	3 (16.67%)	4 (22.22%)	5 (27.78%)	18 (20.00%)
Proficient (3)	15 (83.33%)	10 (55.56%)	14 (77.78%)	11 (61.11%)	12 (66.67%)	62 (68.89%)
Exemplary (4)	0	5 (27.78%)	0	2 (11.11%)	0	7 (7.78%)
Total	18	18	18	18	18	90

Context & Purposes, Ratings Within Course Levels

Context & Purposes, Ratings Across Course Levels

Content Development, Ratings Within Course Levels

Content Development, Ratings AcrossCourse Levels

Genre & Disciplinary Conventions, Ratings Within Course Levels

Genre & Disciplinary Conventions, Ratings Across Course Levels

Sources & Evidence, Ratings Within Course Levels

A grouped bar chart titled "Sources & Evidence, Ratings Within Course Levels" with the y-axis showing percentages from 0% to 80%. The x-axis categories are Overall, 100 Level, 200 Level, 300 Level, and 400 Level. Legend: Below Basic, Basic, Emerging, Proficient, Exemplary.

Sources & Evidence, Ratings Across Course Levels

A grouped bar chart titled "Sources & Evidence, Ratings Across Course Levels" with the y-axis showing percentages from 0% to 80%. The x-axis categories are Below Basic, Basic, Emerging, Proficient, and Exemplary. Legend: Overall, 100 Level, 200 Level, 300 Level, 400 Level.

Control of Syntax & Mechanics, Ratings Within Course Levels

**Control of Syntax & Mechanics, Ratings Across Course Levels**

While no significant differences were found in the distribution of ratings across course levels for any individual dimension, the breakdown of results by individual dimension does yield some important and potentially useful information.

The distribution of ratings by course level across all (combined) dimensions (as shown on page 9), clearly shows that the percentage of Emerging ratings tends to decrease by course level, while the percentage of Exemplary ratings tends to increase across course levels. The percentage of Proficient ratings increases across course levels and is the most frequently assigned rating at all course levels. Similar patterns are found within each dimension, with a few important differences:

1. There are no Exemplary ratings for Context & Purposes at the 400 level.
2. There are no Exemplary ratings for Genre & Disciplinary Conventions at the 400 level.
3. There are no Exemplary ratings for the use of Sources & Evidence at the 400 level but there are more Emerging ratings in this category at the 400 level than at the 200 and 300 levels.

When we examined the distribution of ratings for all dimensions (combined) by upper- and lower-level courses (100 & 200 level vs 300 & 400 level), we found a significant reduction in the percentage of scores at or below the Emerging level and an increase in the percentage of ratings at or above the Proficient level (see page 10). Is this difference located within any specific dimension(s)? Chi-square analyses suggest no significant differences in the distribution of ratings within individual dimensions when course ratings are divided in this manner. The chart below provides a visual comparison of average dimension ratings within course levels.
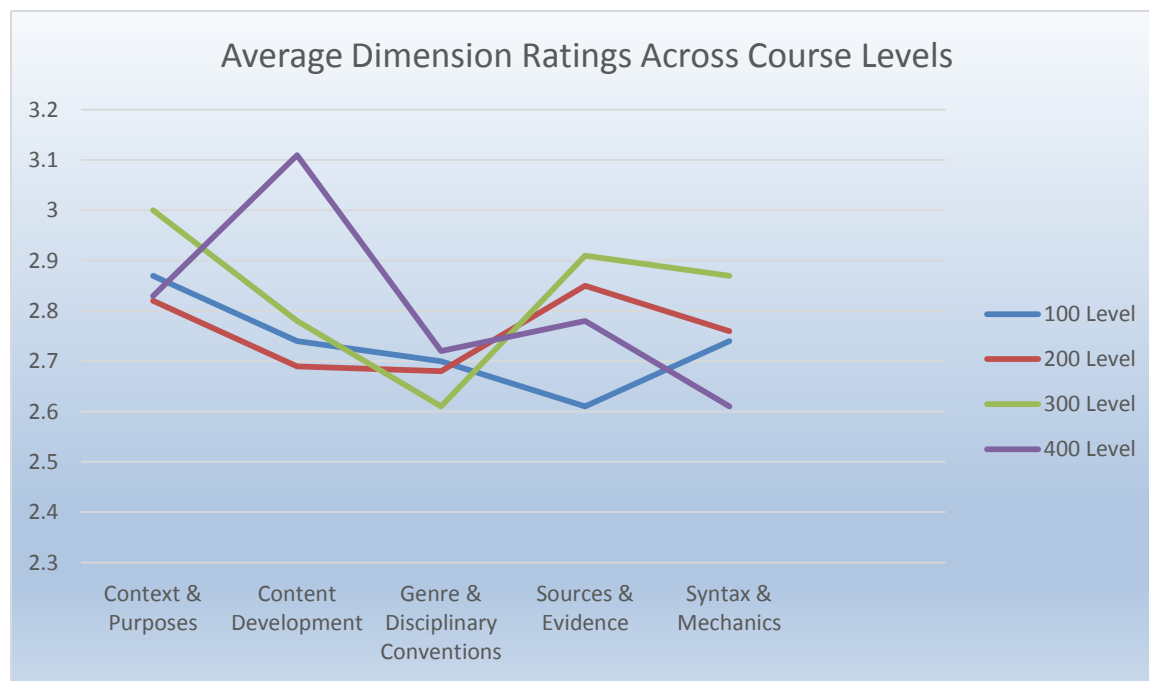
There seem to be, then, no significant differences in student performance across course levels within any single dimension. But, is it possible that there are significant differences between dimension ratings within any course level? To address this question, a series of paired samples t-tests were conducted (again, exploratory), comparing average dimension ratings within each course level (100, 200, 300, and 400). Multiple mean differences approached significance but only a few were significantly

different. Among the ratings at the 300 level (N=32), the average rating for Context & Purposes (m=2.97) and the average rating for Use of Sources & Evidence (m=2.91) were both significantly higher than the average rating for Genre & Disciplinary Conventions (m=2.72). Among the ratings at the 400 level, (N=18), the average rating for Content Development (m=3.11) was significantly higher than the average ratings for Genre & Disciplinary Conventions (m=2.72) and Control of Syntax & Mechanics (m=2.61).

