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A New Hybrid: Students' Extensions of Integrated Communication Content

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Again and again, surveys of employers reiterate the idea that communication skills are not only key to employees' success, but also a skill set with which recent college students need additional help (e.g., Hart Research Associates, 2010). At the top of most of these lists are communication skills: writing, speaking, interpersonal, and teamwork. Despite the necessity of these skills, institutions do not have one set protocol for offering courses to enhance these skills (Morreale, Worley, & Hugenberg, 2010). With increased intersections among modes of communication, this institution altered the general education curriculum to offer students an experience that more closely aligned with the reality of communicating in multiple modalities. In order to better understand the effects of such a change, this paper addresses one aspect of a broader assessment project. Specifically, this paper provides an analysis of students' perspectives on what skills they gained from the integrated communication class.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What constitutes the "basic communication course" can vary greatly from institution to institution. Systematic surveys of the basic communication course use the

definition of “that communication course either required or recommended for a significant number of undergraduates; that course which the department has, or would recommend, as a requirement for all or most undergraduates” (Morreale, Hanna, Berko, & Gibson, 1999, p. 3). Typically, these courses are identified as either focused on public speaking or taking the form of a “hybrid,” in which students learn about public speaking, interpersonal, and small group communication. Some institutions require a different course, such as small group communication, and some students are given a choice among several options. Ongoing research on the basic course indicates shifts in the focus of courses nationally. Morreale et al. (2010) found that public speaking was a less prevalent orientation than it had been in nearly 40 years. In that study, roughly half of the communication programs surveyed had public speaking as the dominant basic course. Two-year schools were more likely to require a hybrid course than were four-year institutions. However, many schools (60.5%) required a basic communication course for general education; other institutions required basic communication courses for specific majors.

The details of the classes also vary greatly. For example, nearly half (43.4%) of schools require between 1 and 4 speeches, while 34.9% require four speeches (Morreale et al., 2010). Just over half of the respondents require between one and four written assignments, which may include self-reflection and written outlines. For four-year schools, 20.7% reported having a combined writing and speaking class. There is great variety in the reading level of the texts used in the basic course; as many as half of the textbooks commonly used in the ba-

sic course are above first-year college level (Schneider & Walter-Reed, 2009).

Scholars have identified trends within research on courses such as the basic communication course. Hunt, Novak, Semlak, and Meyer (2005) synthesized the first 15 years of the *Basic Course Annual* and identified several trends in research. Studies published in this venue focused on teaching strategies, characteristics of teachers and students, status of the basic course, textbooks, and assessment. Among Hunt et al.'s recommendations for future research were several ideas regarding assessment (based on Sprague, 2002). Most pertinent here are the question of what authentic assessments can play a role in the basic course and how the pedagogy and curriculum of a basic course can influence students' learning. The idea of assessment is reiterated by other scholars (e.g., Allen, 2002) and is commonly used within programs as a means of improving assignments (e.g., Morreale et al., 2010).

The importance of assessing the basic course is underscored by the perception that such courses are beneficial to students. A basic communication course is generally perceived to be fundamental to a well-rounded education (Morreale & Pearson, 2008). Morreale, Osborn, and Pearson (2000) argued that the benefits of having a communication course as part of higher education include the opportunity to develop the whole person, to increase global citizenship, and success in career. One positive outcome of basic courses may be enhanced listening abilities. In fact, Johnson and Long (2007) found that while students taking a basic course perceived their skills to be better at the end of the course, performance-based tests showed no significant gains.

Although results are, at times, mixed, basic communication courses do have positive impacts on students. For example, Allen (2002) found that students taking basic courses increased in communication competence, decreased in apprehension, and increased in willingness to communicate. These results are reinforced elsewhere (e.g., Ford & Wolvin, 1993; Veerman, Andreiessen & Kanselaar, 2002; Rose, Rancer, & Crannel, 1993). Furthermore, Ford and Wolvin found that students perceived the impact of communication courses as reaching into academic, work, and social areas of their lives.

In all, extant scholarship shows diversity in the way that institutions configure basic communication courses, but all courses aim to meet their stated learning outcomes. These outcomes may be primarily cognitive (e.g., students will be able to identify...) or performative (e.g., gauging students' public speaking skills against a set rubric). However, the outcomes may also include elements of affect, which can include students' attitudes toward the instructor, the course content, or themselves in relation to the course. It is the affective components of the learning in a basic course that are the primary focus in this study, as viewed through the lens of self-efficacy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although self-efficacy was a central component of Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, he isolated the the concept for further study (Bandura, 1977, 1989). On self-efficacy, Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) noted that "among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than

people's beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their level of functioning and environmental demands" (p. 1206). Self-efficacy theory is parsimonious in that it is comprised of two main concepts. The central concepts are labeled efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies.

