Oral Communication Across the Curriculum: The State of the Art After Twenty-five Years of Experience

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A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* indicated that

> Rhetoric and Communication, long the ugly stepsisters at leafy liberal-arts institutions, are starting to make a comeback across academe. Classes in oral communication are appearing among general education requirements, and "Speaking Across the Curriculum" is fast emerging as the heir apparent to "Writing Across the Curriculum." (Schneider, 1999, p. A16)

The first oral-communication-across-the-curriculum (OCXC) program began twenty-five years ago at Central College in Pella, Iowa. A dissertation (Bowers, 1997) and a master's project (Tomlinson, 1999) have examined OCXC. The National Communication Association has promulgated resolutions to guide the development of OCXC and has offered a three-hour short course on OCXC at the past ten annual conventions. External funding, including four FIPSE grants, has helped support programs at institutions such as Alverno College, Bismark State College, Butler University, Central College, Clarkson University, DePauw University, Hamline University, Ithaca College, Mount Holyoke College, Pima Community College, Radford University, St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, St. Olaf College, and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

The OCXC approach is often patterned after writing across the curriculum. Both the writing and OCXC emphases evolved from the "language-across-the-curriculum" movement that began in Great Britain in the 1960s (Parker, 1985). OCXC is defined as any instructional program in which students employ speaking and listening effectively in specially designated oral communication-intensive courses in non-communication disci-

plines. Communication-intensive (C-I) courses are designated, non-communication courses in which a significant oral communication activity is used to enhance communication competence and/or student learning of course content. These oral communication activities might include individual oral presentations, group reports, panel presentations, oral exams, group discussions, debates, interpersonal interactions, and other speaking and listening activities appropriate for the study of specific course content. For example, in a marketing course the professor may work with communication faculty to design, implement, and evaluate group oral presentations of marketing research studies (Cronin & Tong, 1991).

The major purpose of this article is to guide administrators and faculty in developing OCXC programs. It examines the rationale for and the most common arguments against OCXC; presents recommendations for designing, implementing, and assessing such programs; reviews published assessments of learning outcomes relevant to OCXC; and offers suggestions for the continued development of OCXC.

THE RATIONALE FOR OCXC

The importance of oral communication competency is discussed more fully elsewhere (Cronin & Glenn, 1991; Cronin & Grice, 1999; Garside, 1996; Hay, 1987; Speech Communication Association, *Rationale Kit*, 1994; Roberts, 1983, 1984; Steinfatt, 1986; Tomlinson, 1999). The role of OCXC in helping promote such competency may be summarized as follows: OCXC can enhance students' oral communication competence. Business and education leaders nationwide have noted in recent years that many college graduates lack adequate oral communication skills. Except for students majoring in communication, most undergraduates take *at most* one course emphasizing these skills. Even these students have little or no opportunity for additional structured practice in other contexts. Furthermore, they seldom receive competent context-specific evaluation of their oral communication skills in other contexts to reinforce the skills learned in the oral communication course. Oral communication competence is best developed if taught and practiced in a variety of contexts and courses (*Policy Platform Statement*, 1996).

In addition, OCXC can enhance students' learning of course content. Oral communication represents a fundamental mode of learning (Modaff & Hopper, 1984) that is underrepresented in lecture-oriented college courses. Because "the act of creating and communicating a message is at the heart of the educational experience" (Steinfatt, 1986, p. 465), it is essential to expand the application of meaningful oral communication activities in C-I courses to enhance learning of course content across the curriculum. Because the relationship between oral interaction and learning is influenced by culture, the communication interactions must be understood in relation to culture context (Jordan, Au, & Joesting, 1983; More, 1987; Olson, 1980; Orbe, 1998; Rhodes, 1988; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). OCXC provides an opportunity to address these interactions.

If designed and implemented appropriately, OCXC programs can provide students multiple opportunities to emphasize speaking and listening in a variety of content areas with carefully designed assignments and constructive feedback. It can enhance learning in the classroom, as students take a more active role in processing and communicating course content.

Learning To Communicate

Three-quarters of the program directors of active OCXC programs "explicitly cited improving communication competence as their primary goal" (Tomlinson[1], 2000, p. 14). An institution using OCXC to help increase students' communication competence should require a basic communication course as a foundation for the OCXC program. Absent such

a foundation, students must be "taught about oral communication rather than just required to perform it" (Morello, 2000). The less instruction provided by communication professionals, the greater the need to teach C-I-course faculty to provide competent instruction relevant to the specific communication objectives and activities in their classes, and the greater the need for ongoing consultation.

> It is unfair to students to expect that they will be able to gain the best understanding of their communication—the influences that affect their communication choices, and the influence of their communication choices on the people with whom they interact—or that they will be able to perform satisfactorily without specific educational support. If we expect students to become competent communicators, both as senders and as receivers, then we must provide them with the means to develop their knowledge and abilities by providing competent oral communication instruction. (Speech Communication Association, *Rationale Kit*, 1994, p. 46)

Communication instruction in OCXC courses is limited by the content requirements of the C-I course and by most non-communication teachers' lack of sufficient professional instruction in communication. These limitations severely weaken the claim that OCXC *alone* can ensure that participating students achieve oral communication competence. However, OCXC courses are useful, and perhaps necessary, in enhancing the communication competency of non-communication majors in two ways. First, students in OCXC courses are given a chance to continue using, and hopefully upgrading, their communication skills. Research on writing indicates that there is a deterioration of writing skills among students as they go through college unless writing is required of them throughout college (Kinneavy, 1983). There may be a similar deterioration of oral communication skills absent opportunities to practice and upgrade those skills (Lerstrom, 1988; Rubin & Graham, 1988). Communication education for non-majors is too important to be left solely to one or two courses in the communication department.

