

***COMM 1100: Oral Communication (GE A block)***

In 2015-2016, with generous support from the Promising Practices CSU Chancellor's Redesign Grant, the general education COMM 1100: Oral Communication course was redesigned to increase student success, retention, and engagement. The specific goals of the course redesign were to: (1) increase student retention, (2) provide career-focused communication skills training, and (3) highlight local examples and discourses. Three strategies were identified and employed in the redesign. The goals of the redesign were imbedding into the course design by increasing: (1) class connection and mentoring; (2) problem-posing inquiry and course design; and (3) pragmatic assessment of learning.

Motivated by student desire for practical communication skills that can be immediately applied in job interviews, the oral communication course incorporates traditional public speaking assignments of informative, persuasive, and impromptu speeches with more contemporary oral communication assignments, such as: (1) a personal purpose speech where students share their motivation, retention, and support strategies for college success, and (2) peer reflections and workshops to build classroom community and increase peer learning. With the redesigned elements incorporated into the oral communication course, student failure and withdrawal rates decreased from 15% in the 2015-2016 academic year to 9% in Fall 2016 when the redesign was implemented.

In addition to redesigning the course assignments, the custom textbook used in the course was rewritten to include more localized examples, highlighting local nonprofit organizations, sports teams, news events, alumni accomplishments, and including photos from the University photographer showing campus faces, organizations, and events. These changes to the textbook reflect a culturally inclusive and reflective curricula designed to meet and support the needs of

Cal State LA students. The newly designed course and textbook inspired changes to instructor preparation and training to increase instructor knowledge about inclusive and supportive pedagogy. Such changes include a new three-day graduate teaching associate (GTA) training program and manual, increased transparency in instructor rubrics and assignments, and training in best practices of culturally inclusive and reflective pedagogy.