First, efficacy beliefs are behavioral and cognitive abilities an individual believes they possess, and the determination that these abilities can be successfully employed to reach goals or complete tasks (Bandura, 1977, 1982). These beliefs influence an individual's choice of environments, affect toward environments, affect toward others, and determine challenges that they willingly seek, accept, and overcome (Bandura, 1982). An individual's belief system is organized and evaluated according to three dimensions including magnitude, strength and generality. *Magnitude* considers the difficulty of the behavior, *strength* is an individual's confidence in performing the behavior, and *generality* refers to the likelihood of the behavior being successfully performed across contexts (Bandura, 1977). Those who are high in self-efficacy, when compared to those who are low in self-efficacy, consider most tasks to be manageable, feel confident, and perceive their behaviors as useful across contexts.

Second, outcome expectancies are the results that one anticipates experiencing as a result of enacting chosen behaviors (Bandura, 1977). The importance placed on the outcome influences the individual's choice to strive to reach that outcome. Bandura (1993) characterized outcome expectancies as a cognitive motivator for enacting, or not enacting, behaviors. Positive outcome expectancies encourage the efficacious individual

to proceed, while negative outcome expectancies inhibit an individual and decrease their likelihood of success.

These two central concepts, efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies, are formed and continuously evolve through four types of experiences, which Bandura (1977, 1989) delineated. First, performance experiences are the actual past experiences of an individual that either ended successfully or in failure, leading to the support or diminishment of the individual's efficacy beliefs. Second, vicarious experiences are the actions that an individual witnesses another enact to reach an outcome, similar to modeling. Through this experience the individual determines if he/she can enact the same behaviors and achieve the same outcomes. This type of experience is especially influential if the individual perceives similarities between themselves and the modeler. Third, verbal persuasion refers to the individual hearing advice and encouragement from another. Individuals can be persuaded to believe they have the behavioral competence to reach a desired outcome. Fourth, positive and negative physiological states affect efficacy beliefs. It is important to note that previous performance experiences have the strongest influence on self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Maddux, 1995).

Self-Efficacy and the New Hybrid

In a variety of contexts, those who are high in self-efficacy are different than those who are low in self-efficacy. Specifically, they think, feel, and act differently (Bandura, 1989). The efficacy beliefs of students facilitate a host of positive outcomes including higher academic achievement (e.g., Alfasi, 2003), increased goal-setting and actual goal attainment (e.g., Zimmerman,

Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992), good attendance (e.g., Collins & Bissell, 2002), higher motivation (e.g., Schunk, 1991), more successful adaptation to college (e.g., Zhang, 2004), and proactive career relevant decision making (e.g., Abdalla, 1995; Ancis & Phillips, 1996), among others. Collins and Bissell (2002) acknowledged that self-efficacy is not the only predictor of achievement but argued that it is one of the best. Zimmerman et al. (1992) argued that because self-efficacy is so influential in student outcomes, schools and instructors alike should structure the academic environment so that skills are taught and efficacy is enhanced.

Following Zimmerman et al.'s (1992) argument, we used self-efficacy theory as a guiding framework for the reconceptualization how basic communication courses would be taught. Self-efficacy should be considered a situational and contextualized construct (Bandura, 1977; Imants & De Brabander, 1996; Ross & Bruce, 2007). Therefore, an individual possesses various types of efficacy to deal with all facets of their human life and all challenges they may encounter. Given the context specific nature of self-efficacy, several types of efficacy were targeted in this newly conceptualized two-course sequence. Specifically, courses described in this paper were designed to enhance the situational efficacy (e.g., interpersonal, intercultural, writing, speaking, and visual skills) of students using classroom strategies that incorporate performance experience (e.g., skills practice), vicarious experience (e.g., peer review and critique), verbal persuasion (e.g., instructor and peer support), and affect (e.g., decreasing anxiety). The two-course sequence will now be described including specific

content, strategies, and assignments expected to improve student communication efficacy.

OVERVIEW OF THE TWO COURSE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION SEQUENCE

The courses that arose from scholarship on the basic course and research that highlights the importance of affect were part of a larger university change to a new general education curriculum. The general education requirement is comprised of two courses that integrate written, oral, and visual communication. The first course Composition and Communication 1 (CC1) is typically taken by first year, first semester students (primarily in the fall semester). It is expected that students will then take Composition and Communication 2 (CC2) in the second semester of their first year on campus (primarily in the spring). Both courses are required of students and they must be taken in sequence. The two courses are closely related in the skills that they teach and in allowing students to apply the foundations of communication beyond what would occur in just one course. The two courses also replaced all previous requirements for a communication course (which could be one of a number of options such as public speaking or interpersonal) and a composition requirement. Because the various modes of communication were intertwined throughout the courses, the courses could build their skills and understanding over a longer period of time.