The second advantage of OCXC courses over traditional communication courses lies in the opportunity to emphasize context-specific applications of communication. The discipline-specific nature of communication is well established, and has been an essential component of the rationale for and implementation of writing across the curriculum (Morello, 2000; Palmerton, 1990, 1992). OCXC provides the opportunity for students to learn the forms of communication deemed competent within a given disciplinary context. "When students are given the opportunity to reinforce fundamental communication skills acquired in a basic course to other courses within their major discipline, the likelihood increases that these communication skills will be meaningful to them, and as a result, competence will increase" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 17; see also Morreale, 1999).

Through explicit attention to the communication processes across a variety of contexts, students have the opportunity to develop the rhetorical flexibility necessary to communicate competently in a culturally diverse society. Students have the opportunity to learn how to adapt their communication to the specific situation, or to identify how their choices function within the context of the situation should they decide that adaptation is not an option.

> One prototypical communication approach (e.g., assertiveness) does not exist for all situations. To suggest that some strategic decisions are "ideal" (and in comparison, others less than ideal) would discredit the standpoints of diverse co-cultural group members. Clearly, no absolute model of co-

cultural communication effectiveness is feasible given the multiple ways
in which persons' experiences are situated. (Orbe, 1998, p. 98)

Whether learning the "codes of power" of the dominant culture (Delpit, 1988) or
coming to understand the legitimacy of a cultural communication style in various con-
texts, students in C-I courses can expand their rhetorical repertoire in ways not available in
most communication classes. Furthermore, OCXC potentially enables students and faculty
alike to gain a more complete understanding of how co-cultural[2] differences in communica-
tion affect the ways in which meaning is constructed (Bonilla & Palmerton, 1999; Orbe,
1998; Palmerton & Bushyhead, 1994).

Communicating to Learn

The foundation for a successful undergraduate experience is proficiency
in the written and spoken word. Students need language to grasp and
express effectively feelings and ideas. To succeed in college, students
should be able to write and speak with clarity, and to read and listen with
comprehension. Language and thought are inextricably connected and
as undergraduates develop their linguistic skills, they hone the quality
of their thinking and become intellectually and socially empowered.
(Boyer, 1987, p. 73)

Creating, communicating, and critiquing a message are at the heart of the educational
experience (Steinfatt, 1986). However, "traditional lecture methods, in which professors
talk and students listen, dominate college and university classrooms" (Bonwell & Eison,
1991, p. iii).

Speaking across the curriculum emphasizes the need for talk in the
classroom. There should be ungraded talk, appraised talk, and graded
talk. If oral communication functions to help students learn, then these
programs highlight the epistemological functions of language,
recognizing that language shapes knowledge. (Palmerton, 1988, p. 12)

Oral communication activities, like writing, promote active learning through the for-
mulation, expression, and adaptation of ideas (Cronin & Spencer, 1990; Palmerton 1989,
1992) and provide opportunities for students to explore the relationship between speech
and thought in academic settings (Cronin & Spencer, 1990; Palmerton, 1991). Furthermore,
the incorporation of speaking and writing in the classroom helps teachers gain new insights
into the difficulties that students are having with content learning. "In this way teachers
can help students to avoid rote learning and to gain clear understandings" (Corson, 1988,
p. 13).

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITH OCXC

There are many arguments against OCXC programs. Some of these arguments are well
founded. Some of these arguments are based on lack of knowledge about OCXC and/or
lack of evidence. Regardless of the soundness of the arguments against OCXC, those who
implement such programs must be aware of and must attempt to deal with the "top ten
arguments against OCXC."[3]

1.   OCXC takes time away from course content in C-I courses.
This is one reason why some faculty may choose not to participate in OCXC programs.

Instructors of C-I courses must provide their students appropriate oral communication instruction and appraisal/evaluation of the oral communication activity. Thus, instructors of C-I courses must be willing to sacrifice breadth of content coverage for depth of understanding.

    2.   OCXC is not feasible in large lecture classes.

If the primary goal of a large lecture course is to increase students' oral communication competence, this argument is usually true. However, if the primary goal is to enhance learning, several oral communication activities are applicable even in large lectures to increase understanding of course content, to break up the pure-lecture format, and to help students learn to be better listeners.

    3.   Instructors of C-I courses are not qualified to instruct or evaluate the oral communication component of these courses.

This is usually true, and it is the reason that generic oral communication instruction and generic evaluation of communication activities in C-I courses should be provided, whenever possible, by communication faculty or consultants. Some areas of communication instruction/evaluation, such as communication apprehension, are best left to communication professionals. However, *focused* faculty development can prepare teachers of C-I courses for some of the course-specific communication instruction and refine the context-specific applications relevant to their C-I courses.

    4.   Students are not content experts; thus their oral presentations will contain errors.

Empowering students with a greater responsibility for their own learning (and the learning of others) may require instructors to provide more guidance and feedback as students prepare their presentations of course content. At the minimum, the course instructor should provide in-class analysis of student presentations to correct any significant content errors.

    5.   "Listening students" are not actively involved; communication activities may be good for the sender, but not for the receiver.

This is often true, and may apply to students listening to lecture from the instructor as well. Student listening to other students may be improved by (a) providing instruction in effective listening, (b) providing the same incentives to listen to other students that exist for listening to the instructor, (c) taking advantage of the novelty effect (in some classes) of student presentations breaking up student boredom with the typical lecture format, and (d) teaching senders to adapt their communication to the listeners.

