College of Marin

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Common Rubric

Department of Communication

**Principle Investigators:** Ron Gaiz, Patricia O’Keefe: Speech Discipline

**Overview:**

The Communication Department investigated Student Learning Outcomes in two of the performance classes taught in the SPCH discipline. In the Fall of 2011, “SPCH 122: Public Speaking” and “SPCH 132: Argumentation and Persuasion” were selected for assessment. Gaiz and O’Keefe discussed the student learning outcomes at the department and college-wide levels. Individual students were assessed at either the mid-term or final speeches delivered in the course. These individual assessments were then translated to the College-wide rubric with outstanding results.

**Methods:** Before the fall 2011 semester began, Gaiz and O’Keefe selected the two courses for assessment based on a rotation which will include a quadratic review of all courses in the discipline. While most of the classes assessed two assignments, one during the mid-term and one at the end, one of the SPCH 122 courses only has data for the final project. The grading rubrics for both courses were printed on two-ply paper. One copy was given to the student after their presentation, evaluation and grading was completed. The second, yellow copy, was retained by the instructor for evaluating the Student Learning Outcomes at both the course and college-wide level. All students received both written and oral feedback from both instructor and peers before beginning the final assignments.

**Results:** Overall, students in SPCH 122 and SPCH 132 did excellent work on all six college-wide indicators. For both Gaiz and O’Keefe’s sections it was noted that when students received “lower evaluations,” usually they occurred in two specific areas: organization and delivery. After their second speech in both Gaiz’s and O’Keefe’s classes, for the most part students had a marked improvement in both categories, some dramatically. There are a few “outliers” in each class that did not master the skill sets taught in the course. While all scores were extremely high, Gaiz plans to more strictly adhere to the guidelines he has clearly stated in his syllabus and thus expects somewhat lower scores on his first set of speeches. O’Keefe plans to now spend more time reviewing outlining skills and in addition, reminding students of the value of practicing their presentations.

**Closing:**

This semester, “SPCH 110 will be assessed at both the course and college-wide levels. We plan to continue using NCR paper and will assess the students at two intervals: during their first major speech and during their final speech. Having the copies of student assessments allows for maximum memory recall and clear accurate assessment of student learning outcomes.