CC1

The first course in the sequence is focused on the foundations of producing skilled communication in writ-

ing, speaking, and visual with particular emphasis in interpersonal communication, informative communication (across communication channels), and intercultural communication. The course is comprised of four units and two major projects; each major project has an essay and speech component. Major Project One (MP1) is an individual project where students use photos from their own life to explore their self-concept and the origins of that self-concept. This self-exploration is explored in an essay where students are expected to digitally alter their chosen photos to highlight portions of their identity. Next, students reformulate that self-concept essay by shifting focus to the ways in which their self-concept and identity influences perceptions of others around them. Major Project Two (MP2) is a partner project where students conduct community research on a group that they are not a part of to explore the identity of that group, cultural communication differences, and to build empathy for diverse groups. The student explores this community in depth through an essay, and then creates an informative speech for the classroom, using visuals they collect or create during the research process. In the following paragraphs, each unit will be outlined and described as it relates to the major projects.

Unit One is labeled interpersonal communication and focuses on basic interpersonal communication concepts including self-concept, perceptions, identity, empathy, listening, and self-disclosure. Further, students learn about interpersonal skills that will help them while working in a partnership including ethical critiques and responding and conflict management. This unit is relevant to the content of Major Project One

(MP1) by teaching the students about self-concept, the origin of identity, and how others perceive their self-concept or identity. This unit is relevant to MP2 because it focuses on the process partners will employ as they work together to explore a community and empathize with the cultural differences that emerge.

Unit Two is labeled written communication and focuses on the writing process (i.e., brainstorming, drafting, revising, polishing, publishing). It is during this unit that students will first begin to draft their essays for MP1, and refine their writing skills for MP2. As part of the brainstorming phase, the students explore different techniques for topic selection and narrowing that also apply throughout the rest of the semester. Part of the revising and polishing stages include intense peer review to engage in effective interpersonal communication with peers and the instructor. Further, these writing process phases are relevant to speech construction, organization, and revision, preparing students for Unit Three.

Unit Three is labeled oral communication and focuses on communication anxiety, audience analysis, organization, verbal delivery, nonverbal delivery, and the use of presentational aids. This unit helps to prepare for the speech component of MP1, and to refine their presentation skills for MP2. Similar to Unit Two, students have additional opportunities to practice their interpersonal communication skills with one another and the instructor. It is important to note that Units Two and Three are reciprocal in that the information contained in each unit informs the communication students are expected to engage in through all channels (i.e., written, oral, and visual). For example, although audience analy-

sis is placed in Unit Three, the students gain an understanding of how audience analysis is important when creating written, oral, or visual work.

Finally, Unit Four is labeled intercultural communication. In this unit, the content focuses on understanding other cultures and communities and their communication differences and how to effectively and ethically examine another community as someone who is not a member. Students learn skills in participant observation, interviewing, addressing assumptions and stereotypes, and ways in which to think about themselves as a part of a larger and diverse society. During this unit, students are expected to synthesize the skills they have learned throughout the semester to work with a partner on producing communication using the new skills provided in Unit Four (culture, primary research) to produce MP2.

CC2

The second course in the sequence is focused on increasing information literacy as consumers of communication (not just producers), argumentation and persuasion, group communication, and challenges students to produce messages using digital and technological resources. The course is comprised of four units and one major project. Whereas students learn about a community and how to convey information in MP2 during the first course, the students in CC2 are required to work in a group for the entire semester, choose a controversial topic in the local community to explore, take a stance on the chosen topic, and present persuasive information to the class about that controversy. In the following para-

graphs, each unit will be described as it relates to the expectations for the major project.

Unit One is labeled group communication and focuses on the basic roles, dynamics, and processes that take place in small group settings. The small group communication skills build on the interpersonal skills learned in CC1 and extend them to understanding communication in teams. This unit is strategically positioned early in the semester to prepare students to work in the same group for the entire semester of CC2.

Unit Two is labeled rhetoric, argumentation, and persuasive appeals and focuses on how students can construct and support effective arguments and persuasive messages. This material is relevant throughout each step of the major project. First, students, as producers, write a position paper on a controversial topic demonstrating persuasion and argumentation. Second, students, as consumers, conduct a rhetorical analysis to examine the rhetorical practices in an artifact related to their group's controversial issue. Third, students present a persuasive symposium speech on their issue to the class. Finally, students reformulate the persuasive messages about the controversy into a digital project with greater emphasis on visual persuasion and influence.