Average Dimension Ratings Within Course Levels
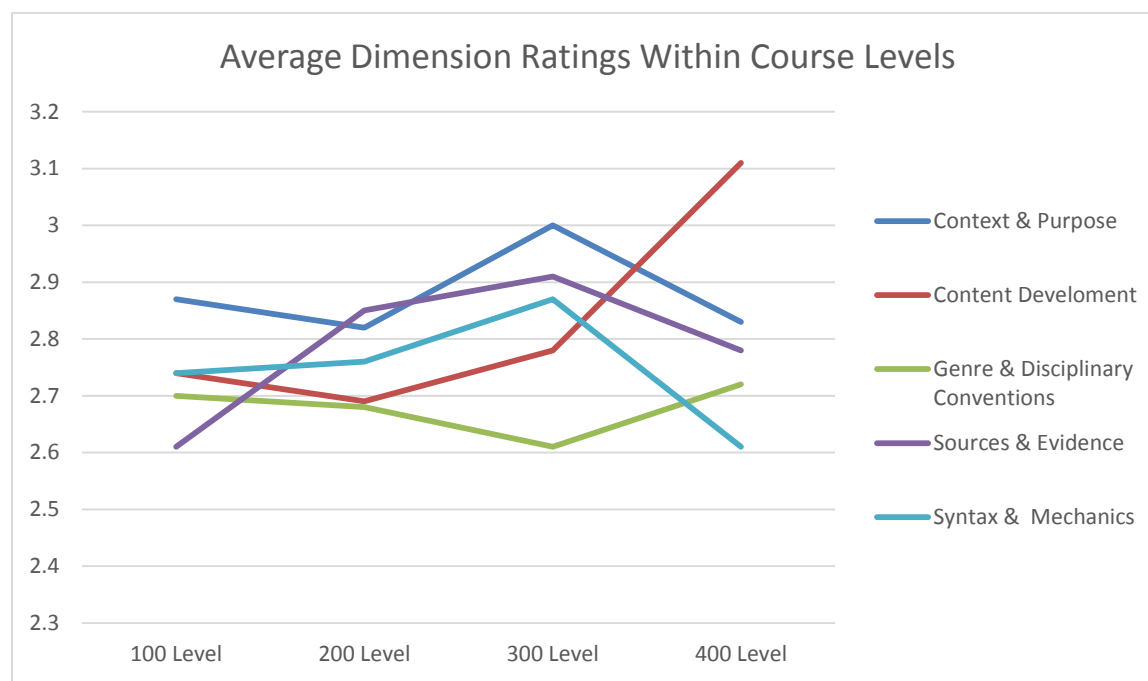
Conclusion: Despite the fact that no significant differences were found across course levels within individual rubric dimensions and only a few significant differences across dimensions within course levels were found, a few rudimentary conclusions can be drawn from the data presented above. Students appear to be performing at their lowest levels (at almost every course level) in the area of Genre & Disciplinary Conventions. In most categories (i.e., rubric dimensions) students in 100 level courses earned lower ratings than students in most other course levels, as one would expect. The area of strongest growth across the course levels appears to be in the area of Content Development. We, unfortunately, see a decline in average ratings for the use of Sources & Evidence as well as Genre & Disciplinary Conventions at the 400 level in this sample. This last finding may well be a result of the types of classes included in this sample, however, as well as the specific artifact types included.

Comparison to 2014 Assessment Results

While we originally intended to directly compare the ratings assigned to student artifacts across the two years of this assessment process, the written communication assessment group felt strongly that such a comparison would be inappropriate. They reported that their understanding of the rubric and the

assessment process improved as a result of last year's participation and their attempts to alter their courses and assignments, making such a comparison meaningless. They also reported that our simple change in the labeling of the rubric dimensions helped to clarify their thinking of each of the levels, relative to last year, and, therefore, influenced their assignment of ratings. Thus, we do not present a comparison to last year. However, data is available if there is a specific reason to present a comparison of any portion of the results.

Conclusion Regarding Written Communication Assessment

The data presented here suggest that WCU students are performing at reasonable levels with regard to the general education goal of effective written communication. That is, very few students are writing at the Basic level or below at any course level. The majority of ratings, completed by a set of trained and dedicated faculty members, are at the Emerging and Proficient levels (ratings of 2 and 3 on the AAC&U VALUE Rubric). There are, of course, areas in need of improvement. Scores seem to be lowest in the areas of Genre & Disciplinary Conventions and Use of Sources & Evidence. This may simply be an artifact of the range of writing assignments that were included in this sample. But, it may also be that these particular dimensions are better left to disciplinary writing assignments, rather than used in the assessment of effective communication within general education.

Recommendations of the Written Communication Assessment Group: Participants again made multiple recommendations, both short- and long-term, regarding the improvement of student writing, the improvement of faculty preparation for teaching writing across the curriculum, improving the assessment of general education goals, and for institutionalizing a culture of writing instruction at West Chester University. The recommendations listed below are, in some cases, exactly the same as those made last year:

1. A more permanent committee or cohort of faculty should be tasked with ongoing assessment of writing in the disciplines, the analysis of assessment data, and the development of faculty development programs to support continued improvement in the instruction of writing across the curriculum. The existing Writing Emphasis sub-committee of the CAPC General Education Committee is currently responsible for the review of proposals for new writing emphasis courses, the maintenance of a handbook for the development of writing emphasis courses, and the review of general education syllabi (including those for writing emphasis courses) as part of the 5-year Program Review process. They cannot take on the additional tasks recommended by this faculty body. Thus, a separate committee should be identified.
2. Provide all instructors of writing emphasis ("W") courses with information about syllabus requirements and the assessment of writing from classroom assignments on a regular basis, as instructors change and not all are aware of the requirements. Consider the development of a Writing Emphasis Booklet to be provided to all instructors of writing emphasis courses. The booklet should provide specific information about the requirements of writing emphasis courses, the need for assignments that allow for the assessment of effective writing, and good examples of classroom assignments that allow for appropriate assessment. Booklet should also include information about strategies for teaching writing (including simple strategies such as reading aloud).
3. Require, at minimum, that students complete WRT120 before taking a general education writing emphasis course. Provide a set of developmental writing goals/outcomes that would be associated with writing or writing emphasis courses at various levels. In this way, instructors teaching writing emphasis courses at various levels might be aware of what writing skills their students should have mastered before entering their classes. At the very least, they may then be able to test whether or not

their students do, indeed, have these skills and be aware of the specific skills that their courses are required to help students develop.

4. Focus on the development of writing skills for transfer across the curriculum. Require that "W" courses specifically include content for transfer.

