

Speech Communication Department

Program Review of the Undergraduate Major and Debate Team

2006-2007 Academic Year

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Executive Summary

The Department of Speech Communication offers a major and minor in Speech Communication as well as the debate team. The 42-unit major was initiated in 2001. The major has grown dramatically in its initial years, from one graduating major in spring 2003 to approximately 20 graduating majors in spring 2007. The average class size for all speech communication courses is over 20. All courses are taught by full-time faculty, except in cases of leave (e.g., sabbatical).

The debate team currently consists of 72 ULV students and is one of the most popular extracurricular activities on campus. ULV debaters compete in British Parliamentary format, a highly respected international format. Select members of the debate team attend local, national, and international tournaments, with the pinnacle of competition at the World Debate Championships held in a different country each year.

The learning outcomes for the academic major/minor and the debate program encourage students to examine communication theory and research, practice communication skills in a variety of contexts, and explore communication from a multicultural perspective. Further goals specific to the academic major/minor provide that majors/minors will receive good program and career related advising and experience choice of classes to suit academic and professional aspirations and to teach useful lifelong skills. Further goals specific to the debate program provide that participants will be involved in an extracurricular activity that promotes individual growth and a connection with other ULV students.

The assessment procedures included a senior exit survey, alumni survey, focus groups with majors and debate team members, analysis of public speaking evaluation forms, analysis of intercultural communication theory essay exams, senior project papers and presentations, debate tabs, and the adjudication accreditation exam. The findings suggest the following:

1. Students feel they are challenged to examine various areas of communication theory and research through classes, the senior project, and their experience in the debate program. The department faculty is committed to improving students' use of APA format and writing style.
2. Students receive a strong background in communication skill practice from the major. Debate team members report a heightened level of public speaking confidence and perform well nationally and internationally.
3. The department's push to explore communication from a multicultural perspective throughout the major and debate team experience is accomplished successfully.
4. Students responded overwhelmingly that they received excellent program related advising and appreciated the attention in a small department. The majority of students felt their career-related advising was "adequate."
5. Knowledge and skills acquired through the major benefit students personal lives and prepare them professionally for careers or graduate school. Students desire more classes in the major. The department has the largest average class size among all arts and sciences departments, with an average class size over 20.

6. Students offered *highly* positive remarks about the connectedness of the debate team, the quality of coaching, and the personal and academic growth that stemmed from their participation. Participation on the debate team is so popular that students hope the increasing number of participants does not jeopardize the team quality.

Some of the recommendations for action include:

1. Consider the pros and cons of additional staffing.
2. Develop a new course, SPCM 490: Special Topics in Speech Communication.
3. Develop a workshop on career and graduate school planning.
4. Improve student's mastery of APA format and writing style through the use of scaffolded writing assignments.
5. Revise Department of Speech Communication brochures, website, and information available to ULV admissions.
6. Develop a peer-mentoring program for the debate team to develop the skills of new members and maintain a sense of connectedness amidst an increasingly large team.
7. Encourage the office of admissions to capitalize on the success of our debate program when marketing the university to new students.

Introduction

The Department of Speech Communication at the University of La Verne conducted a program review during the 2006-2007 academic year. The faculty met on a regular basis to examine the mission and assess the learning outcomes of the department. The review investigates the two arms of the Speech Communication Department, (1) the academic major/minor in speech communication and (2) the debate team. Results from data analysis provide a summary of strengths and weakness of the department and provide the basis for action items to improve departmental effectiveness. Specifically, the review includes a description of the department, a description of assessment procedures, a report of assessment of learning outcomes, and list of action items to address future direction of the department.

Department Description and Background

Department Mission

The mission of the Department of Speech Communication is to use theory and practice to help students explore how and why people communicate, and the effects of communication on individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.

Department Goals and Learning Outcomes

In support of our mission, the department provides a curriculum for the academic major/minor and the debate program that encourages students to:

- a. Examine communication theory and research
- b. Practice communication skills in a variety of contexts
- c. Explore communication from a multicultural perspective

Further goals specific to the academic major/minor provide that majors/minors will:

- d. Receive good program and career related advising
- e. Experience choice of classes to suit academic and professional aspirations and to teach useful lifelong skills

Further goals specific to the debate program provide that participants will:

- f. Be involved in an extracurricular activity that promotes individual growth and a connection with other ULV students

Department Description

History and organization. In 2000-2001, at the prompting of former Dean Gingrich, ULV formed the Department of Speech Communication. The department received approval for an undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree and minor in speech communication in 2001-2002.

Prior to this approval, the only speech communication courses taught at ULV were Fundamentals of Public Speaking and Argumentation and Debate. These courses were nested in the Communications (mass communication) department, and primarily served to meet the General Education Spoken English (GESE) requirement. Courses were taught primarily by adjunct faculty. The development of the Department of Speech Communication represents the University's mission-driven commitment to improve students' life-long skills in oral communication. The introduction of the Speech Communication major and minor inspired the development and approval of eight new courses detailed later in the description of the major.

ULV's debate program began as an extracurricular activity in 1912. Today, students may participate in the debate program purely on an academic level, by enrolling in SPCM 350 Argumentation and Debate. Many students extend their involvement in debate beyond the class, by participating in the ULV varsity debate team as an extracurricular activity. What distinguishes students who participate in the debate class versus the debate team is that team members participate in practices outside class times as well as competitions outside the university. Students who participate in the varsity debate team not only receive forensics training, but also the privilege of trying out for team slots. Try-outs for representing the debate team in tournaments are highly competitive. It is possible that a person will be a part of the debate team, but never represent it outside the campus.

Faculty. The Department of Speech Communication has two full-time faculty (see faculty vitas in **Appendix A**). Dr. Jeanne Flora specializes in interpersonal and family communication, communication theory, and intercultural communication. Dr. Flora received her Ph.D. (1998) from the University of Kansas. From 1998 - 2000, she served an assistant professor at California State University, Fullerton. In 2000, she joined the University of La Verne faculty as an assistant professor and chair of the Department of Speech Communication. Dr. Flora's research interests include communication in close relationships. She recently published a book titled *Family Communication* that she uses as a text in the Advanced Interpersonal and Family Communication course. She has published nine peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, and has given numerous conference presentations. Some of her latest work is listed below:

Segrin, C., & Flora, J. (2005). *Family Communication*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, NJ.