Unit Three is labeled group presentations and focuses on advanced organization, presentational aids, and delivery skills as they are altered by presenting as a coherent group instead of an individual speaker. During this unit, students have the opportunity to integrate both the group communication skills and the persuasion and argumentation skills to write an outline, construct a presentational aid, practice presentation skills, and

develop a speech with a distinct call to action for audience members.

Finally, Unit Four is labeled digital and visual communication and allows students to focus the knowledge they have gained from both CC1 and CC2 to develop an advanced digital and visual project to present and support an argument that must be made public. This final part of the major project is the ultimate test of the skills required of an effective communicator (e.g., audience analysis, purpose analysis, invention, revision, publishing).

Because of the dramatic changes to curricula undertaken with the introduction of these courses, assessment has been an integral part of gauging student outcomes and adjusting content and instruction. The administrators and faculty involved in the courses work to close the assessment loop so that assessment results can feed back into further improving the courses. The results reported here are specifically focused on answering the questions:

- RQ1: How do students perceive the concepts taught in these courses in relation to their communication efficacy?
- RQ2: What affective changes do students perceive that they experienced in relation to the concepts taught?

METHODS

The data analyzed here are part of ongoing assessment of the CC1 and CC2 courses at this flagship, land-grant institution. Students from all sections of CC1 and CC2 complete a pretest and posttest assignment, for

which they receive course credit based on completion. Students are also asked for informed consent for their work to be used for assessment purposes. Pretest and posttest assignment data is then pulled for the consented students, as are their essays and recorded speeches. All sections are taught in classrooms equipped with lecture capture software, a camera, and microphone so that all speeches are recorded and then made available to students via a secure connection for self-critique. All sections also require students to submit work through the university's course management system and the faculty members working on assessment are able to access the submitted work (namely essays and recorded speeches) of consenting students after the semester ends. During the semester, instructors do not know which students consented and do not have access to the pretest and posttest data. The researchers also did not have access to students' grades on any of the assignments.

The courses are required of all students across the university, providing a cross-section of the student population. For the study reported here, we used data from one fall semester, capturing data at the end of the semester. This particular semester was only the second time that each course had been offered, meaning that only a small number of students were eligible for CC2 because of completing CC1 or testing out of the course due to test (e.g., ACT) scores or AP credit.

DATA COLLECTION

The portion of assessment data used here came from the posttest assignment, which included measures such

as communication apprehension and cognitive measures. Students also responded to questions about the specific major projectsⁱ they had completed and concepts they had learned (see Table 1 for these questions). Students were asked how strongly they agreed with a statement about a value of the concepts taught (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) and then were asked to explain their response. Because of the differing content in CC1 and CC2, students were given different questions based on the course they were completing (e.g., CC1 students would rate interpersonal communication, while CC2 students would rate group communication). Other questions (reported elsewhere) were more focused on skills.

For this analysis, we culled students' answers to these questions about the value of the assignments. From CC1, we had 794 responses; from CC2, we had 273 responses.ⁱⁱ This difference in response rates is to be expected because more students take CC1 in the fall than take CC2 and this data set was collected in the fall semester. See Table 2 for details on the demographics of the student respondents. We calculated descriptive statistics for the quantitative items to provide a foundation for students' perspectives in answering RQ1.

For the bulk of the analysis, we used the students' explanations regarding their quantitative answers. We maintained all segments that dealt with anything students gained from the courses, dropping all general comments (e.g., "I really liked this project.") and comments about the class that were unrelated to the research questions. Comments that had multiple parts were split into their components. For example, if a student said "I learned all about how to better communi-

Table 1
Statements Given to Students, with Associated Course Unit, Number of Respondents, Means, and Standard Deviations.

Statement	Course Unit	n^1	M (SD)
CC1 Learning about interpersonal communication concepts has helped me outside of this class.	1	786	4.83 (1.49)
Learning about intercultural communication concepts has helped me outside of this class.	4	784	4.82 (1.45)
CC2 The projects in this course helped me understand how to be an effective team member.	1	273	5.79 (1.43)
Learning small group communication concepts will help me beyond this class.	1	273	5.96 (1.39)
The rhetorical analysis project helped me become a more critical consumer of the messages I see every day.	2	273	5.25 (1.55)
The digital remix project helped me learn to construct and critique visual messages as a form of communication.	4	271	5.57 (1.36)

¹ For this table, n represents the total number of valid responses to the statement on the scale of 1-7 (strongly disagree—strongly agree). Students who responded to the numerical question may or may not have entered valid responses for the qualitative data.

Table 2
Demographics of Students Who Responded.