5. Continue to provide specialized workshops and training sessions to assist faculty in learning how to teach writing across the curriculum. One example might be expansion of the current "W on Wednesdays" series of lunch-time presentations and workshops co-sponsored by the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Center and the Committee for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, a series designed for faculty teaching (or thinking about teaching) writing emphasis ("W") courses. Focus of this series will be on writing pedagogy and helping faculty to teaching writing across the curriculum.

6. Consider offering writing retreats for faculty as writers or for faculty as writing teachers. One possibility might be a Writing Project Model, in which faculty write and, simultaneously, learn about how to work with students to develop their writing skills.

7. Develop a set of online modules to illustrate teaching practices related to writing across the curriculum. Make these easily available to faculty through the Teaching, Learning, & Assessment web-page. (Currently in process)

8. Consider identifying and publicizing best practices in the teaching of "W" courses

9. Create a culture of writing and writing development at WCU:
   a. Create a formal Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program at WCU.
   b. Fund a regular position (half-time or full-time) for someone to serve as the WAC Director who would implement recommendations and would serve as leader or chairperson of the extended faculty committee described above.
   c. Provide a location for this WAC program and director on campus, preferably as part of a Center for Writing Excellence or a Center for Teaching Excellence or a Teaching and Learning Center.
   d. Develop a certification program for faculty teaching writing across the curriculum and require certification (in much the same way as we currently require faculty to be approved for teaching hybrid or online courses after completing a training session).
   e. Create "W" mentors or faculty liaisons (much like Assessment Coordinators) to work with faculty on the development of teaching across the curriculum skills.

10. Given the apparent lack of understanding about the intended goals of the writing emphasis courses, consider a process for review of general education syllabi (including those for "W" courses) for accredited programs (as they do not currently undergo the 5-year Program Review).
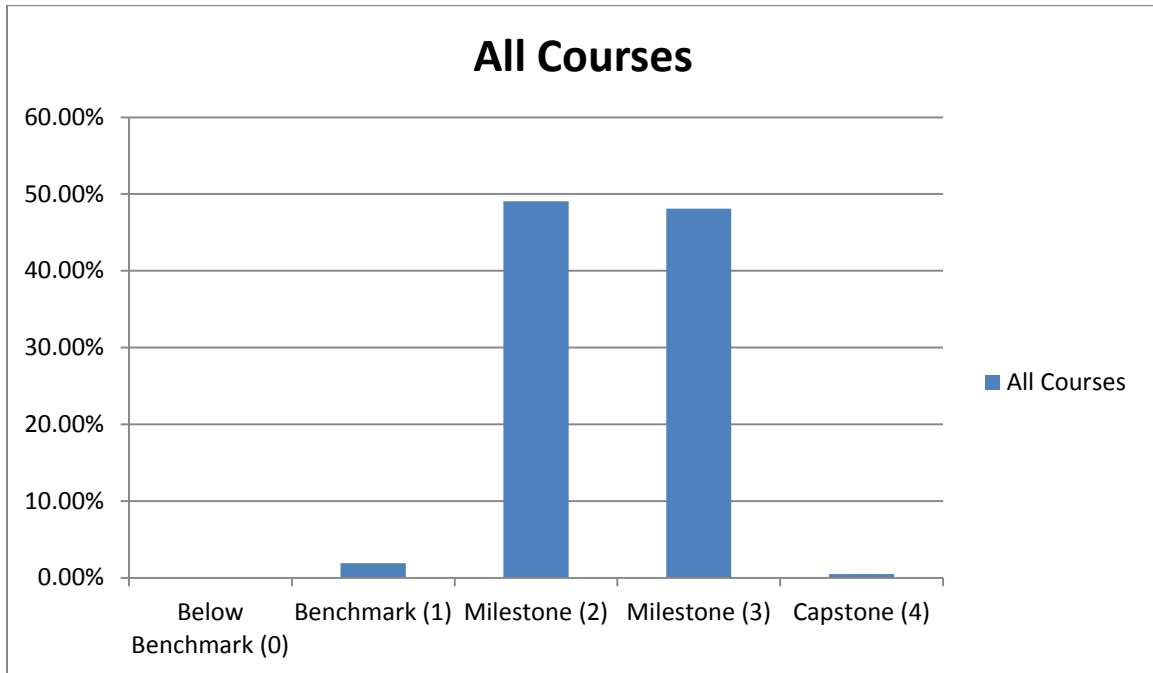
RESULTS: ORAL COMMUNICATION

Six of the 7 instructors of senior capstone courses (all 400 level) who participated in 2014 agreed to participate again. As was done for last year's assessment process, instructors agreed to allow video-recording of their students' oral presentations for assessment purposes. Students were asked to sign consent forms in each class. Throughout the semester, recorded sessions were submitted to D2L as student artifacts. Training and norming sessions occurred early in the summer of 2015. Evaluators were broken into two teams of 4 (with each team including 3 of the 6 instructors and the assessment team leader). A total of 42 student presentations were assessed by the two teams using all of the dimensions of the VALUE Rubric for Oral Communication.

Inter-rater agreement was assessed by comparing individual rater scores within teams and within dimensions. 75% agreement for each rating (i.e., each dimension for each artifact) was the goal. That is, we accepted all ratings as final when at least 3 of the 4 team members (i.e., 75% of the team) agreed on a rating. If fewer than 3 team members agreed on any rating, consensus was obtained by viewing the artifact as a team and discussing the scoring. At least 3 team members had to agree on a final rating. Thus, all individual ratings were the result of consensus by at least 3 of 4 team members

Final (Consensus) Scores:

Rating	Organization	Language	Delivery	Supporting Material	Central Message	Overall
Below Benchmark (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benchmark (1)	1 (2.38%)	0	3 (7.14%)	0	0	4 (1.90%)
Milestone (2)	23 (54.76%)	21 (50.00%)	26 (61.90%)	26 (61.90%)	7 (16.67%%)	103 (49.05%)
Milestone (3)	18 (42.86%)	21 (50.00%)	12 (28.57%)	15 (35.71%)	35 (83.33%)	101 (48.10%)
Capstone (4)	0	0	1 (2.38%)	1 (2.38%)	0	2 (0.95%)
Total	42	42	42	42	42	210

Oral Communication Ratings
All Dimensions, All Courses, 2015

All Courses

Chart showing percentages for All Courses across rating levels: Below Benchmark (0): 0%, Benchmark (1): ~2%, Milestone (2): ~49%, Milestone (3): ~48%, Capstone (4): ~0.5%

Conclusion: None of the ratings fell below benchmark level and less than 2% of all ratings were at the benchmark level. Across all dimensions, the greatest percentage of scores (97.15%) were at milestone levels, with very few falling below or above these levels.

