

## 2014 General Education Annual Assessment Report

Prepared by John Blondell and Tatiana Nazarenko in consultation with the 2013-2014 GE Committee

Reviewed and approved by the 2014-2015 GE Committee

2013-2014: Committee Chair: John Blondell

Committee members: Wayne Iba, Rick Pointer, Tatiana Nazarenko, Debra Quast, Michelle Hardley (Secretary)

2014-2015: Committee Chair: Tatiana Nazarenko

Committee members: Bruce Fisk, Stephen Contakes, Tom Knecht, Debra Quast, Michelle Hardley (Secretary)

### I. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

<b>ILO/PLO</b>	<b>Graduates of Westmont College will effectively communicate orally in various contexts</b> (Competence in Oral Communication)																										
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness, the entire GE Committee , Task force on Assessing Oral Communication (Deborah Dunn, Chair; Steve Julio, Edd Noell, & Sarah Skripsky)																										
<b><u>Direct Assessment Methods</u></b>	<p>Forty seven recordings of presentations were collected by the Office of Educational Effectiveness in the course of 2012-2013 academic year. In summer 2013, the Task force on Assessing Oral Communication eliminated the group presentations and casual presentations around the tables and codified 16 presentations out of 27 individual presentations. These presentations came from biology, chemistry, communication studies, English, history, internships, and music. The presentations were assessed by using the rubric developed by the faculty in communication based largely on a model developed by the National Communication Association (<a href="#">Appendix A</a>). Each speech was scored in seven categories using a scale of 1 (C- and lower), 2 (C-B range), or 3 (B+ to A+ range). Five speeches were scored by more than one coder for norming/interrater reliability; where scores differed, they were not included in statistical calculations.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #f28b82;">Presentation Competencies</th> <th style="background-color: #f28b82;">Mean</th> <th style="background-color: #f28b82;">Mode</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Topic Selection</td> <td>2.93</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communicating Thesis</td> <td>2.00</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supporting Material</td> <td>2.40</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Organization</td> <td>2.08</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Language</td> <td>2.60</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vocal Delivery</td> <td>2.25</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Physical Presence</td> <td>2.07</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Presentation Competencies	Mean	Mode	Topic Selection	2.93	3	Communicating Thesis	2.00	2	Supporting Material	2.40	2	Organization	2.08	2	Language	2.60	3	Vocal Delivery	2.25	2	Physical Presence	2.07	2
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<b><u>Indirect Assessment</u></b>	In 2013-2014, the GE committee conducted a comprehensive syllabi review. All posted syllabi for courses offered in fall 2013 and spring 2014 (n=502) with accompanying prompts, discussion tips, and presentation guides were evaluated for possible oral presentation																										

<b>Methods</b>	components by utilizing the code sheet for oral presentations developed by the Chair of Communication Studies ( <a href="#">Appendix B</a> ).
<b>Major Findings</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Westmont graduating students appear to be competent in the areas of finding good supporting material for their speeches and in choosing and using appropriate language – appropriate for the audience, occasion, topic, and purpose of the presentation. They appear to be less able to clearly state a compelling thesis and eloquently speak extemporaneously, and appear somewhat uncomfortable in establishing a physical presence and using their bodies to gesture purposefully and meaningfully. Students appear to write very good research papers and spend very little time and thought planning an oral presentation based on their written work. Either presentations are too casual, or consist of reading a paper. Good presentations across disciplines involve persuasive story telling which is not usually accomplished simply by reading a research paper, talking to a projected slide, or casually chatting about lessons learned in a research or internship process.</li> <li>2) It appears that out of 502 evaluated courses 43% (n=214) contain at least one element of oral presentation. Much of oral communication work is embedded within courses that are not certified as Speech Intensive for the General Education program. Westmont teaching on oral communication is broader than initially thought. See <a href="#">Appendix C</a>.</li> </ol>
<b>Closing the Loop Activities</b>	<p>Following a lengthy conversation, the Committee made the following recommendations for closing the loop:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change GE “Speech Intensive” area to “Oral Communication,” and develop certification criteria and outcomes accordingly.</li> <li>2. Discuss possibilities of clearly articulated expectations for professors who teach in the Oral Communication area, including a set of best practices that can be used by all professors and can help students clearly identify what successful Oral Communication sounds and looks like.</li> <li>3. Consider the possibility of developing a Speakers Resource Center, which could include a web site with resources, best practices, sound methods, help and advice, etc.</li> <li>4. Consider how Oral Communication may be an area for <i>innovative</i> thinking and teaching, and put structures in place whereby this innovation may start and be inspired.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Discussion:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The Task force and the GE Committee members agreed that students’ shortcomings in oral communication do not rest solely on the shoulders of the students. Most syllabi and assignment prompts spent very little time explaining what was expected in an oral presentation, and when we could discern how much credit was given for an oral vs. written presentation, it was clear that most of the grade depended on the written paper, not on the speech. Finally, the college provides very little in the way of training or resources for students to develop public speaking skills and for faculty teaching courses with the oral communication components.</li> <li>2) The Committee discussed the possibility of being more inclusive of all oral communication types for this outcome. It is possible that with new guideline in the GE Combined document and a new Core Competence title more faculty will certify their courses within this category. Currently, only three courses are certified in the Speech Intensive GE area. Once this task is completed, the Committee needs to work with academic departments to consider broadening their course offerings in Oral Communication and possibly reducing the number of courses in their major that are certified as writing intensive.</li> </ol>	