Flora, J., & Segrin, C. (2003). Relational development trajectories and relational well-being. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 20, 515-536.

Segrin, C. & Flora, J. (2001). Perceptions of relational histories, marital quality, and loneliness in married prison inmates. *Journal of Family Communication*, 1, 151-173.

Flora, J., & Segrin, C. (2000). Affect and behavioral involvement in spousal complaints and compliments. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 14, 641-657.

Flora, J., & Segrin, C. (2000). Relationship development in dating couples: Implications for relational and personal well-being. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 17*, 811-825.

Ian Lising's academic training is specialized in argumentation and debate, rhetorical theory, and interviewing. Professor Lising has an esteemed background as a debate coach and is one of the most prominent leaders in debate worldwide. Ian Lising was the co-Founder, Chair and Coach of the Ateneo Debate Society (Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines) from 1991-1998. He coached the 1st Asian Debate Champion team at the inaugural event in 1995. In 1999, he served as the Championship Director of Worlds Universities Debating Championships (WUDC). Later that year, he coached the University of La Verne (California, USA) to the Grand Final of the Oxford Union International Intervarsity Debating Championship. He has served as an adjudicator in the finals of the Asian Debating Championship, the Australasian Debating Championship, as well as the Yale, Cambridge, and Oxford international intervarsity championships. He is a five-time Grand Finals Adjudicator at the Worlds University Debating Championships. He has also coached both Ateneo and La Verne at the WUDC. His teams have become World Octofinalists, Quarterfinalists, Semifinalists, and Grand Finalists. In 2003, the University of La Verne was the only American team to advance past the preliminary rounds. He continues to serve as the Chair of the World Debating Council, where he was first elected in 2002. He will retire from the position at the 2008 WUDC in Bangkok.

All courses in the department are taught by these two full-time faculty, except in cases where a faculty is granted leave (e.g., for sabbatical) (see **Appendix A** for course rotations and teaching loads). In these situations, the department relies on part-time faculty. In addition to delivering courses for the Speech Communication major, the two full-time faculty deliver five of the eight courses that fulfill the University's Spoken English General Education (GESE) requirement. The other three courses that fulfill the GESE are taught outside the Speech Communication department. The department teaches numerous sections of the general education courses, in addition to courses specifically for the major/minor. The result is that out of 39 subject areas/majors in the College of Arts and Sciences, Speech Communication ranked 16th for total credit hours delivered in 2006 (ULV Factbook, 2006, see **Appendix B** for a table of Total Credit Hours Delivered by Subject 2000-2006). In other words, 23 other subject areas delivered a lower number of total credit hours. The reason this statistic is notable is because the Department of Speech Communication only has two faculty, in comparison to many other larger departments who deliver fewer total credit hours.

The major and minor. Course work for the major emphasizes basic communication theory, basic research methods (in either the social scientific tradition or rhetorical criticism tradition), as well as context-specific training in areas such as interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, persuasion, and argumentation. Some supportive upper division electives outside the department also count toward the major and allow students to explore areas closely related to the field. The speech communication major requires a minimum of 42 semester hours. All majors complete a 26-unit core requirement, of which 10 or more units are upper division. Students choose an additional 16 hours of upper-division course work from an approved list. With assistance from an advisor, students are required to complete a senior

project from 2-4 units. The project consists of either a social scientific research study, a rhetorical criticism project, a research review, or an applied project. The minor requires a minimum of 24 semester hours, 16 of which are upper division. See **Appendix C** for a complete list of requirements for the major and a list of courses.

Table 1 summarizes the trends of speech communication majors from 2000-2006. **Appendix B** presents information of all majors in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences over the same time period.

Table 1

Unduplicated Speech Communication Undergraduate Headcount by Major from Fall 2002 to Fall 2006 (Source: Excerpt from ULV Factbook)

Fall 2002		Fall 2003		Fall 2004		Fall 2005		Fall 2006	
N	% of A&S	N	% of A&S	N	% of A&S	N	% of A&S	N	% of A&S
7	.6%	9	.7%	12	.8%	22	1.5%	35	2.3%

Trends in **Table 1** show a steady increase in speech communication majors over that past five years. The trend appears to be continuing into 2007. Upon most recent check, in February 2007, the academic advising office reported **40** declared speech communication majors (see **Appendix D**). As the description of course enrollments in the following section suggests, it would be difficult for the department to function with the addition of many more majors, unless another faculty member joined the department. Results from the **senior exit survey** illustrate that the majority of people make their decision to major in speech communication after coming to ULV and taking some classes in the field: 35% of people decided to major in speech communication “after taking several classes,” while 57% of people “started with another major, but later changed.”

Why incoming ULV students are not choosing to begin their career as a speech communication major is an interesting question that the department will want to monitor for the future, should they ever need to focus more on student recruitment. First, it is clear that unlike many states in the U.S., California high school students are not required to take a speech class or even offered a speech class. Thus, few high school students have exposure to the field. Second, as a relatively new department at ULV, it is questionable the extent to which the ULV Office of Admissions highlights speech communication as a possible major or participation in our renowned debate team as a possible extracurricular activity. When high school students indicate an interest in the communications field, the admissions department has traditionally only sent them an information letter from the (mass) communications department. Beginning in spring 2007, the admissions department will send these students an information letter from the (mass) communications department and the speech communication department. Many high school students are not sure which area of the communication field they are interested in. They are confused by the terminology that defines department names. Rather than having the admissions office assume that because the student did not specifically indicate *speech* communication, they

are only interested in (mass) communications, ULV admissions has agreed to mail students information about *all* their options in the communication field.