Individual Dimensions: Might there be differences in performance across dimensions? That is, are students performing at a higher level on some dimensions than on others? In order, the dimension scores from highest to lowest were Central Message, Language, Organization & Supporting Material, and Delivery. A series of paired-samples t-tests (exploratory due to ordinal nature of data) suggests that there are some significant differences in performance across dimensions:

Organization	Language*	Delivery*	Supporting Material	Central*** Message
(m=2.40)	(m=2.50)	(m=2.26)	(m=2.40)	(m=2.83)
Organization*	**Language**	Delivery**	Supporting Material	Central*** Message
(m=2.40)	(m=2.50)	(m=2.26)	(m=2.40)	(m=2.83)
Organization*	Language**	**Delivery**	Supporting* Material	Central*** Message
(m=2.40)	(m=2.50)	(m=2.26)	(m=2.40)	(m=2.83)
Organization	Language	Delivery*	**Supporting Material**	Central*** Message
(m=2.40)	(m=2.50)	(m=2.26)	(m=2.40)	(m=2.83)
Organization*	Language	Delivery	Supporting*** Material	**Central Message**
(m=2.40)	(m=2.50)	(m=2.26)	(m=2.40)	(m=2.83)

*p <.05
** p <.01
*** p < .001

     Interpretation of Oral Communication Results: These results demonstrate that students are achieving milestone status as it relates to oral communication within their disciplines. And, it is certainly important to note the very low level of benchmark ratings. However, given that the individuals assessed were senior-level students, we expected to see a greater percentage of students scoring at the capstone level. While students are meeting appropriate milestones, the general premise of the VALUE rubric is that senior level students should be at the level of capstone.

Comparison to 2014 Assessment Results

Oral Communication Ratings
All Dimensions, All Courses
2014, 2015
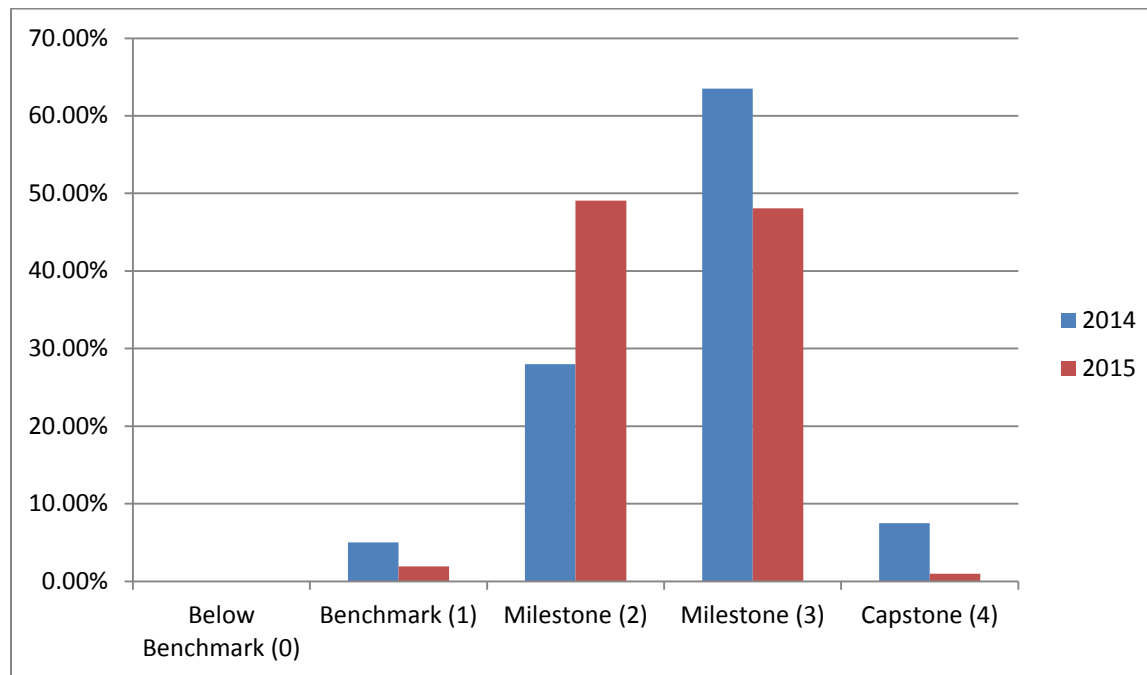
Conclusion Regarding Oral Communication Assessment

While it is interesting that the scores were not generally higher across the dimensions, it is not that surprising. The raters were the same for the last two years and were more experienced in using the rubric and evaluating each of the respective components. This may have resulted in their being more critical in the evaluation of artifacts. However, we would have hoped for them to make more deliberate changes in their courses with regard to instructions to students regarding presentation requirements in the hope of them achieving higher results.

Recommendations of Oral Communication Assessment Group: It is important for faculty within an academic program to take an active role in the assessment of oral communication. This responsibility does not lie solely with the Communication Studies department or the professor of a capstone course where students are being evaluated for the last time. Any faculty member who has an oral presentation in their course must take responsibility in reviewing the core components of a presentation (i.e. central message, delivery, supporting material, organization, and language) and briefly discuss with students how they can be successful in demonstrating them during the presentation. Departmental faculty should also consider the adoption of the AAC&U VALUE rubric that has been used the past two years for this assessment.

ACTION PLANS

Following a review of the results of each assessment sub-group and a discussion of the lessons learned, the Assessment Team members considered various follow-up plans, both generally and with the individual sub-groups in mind.

General Follow-Up: Following both years of data collection and faculty collaboration for the assessment of written and oral communication, all participants (including assessment leaders) emphasized the need for ongoing faculty professional development. We all agree that we need to improve faculty preparation for teaching effective communication (writing and speaking) across the curriculum. We recommend that information be made available to all instructors involved with courses that require student writing and public speaking (including "W" courses and capstone courses). We recommend the consideration of multiple formats for making this information available including booklets, online resources, training sessions, workshops, and/or faculty retreats. Each of these formats should include information about:
   a. specific course type requirements (e.g., to meet "W" course requirements)
   b. the development of assignments that allow for post-course assessment of general education goals
   c. examples of classroom assignments that allow authentic assessment of general education goals
   d. information about teaching strategies or tips to assist instructors outside the writing and public speaking disciplines to teach communication within their courses

It is important that WCU help faculty (and students) to understand the need to share responsibility for helping students to meet general education student learning outcomes. It is not enough to expect that general education courses will provide everything a student needs to become proficient in oral and/or written communication. We must work together across disciplines to create this shared understanding.