    6.   Oral communication activities in C-I courses may be perfunctory.

Even if this is true, oral communication activities should increase learning of course content.[4] Perfunctory oral communication activities are less likely in C-I courses if (a) C-I instructors are given adequate oral communication instruction; (b) communication faculty or outside communication consultants help C-I instructors design, implement, and evaluate the oral-communication component of their courses; and (c) C-I course proposals are carefully screened. Carefully designed oral communication activities should enhance learning of course content and context-specific communication competence.

    7.   Because of OCXC, the administration may decrease support of the communication department.

This could happen; however, all published reports of OCXC in practice indicated increased demand for communication courses from students in C-I courses (Cronin & Grice, 1991; Madsen, 1984; Palmerton, 1988; Roberts, 1983). Furthermore, as participating administrators and faculty become more aware of the nature of the communication discipline and of OCXC, they are *less* likely to conclude that limited oral communication instruction in C-I courses could even approximate the oral communication instruction available through courses in the communication department. Communication departments must advance

these arguments at their institutions and must participate in the development and implementation of OCXC.

8.   OCXC alone may be used to "satisfy" accreditation requirements and/or university mission statements regarding oral communication competence.

It may be attempted, but OCXC alone does not "satisfy" these standards. Many C-I courses provide little oral communication instruction and minimal evaluation/appraisal of oral communication competency from communication professionals. Thus, C-I courses *alone* cannot ensure that participating students achieve communication competence. This is why OCXC must supplement and not supplant courses in the communication department.

9.   OCXC activities may focus only on public speaking (or discussion or debate).

True, but instruction and context-specific applications in one area of oral communication are usually better than none. Furthermore, students may be exposed to several different oral communication activities in a variety of C-I courses throughout their college education.

10.   Too few "rewards" accrue to those faculty involved in OCXC.

There are many rewards for OCXC participants. For example, the oral communication activities usually produce more student involvement and learning, and may result in more positive student evaluations of faculty. Furthermore, administrators should be made aware of the support needed to start and sustain a quality OCXC program.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING OCXC

In November, 1996, the Legislative Council of the Speech Communication Association (now the National Communication Association) passed three resolutions regarding communication across the curriculum. The Council provided a rationale for these recommendations, portions of which are included below.

> Resolved, That Communication Across the Curriculum programs should not be approved as substitutes for basic communication instruction provided by the discipline. (Gaudino, 1997, p. 15)

> Certain configurations of Communication across the Curriculum courses are dangerous and misleading if they seem to suggest that faculty members from any discipline, with no or very little communication training, are qualified to teach communication courses. These faculty members are experts on the particular discourse conventions, rhetorical forms, and argumentative styles of their fields. They are not conversant with the knowledge base on which communication pedagogy is founded nor are they prepared to deal with particular communication needs of students with communication apprehension, second language problems that may affect comprehensibility, or specific cultural issues that may arise in communication. They may operate from highly simplified models of how communication works or from lay theories of how communication is taught. (Policy Platform Statement, 1996)

> Resolved, That Communication Across the Curriculum courses are endorsed as useful extensions of and supplements to courses taught in departments of communication. (Gaudino, 1997, p. 15)

First, it is not realistic to expect students to become fully competent communicators if they are only exposed to a single communication course. Particularly, if students practice communication only in our courses and are passive receivers of information in other classes, it is highly unlikely that they will graduate with the communication skills and sophisticated understandings most universities claim as goals in their mission statements. If instead they participate in debates in their political science classes, panel discussions in their history classes, team projects in their business classes, and oral presentations in their major senior seminars, they are more likely to develop and practice whatever skills they have learned in oral communication classes. Accreditation teams are holding institutions accountable for making more than a token effort to teach the important intellectual skills they claim as outcomes; therefore the existence of a Communication Across the Curriculum program shows good faith in helping students develop their communication skills and a campus-wide commitment to providing practice and feedback.

Secondly, when students apply communication principles in a variety of contexts during their years in school, they are more likely to generalize the concepts and skills to a variety of contexts after graduation. As the communication discipline moves toward understanding communication as a socially constructed process, it becomes increasingly less defensible to teach communication principles or skills as generic and acontextual. Students need to learn that effective communication varies from one discourse community to another. We can claim to be experts in communication in general, but it is intellectually dishonest to claim that we know what students need to know about communication in every context they will encounter. (Policy Platform Statement, 1996)

Resolved, That courses in Communication Across the Curriculum programs should be developed in close consultation with the communication faculty on the campus, and with outside consultants as needed. These cross-disciplinary efforts must be acknowledged with resources, administrative support and recognition of faculty effort. (Gaudino, 1997, p. 15)[5]

Development of an OCXC program requires extensive planning. Program designers and administrators must consider issues such as program objectives, personnel needs, equipment and facility needs, instructional requirements for participating faculty and students, support services, implementation procedures, quality control and assessment procedures, dissemination of information, rewards for participants, and operational policies (Cronin & Grice, 1991). This section discusses seven of these key issues.

Recommendation 1. A well-conceived and well-managed OCXC program can make a significant contribution to a student's educational development, but it must be part of a more comprehensive structure to meet adequate standards for enhancing oral communication competence.

An OCXC program should supplement and not supplant required course work in oral communication. Only in communication courses do students typically receive sustained, intensive oral communication instruction, practice, and evaluation from a qualified professional.

While the across-the-curriculum approach can make a valuable contribution to educational efforts, it should not be the "stand-alone" component of a student's communication education. The most sensible foundation for a structured program of OCXC education in general is a required course in communication, or a course chosen from a menu of appropriate courses (e.g., public speaking, interpersonal communication, small group communication, argumentation, and intercultural communication). At the minimum, it is essential that a full curriculum of courses in communication be available to students. Students who discover that they need to work on specific communication competencies must have the opportunity to do so in a concentrated way. This can happen only in courses specifically addressing the communication competencies needed, for example, small group communication, interpersonal communication, argumentation, or public speaking.