Course enrollments. During the first two years of the major, enrollments in the lower division classes were good, but the upper division classes had lower enrollments (always at least 7 to run the course, but in some cases not many more). This is typical for a new major. After two years, enrollments blossomed in all courses, even upper division courses within the major. The department has a 20-student cap on enrollment in each of the 2-unit Fundamentals of Public Speaking (SPCM 100) courses. With many more than 20 students, it is difficult for instructors to simply have the class time to listen to student speeches in class. The Fundamentals of Public Speaking classes are almost always at full capacity. The average enrollment across the 2006-2007 public speaking classes was 19.67. On occasion, the academic advising office has requested that the department offer an additional section of public speaking to relieve demand. The department responded to this request once in the last five years by having one faculty member teach an overload. Teaching an additional section of public speaking is taxing on department faculty, because the two faculty already teach the senior project class as an unpaid overload, sometimes offer SPCM 110: Speech Communication Theory and Practice as an unpaid directed study, and often teach online public speaking as an overload.

The Argumentation and Debate (SPCM 350) class has an enrollment cap at 60. Enrollment in SPCM 350 was 53 during fall 2006 and 54 during spring 2007. In previous years the department put an enrollment cap at 40 for this course, but due to high demand for the course, we decided in 2005 to increase the enrollment to 60. Professor Lising has a phenomenal work ethic that motivates him to extend his time to deal with such high student interest in the debate class.

All other courses in the department have an enrollment cap at 30. During the 2006-2007 academic year, five other courses (which all had a 30-student enrollment cap) averaged class sizes of 29.4. The Speech Communication Department is the only department in the College of Arts and Sciences that had an average class size over 20 in 2006 (Office of Institutional Research: Class Size Analysis, 2006, see **Appendix E**).

In summary enrollment in speech communication classes is very strong. Written comments from the **senior exit surveys** and **alumni surveys** emphasized that the students liked a small department with a “personal touch.” Further, the comments indicated that the majors had high regard for the two professors in the department. Comments about the department’s weaknesses primarily focused on the desire for “more classes” and more faculty. In sum, students like what they are getting from the department and want more of it, so they can gain a “broader perspective” (**focus group with majors**).

Advising. The two full-time faculty advise all majors. According to data from the Office of Academic Advising in February 2007 (see **Appendix D**), one faculty advised 21 students and the other 19. The two faculty equally split the advising load for senior projects.

The debate team. The ULV debate team competes in a format called the British Parliamentary format, the most widely-respected debate format and also the official format of the World Universities Debating Championships. Beyond the debate class that meets twice weekly, the debate team holds weekly practices. Some of the tournaments in which the debate team participates are local (e.g., Claremont Colleges, Loyola Marymount, California State University, San Bernardino), some national (e.g., Yale Invite) and some international such as the Oxford International Intervarsity Championships and the World Universities Debating Championships, held in a different country every year. In the past few years, select members of the debate team have traveled to England, Australia, Scotland, Canada, South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia, and Ireland. The team regularly competes against other high-level debate programs from Oxford, Cambridge, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Harvard, Sydney, Glasgow, Melbourne, Monash, Ateneo de Manila, University College Dublin, etc. The World Universities Debating Championships is the pinnacle of competition for the team each year.

Currently there are a total of 72 students on the ULV debate team (54 of the 72 are simultaneously enrolled in the class). More students are on the ULV debate than any athletic team on campus, including the football team.

Assessment Procedures

Senior Exit Survey

Senior exit surveys, collected from 23 majors over the last three years, provided information about the demographics of the majors, career plans, satisfaction related to courses, faculty, advising, content of the major, the senior project experience, as well as general strengths, weakness, and areas of improvement in the department. Senior exit surveys were conducted near the end of the senior project class in spring semester. Data from the surveys were entered into SPSS to allow for reports of frequencies and other descriptive statistics. Full results from the senior exit survey, as well as the senior exit survey itself, are reported in **Appendix F**.

Alumni Survey

In fall 2006 the department conducted the first ever alumni survey. Twelve graduates were contacted by mail and asked to respond to an enclosed hard copy of the survey or an online version of the survey. Eight graduates responded, seven by returning the hard copy of the survey through the prepaid envelopes and one responded to the online survey. The survey collected information about the graduates' career and graduate school developments and preparation, the extent to which they were using information learned in the major, and areas of departmental improvement. With only eight responses the data from the surveys were calculated as percentages by hand. Full results from the alumni survey, as well as the alumni survey itself, are reported in **Appendix G**.

Focus Group of Majors and Debate Team Members

Two separate focus groups were conducted to assess strengths and weaknesses related to departmental goals. One focus group was composed of four speech communication majors, while the other focus group was composed of five debate team members. Six undergraduate students received training on methods for conducting focus groups as a part of the SPCM 332 Interviewing Principles and Practices course. Three of six students who were *not* speech communication majors conducted the focus group with speech communication majors. Three other students who were speech communication majors, but *not* members of the debate team conducted the debate focus group. The focus group facilitators used a Sony Handycam pointed toward a blank wall to record only the conversation in the focus group. No individual faces were recorded to protect anonymity. Facilitators also took written notes to supplement the recording. Facilitators asked eight primary questions in the speech communication major focus group and six primary questions in the debate focus group. Facilitators then transcribed the recording. Psychology department graduate students, who were currently taking a methods course, were assigned to conduct a content analysis of the transcriptions. A list of focus group questions and results of the content analyses are in **Appendix H** for the focus group with majors and **Appendix I** for the focus group with debate team members.

Evaluation of Public Speaking Evaluation Forms

Students who take the Fundamentals of Public Speaking course (SPCM 100) present several graded speeches during each semester. Faculty use evaluation forms unique to each speech assignment to grade the speeches. Informative and persuasive speech evaluation forms from two sections of a public speaking course were analyzed to assess overall student performance in several common areas of public speaking (e.g., introduction, body, conclusions, delivery, outlining). Psychology department graduate students, who were currently taking a methods course, were assigned to calculate means and standard deviations of individual items on 57 evaluation forms. Results of these analyses are in **Appendix J**.