We recommend the continuation of faculty development programs that serve to improve the assessment of general education goals. We believe that faculty development has a measurable impact on faculty teaching and that changes in teaching will affect student learning. A recent study supports this conclusion (Condon, Iverson, & Willett, 2016), with positive effects reported for "a circular model of pedagogical reform. That is, assessing student writing to inform professional development, which in turn informs curricular reform and assessment to evaluate its effectiveness" (Flaherty, 2016).

Written Communication: The faculty group focused on the assessment of written communication recommends that the Provost's office convene a faculty group to consider the creation of an overall writing program center and director that might oversee the creation and implementation of faculty professional development effects aimed at assisting all instructors teaching courses that include write and/or speaking requirements.

Effective Oral Communication: The assessment group for oral communication provided specific feedback for the university community to consider for each of the dimensions of the rubric. Specifically they provided some tips to assist faculty teaching oral communication in an effort to make students more aware of the importance of each dimension (APPENDIX C).

REFERENCES

Condon, W.; Iverson, E.R.; Manduca, C.A.,; Rutz, C.; & Willett, G. (2016).
        <u>Faculty development and student learning: Assessing the connections</u>.
Indiana University Press.

Flaherty, C. (2016, Feb. 10). <u>New study suggests that faculty development has a
        demonstrable impact on student learning</u>. https://www.insidehighered.com.

APPENDIX A

Analytic Memo Re Participant Feedback

To: Loretta Rieser-Danner

From: Hannah Ashley

Re: W Assessment Summer 2015, Analytic memo on meeting 6/5/2015

Date: 7-19-2015

Four notable themes emerged out of this two-hour meeting: the usefulness of the collaborative process, faculty changes in strategies, faculty talk about what they continued to do or didn't do, and narratives of student difficulty. Some are to be expected, especially the theme of what changes were made in faculty strategies in the teaching of writing, given that that was the direct prompt for the conversation. Others were more surprising and, therefore, interesting. All in all, however, the discussion at this meeting highlighted **the value of this method of writing-across-the-curriculum assessment as a method of faculty development, while simultaneously highlighting further campus needs, and that the quantitative aspects of this assessment method (numbers and averages as stated in a report) may not be fine-grained enough to capture improvements in student writing or in faculty teaching of writing**. Qualitative and multi-method examinations of student artifacts and faculty teaching may be required to have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of our teaching and faculty development.

First, <u>faculty at this meeting universally experienced the process as useful</u>; specifically, the **talk with other faculty about the teaching of writing** was a central theme. Comments included explicit recognition like:

- We need to teach the teachers
- Saying [these ideas about explicitly teaching structure] out loud sort of reminds me or teaches it
- It was a lot of work [to revise pedagogy] but worth it
- Us looking at [a rubric] and discussing it made me go back and revise it
- It was eye-opening to talk with others teaching W
- I took one of [another faculty member's] assignments!

That is, good research-based current information about the teaching of writing was necessary (the provision of the AACU rubric, the inclusion of teacher-scholars in the group who are in writing and rhetoric and related disciplines) but not sufficient for the project to be useful: the interaction around the new information was key.

<u>Specific changes to pedagogy</u> included refining rubrics, modeling and analyzing models, breaking writing tasks into steps, multiple reiterative steps to check with students on their understanding and success with the skills and knowledge (the teaching of writing is not a one-shot "inoculation" but integral course content), cutting back on quantity in favor of depth and quality, drilling down in terms of student support (providing additional one-on-ones from faculty or a GA to students who are having trouble), using available technologies to support student learning, increasing the use of peer review, thinking of drafts and revision in smaller increments (which helps with managing the workload and with earlier feedback mechanisms especially for those students who are having trouble), using consistent terminology throughout the semester and perhaps drawing back to earlier writing courses (assists with transfer), helping students understand discourse community expectations. Comments included:

- My rubric was kinda basic before…[this time] I used [the AACU] rubric and incorporated each of these components
- I spent more time in class modeling—good papers—what makes this a good paper?
- Added clarity and specificity [to my rubric]—going over things in more detail—first day, then other opportunities to check in
- Focused on one component every week
- Next time, I made them do annotated bib, references, summary, how they will use it in your paper
- This time I required them to turn in a list of references, and then I had one-on-ones with the ones who were having trouble
- I changed ALL my rubrics for my labs to reflect a little more of the rubric, and the term paper only 4-6 pages
- This time they put it in TurnItIn and it had a lot of help for them
- I did more peer editing. … I was amazed at how seriously they took it. Some were magnificent
- I asked my students to submit drafts and [I] skim through are they on the right track. …I also made my GA available for writing lab
- I let students revise labs until the end of the semester
- I tried to stick with these key words and the grades went way up
- I focused on audience and context throughout whole class
- [I told them] imagine that you are placing yourself in an ongoing scholarly dialogue

Two observations are notable here. First, some of these same strategies were approaches that other faculty articulated as ongoing, that is, what they already were doing to teach writing—but different faculty than the ones who noted the above as changes. In other words, this was not a group of faculty who did not engage in the deliberate teaching of writing prior to this faculty development/assessment project. **All faculty involved already had some strategies to teach writing, but all gained something, often a great deal, from this process**.

Secondly, this is an astonishing list of changes at the micro-level. Many of these would be described as best practices by writing studies specialists. How did this effective intervention, on the surface for the purposes of assessment, occur? While we did not take notes from last summer, one interaction as an example from this summer stands in as an example of how assessment work—when there is time for reflection and faculty interaction with new information—can work as faculty development. Below, Faculty 1 articulates a worry about a specific and commonly-used technique in the teaching of writing: providing a strong sample student paper. That faculty member worried that students would simply rehash content or structure from the sample paper. Multiple faculty members offer ideas in response to this concern.

F1: Do you give samples? I worry I will just get that back.

F2: Yes, I do…they aren't doing the same topic.

F3: I have to explain what an analysis is…I have to spend more time on that—they just want to describe.