Recommendation 2. An OCXC program should have clear and explicit goals that are consistent with and help meet relevant institutional mission statements and relevant accreditation guidelines, if applicable. These goals should be considered systematically and set forth explicitly.

Communication-intensive courses must be specially designated and prepared. The position that "Of course, we do that in all our courses" is not acceptable because it does not ensure (a) significant attention to oral communication competence in the course, and (b) adequate preparation of course instructors in oral communication theory and applications.

Oral communication across the curriculum can help to meet an institution's educational objectives and strengthen an institution's case for accreditation by (a) enhancing active learning through the formulation, expression, and adaptation of ideas; (b) providing the setting for a contextual assessment of oral communication competence; (c) emphasizing appropriate rhetorical choices throughout the curriculum; (d) providing opportunities for students to learn oral communication theory and skills; and (e) providing opportunities for students to explore the relationship between speech and thought in academic settings (Cronin & Grice, 1991; Palmerton, 1991).

Recommendation 3. The potential of OCXC to improve teaching and learning throughout the curriculum should be accepted and endorsed throughout the institution.

All parties—administrators, non-communication faculty, and communication faculty—must be involved and must interact in planning, implementing, and maintaining an OCXC program. Shared ownership of OCXC will enhance the likelihood of success. Specifically, administrators must understand what an OCXC program requires. They must promote the program throughout the university, contribute adequate resources, and provide appropriate rewards for participating faculty. C-I course instructors must be interested in exploring ways to improve the teaching/learning process even if it requires modification of their teaching techniques and exchanging breadth of coverage for depth of understanding. They must recognize that they can and should play a role in enhancing the speaking and listening competence of their students. Also, they must be willing to attend instructional sessions to learn oral communication theory and applications appropriate to their courses. Communication faculty participants must accept the pedagogical value of OCXC and be willing to provide instruction and advice to faculty teaching C-I courses in designing, implementing, and evaluating oral communication activities.

Recommendation 4. C-I courses must meet guidelines for academic quality.

First, a detailed application for C-I course designation should be required. This application should describe how the oral communication activities would be assigned, conducted, and evaluated. Only meaningful and educationally sound applications of oral communication activities should receive approval as C-I courses. Second, communication faculty or communication consultants should be available to meet with C-I course instructors to help them refine their proposed oral communication activities. Third, course syllabi should be approved by a faculty committee to indicate their suitability for C-I courses

(Palmerton, 1990). Communication faculty or communication consultants should be involved in this screening process. Fourth, individual faculty members who are permitted to develop and teach C-I courses should be certified on the basis of their preparation and competence to do so. Communication faculty or communication consultants should have significant input in the certification process.

Recommendation 5. All faculty members authorized to teach C-I courses should be required to engage in substantial faculty development under the direction of oral communication experts.

No one expects nor wants faculty teaching C-I courses to provide the same communication instruction that students would receive in a communication course. Rather, these faculty need to be prepared to help students accomplish the oral communication tasks assigned instead of just expecting that students will somehow figure out how to do them. However, faculty members who teach C-I courses are seldom experts in oral communication (Weiss, 1989), and thus must engage in special preparation to learn rudimentary approaches to teaching and evaluating oral communication. This typically takes the form of workshops or retreats in which they develop their own C-I courses and are exposed to rhetorical concepts and critical standards. Follow-up instruction may be required for faculty development (Weiss, 1990).

Recommendation 6. The OCXC program should be supported with sufficient institutional resources.

Personnel commitments are essential. Support for faculty to provide a communication curriculum must be sustained and increased as needed. C-I course instructors, program administrators, and communication faculty assigned to the program must receive adequate rewards such as reassigned time and/or supplemental pay. Participation in OCXC should be included in criteria for tenure, promotion, and merit pay.

Facilities and equipment must be provided. These include not only office and classroom space, but also appropriate videotaping laboratories, practice rooms, and counseling/ tutoring space.

A communication laboratory can provide students with workshops, practice facilities, and personal consultation (Grice, Bird, & Dalton, 1990; Grice & Cronin, 1992; Morreale, Shockley-Zalabak, & Whitney, 1993; Weiss, 1988). Graduate and senior-level undergraduate communication majors may be trained to tutor students in C-I courses in preparing, practicing, and revising their oral communication assignments (Grice, Bird, & Dalton, 1990; Grice & Cronin, 1998). The use of interactive multimedia instruction (IMI) in a laboratory setting can provide quality oral communication instruction. Prepared by communication experts and capable of providing individualized, self-paced instruction to a large number of students in a cost-effective manner, IMI can ensure expert communication instruction in C-I courses (Cronin, 1992, 1994, 1995; Cronin & Cronin, 1992).

Recommendation 7. OCXC should conduct valid assessment to determine if OCXC is achieving program and institutional goals.

A growing number of OCXC directors report that they have established or are establishing a formal large-scale assessment program.[6] Program assessment should be built into the agenda from the beginning, confirming that the structure is meeting the expectations it was designed to reach. Both outcomes assessment and implementation assessment are needed (Patton, 1997). Assessment of outcomes addresses how well program activities are meeting the goals of OCXC as well as the goals of the given institution. Implementation assessment addresses the programmatic elements that help or hinder the achievement of these goals. Insights derived give direction for course revision and program development. Multiple assessment measures should be used, both quantitative and qualitative.