Evaluation of Intercultural Communication Theory Essays

Intercultural Communication is one of majors' core requirements. In the January 2007 class, 31 students took an exam in which 5 of the essay questions focused on intercultural communication theories and application. The essays were graded with a rubric. Results from the 31 student rubrics were collected and analyzed in SPSS to assess students' mastery of intercultural communication theories (see **Appendix K** for a sample of the exam, the rubric, and the results of the rubric analyses.)

Senior Project Paper and Presentation Rubrics

As of February 2007, the Department of Speech Communication Department has conducted 21 senior projects, 15 of which were evaluated using a standardized rubric. The department began using a standardized rubric for the evaluation of senior project papers and presentations in 2005. For the 6 seniors who graduated prior to 2005, the department used an

informal evaluation form. Twenty more senior projects are currently underway but not included in this analysis. **Appendix L** shows the average grade for senior projects and the number of senior projects completed by year. **Appendix L** also contains means and standard deviations that were calculated for the items on the formal evaluation forms that have been collected at this point.

Adjudication Accreditation Exam

At the end of each semester, all debaters take the Adjudication Accreditation Exam, a standard exam developed by the World Universities Debating Championships (**Appendix M**). The exam is based on students' mastery of debating theory and rules as well as adjudication theory and rules, and their ability to apply these rules to adjudicating an actual debate. In this exam, students watch a videotaped debate and then answer a set of questions that assesses their ability to examine or adjudicate a debate. In ULV's case, the exam is graded by the debate coach, Professor Lising. Scores on the exam influence whether a student is selected as an adjudicator to a tournament and to which level of tournament. Copies of the World Parliamentary Debate Rules, the Adjudication Accreditation Exam, and the rubric used to grade the adjudication exam are contained in **Appendix M**.

Tabs from Debate Tournaments

Each debate tournament generates a set of debate tabs. Essentially these tabs are an accumulation of speaker scores over several rounds in a debate. Debate tabs are used to determine the winner of a debate tournament and what place each individual speaker received at the end of the tournament. Debate tabs are an indicator of individual and team success for the ULV debate team. A sample of debate tabs from a recent tournament (March 2-3, 2007) at California State San Bernardino are in **Appendix N**.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes Common to the Major and Debate Team

(1) Majors and debate team members will examine communication theory and research.

Majors' ability to examine communication theory and research was assessed through (1) their own self-report in the **senior exit survey**, (2) their own self-report in the **alumni survey**, and (3) by instructors' **evaluation of the senior project**.

A complete report of responses from 23 seniors on the **senior exit survey** is included in **Appendix F**. Specific results that pertain to the first learning outcome (i.e., students' ability to examine communication theory and research in classes in the major or in their senior project) are summarized in **Table 2**.

Table 2

*Information from Senior Exit Survey Pertaining to Outcome #1***Strong background in . . .**

	1=strongly agree	2=agree	3=disagree	4=strongly disagree
Theoretical information	69.6%	26.1%	4.3%	0%
Practical/applied information	52.2%	47.8%	0%	0%
Contexts of communication	87.0%	13.0%	0%	0%

Usefulness of senior project to . . .

	1=strongly agree	2=agree	3=disagree	4=strongly disagree
Understand published research	69.6%	30.4%	0%	0%
Use APA format for research papers	78.3%	21.7%	0%	0%
Link research and theory	82.6%	13.0%	4.3%	0%

As indicated in **Table 2**, the majority of students “strongly agree” that they are receiving a solid background in theoretical information, practical/applied information, and exposure to various contexts of communication. Over two-thirds of majors “strongly agree” that the senior project helped them understand published research, and over three-fourths of students “strongly agree” that the senior project helped them better use APA format and make links between research and theory. Thus, at the end of their college experience, students feel that their major has challenged them to explore communication theory and research.

The **evaluation of senior project paper rubrics** show that the average grade on the senior project (N=21) is B (3.08). An analysis of means (**see Table 3**) indicates that instructors rated students the weakest in the general areas of “references” and “language use” and strongest in the general areas of “organization” and “integration and inference.”

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for General Categories on Senior Project Paper Rubrics

Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Integration and Inference	1.89	.84
Reference List	1.96	.82
Organization	1.34	.52
Language Use	1.96	.76
Academic Integrity	1.41	.59

Note. 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Fair, 4=Poor.

Students' two weakest individual items were use of APA format (M=2.21) and use of an appropriate number of scholarly sources (M=2.29). The department faculty agreed that students' self-reports of their ability to use APA format and to research well were higher than their actual ability. In response to this concern, the department tripled the lecture time spent on APA format and how to conduct research in the spring 2007 senior project class. Anecdotally, when asked, students often say upon entry to the senior project class that they feel they understand APA format well and do not need much more instruction. Senior project papers have not matched their verbal self-assessment. Recognizing the bias in self-report, we now offer more intense instruction on APA format in the senior project class. We may need to make similar or additional efforts to boost the quality of writing in student projects.

Students' received strongest individual ratings for organization of ideas and academic integrity. Incidentally, members of the department had the opportunity to discuss the Manchester College Department of Communication program review results with their faculty at the time ULV was forming the Speech Communication Department. Manchester College faculty offered ULV faculty their view of their current challenges in their department, one of them being students' difficulty with integrating communication theory into their senior project. Indeed, Manchester College students were weakest in their ability to integrate communication theory in their projects, in comparison to other areas. We have attempted to proactively engage students in theory-driven senior projects. The department faculty agreed that instruction in the senior project class has emphasized *integration of communication theory and research*. While there is room for improvement, integration and inference is not the weakest area for ULV speech communication majors.

The **alumni survey** was used to assess the extent to which ULV speech communication graduates who have gone on to graduate school (N=2) felt academically prepared. With such a small number of students reporting, the results only offer a limited picture. Still, as indicated in **Appendix G**, those who entered graduate school reported that the education they received at ULV provided them with "excellent preparation for graduate school" and that they "felt equally prepared in comparison to peers from other universities."