F4: I will use published journal articles as models….I do a process too: proposal, annotated bib, lit review, etc.

F1 continues, however, to worry aloud that students will simply recap what they were provided. Soon, though, the faculty member gains an insight, not precisely from any one comment, but coming to a synthesis, it seems, in her mind.

F5: I dig out a good and a bad paper…they have the rubric, and we talk about what makes it good or bad…

F1: I could show them one concept analyzed, breaking it up.

F6: Originality ex nihlio is tough for them but one example lets them spring off it

Then the conversation continued on other topics. Again, returning to the key point: talk with other faculty about the teaching of writing is vital. It seems evident from this sample interaction that it was not simply the provision of information about strategies, but Faculty 1 working through what are the possible problems of those strategies aloud and with others who know the local educational context which was effective in helping her to gain the insight, which by the end she seems ready to try out. To repeat, information (such as can be provided in writing or in online tutorials or even frontal demonstrations) is necessary but not sufficient. We know this type of constructivist approach is one of the best ways to learn for students, so it makes sense that a similar approach would be necessary for faculty as learners of new pedagogies as well.

While we see a great deal of evidence, above, for the usefulness of this project, there was also evidence of further needs. A strong counter-theme emerged, which I call here "narratives of student difficulty."

The primary narrative of this type that emerged is "some of them won't get it no matter what," as exemplified by the following types of comments:

- Some still don't—I don't know what you can do.
- Some…There's nothing you can do
- No matter what we do, there will be some who will not get it.
- Yea they want to just talk their way out of things
- Some blew [peer review] off

Several of those "there's nothing you can do" comments came after mention of another narrative of student difficulty, centered on the theme of disciplinary/academic discourse expectations:

- We had to spend quite a bit of time discussing what makes it scholarly not dogma for your religion or politics…. they want to use *Discover* magazine rather than things in the discipline…rather than how you would find scholarly works
- [I make them do reading reflections] I am this evil person to make sure you did the reading…muddled thought is core issue here… they love those [other types of assignments] because come from their own experience
- most challenging is content and references
- [laughter about students preferring Starbucks over the library]
- students experience these shifting expectations…you should always, you should never…they learn that there is no such thing as expectations in writing and so it distances this part of their brain that might enact…they learn that it is just pleasing YOU

One faculty member mentioned "prose quality" as an area of student difficulty:

- Quality of the prose is still really problematic—I'm at a level of frustration about it

Above we see that faculty express frustration or confusion about a particular issue that seemed, to them, to trouble students across the board: disciplinary discourse expectations including the use of sources as a way to situate oneself in a scholarly conversation. A reframe of these comments (which came throughout the two hour meeting and not all at once as part of a single conversational segment) would be: faculty have trouble teaching disciplinary discourse expectations, including both the skills and dispositions to engage in scholarly conversations. (This trouble is unsurprising since it is a given in the writing studies literature that the uses of sources and citations is not merely a vital and conspicuous feature of academic writing requiring a particular skill set, but it also requires a political and often-conflicted identity negotiation.) This is just one example of an area that faculty, through their informal talk, highlight as needing more support in order to teach and teach well.

Additionally, the narrative of "some just won't get it no matter what you do" highlights that faculty would do well with more supports thinking about differentiated instruction. Or perhaps these two areas

of difficulty are more intimately related to one another; but for the purposes of this memo, what is essential to note that effective faculty development is an ongoing process, not a one-shot "inoculation," much like the teaching of writing to students.

Finally, it is worth noting that there was a very mixed response to the question: do you think that your students are better writers because you engaged in this process? The group answer was a hearty "yes—maybe." So, interestingly, the question arises—if faculty think that they are better teachers of writing, why are they not sure that their students are writing better? One thought put forward by a member of the group was that the assessment rubric is currently simply not refined enough to catch improvements. It is a four-point scale that tends to draw a lot of middle scores (2's and 3's). However, there may be more at work than that. Perhaps, given the engaged and committed nature of the group, they felt as though if they were still have trouble teaching or if their students were challenged by writing in any way, that they did not see themselves as succeeding. It will be interesting to see the results of the assessment of the next group of papers.   If, quantitatively, the assessment numbers suggest improved student writing, that would be a strong endorsement for this type and related types of faculty development. If not, however, given the evidence outlined in this memo, we should not immediately assume that the process and investment was not useful, but that it may be the assessment methods are not robust, rigorous or fine-grained enough to capture changes.

APPENDIX B

Some Faculty Participant Feedback

(Provided at start of Summer 2015 regarding Summer 2014 Participation)

Changes made to <u>EDR 304</u> -Writing Emphasis Assessment

After participating in the writing group last summer, I revised my syllabus for EDR 304 so that I spent more time on 3 different genres (memoir, informational writing, and poetry). I explicitly taught more about the elements of each genre and shared numerous examples with my students. I also built in time for students to try writing a piece in each genre. I did not require students to submit these pieces but they were given time to share them with a classmate and the classmate provided feedback. Students were also able to use one of these pieces for their final graded writing assignment if they so desired. The final piece is published in a class book and read aloud to the entire class on the last day.

I had hoped to have students submit a draft of their final piece so that I could provide feedback. I realized how important this step was after our discussions last summer. However, time did not allow due to a family medical issue that usurped a great deal of my time towards the end of the fall semester and throughout the spring. I have always required students to share a typed draft of their final piece with a classmate during one class session and they complete a feedback sheet that clearly outlines the type of feedback they should provide one another. This sheet is also submitted to me for a grade. Students always comment how helpful the feedback is but I think it would be beneficial if I offered feedback as well. Ideally, I would like to have individual writing conferences with students at least once during the semester, either on the final piece or one that is completed mid-semester. I plan to try that this fall.

Writing Emphasis Assessment Project
Changes in AY 2014-15, <u>SPP106</u>

Changes, as a result of last year's participation, made in:
1. Syllabus
   - I included the Written Communication Value Rubric into the course syllabus. Students were informed that their artifacts might be submitted for the writing emphasis assessment project. The project's goals were also explained in the syllabus.
2. Teaching
   - Students were required to submit their final drafts and receive my approval prior to the deadline for submission. Because I had a large number of students (45-48 students in each writing-emphasis section), I briefly skimmed through the submitted drafts and only caught major

problems such as plagiarism and insufficient or incorrect content. Students were allowed to re-write papers based on my feedback.