Each institution will, and should, adapt assessment procedures to its goals and to available resources. For example, St. Olaf College uses an outside evaluator to respond to

C-I faculty portfolios consisting of syllabi, oral communication assignments, examples of student products, and self-reports from participating students and faculty. In addition, St. Olaf College is developing measures of communication competency focused on the specific goals of the program, longitudinal controlled studies of learning outcomes from C-I courses, and formative and summative evaluations of faculty knowledge, confidence, and applications with respect to principles of effective communication instruction (J. Beld, personal communication, October 22, 1999).

> Reliable and valid assessment of learning and performance outcomes allows OCXC programs to refine program offerings to enhance learning across the curriculum and the development of oral communication skills. Furthermore, if valid empirical assessment indicates significant learning outcomes from OCXC applications, it will (a) help convince non-participating faculty to employ oral communication activities in their courses to enhance learning, (b) help convince students and administrators of the educational value of OCXC, and (c) help secure continued and increased funding for OCXC programs. (Cronin & Grice, 1991, p. 40)

It is beyond the scope of this article to detail specific procedures for implementing each of these seven recommendations. Such procedures are discussed elsewhere (Cronin & Glenn, 1990, 1991; Cronin & Grice, 1991, 1993, 1999; Cronin, Grice, & Wiedeman, 1997; Grice, Blackburn, & Darby, 1991; Grice & Cronin, 1992, 1998; Morreale, et. al., 1993; Palmerton, 1990; Weiss, 1988, 1990).

PUBLISHED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM OCXC

Published assessment of the learning outcomes of various aspects of OCXC programs includes self-report data from participating students and faculty, and quasi-experimental and experimental studies.

Published Assessment: Self-Report Data

"Self-report measures, while valid as indicators of self-perceived intentions, attitudes, and predispositions, are highly affected by social desirability mandates and the inability of subjects to perceive their strengths and weaknesses" (Rubin & Graham, 1988, p. 26). Although self-report data from students are not the best measures of their learning of course content or their communication competence, student self-reports on attitudes, intentions, and predispositions are valuable and consistently positive across the studies reported on OCXC outcomes.

Over 90% of the students participating in OCXC at Central College, Iowa reported a moderate or an intense desire for additional communication skills training (Roberts, 1983). Likewise, students participating in the University of New Mexico Arts and Sciences Participatory Seminar reported that they enjoyed using speaking and writing activities to develop critical thinking skills (Civikly, 1990). In two other studies, students reported that OCXC activities helped them gain confidence in speaking (Palmerton, 1990) and increased their confidence in their ability to debate in class (Combs & Bourne, 1989).

The Oral Communication Program at Radford University conducted self-report assessments of 51 faculty participants and 2903 student participants in OCXC courses from 1989-1994 (see Table 1 for student evaluations). Most students (81%) reported that their overall evaluation of oral communication activities was either excellent or good; only 2% rated them poor or very poor. Most students (60%) liked participating in the oral communication activities in their course(s); 8% indicated that they disliked participating in them.

Students clearly favored the inclusion of oral communication activities in C-I courses. Most students (80%) felt that oral communication activities should be used again in the course(s); 5% indicated that such activities should not be used again. Sixty-nine percent of students rated the course as better due to the inclusion of oral communication activities; 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this conclusion.

The faculty self-reports were even more favorable (perhaps because of the fact that faculty responding chose to teach an OCXC course). Of the 51 faculty participants surveyed over a five-year period, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the oral communication components were very worthwhile to their students, 84% rated the course more enjoyable to teach with the inclusion of the oral communication components, 94% felt that these components should be included the "next time I teach the course," and 86% reported that their students learned more about course content and improved their oral communication skills as a result of the oral communication components. Likewise, faculty participants at (a) Hamline University reported positive effects of OCXC activities on students' knowledge formation and understanding (Palmerton, 1990); (b) the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs reported uniformly favorable "written evaluations of the quality and impact of communication components on student achievement" (Morreale et al., 1993, p. 20); and (c) Central College in Iowa reported increased acceptance of the importance of teaching communication skills and increased confidence in their ability to teach communication skills (Roberts, 1983).

These self-reports are encouraging. Collectively they indicate that students and faculty liked the inclusion of oral communication activities, felt that they should be used in future OCXC courses, and rated the course more positively due to the inclusion of oral communication activities. Faculty participants (a) reported that their courses were more enjoyable to teach with the inclusion of the oral communication components, (b) reported increased acceptance of the importance of teaching communication skills, (c) felt more confident in their ability to teach communication skills, and (d) felt that their students learned more about course content and improved their oral communication skills. However, independent measures of actual content learning or skill improvement should be included in OCXC assessment strategies.

Published Assessment: Controlled Studies

Few controlled studies have been reported that investigated the effects of specific OCXC activities on the stated goals of these programs—communicating to learn course content and learning to communicate (Tomlinson, 1999).

Communicating to learn course content. No controlled study has been reported linking activities included in a *specific* OCXC program with increased learning of course content in *that OCXC course*. However, investigations of the impact of oral and written "active learning" techniques on higher order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) appear to provide strong support for the effect of OCXC on this goal. Bonwell and Eison's (1991) review of studies of active learning emphasized material published since 1980 and focused on research-based rather than descriptive studies. Their review indicated that active learning strategies significantly increased learning outcomes, especially in the areas of higher order thinking.