		CC1	CC2
Gender	Male	303	86
	Female	490	187
Year	Freshman	706	184
	Sophomore	52	53
	Junior	19	29
	Senior	12	4
	Other ¹	4	3
	Age	17 or younger	5
	18-21	753	257
	22-25	26	9
	26 or older	9	6

¹Students who identified as "other" included international exchange students, students returning for a second degree, and post-baccalaureate students.

cate within a group. I also learned more about how to best communicate with people from other cultures." These two statements would then be divided into two separate coding segments. Because students responded to multiple open-ended questions, segments are not unique to students. In the end, the data set consisted of 1,570 segments.

Data Analysis

The first research question was answered through an analysis of descriptive statistics related to students'

level of agreement with the statements about how the assignments affected them. The second research question was answered using students' responses to the open-ended questions that followed the statements.

The analysis for RQ2 began with constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to derive a coding scheme. Ultimately, the researchers derived a coding scheme that required each segment of data to be coded on three aspects: affective, context, and arena. Under the affective stage of coding, each segment was placed into one of seven categories of affective changes (see Table 3). The affective changes tapped into the portions of students' comments that dealt with how the assignments influenced their thinking and attitudes. Second, each segment was coded for context. The contextual coding was intended to identify which context of communication (e.g., interpersonal, groups; see Table 3) was most salient. For both affective and contextual coding—a final category “not specified”—was used to account for the broader nature of some comments. Finally, segments were coded as to the arena of their lives where students saw the connection: academic life, work life (including future work), or everyday life.

After initial consultation with other communication experts on the clarity and validity of the coding scheme, the two researchers independently coded a sample of the data, representing approximately 10% of the data. The reliability of the two coders was evaluated using Cohen's kappa for each stage of the coding. Kappa scores were each at an acceptable score (affective: 0.75;

Table 3
Distribution of Attitudinal Comments and Associated Contexts of Communication

	Heightened awareness	Increased confidence	Improved openness/acceptance	Gained collaboration	Increased ability to critically examine	Expanded knowledge	Not specified	Total
Interpersonal	20	33	5	2	0	36	32	128
Intrapersonal	16	16	13	0	0	2	4	51
Mediated	21	1	0	1	79	65	6	173
Public speaking	2	33	1	0	0	20	3	59
Groups	8	5	4	278	1	14	36	346
Visual	10	2	0	0	13	15	1	41
Intercultural	32	16	135	0	0	52	26	261
Written	2	1	0	0	4	6	3	16
Not specified	66	55	63	5	47	91	168	495
Total	177	162	221	286	144	301	279	

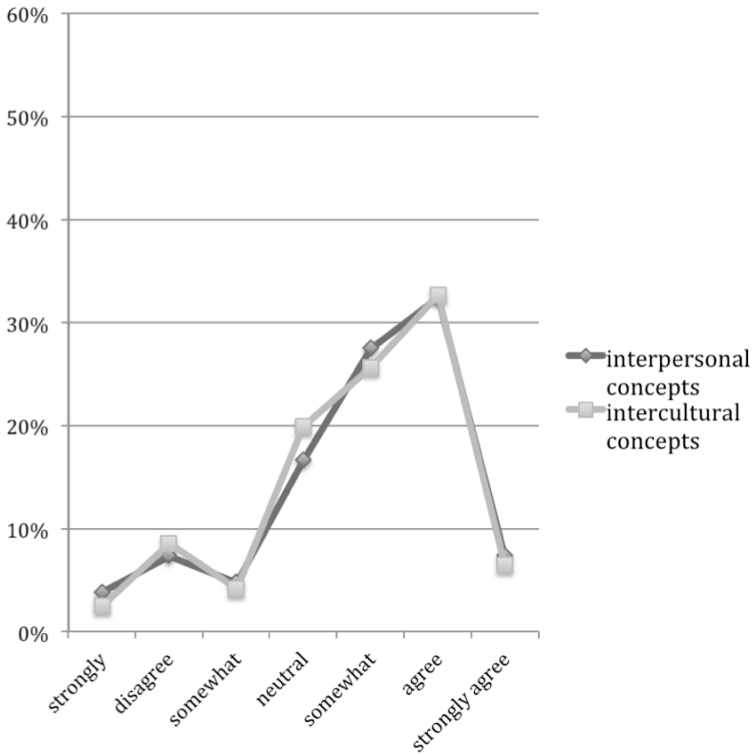


Figure 1. Distribution of responses by CC1 students.