- Students were strongly encouraged to visit my graduate assistant's tutoring sessions to receive her feedback. I was fortunate to have an incredible graduate assistant who is very strong in writing. A majority of students visited her tutoring sessions to discuss their papers' macrostructure, microstructure, content, and style.

3. Class Preparation

- I continued to utilize an extensive set of PPT slides to pinpoint the written assignments' requirements. Students had access to the PPT slides via the course D2L site. Students reported that the PPT slides helped them complete their papers one step at a time.

4. Assignments

- I did not change any parts of written assignments in AY 2014-15 following the participation of last summer's project.

Revisions to ESS 204W (Historical Geology, Fall-2014, Spring-2015)
Based on Participation in the 2014 General Education Pilot Project

1. All laboratory reports have informal and formal writing components.
   - I revised the grading rubrics for all laboratory writing so they are more in line with writing evaluation criteria used in the Pilot Project.
   - I gave students more laboratory time to complete their draft written summaries using peer review during the process (and laptop computers supplied by my department).
   - I devoted more laboratory time to presenting examples of students' laboratory writing, and having the class review and revise the examples.
2. Students must write a short term paper (4 – 6 pages) on a topic related to the course. The paper must integrate information from at least four articles published in scholarly periodicals, and the articles must be cited using APA style.
   - All students were required to turn in a term paper topic plus four references on the topic from scholarly periodicals. I met personally with each student who had difficulty with this to ensure that everyone knew how to obtain credible references. [However, some students changed their topic and did not demonstrate an ability to find/apply scholarly references related to the new topic.]
   - In the past, the rough draft of this paper was peer reviewed by student colleagues in the class, and the final draft was submitted to a D2L drop box for grading. I changed the review so that students submitted their rough draft to the D2L drop box, I reviewed it

using "Turn it in", and the students revised and submitted their final draft to the D2L drop box. Student peer review of the term paper was recommended but not required.

- I revised the grading rubric for the term paper so it was more in line with writing evaluation criteria used in the Pilot Project.

3. I changed some of the <u>writing instruction parts of my laboratory activities and lecture</u> PowerPoint slides, so they became more in line with evaluation criteria used in the Pilot Project.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (of Fall-2014 and Spring-2015 classes):
1. Changes implemented in relation to the written laboratory assignments resulted in marked improvement in students' writing ability and grades. Students were encouraged to revise and resubmit the laboratory formal-writing components as in past years, but not all students took advantage of this option. <u>Beginning in Fall-2015, I will place greater emphasis on revision.</u>
2. As in past years, the term paper assignment was due at the end of the semester. Some students who did well in their formally-written laboratory summaries did not apply their skills, or follow instructions, on the term paper assignments. When asked about this, students noted that they just did not have time at the end of the semester to write the paper to the best of their ability. <u>Beginning in Fall-2015, I will move the due date for the term paper to a date earlier in the semester, and I will require a minimum level of performance for the paper to be accepted for grading</u> (i.e., papers that do not satisfy the terms of the term-paper checklist will not be accepted for grading and must be revised for resubmission).
3. <u>I may require students to submit their preliminary list of term paper references as a limited annotated bibliography</u>. This would force students to read exemplary scientific writing.

Revisions to <u>COM445W</u> as a Result of Participation in 2014 Writing Emphasis Assessment

I've been teaching Writing Emphasis courses at West Chester University since I was hired in 1992 to teach COM 415 Language, Thought, and Behavior. I served as a member of the CAPC Subcommittee on Writing Emphasis courses for ten years, from 2000 to 2010. And two of the upper level courses I've designed for the Department of Communication Studies – COM 440 Friendship Communication and COM 445 Family Communication – received Writing Emphasis status in 2007. However, I learned more about the Writing Emphasis courses at WCU by participating in the 2014 General Education Assessment Pilot Project as part of the Written Communication Assessment Group than I had in my previous 20+ years of designing and teaching Writing Emphasis courses at WCU.

After participating in last summer's program, I changed how I taught writing in the two sections of Writing Emphasis classes that I taught during the Fall, 2014 semester. First, I taught more actual writing in the class. And I made more links between writing and the behaviors I taught my students – how to analyze, for example, was now taught as how to "write an analysis." I was also much more conscious of the categories in the rubrics the Written Communication Assessment Group edited and worked with last summer. I plan on designing a rubric for the major interview analysis writing assignment in my two Fall,

2015 sections of COM 440 Friendship Communication that parallel the rubric we've continued to refine during the 2015 summer meetings of the Written Communication Assessment Group.

In relation to the report that's been prepared, I completely agree with the Recommendations on pages 11 and 12, particularly Recommendation #2 – that instructors of Writing Emphasis courses be given information about what the requirements of Writing Emphasis courses. While I had some information about those requirements, I only had that information because I'd served on the CAPC Subcommittee. No one in my Department had given me any instructions on the specifics of a Writing Emphasis course beyond the fact that I was teaching a "W" course. However, the reason I wasn't given instructions is that no one from WCU had ever given anyone in my Department instructions on the topic. I learned last summer that my Department was not unique in simply telling faculty that specific courses should "contain writing." And even though I'd served on the CAPC Subcommittee, some of the requirements of Writing Emphasis courses had changed over the past five years and I was not aware of those changes.

As the report mentions, we need the information about Writing Emphasis courses at WCU organized and distributed to faculty. However, I'd like information distributed to students, too. I'd like to see writing valued rather than feared. I'd like students to believe that writing isn't just a skill one either has or not. I'd like students to believe all students, from the best writers to the worst, can improve. But what I'd really like is for all WCU students in all majors to know how important writing is to their futures. Whether their writing ends up being printed on paper or appearing online and whether they become artists or physicians doesn't change the fact that our students need to know how to organize ideas, use supporting evidence, and manage language. If WCU wants students to become better writers, creating a strong Writing Across the Curriculum program would be a great start.

Course Changes Made as a Result of Participation in Summer 2014 Writing Emphasis Assessment Project, MAT401

The biggest change to my syllabus has been giving the students the opportunity to revise their final papers. As someone who inherited a W course and was never told the "rules" about, it, I was unaware that it should happen.

I also have students do "read alouds" of their drafts instead of the typical pair and share of the draft. I picked up this tip from going to the W course workshop at the end of last summer. I found that the students caught more awkward structure when they actually read their stuff out loud to a peer, than when their peers read over their papers.