> Use of these techniques in the classroom is vital because of their powerful impact upon students' learning. For example, several studies have shown that students prefer strategies promoting active learning to traditional lectures. Other research studies evaluating students' achievement have demonstrated that many strategies promoting active learning are comparable to lectures in promoting the mastery of content but superior

TABLE 1

Student Evaluations of C-I Courses at Radford University
N=2903

Item Response choice	1989 No. (%)	1990 No. (%)	1991 No. (%)	1992 No. (%)	1993 No. (%)	1994 No. (%)	TOTAL No. (%)
1. Overall evaluation of oral communication activities							
Excellent	203 (32%)	167 (29%)	104 (20%)	133 (23%)	59 (23%)	81 (24%)	747 (26%)
Good	345 (54%)	305 (53%)	342 (67%)	292 (51%)	123 (48%)	200 (59%)	1607 (55%)
Fair	79 (12%)	91 (16%)	65 (13%)	127 (22%)	69 (27%)	51 (15%)	482 (17%)
Poor	4 (1%)	13 (2%)	3 (1%)	21 (4%)	4 (2%)	5 (1%)	50 (2%)
Very Poor	3 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0%)	1 (0%)	4 (1%)	10 (0%)
2. If the course had *not* included the oral communication activities, I would have learned:							
More	11 (2%)	8 (1%)	16 (3%)	28 (5%)	14 (5%)	9 (3%)	8 (3%)
About the Same	187 (30%)	173 (30%)	198 (38%)	234 (41%)	107 (42%)	120 (35%)	1019 (35%)
Less	431 (69%)	394 (69%)	302 (59%)	311 (54%)	136 (53%)	212 (62%)	1786 (62%)
3. Oral communication activities should *not* be used again in this course.							
Strongly Agree	9 (1%)	7 (1%)	8 (2%)	7 (1%)	3 (1%)	0 (0%)	34 (1%)
Agree	18 (3%)	16 (3%)	10 (2%)	38 (7%)	12 (5%)	15 (4%)	109 (4%)
Neutral	67 (11%)	74 (13%)	72 (14%)	112 (20%)	53 (21%)	58 (17%)	436 (15%)
Disagree	254 (40%)	243 (42%)	245 (47%)	259 (45%)	113 (44%)	159 (47%)	1273 (44%)
Strongly Disagree	286 (45%)	238 (41%)	181 (35%)	156 (27%)	77 (30%)	109 (32%)	1047 (36%)

4. Oral communication activities have helped me improve my oral communication skills.

Strongly Agree	117	(19%)	85	(15%)	83	(16%)	46	(8%)	21	(8%)	47	(14%)	399 (14%)
Agree	319	(50%)	293	(51%)	259	(50%)	259	(45%)	128	(50%)	176	(52%)	1434 (49%)
Neutral	139	(22%)	153	(26%)	139	(27%)	181	(31%)	78	(30%)	83	(24%)	773 (27%)
Disagree	52	(8%)	37	(6%)	26	(5%)	74	(13%)	24	(9%)	29	(9%)	242 (8%)
Strongly Disagree	7	(1%)	10	(2%)	10	(2%)	15	(3%)	7	(3%)	6	(2%)	55 (2%)

5. Feelings on participation in oral communication activities

Liked	424	(67%)	379	(66%)	306	(59%)	287	(50%)	129	(50%)	206	(60%)	1731 (60%)
Neutral	177	(28%)	159	(28%)	176	(34%)	219	(38%)	99	(39%)	109	(32%)	939 (32%)
Disliked	33	(5%)	38	(7%)	33	(6%)	66	(11%)	29	(11%)	26	(8%)	225 (8%)

6. I think this course is better because of the inclusion of oral communication activities.

Strongly Agree	161	(25%)	144	(25%)	90	(18%)	93	(16%)	37	(14%)	64	(19%)	589 (20%)
Agree	324	(51%)	281	(49%)	288	(56%)	245	(43%)	114	(44%)	156	(46%)	1408 (49%)
Neutral	100	(16%)	103	(18%)	104	(20%)	157	(27%)	73	(28%)	97	(28%)	634 (22%)
Disagree	36	(6%)	31	(5%)	24	(5%)	60	(10%)	28	(11%)	20	(6%)	199 (7%)
Strongly Disagree	13	(2%)	18	(3%)	8	(2%)	17	(3%)	6	(2%)	5	(1%)	67 (2%)

to lectures in promoting the development of students' skills in thinking
and writing. Further, some cognitive research has shown that a significant
number of individuals have learning styles best served by pedagogical
techniques other than lecturing. (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. iii)

A large body of classic research-based studies indicates that a variety of oral commu-
nication activities significantly increased learning. For example, vocalized stimuli were
recalled more often than non-vocalized stimuli (Carmean & Weir, 1967; DeVesta & Rickards,
1971; Weir & Helgoe, 1968), and vocalization during problem-solving tasks produced
better performance than not vocalizing (Davis, 1968; Gagne & Smith, 1962; Marks, 1951).
Oral interaction also contributed to learning. Students restructured their knowledge when
engaged in small group discussion, affecting their learning positively. This restructuring
did not happen as effectively in individual learning (Schmidt, De Volder, DeGrave, Joust, &
Patel, 1989). Students learned more when they engaged in oral interaction with those who
had a greater degree of knowledge and who communicated within the "zone of knowledge"
held by the learner (Vygotsky, 1978). Students who studied material in order to teach it to
another student learned more than students instructed only to learn it (Bargh & Schul,
1980), and students who gave and received explanations learned more than those who did
not (Webb, 1982). Complexities of group composition affected learning and group func-
tioning (Webb, 1982), and cultural communication patterns affected learning outcomes:
learning was enhanced for students only when patterns of interaction and meanings were
consistent with the functioning of the communication in the home culture (Jordan, Au, &
Joesting, 1983; More, 1987; Olson, 1980; Rhodes, 1988; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). The
importance of the nature of the interaction is evident, emphasizing the need to help faculty
learn how to teach students about oral communication.