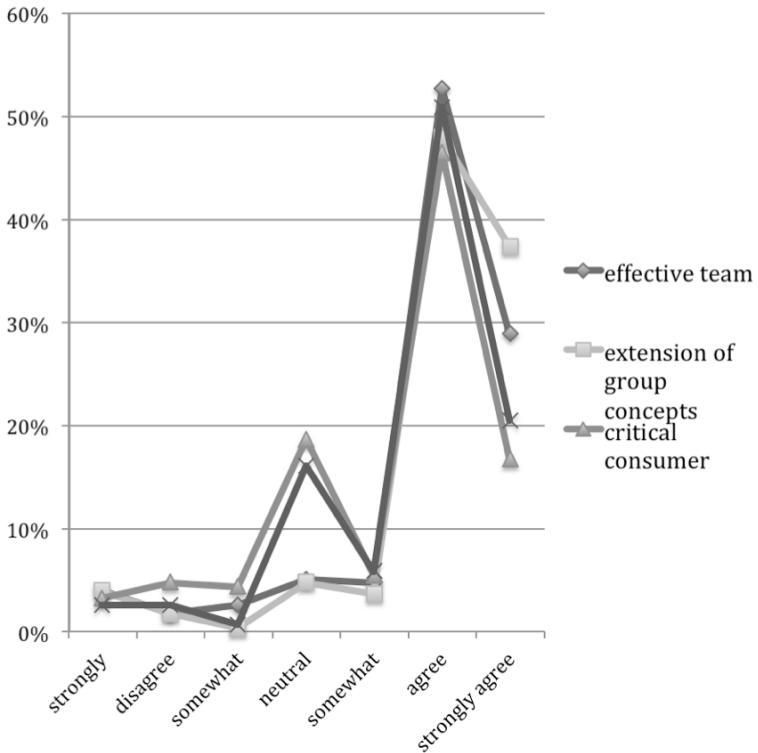


Figure 2. Distribution of responses by CC2 students.

Expanded Knowledge. The most prevalent category was “expanded knowledge,” accounting for 19.17% of the data. Students identified numerous areas in which they gained knowledge. For example, students reported that they gained knowledge that was helpful for the class:

They have helped me construct my paper and speeches. For example, they have given me ideas about audience, audience knowledge, etc.

Additionally, students also saw the merits in the course in terms of learning about “different cultures and how that can effect [sic] your speech.” Along with these types of comments, students also reported that they learned “about rhetoric and really understanding what goes into it.” The expanded knowledge spread across all of the contexts of communication, but was most prevalent in regards to mediated communication and intercultural communication.

Collaborative Skills. Students also felt they had gained valuable collaborative skills (18.22%). Not surprisingly, the majority of these segments were related to the group context:

I plan on becoming a teacher, so learning to work in small group will prepare me for working with other teachers, and/or parents.

For some of the students, learning to work in a group was a new experience as indicated by the following two students:

I learned how to work with people I had never met before in a group setting. This class taught me skills that made it possible to communicate my ideas in a group setting and work better with others.

I had no previous experience with group projects until taking this course. Now I am comfortable with group tasks and can get along well in group situations.

A small number of comments related to collaborative skills were not specified in terms of contexts, with only

two other contexts related to collaboration: interpersonal and mediated. For example, one student made the connection between small groups and interpersonal communication: "I'm in a very one-on-one industry and small group communication is essential."

Openness/Acceptance. An expanded worldview and openness to diversity was another common theme in students' comments, making up 14.08% of the data. Many of these comments were related to intercultural/diverse contexts. However, some students also indicated that they were more open in interpersonal and intrapersonal contexts, as demonstrated in the following three comments:

This has showed me that even if someone is a part of another culture we are still the same in a way.

There are a lot more people here and a lot more different kinds of people here than that which I have grown up with, so I am sure it's helped in some aspects somehow.

I've learned not to let misconceptions guide my life and to step out of my comfort zone to talk to those not in the same communities as me.

These comments demonstrate what students gained in terms of being open and understanding of diversity—not just intercultural communication contexts. Comments about openness are exemplified by the student who said that a project "allowed me to understand other peoples' points of view."

Heightened Awareness. Across all of the contexts of communication students indicated, they also indicated a heightened awareness (11.27%). For some students, this awareness was about being exposed to ideas

or diversity that had not previously been salient to the student.

Many people are unaware of the messages that are being sent out into the world by the media and through analyzing the information in class I'm able to see beyond the obvious and I feel that it will benefit not only myself, but everyone else as well.

There are so many different groups and it was cool hearing about how the stereotypes aren't true.

The heightened awareness was typically about expanding students' experiences and world view, which was particularly important given that the majority of these students were first-year students. The awareness was not only limited to others. For example, one student placed the awareness in the intrapersonal realm: "These concepts have allowed me better to think rationally about myself as far as skills that I have."

Increased Confidence. Students reported feeling more confident in themselves and their abilities as a result of the work in the courses (10.32%). Not surprisingly, some of these gains in confidence were tied specifically to speaking, but students also saw broader implications:

The speeches and interaction in this class helped me improve my interpersonal communication skills which carried on into other areas of my life.