Debate team members apply communication theory, in part through their training in World Parliamentary debating rules and adjudication rules. At the end of the semester, students in the Argumentation and Debate class take a standard exam, the **Adjudication Accreditation Exam**, developed by the World Universities Debating Championships (**Appendix M**). The exam is based on students' mastery of debating theory and rules as well as adjudication theory and rules, and their ability to apply these rules to adjudicating an actual debate. In this exam, students watch a videotaped debate and then answer a set of questions that assesses their ability to examine or adjudicate a debate. Students' average score on the spring 2007 Adjudication Accreditation Exam was 2.76 (N = 51). This score translates to a B-, or as the grading rubric (**Appendix M**) indicates: "The adjudicator can serve as the second member on a panel in a preliminary round of an international intervarsity tournament . . . has good understanding of the roles and function of each team and speaker in a debate." For a 300-level class, an average grade of B- on an exam is common. In other words, we feel students are mastering debate theory fairly well, yet the class is challenging as an upper division course should be. Adjudicators are assessed very rigorously, and as mentioned in the description of the debate team, only a select few students are A-level adjudicators who are selected to participate in international tournaments. For example, only 6 out of 51 students received a score of 3.7 (A-) or better. We have already made selections of adjudicators for the 2007-2008 international tournaments. Results on the adjudication exam heavily influence the decision. We are sending just 5 adjudicators to the elite level international tournaments next year—a number that corresponds closely with the scores on the adjudication exams.

In **summary**, students feel they are challenged to examine and apply communication theory and research through classes, the senior project, and their experience in the debate program. They report that they have been exposed to various contexts/areas of speech communication through their academic experience. In turn, the exposure to theory and research in the undergraduate major translates to majors who feel excellent preparation upon entry to graduate programs in speech communication. The department faculty are committed to improving students' use of APA format and writing style, so students can better integrate and translate material from communication research journals into the language and format of a solid research paper/senior project. Students do not view APA format and writing as a weakness, but the department faculty are closely monitoring and working to improve students' standards in this area. Debate team members, in general, score above average level in their mastery of debate and adjudication theory.

(2) Majors and debate team members will practice communication skills in a variety of contexts.

Majors' ability to *practice* communication skills in a variety of contexts is assessed through the **public speaking evaluation forms**, **senior project presentation rubrics**, and the **senior exit survey**. Formal analysis of **public speaking rubrics** illustrates students' strengths and weaknesses in the major components of the platform speeches: introduction, body, conclusion, delivery, and outline. Of all the major components, students experienced the most difficulty with delivery (not a surprising finding according to research in the area of public

speaking). Within the delivery component, students were weakest in the area of eye-contact and strongest in the area of physical delivery (e.g., gestures), as illustrated by **Table 4**.

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviation for Scores on Delivery

Delivery	Mean	Standard Deviation
1 Eye contact	1.18	0.64
2 Vocal delivery	1.45	0.40
3 Physical delivery	1.86	0.27
Total	75.14%	1.32

Tables that illustrate the mean and standard deviation scores for the other major speech components are available in **Appendix J**. As indicated by the data, students' strengths in the speech introduction included stating their thesis and relating the topic to the audience, while their weaknesses were capturing attention and establishing credibility. Students' weakest points in the body of their speech involved source citations and use of transitions. In the speech conclusion, students were restating their theses well, but showed less competence in ending their speech in a conclusive, memorable manner. Knowing these strengths and weakness has been informative for departmental discussion about areas to emphasize to a greater extent in public speaking instruction.

In the **senior exit survey**, 87% of the respondents "strongly agreed" and 13% "agreed" that the major provided them with a "strong background in oral communication skills." None of the majors disagreed. Seventy percent "strongly agreed" and 30% "agreed" that the **senior project** was useful in teaching them to orally present research to peers. Recently, the department began grading the senior project presentations according to a general rubric. The rubric is currently being revised with a more specific checklist of items to aid in a more formal analysis of senior project presentations in the future, which will include videotaping presentations.

Debate team members' ability to practice communication skills was assessed through the **debate team focus group** and the **debate tournament tabs**. Content analysis of the **debate team focus group (Appendix I)** revealed some significant themes related to students' perceptions of communication skill-practice and improvement. In responding to questions about the debate program in general, students reflected in 11% of the grand total responses that they gained a sense of "personal growth" from their participation. Among other ideas, students described that the personal growth stemmed from being motivated to challenge themselves, get over fears of speaking in public, and build intelligence. Further, when asked about the skills they felt they would take away from the debate program, students mentioned in 5% of the grand total

responses that they “gained a sense of . . . confidence in their communication skills” and felt “more confident in speaking with people in general.”

Debate tabs/results show whether students’ perceptions about their improved communication skills translate to success in debate tournaments. The following section reviews debate tabs/results from the world championships, nationals, as well as a local tournament. The World Universities Debating Championships (i.e., Worlds) is by far the largest and most competitive tournament for the team. “Worlds” is essentially the “Olympics” of debate. In 2000 and 2001, ULV was the top-ranked team at the World Universities Debating Championships from this hemisphere. Each year, ULV is committed to sending its top teams to the World Championships. **Table 5** provides a summary of ULV’s top-ranked team at the World Universities Debating Championships over the past 10 years. Detailed debate tabs from the last 2 World Championships are included in **Appendix N**.