Appendix B

Oral Communication Results Feedback to the Campus Community

ORGANIZATION (introduction, conclusion, sequenced material within the body, & transitions)	LANGUAGE (vocabulary, terminology, & sentence structure)	DELIVERY (posture, gestures, eye contact, & vocal expressiveness)	SUPPORTING MATERIAL (explanations, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant sources & using quotations when applicable)	CENTRAL MESSAGE (main point/thesis/bottom line/take away of a presentation)	AV (materials such as text size, choice, and quality of illustrations)
1. Students need to be aware that this section needs to be part of their oral presentations. This was one of the most lacking components. A brief introduction and conclusion will suffice, along with appropriate transitions within the presentation. **2**. Transitions need to be fine-tuned, with a clear flow from one portion of the talk to another. Too often students jump from topic	**1**. Make sure language is appropriate to and understandable by audience. **2**. Define potentially difficult terms. **3**. Avoid kid-speak like "based off" or "you guys".	**1**. Speak assertively not as though everything had a question mark. Don't swallow the ends of sentences. **2**. It is important to maintain as much eye contact as possible. There should be minimum reading from slides and/or papers with notes. **3**. Avoid monotonous	**1**. Provide adequate source information when a specific claim is made. For instance, if you are citing Einstein and his theory of relativity, you can get away with just citing him as Einstein. However, if you talking about an article written for the Philadelphia Inquirer and you cite it only	**1**. After stating a clear thesis in the beginning, rephrase that specific idea at the end of the presentation. Don't just end with . . . "And, uh, so that's it, I guess." Take advantage of your last chance to make your point to your audience; reinforce your thesis. **2**. Emphasize the central message. Many students don't seem to have a main point. Rarely is the reason for	**1**. If you can't find a high resolution picture, do NOT use a low resolution one. **2**. Font size should be at least 18-20 (the bigger the better). **3**. Keep words on each slide to under 40. **4**. Use key words; the speaker should tell the story, NOT the

to topic without integrating them and without alerting the view of the shift in topic.		speech and give the viewer some idea of what is important and exciting through the delivery. 4. Emphasize practicing presentations prior to class. Have students record themselves and watch prior to presentation.	as "Reuben", no one will understand the source. In that case, you need more clarification as to the citation – e.g., "According to Reuben, columnist for the Philadelphia Inquirer and expert on home remodeling projects . . ." 2. Provide evidence to support your talks! The viewer needs to be able to trust your information. Simply stating facts without providing appropriate support is not effective.	listening made clear from the beginning. Instead, students tend to simply talk about a topic for several minutes.	slides. 5. Keep the color selection to a minimum. 6. There are a lot of resources that can be provided to students that provide rules for effective power-point presentations.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

(Revision #2, 2015, WCU General Education Assessment)

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Exemplary 4	Proficient 3	Emerging 2	Basic 1
Context of and Purpose for Writing *Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).*	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates appropriate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work. (Much like a beginner in the discipline)	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions (Conventions of Form & Structure) *Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary)*	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific writing task (s) including organization, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices (content not included).	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific writing task(s), including organization, presentation, and stylistic choices (content not included).	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific writing task(s) for basic organization and presentation (content not included).	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.

Sources and Evidence (**Use of Evidence**)	Demonstrates skillful use of high- quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error- free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that often impedes meaning because of many errors in usage.

ORAL COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

(Revision #1, 2014, WCU General Education Assessment)

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

The type of oral communication most likely to be included in a collection of student work is an oral presentation and therefore is the focus for the application of this rubric.

Definition

Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Framing Language

Oral communication takes many forms. This rubric is specifically designed to evaluate oral presentations of a single speaker at a time and is best applied to live or video-recorded presentations. For panel presentations or group presentations, it is recommended that each speaker be evaluated separately. This rubric best applies to presentations of sufficient length such that a central message is conveyed, supported by one or more forms of supporting materials and includes a purposeful organization. An oral answer to a single question not designed to be structured into a presentation does not readily apply to this rubric.

Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Central message: The main point/thesis/"bottom line"/"take-away" of a presentation. A clear central message is easy to identify; a compelling central message is also vivid and memorable.
- Delivery techniques: Posture, gestures, eye contact, and use of the voice. Delivery techniques enhance the effectiveness of the presentation when the speaker stands and moves with authority, looks more often at the audience than at his/her speaking materials/notes, uses the voice expressively, and uses few vocal fillers ("um," "uh," "like," "you know," etc.).
- Language: Vocabulary, terminology, and sentence structure. Language that supports the effectiveness of a presentation is appropriate to the topic and audience, grammatical, clear, and free from bias. Language that enhances the effectiveness of a presentation is also vivid, imaginative, and expressive.
- Organization: The grouping and sequencing of ideas and supporting material in a presentation. An organizational pattern that supports the effectiveness of a presentation typically includes an

introduction, one or more identifiable sections in the body of the speech, and a conclusion. An organizational pattern that enhances the effectiveness of the presentation reflects a purposeful choice among possible alternatives, such as a chronological pattern, a problem-solution pattern, an analysis-of-parts pattern, etc., that makes the content of the presentation easier to follow and more likely to accomplish its purpose.

- Supporting material: Explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities, and other kinds of information or analysis that supports the principal ideas of the presentation. Supporting material is generally credible when it is relevant and derived from reliable and appropriate sources. Supporting material is highly credible when it is also vivid and varied across the types listed above (e.g., a mix of examples, statistics, and references to authorities). Supporting material may also serve the purpose of establishing the speaker's credibility. For example, in presenting a creative work such as a dramatic reading of Shakespeare, supporting evidence may not advance the ideas of Shakespeare, but rather serve to establish the speaker as a credible Shakespearean actor.

ORAL COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC
(Revision #1, 2014, WCU General Education Assessment)

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	Capstone 4	Milestones 3	Milestones 2	Benchmark 1
Organization	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful and makes the content of the presentation cohesive.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently observable within the presentation.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not observable within the presentation.
Language	Language choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are mundane and commonplace and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is appropriate to audience.	Language choices are unclear and minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Language in presentation is not appropriate to audience.
Delivery	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation compelling, and speaker appears polished and confident.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation interesting, and speaker appears comfortable.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation understandable, and speaker appears tentative.	Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) detract from the understandability of the presentation, and speaker appears uncomfortable.

Supporting Material	A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that partially supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Insufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis that minimally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.
Central Message	Central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)	Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.	Central message is basically understandable but is not often repeated and is not memorable.	Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.