Learning to communicate. Even if a particular OCXC program or activity produces
significant increases in some aspects of communication competence, the findings may not
be generalizable to other OCXC programs. Key differences among OCXC programs and
C-I courses may include: the relative importance of the goal of learning to communicate
versus communicating to learn, the communication competence of the C-I-course instruc-
tor, the amount and quality of oral communication instruction given to students in the C-I
course, the degree of control for communication instruction provided in other classes, the
actual communication activity (activities) in which the OCXC students engage, the type
and quality of feedback/evaluation regarding oral communication performance provided
to students in and out of class, and the amount and quality of follow-up instruction in
communication provided to OCXC students.

Only one controlled study of the effects of a particular C-I course on communication
skills has been reported. Cronin and King investigated the effect of an OCXC course in
experimental psychology on selected communication outcomes using a quasi-experimen-
tal nonequivalent control group design (1991, see Cronin & Glenn, 1991 for a brief sum-
mary of the study). Blind comparisons were made between treatment groups receiving oral
communication instruction and non-treatment groups receiving placebo (non-communi-
cation) instruction using three dependent variables: presentation time for each group activ-
ity, class discussion time following each group presentation, and instructor rating of the
clarity/organization of each group oral presentation. Results indicated that the treatment
group significantly surpassed the non-treatment group on both mean presentation time and
the clarity/organization of the group oral presentations of their proposed research designs.

The Oral Communication Program at Radford University developed a series of interac-
tive multimedia instruction (IMI) modules that were designed to provide individualized,
self-paced, laboratory instruction in oral communication to students and faculty in C-I
courses. Separate experimental studies examined the effects of four of these IMI programs

on knowledge of communication and/or communication behaviors. In all four experimental studies, the treatment groups receiving IMI on coping with speech fright, constructing speaking outlines, developing key ideas, or improving listening achieved significantly higher cognitive test scores than did students in the control groups. In the speech fright study, students receiving IMI in coping with speech fright showed a significant decrease in speech fright over a four-week period on the public speaking section of the Communication Apprehension in Generalized Contexts instrument compared with students in the control group ($p < .05$). In the listening study, students receiving IMI in effective listening showed significantly greater gain scores on the video version of the Watson-Barker Listening Test than did students in the control group ($p < .0001$). (See Cronin, 1994, 1995; Cronin, Grice, & Olsen, 1994; Cronin & Kennan, 1994; Cronin & Myers, 1994 for detailed descriptions of these studies and suggested applications of IMI in communication education.)

These preliminary empirical results may be particularly relevant to OCXC programs seeking to provide effective oral communication instruction to students in C-I courses. Self-paced IMI could be developed by communication experts, designed to meet the needs of students and faculty in C-I courses, and delivered in or out of the classroom. However, IMI "should not and cannot replace classroom instruction" (Cronin & Kennan, 1994, pp. 1-2). Instructors using IMI should determine what is best done in the classroom and what instruction could be shifted to the IMI laboratory (Cronin, 1994). Such technology must be "used correctly to free faculty *for* students, not *from* them" (State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, 1992, p. 7, emphasis in original).

In summary, the results of published controlled studies relevant to OCXC provide (a) strong support that oral communication activities enhance learning of course content, (b) preliminary empirical support that well-designed IMI prepared by communication experts is effective in teaching oral communication theory and applications, and (c) almost no empirical evidence regarding the effect of specific OCXC programs on oral communication competence.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

OCXC programs are proliferating in higher education (Schneider, 1999). Administrators, faculty, and students are becoming more aware of the need for communication competence, the need for more effective teaching/learning strategies, and the contributions that OCXC is making and can make in helping meet these needs. However, serious challenges confront OCXC programs (see Tomlinson, 1999 for a review of these challenges). It is beyond the scope of this article to examine all major challenges to OCXC. However, recommendations are presented regarding (a) facilitating access to information, (b) enabling OCXC programs to live and grow, and (c) increasing active leadership by the National Communication Association.

Facilitating Access to OCXC Information

Robert Weiss developed and distributes a free national newsletter on OCXC.[7] Sherwyn Morreale (personal communication, October 8, 1999) indicated a willingness to **help** organize a national Web site for OCXC. This Web site could include information about OCXC such as (a) descriptions of all OCXC programs; (b) research material including convention papers, articles, bibliographies; and (c) instructional materials on the design, development, implementation, and assessment of OCXC. One example of this instructional material was developed by Jo Beld in *Communication by Design: Resources and Ideas for ORC Courses* (1997), a 290-page instructional manual, includes syllabi, handouts, activities, assignments, workshop materials, and assessment materials developed for OCXC at St. Olaf Col-

lege. Another example was developed by Patricia Palmerton in *Talking, Learning: Oral Communication in the Classroom, a Handbook for Instructors (1991)*. It includes 110 pages relating to oral communication competence, ethical considerations, instructional materials for specific applications, and evaluation/feedback/appraisal material developed for OCXC at Hamline University.

Sustaining OCXC Programs

Excessive dependence on a single leader or a small group of leaders, lack of adequate finances and resources, and lack of involvement by sufficient numbers of non-communication faculty appear to be the major challenges to sustaining OCXC programs (Tomlinson, 1999; Weiss, 1998). The most promising strategies for addressing these challenges include: (a) Interdisciplinary involvement from the outset will establish shared ownership of OCXC and enhance the likelihood of support and faculty involvement across the curriculum; (b) dissemination of OCXC assessment results, if positive, should convince faculty, students, administrators, alumni, and outside agencies that well-designed OCXC enhances course-content learning and context-specific communication competence; (c) on-going informational and persuasive campaigns will help convince administrators of the resources needed for OCXC (Palmerton, 1991) and enhance faculty support and involvement; and (d) programs must find ways to do more with less, but only if the quality of the program is maintained. For example, see Cronin, Grice, and Wiedeman (1997) for suggestions about dealing with budget cuts; and see Grice and Cronin (1998) for suggestions about using "peer-plus" tutors in a communication laboratory.