Table 5

ULV's Top-Ranked Team at the World Universities Debating Championships by Year

Year (Host)	Team	Rank	Teams at Worlds
2007 (Canada)	Josh Martin and John Patrick	59th	344
2006 (Ireland)	Josh Martin and Rob Ruiz	109th	324
2005 (Malaysia)	Josh Martin and Manuel Perez	96th	312
2004 (Singapore)	Travis Raymond and Juan Garcia	90th	304
2003 (South Africa)	Andrew Kim and Travis Raymond	Octofinalist	193
2002 (Canada)	Andrew Kim and Beverly Samano	50th	228
2001 (Scotland)	Sean Krispinsky and Stefan Chacon	Semifinalist	284
2000 (Australia)	JJ Rodriguez and Sean Krispinsky	Grand Finalist	204
1999 (Philippines)	JJ Rodriguez and Sean Krispinsky	107th	171

1998 (Greece)	Jason Sandford and John Keller	103rd	292
1997 (South Africa)	Scott Mackay and Shannon Beets	77th	177

Recently, ULV participated in the 2007 national tournament, held at Claremont McKenna College on March 31 and April 1. ULV's top team, Josh Martin and Rob Ruiz, won the national championship, debating the motion "This house believes that the United Nations should ban the use of private militias." Speaker rankings from the tournament are in **Appendix O**. ULV participated in a smaller, local tournament, the San Bernardino Intervarsity Tournament, held on March 2 and 3, 2007. This tournament matched ULV against Claremont-McKenna College and California State University, San Bernardino. As indicated by the tournament tabs in **Appendix O**, ULV placed four speakers in the top ten, including the #1, #3, #5, and #7 speaker positions. Thus, students' improved skills are translating to successful results at the national and international level.

In **summary**, speech communication majors are required to practice communication skills through activities in several classes, and many students (some majors and some not) challenge their communication skills with participation in the debate team. In the area of public speaking, students struggle the most with delivery compared to issues of speech organization and source citation. Specifically, eye contact during public speaking is the most difficult skill. Overall, students conclusively confirmed in the **senior exit survey** that they receive a strong background in communication skill practice from the major. Students who participate in the debate team report a heightened level of confidence and reduction of fear related to public speaking. As indicated in results from debate tournaments, the communication skills that ULV debaters possess catapults them to top positions at national and international tournaments.

(3) Majors and debate team members will explore communication from a multicultural perspective.

Majors' ability to explore communication from a multicultural perspective is assessed through the **Intercultural Exam Rubric**, the **senior exit survey**, and the **alumni survey**. According to the **senior exit survey**, 74% of respondents "strongly agreed" that ULV's speech communication major provided them with a strong "multicultural perspective" in the field of communication. Twenty-six percent "agreed," and no respondents "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed." In the **alumni survey**, respondents were asked about the quality of preparation they received in issues of cultural diversity. Sixty three percent felt the quality of preparation was "excellent," while 25% thought it was "good," and close to 13% felt it was "fair."

While all courses in the major are intended to address multicultural issues in communication at some level, one of the core classes for speech communication majors is SPCM 220: Intercultural Communication. This course is typically taught as a traditional on-campus class. However, twice the class has been offered as a travel course during the January term (once to Guatemala and once to Brazil). When offered as a traditional on-campus class, part of the

assessment plan involves essay exams that cover intercultural communication theory and application. The exams are graded using a rubric (see **Appendix K**). Scores from the midterm exam from the January 2007 intercultural class were formally analyzed (see means and standard deviations by essay question in **Appendix K**). Results illustrate that, overall, students are performing very strongly on the **intercultural theory essay exam**. The weakest scores stemmed from the essay question about defining culture and communication, the interplay between the two, and the demands of studying culture. But even the “weakest” score was a mean of 4.30 out of 5 possible points. In the intercultural communication class, students are also assessed in ways beyond the two essay/multiple choice exams. They write two application papers, complete a hands-on intercultural training project, and write reflections to 6 guest speakers in which they must link intercultural communication theory to the guest speaker’s personal experience.

Debate team members’ ability to explore communication from a multicultural perspective is assessed through the **debate focus group**. In addition, the goal of promoting a multicultural perspective is encouraged by the types of topics students’ debate and by the quality of international debate tournaments that the team attends. Students commented in 5% of the grand total responses in the debate focus group that a strength of the debate program is “educational growth,” manifested in “opportunities to expand their horizons by being able to travel.” Students reflected in another 5% of the grand total responses that one of the things students take away from the debate program is “a broader worldview and perspective.”

Only select members of the debate team participate in international tournaments. On average 15 students travel internationally with the team each year. However, there is a sense of internationalism that buzzes around the team. Even students who do not travel are impacted by the members of the team who return from travels. Second, the team has made a conscious choice to participate in the most highly respected *international* format of debate (i.e., they follow international rules) rather than many of less highly regarded and admittedly less difficult national formats. Finally, the team regularly debates motions that require them to access knowledge about the world and other cultures. A list of the 10 most recent debate motions reflects the international nature of ULV debate:

“This house . . .

- (1) supports the right to practice polygamy in liberal democracies.”
- (2) believes that all migrants should be forced to learn the national language of their new country.”
- (3) would relax airport security.”
- (4) would require HIV infected people to disclose their disease to their sexual partners.”
- (5) would prohibit landlords from renting to illegal immigrants.”
- (6) supports the right of developing nations to pursue the use of nuclear power.”
- (7) would allow the production of animated child pornography.”
- (8) would allow police to use entrapment.”
- (9) believes that the United Nations should ban the use of private militias.”
- (10) would allow people to sell their organs (for extraction while they are still alive)!”

In **summary**, students confirm in the senior exit survey and alumni survey that the

department's push to explore communication from a multicultural perspective throughout the major is accomplished successfully. Overall, students performed *very well* on the intercultural theory exam. Debate team members take positions regarding international-related motions on a weekly basis in debate practice and the debate class. Furthermore, students who travel to international tournaments not only study and speak about multicultural issues, but they experience another culture and debate against people from countries around the world. The international tone of our debate program is strong.

Goals specific to the major

(4) Majors will receive good program and career related advising.

The quality of program and career related advising offered to majors was assessed through the **senior exit survey**, **alumni survey**, and the **focus group with majors**. According to results from the **senior exit survey**, program related advising is a strength of the department. With regard to faculty availability, 96% of students were "very satisfied," and 4% were satisfied. In response to advising, 91% of students were "very satisfied," and 9% were satisfied. Written comments from the senior exit survey emphasized that students appreciated "good advising." Faculty members in the department pride themselves in spending quality time with students for program advising. Currently each faculty member advises around 20 students. The two faculty in the department are aware that should the advising load increase much more, the quality of advising may be compromised.

