Project Summary

Title: Communication studies program goal assessment: Cultural diversity student learning outcome in SPE 120 and SPE 201

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Through viewing multiple videos of student performances of literature and storytelling, we developed three holistic rubrics that allow us to assess a student’s abilities in the areas of (1) cultural competence, (2) vocal performance, and (3) overall performance. (Rubrics are available upon request.)

We found that in order to effectively use a holistic scoring system, a norming session is essential to standardize the use of the rubric. A norming session starts with viewing representative samples of what would be considered a 4, 3, 2, and 1. Next, new samples of student performances/storytelling are viewed and scored by multiple evaluators. The scores are then compared and evaluators are asked to articulate the rationale for their scores. Through the norming process, we moved from having widely divergent scores to having scores that were highly consistent with each other. We also adapted the wording of the rubrics to cover additional aspects of student performance that we had not yet considered.

Through applying the rubrics to random performances, we discovered that students tended to achieve higher scores in the areas of vocal performance and overall performance, but struggled in the area of cultural competence. These findings resulted in adding an additional text on multiculturalism and diversity to the storytelling class. In addition, the oral interpretation class added a written analysis paper in which students explicitly addressed the cultural context of the performance and how they would respect the culture through specific performance choices.

We plan to continue using the revised rubrics in the oral interpretation and storytelling classes for the Fall 2013-Spring 2014 school year. We also plan to disseminate the findings by submitting a paper on assessment of performance to the Eastern Communication Association Convention in Washington, D.C. in Spring 2014. This conference is the regional conference for Communication Studies professors and the audience includes professors from the East Coast in the area of Communication Studies, Performance Studies, K-12 Education, and Theatre.

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