## II. Follow-up project # 1.

<b>ILO/PLO</b>	Graduates of Westmont College will write effectively in various contexts (Competence in Written Communication)
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	The GE Committee in collaboration with the Academic Senate; the First-Year Seminar group
<b>Major Findings</b>	Upon assessing Written Communication outcome, the Lead Assessment Specialist and the GE committee proposed the development of the first year seminar where student will be introduced to the college-level writing and reading.
<b>Closing the Loop Activities</b>	Two members of the GE Committee participated in the syllabus development for the First-Year seminar offered as a pilot in fall 2014.

## III. Follow-up project # 2.

<b>Project</b>	Reorganization of the GE Website documents
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	Wayne Iba, Tatiana Nazarenko, Debora Quast, and Michelle Hardley in collaboration with Brittany Myles
<b>Major Findings</b>	GE documents are spread over four different locations on the Westmont website, with significant overlap, duplication and occasional contradiction.
<b>Action</b>	The GE Committee proposed that all GE documents be consolidated in one folder directly under 'Academics' and that two entry pages – one for students and another for faculty and staff -- should be created. The project was completed in summer 2014.

## IV. Other assessment projects

<b>Project</b>	GE Assessment Redesign
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	The GE Committee in collaboration with the Program Review Committee and the Academic Senate
<b>Major Findings</b>	Westmont has numerous broad-based outcomes that require assessment on an institutional level, including institutional outcomes, General Education outcomes, and outcomes that emerge naturally from the college mission. In addition, WASC mandates Core Competencies, which the college must also assess on a periodic, cyclical basis. We need to have a sustainable and manageable assessment of the GE curriculum, which should be instrumental in improving student learning while being meaningful for faculty and consistent with WASC standards.
<b>Action</b>	The GE Committee developed a new model of the GE assessment to streamline assessment practices and align them with respect to institutional, General Education, mission-driven, and WASC mandated outcomes ( <a href="#">Appendix D</a> ). The proposal was presented to and approved by the Academic Senate in spring 2014. The Assessment Redesign document is posted on the Educational Effectiveness website. The implementation of the project began in fall 2014 with the Understanding Society and

	Performing and Interpreting the Art areas assessment.
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**Discussion:** The GE committee discussed the possibilities of further streamlining and restructuring the GE curriculum and its assessment. The rationale for undertaking this task is as follows:

- 1) We need room in the GE program for the first-year seminar which is being piloted in fall 2014. At this point, nothing can be added to the GE curriculum.
- 2) When the General Education Program was most recently revised, one of the goals was to provide more opportunities and better structure for interdisciplinary learning. To this point, these opportunities have not materialized in the current GE.
- 3) Effective written communication is one of the Westmont Institutional/GE outcome and WASC Core Competencies. We have 107 Writing-Intensive courses in the GE curriculum and yet, according to the results of the 2011-2012 institutional/GE assessment of Writing across the Curriculum, our students are not provided with the adequate opportunities to develop rhetorical sensitivity and mobility. It is almost impossible to create these opportunities within the current GE structure.
- 4) Effective oral communication is yet another Westmont Institutional/GE outcome and WASC Core Competence which is not supported by the current GE structure.
- 5) Diversity is not structurally integrated in the current GE curriculum.
- 6) It is not clear where the critical thinking outcome is introduced and developed in the GE curriculum. Neither Reasoning Abstractly nor Quantitative and Analytical Reasoning areas fully address student learning in relation to this Westmont Institutional outcome and WASC Core Competence.
- 7) It is not evident that the Integrating the Major Discipline, Research, and Productions and Performance areas should belong to the GE curriculum. The replacement of these areas by a required capstone experience in every major program will simplify the GE program and free space for the first-year seminar and other high-impact practices.
- 8) It is advisable to restructure the Serving Society area into required curricular and/or co-curricular leading and serving society experience.
- 9) It is advisable to revise the Communicating Cross-Culturally area, identify its role in the GE and college program and develop certification criteria and outcomes accordingly.

<b>Project</b>	<b>GE Combined Document Audit</b>
<b>Who is in Charge</b>	The entire Committee
<b>Major Findings</b>	The GE Combined document has inconsistencies and outdated information in many sections.
<b>Action</b>	Following the audit, the GE Combined document was updated.

**V. Appendices**

- A. Oral Communication Assessment Rubric
- B. Code Sheet for Oral Presentations
- C. Oral Communication Syllabi Review 2013-2014 Chart
- D. Assessment Redesign document