While the senior exit survey asked students about *program* related advising, the **alumni survey** asked students about *career* related advising. When asked, "Did you receive advice and support as an undergraduate concerning graduate and career opportunities in speech communication," 37.5 % of respondents felt the advice and support was "excellent" and 62.5% felt it was "adequate." One of the written responses in a senior exit survey reflected a desire to hear more about job opportunities. In the last year of the SPCM 110: Introduction to Speech Communication Theory and Practice class, the department introduced a stronger unit on careers in the field. Students in the class develop resumes, learn about GRE's and graduate school preparation, interview a person working in the field as a part of a paper on careers in the field. This career unit is helpful for many students, especially the ones taking the class as freshmen or sophomores who have more time to prepare themselves for the job/graduate school market. Indeed, students are advised to take SPCM 110 early in their career; however, this is not always the case. According to data from the **senior exit** survey, many students switch to the Speech Communication major "after taking several classes." Sometimes, they declare the major late in their sophomore year or even in their junior year. Because the department only has the capacity to teach SPCM 110 every other year, a few students do not end up taking the class until spring of their senior year, when they needed to be thinking about career/graduate school options earlier. Thus, we may need to review as a department how we can provide students with more information about career/graduate school opportunities earlier in their time at ULV.

One might immediately conclude the SPCM 110 class should be offered every year. However there are several deterring factors. First, the two faculty already have full and

occasionally overload schedules. Second, when the major was developed, the department committed itself to efficiency. We only offered classes if the number of students deemed it appropriate. As mentioned earlier in the review, now the Department of Speech Communication has the largest average class size in the whole College of Arts and Sciences. We offer several courses besides SPCM 110 on an every other year basis, especially ones that are upper division classes for majors. Admittedly, we have felt self-imposed scrutiny as a new department to show that we are appropriately filling our classes—that there is a “need,” “desire,” and economic viability for the major. The dilemma is that offering SPCM 110 every year would likely benefit students, but the class sizes would be smaller (more in the range of 12-15), and we have felt pressure not to run small classes. Perhaps there is another way to introduce students to the field and offer them career and graduate school preparation outside a class (e.g., a yearly seminar on careers), though this would mean additional effort for the department faculty.

Finally, students in the **focus group** commented that they appreciated the professors’ concern for students. Students mentioned in a stunning 64% of their grand total responses that they appreciated the professors’ styles of “being supportive, showing an interest or being attentive to students, and demonstrating personal warmth.” Students pointed out in 54% of the responses that the professors were “knowledgeable, approachable for questions, structured, and more than able to point them in the right direction.” In addition, students commented in 28% of responses that they preferred a small department that allows “a greater opportunity for faculty to know the students personally.”

In **summary**, students responded overwhelmingly that they received excellent program related advising and that the two faculty were always available. In the focus group, students expanded that they greatly appreciated the attentiveness, support and personal warmth displayed by faculty. The majority of students felt their career-related advising was “adequate,” but the department is exploring ways to make a majority of students feel career related advising “excellent.” One of the things students loved most about the department was that it was small, which students felt provided better opportunity for faculty to get to know them personally.

(5) Majors will experience choice of classes to suit academic and professional aspirations and to teach useful lifelong skills.

Majors access to classes that benefit them academically, professionally, and personally was assessed through the **senior exit survey**, **alumni survey**, and the **focus group with majors**. Within this goal, we examine *variety of course offerings*, *course availability*, *course content*, *professional/graduate school preparation*, and *personal growth*.

To begin, Table 6 presents an excerpt of the full results (**Appendix F**) from the **senior exit survey**. This excerpt of results is related to student opinions about the *variety of courses offered* and *scheduling times*.

Table 6

Variety and Scheduling of Courses

	1=very satisfactory	2=satisfactory	3=unsatisfactory	4=very unsatisfactory
Variety of courses	60.9%	39.1%	0%	0%
Scheduling of courses	78.3%	17.4%	4.3%	0%

When asked about improvements for the department, students wrote in the **senior exit survey** that they wished the department had more faculty and more classes, particularly upper division classes. Further, students commented in 2% of the responses in the **focus group** that the size of the department limited students' ability to gain a broader perspective in terms of a variety of courses. This echoes results from Table 6 above about variety of courses. Comments that expressed a desire for more classes and faculty must be interpreted in light of comments that revealed students' strong preference for a small department that had the time to advise and care for students personally (see results related to goal #4 above).

Although this program review focused primarily on assessing the quality of service to majors and debate team members, it is important to emphasize that the department serves a large number of non-speech communication majors who take speech courses to satisfy their oral communication general education requirement. As the department discusses whether there is a valid need for more classes for majors, the department should also determine whether they are able to meet the needs of the GE and other majors that incorporate speech communication classes into their elective choices classes. As noted earlier in the review, the 2-unit Fundamentals of Public Speaking classes, the course most commonly taken to fulfill the GE, is always full. The department has even developed, at the request of the distance learning center, and online version of Fundamentals of Public Speaking for CAPA and off-campus students. This course must be taught as an overload. Further, our Interviewing Principles and Practices course is now a major elective course for business majors. Students from the communications classes also take some of our selected classes as electives for their (mass) communications major.

Throughout the program review, the two faculty discussed whether it would be useful to add another faculty member, whether full-time or part-time, in response to demand issues. We are ambivalent about the issue. We feel we are a strong department functioning at maximum (and many times above maximum) capacity. However, we are a very healthy department in which the two faculty get along with each other well. The student-faculty interaction is vibrant, and students feel a strong sense of identity with a department that they appreciate for its intimacy. On one hand we do not want to disturb the good energy of the department. Yet we do not want to ignore demand issues and try to take on too much. So we need further discussion and input about the issue.

The content analysis did not reveal any significant patterns regarding students' suggestions for alternative *class scheduling times*. Some students wanted more morning classes, others more night classes, another wanted classes on just two days a week! Thus, there was not a

conclusive push to change class times significantly for students, although the university as a whole plans to recommend new rules for scheduling of classes beginning in fall 2008 that may impact class times.