This concept has really helped me with my social skills and meeting new people. I am not from [this state] so I was forced to break out of my shell and meet people. I used these skills!

The confidence felt by students spread across all contexts of communication, but was most concentrated in public speaking and interpersonal communication.

Critical Examination. Increased abilities to critically examine messages was a positive outcome for many students, representing 9.17% of the data. For many students, this critical examination was in relation to mediated messages (e.g., advertising), as demonstrated in the following four comments:

It made me think of how to analyze what I see rather than just looking at it.

It taught me how to interpret an image and break it down piece by piece to really know what it is saying.

I strongly agree to this question because the rhetorical analysis really showed me what is being done to persuade an audience at a deeper level.

I really look at stats a different way no matter where I'm seeing them because I want to know if these are true stats or if someone has put a spin on them to get a point across.

Occasionally, students also indicated an increased ability to critically examine messages in relation to visual and written communication.

Not Specified. The remaining comments (17.77%) did not specify an attitudinal change. Often, these comments were broad statements and did not include any indication of what—if any—change had happened. For example, one student wrote:

Communication classes can actually be used outside of the classroom as compared to some classes that you'll never put into effect in a real world situation.

Another student's response was that "Everyone can work on their [*sic*] communication skills. Especially people who need to work on communication I think this subject can be very helpful." The student's comment indicates that there was something to be gained from the course but it wasn't clear what the student saw as the primary context in which a gain occurred.

Arena. In identifying the arena of life in which students made connections, coding only looked at explicit statements. Furthermore, if a student identified multiple contexts (e.g., both work and school), that segment was coded for "everyday life," which served as the broadest category. In all, students reported 232 connections to their academic lives, 108 connections to their current or future work life, and 1,229 connections to everyday life.

For example, one student in CC1 demonstrated how the interpersonal communication concepts she learned helped her deal with her roommate:

I took the interpersonal communication concepts that I learned in class and tried to use them to the best of my ability when I had to confront my roommate or my boyfriend about certain things. I am more aware now of how I come off to people when either confronting them or arguing with them.

In terms of academic connections, students made connections to current course work and future coursework, extending both within and beyond the class. Three comments from students exemplified the academic connections:

Majority of the projects done in this course were group projects, therefore you had to learn how to be an effective team member and get along with a group.

It will help me if I were to be put into another group in another class, or if I'm doing a project alone, I know how to divide things up and work on those separately to make the project better as a whole.

I feel like everything that was offered in this course helped me with my speaking skills. And I need good speaking skills for the major I am going after.

Students were also able to project into their future work life, whether or not students had a particular major in mind, as demonstrated by the following three comments:

As an interior design major, I will have to work as a group member for the majority of my career, so the skills I learned in this course will aid me in this.

Many jobs, even ones where you don't have to work in groups, are looking for people with "people skills" who know how to work with other people.

Most of the career options I have looked at place a heavy emphasis on working well with others. What I have learned in this course can be nothing but valuable to me in the future.

Students also saw broader connections to everyday life:

This project gave me a new outlook on the way we see things everyday and I have learned to be very cautious of the things I view

This project was the first time I had dealt with something of that kind. It was a very enlightening experience and at projects end, very fun. Since completing

this project I do feel that I am more critical of the messages I am exposed to and give more thought before making decisions.

Before I entered this course I knew how to interact with people. But the interpersonal concept taught me how to properly interact with others.

These three comments represent the breadth of the applications that students were able to make with the courses. The majority of the comments were tied to everyday life.

DISCUSSION

Curricular changes are ideally undertaken for the good of students. In relation to these changes, success can be measured in terms of cognitive learning (e.g., answers to a test; Bloom, 1956), behavioral learning (e.g., giving a speech or completing a math problems; Harrow, 1972), or affective learning (e.g., attitudes toward the content; Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1973). In order to fully understand the scope and depth of students' perceptions of learning in the revised courses described here, the assessment team has taken a multi-pronged approach. The focus here is on the affective learning, which is framed in terms of self-efficacy. Specifically, the goal was to examine the impact of the curriculum on students' attitudes. Students generally felt that the course projects and units had a positive impact on their abilities and attitudes, with extensions beyond the classroom.

When examining the data here, it becomes clear that students can take away a variety of applications from the same project. For the same set of assignments, stu-

dents gained collaborative skills, knowledge, and confidence, among other attitudes. Furthermore, students were able to see how completing a particular project related across multiple contexts of their lives. There is value in having a diversity of assignments to help students see what they can—and do—gain from the courses; in fact, self-efficacy and affect are closely tied (Bandura, 1982).