Providing More Active Leadership Regarding OCXC

"The growing interest in OCXC programs throughout the nation requires active leadership from the Speech Communication discipline in shaping the oral communication instruction provided by these programs" (Cronin & Grice, 1993, p. 8). The National Communication Association (NCA) has provided some leadership by issuing three resolutions about OCXC (see pp. 71-72) and offering a short course since 1990 and other programs on OCXC at conventions since 1984. However, leaders in OCXC have called for more active and additional leadership from the NCA.

Morello (2000) called for two coherent sets of standards (*musts* and *shoulds*) for OCXC programs. He contends that this approach could "forcefully articulate a different set of objectives expected of a speaking-across-the-curriculum program that did not have a basic course as its foundation." Although the NCA may oppose promulgating the two sets of standards called for by Morello, it should

- Take a greater role in improving pedagogy by promoting applications of oral communication activities to enhance learning across the curriculum (Cronin & Glenn, 1991; Palmerton, 1989).
- Provide more proactive promotion of the unique contributions of OCXC to enhancing *contextual* communication competence and reducing the potential deterioration of students' oral communication skills.
- Provide more recognition of OCXC programs that are "doing it right" and, perhaps, provide some "gentle persuasion" to those OCXC programs that are not meeting NCA guidelines. Voluntary NCA certification for OCXC programs should be considered, perhaps similar to that suggested by Orlando L. Taylor, President of the National Communication Association for applied communication programs (Taylor, 1999, p. 2).
- Encourage and support efforts to establish an interest group for OCXC in the NCA.[7]
- Facilitate the establishment of an OCXC Web site.

- Encourage and facilitate quality assessment of OCXC. Controlled studies, including longitudinal studies to "measure the effectiveness of OCXC programs over time" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 53), are needed that focus on the specific goals of specific OCXC programs. The major emphasis of such studies should be on the effects of *specific* OCXC programs on the *specific* (and necessarily limited) communication competencies addressed in *specific* C-I courses.

CONCLUSION

OCXC is alive and growing across the country. Coursework in a communication department provides the best foundation for OCXC offerings. Given a strong communication foundation, OCXC offers unique pedagogical advantages in three areas: (a) active learning, (b) contextual, discipline-specific applications of communication, and (c) continued instruction, practice, and appraisal of oral communication throughout college for non-communication majors.

Many arguments have been advanced against OCXC. Moreover, significant challenges including financial and resource limitations as well as the lack of involvement by sufficient numbers of non-communication faculty threaten some OCXC programs. However, "if these potential problems are anticipated and strategies are devised to overcome those that prove significant, an oral-communication-across-the-curriculum emphasis holds great potential for supplementing traditional approaches to communication training and for enhancing learning across the curriculum" (Cronin & Glenn, 1991, p. 365).

REFERENCES AND NOTES

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[1]Stephanie D. Tomlinson provided an excellent review and synthesis of the literature on OCXC.

[2]We are using the term 'co-cultural' in the sense suggested by Orbe: "Co-cultural communication theory is based on the belief that the United States is a country of many cultures, each of which exists simultaneously within and apart from other cultures. The word *co-culture* is embraced over other terminologies to signify the notion that no one culture in our society is inherently superior to other coexisting cultures" (Orbe, 1998, p. 2, emphasis in original).

[3]Response/refutation was restricted to three sentences due to space limitations for this article. The authors are preparing an article with detailed discussion of each of the arguments against OCXC. Readers are invited to contribute their responses (e-mail mcronin@runet.edu or mail to Dr. Cronin).

[4]The research clearly shows that increased learning is associated with oral verbal participation; however, it also shows that the *kind* of interaction matters. For example, Webb found that the strongest predictor of poor learning outcomes for students in small group

settings was failure to answer their questions (1982), and cultural factors influence how oral communication activities interact with learning.

[5]These resolutions were based, at least in part, on a blue-ribbon committee report submitted to the SCA in 1993. The committee was chaired by Dr. Michael Cronin and was composed of 15 additional communication faculty (Philip M. Backlund, Frank Dance, Isa N. Engleberg, Phillip Glenn, George L. Grice, Diana K. Ivy, James C. McCroskey, Sherwyn P. Morreale, Patricia R. Palmerton, Lawrence B. Rosenfeld, Thomas M. Steinfatt, Douglas Trank, David H. Waite, Allan Ward, and Robert O. Weiss). Part of this unpublished report (*Oral Communication in the Undergraduate General Education Curriculum,* 1993) focused on the role of OCXC in general education programs. A subcommittee, chaired by George L. Grice along with Michael W. Cronin, Sherwyn P. Morreale, Patricia R. Palmerton, and Robert O. Weiss, drafted seven recommendations regarding OCXC in general education. These recommendations are modified in this article to focus on the role of OCXC in higher education in general.

[6]These programs include The College of William and Mary, DePauw University, Hamline University, North Carolina State University, St. Olaf College, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and the University of Utah (Cronin & Grice, 1991; Tomlinson, 1999).

[7]Contact Robert O. Weiss to provide information for the newsletter, to be added to the mailing list, and to indicate support for establishing an interest group for OCXC in the NCA, (108E Performing Arts Center, DePauw University, Greencastle, IN 46135, robertweiss@depauw.edu, 765-658-4490).

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