Strong themes in the content analysis of the **focus group** revealed that students felt the *content* of speech communication classes were interesting and fun. In written comments from the **senior exit survey**, students expanded on the numerical data about class content, variety, and scheduling to say that the faculty and their teaching style were strengths of the department.

In the **alumni survey**, students reported opinions related to whether classes in the major *prepared them professionally, academically, and personally* for the next step. Table 7 presents an excerpt from the full results of the alumni survey.

Table 7
Alumni Opinion about Their Readiness for Employment or Graduate School

Question	Results
Did you pursue further education after attending ULV?	25% yes 75% no
If in graduate school, how well did the education you received at ULV prepare you for graduate school?	100% reported excellent preparation (2 total responses)
If in graduate school, how well prepared for graduate school were you compared to peers from other universities?	100% reported equally preparation (2 total responses)
Did you find employment after graduation From ULV?	Of the 5 who answered, all found employment within 6 months
How well were you prepared for your job, compared to your peers from other universities?	12.2% equally prepared 50% better prepared 37.5% no basis for comparison
To what extent, in your current position or school, are you utilizing the material you acquired as a speech communication undergraduate at ULV?	50% somewhat 37.5% great 12.5% no response
To what extent, in your personal relationships, are you utilizing the material you acquired as a speech communication undergraduate at ULV?	Of the 7 who answered, all reported using the material a "great" extent

Alumni appear to be generally positive about their preparation for graduate school or a career. The comments in the **focus group** with current majors (to be specific, a stunning 92% of the grand total responses) indicated that students felt well prepared for a career right after they graduated. Only one respondent indicated a feeling of being unready to work in the field and noted the need for more education in graduate school.

Finally, the fifth goal states that the major seeks to teach students useful lifelong skills that benefit not only their professional life, but also their *personal* life. In the **focus group**, students confirmed that the major left them with better interpersonal skills (e.g., more patience, better listening skills, more ability to communicate with different types of people, better problem solving skills, better ability to network in the workplace, and more mindfulness about communication in general). Students also reported improved interpersonal relationships with significant others (e.g., family and intimate partners). Because the university mission emphasizes the importance of lifelong skills, the department is pleased to know that majors are learning information that benefits them both professionally and personally.

In **summary**, students felt that the major offered classes that taught useful lifelong communication skills that benefited their *personal* lives. Both the **alumni** and **senior exit surveys** confirmed that students felt classes prepared them for their *professional* lives. In other words, students felt prepared for a career or graduate school and were indeed getting jobs and getting into graduate school after they graduated. Finally, students commented on the choice of classes and times offered. Students offered some responses indicating a desire for more classes. They liked the classes they were offered and wanted even more variety. At the same time that students cherish the attention of a small department (as indicated in the discussion of goal #4), they also want it to be bigger, or at least to offer more classes (as indicated in the discussion of goal #5). It is as if students were saying we like what is offered and we want more of it. This will challenge the department to consider whether it would be beneficial to students to increase in size and class offerings or whether an increase would compromise the appeal of the department.

Goal specific to the debate program

(6) The debate team will provide members with an extracurricular activity that promotes individual growth and a connection with other ULV students.

The **focus group with debate team members** was used to assess whether the debate program served to promote individual growth and connection with other ULV students. In providing an overview of the debate program, a common theme in student responses reflected how participation in the debate team afforded students a *connectedness to the community of ULV students*. Students said that debate provided them with opportunities to interact with different types of people, the chance to build close relationships with peers and professors, and a feeling of having support from group members.

Students also felt that the debate team stimulated their *personal growth*. Students said that in debate they were motivated to challenge themselves, learned determination to stick with a goal, learned how to get over fears of public speaking, gained a global perspective, and built intelligence. Students felt a high level of support from other students and the professor. They felt they received constructive criticism and encouragement.

In **summary**, the only weakness students pointed out was their fear that the debate team may get so large that the size will jeopardize the sense of connectedness and intimacy among team members. Overall, students offered *highly* positive remarks about the connectedness of the team, the quality of coaching, and the personal and academic growth that stemmed from their participation. Participation in ULV debate is an experience that students remember long after they graduate.

Recommendations for Action

1. Consider the pros and cons of (1) adding another full-time faculty member, or (2) adding an assistant debate coach who can also teach some sections of public speaking to free the two current full-time faculty to teach other courses, or (3) maintaining the department with two-full-time faculty.
2. Develop a new course, SPCM 490: Special Topics in Speech Communication, that, when taught on occasion, will provide for another upper division major course offering. Offering this course will be dependent on staffing and adjunct faculty funds, given that an adjunct faculty may need to teach a lower division course to free a full-time faculty to teach SPCM 490.
3. Develop a workshop on career and graduate school planning to be offered in the years that SPCM 110 is not offered.
4. Incorporate the services of ULV's Career Development and Placement Center in the SPCM 110 class and the career/graduate school workshop (either in the form of a guest presentation or accessing resource material).
5. Develop a handout of common corrections related to APA format to improve mastery of APA format. Distribute handout and discuss material not only in the senior project class, but also in other upper division classes in the major where students write research papers using APA format, namely SPCM 452 and SPCM 410.
6. Require students to turn in senior projects, as well as research papers in SPCM 452 and 410, in scaffold format, so professors can detect major writing and APA problems in a small section of the project, make comments, and then allow students to make revisions and complete the rest of the senior project based on the comments.
7. Revise Department of Speech Communication brochures, website, and admissions material in order to reflect current information and facts about the major and debate team.
8. Begin videotaping senior project presentations and saving the DVDs in the event that ULV needs a way to assess authentic student oral presentations for assessment purposes.
9. Develop a more formal way of assessing skill exercises in the interpersonal communication class.
10. Revise senior project presentation rubric.
11. Encourage the office of admissions to capitalize on the success of our debate program when marketing the university to new students.
12. Develop a peer-mentoring program for the debate team to develop the skills of new members and maintain a sense of connectedness amidst an increasingly large team.