Like many basic communication courses (e.g., Morreale et al., 2010), the learning outcomes for these courses revolved heavily around students' abilities to speak and write. However, in students' responses, only a small number of public speaking and writing comments were made (together, less than 5% of the comments). Of course, the questions students answered were not specifically about those parts of the classes but students clearly identified their improvements as being about something more than public speaking and writing essays. Given the reality that professional writing and speaking may not conform to the types of assignments given in the classroom (e.g., Dannels, 2002), there is merit to understanding that the assignments provide more than just writing and speaking skills. The results raise the question of how much the goal of the courses should be about those very specific and narrow skills and how much should be moving beyond academic writing and speaking. Furthermore, once students leave these courses, they will be expected to communicate in more sophisticated ways in upper-division courses, which bring to the table their own sets of expectations.

The students' perceptions that these integrated communication skills are beneficial in everyday life, including academic, work, and personal arenas, speaks to

the importance of hybrid courses being included in general education curricula. Moreover, their perceived importance of the skills echo those reported by employers (Hart Research Associates, 2010). Particularly when communication-centered courses are a general education requirement, the value of the courses are a concern. Research demonstrates, for example, that when students see communication instruction as an add-on or irrelevant, it becomes a lower priority for students (Dannels, Anson, Bullard, & Peretti, 2003). Students appear to be making the connections between the assignments they complete in CC1 and CC2 to other contexts, which is a step in the right direction.

In terms of self-efficacy, the courses both explicitly and implicitly integrated the different strategies for improving self-efficacy. Specifically, students had performance experiences, vicarious experiences, experienced verbal persuasion, and enhanced affect during the assignment sequences in both courses—all influences on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Students did self-report an increase in perceptions of their self-efficacy as evidenced by those who reported feeling more comfortable, confident, knowledgeable, prepared, and skilled to enact the communication strategies they have learned in academic, personal, and professional realms. The student comments addressed both positive efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies. Of particular prevalence in this study was students' efficacy belief generality, or the belief that their integrated communication skills would transfer across contexts (Bandura). Although efficacy and affect are both perceptions that students hold, both have been associated with positive academic outcomes and cognitive learning (e.g., Zimmerman et al., 1992).

Thus, the students in these courses could be expected to have positive outcomes such as learning and skills.

Another important implication of the assessment results reported here revolves around the two-course sequence implemented at this institution. Generally, other institutions require one basic course and often this course can be taken at any time during the student's college career. This two-course sequence strongly encourages students to take two courses in subsequent semesters; students are required to take both courses, with the exception of students being able to test out of the first course due to equivalent credit. While students reported generally high affect for the content and the assignments in CC1, students reported greater affect for CC2. These results could be explained in a number of ways. First, students who are in their first semester of college are likely facing transitional issues, both academically and socially, that can alter their perceptions of college courses and the skills they are learning. The students who have persisted into the second semester are likely those who had more positive experiences during the first semester and who have adjusted to college life more effectively. Second, the higher affect ratings toward the second integrated communication course may be a result of the foundational communication skills the students gained, practiced, and refined before the second course.ⁱⁱⁱ In other words, students may feel more efficacious in enacting the communication skills during CC2 because they already had exposure to the material covered in CC1, whether they took the course or bypassed it due to an equivalent course taken elsewhere. Although these explanations are speculative, the results raise questions about the potential value of

requiring a two-course sequence instead of one course. Additionally, the connections made in the classes between multiple modes of communication may further reinforce the value of the two-course sequence where students build on knowledge and explore different modes of communication.

For assessment, this project reinforces the need to remember that while the stated learning outcomes are going to be a focal point of the assessment, it can also be meaningful to see beyond those learning outcomes, which may result in expanded outcomes or simply in a broader perspective on what can be gained by students in a course. Learning, like communication, is a process and the goals and outcomes of that process are not always readily apparent. If one goal of basic communication course research is to better understand different course configurations (e.g., Morreale et al., 2010), this study points to promising results from a multi-pronged approach to studying an integrated course.

The research here—like all assessment—is not without its limitations. First, the data here was collected from one semester of students while the course was still relatively new, meaning that the curriculum was not fully vetted. However, the data used here did feed back into the curriculum to make necessary adjustments. Secondly, the data comes from one time in one semester and does not allow for tracking of students; future data from these courses will allow us to make more of these longitudinal assessments. Thirdly, students completed the assessment outside of class (as part of an assignment) and some students did not respond to all questions; there may be inherent bias in the results. Finally, these results are not comprehensive in explaining what

happens within the courses and where there may be variety based on individual instructors or other factors such as the personality dynamics of classmates. However, the results here do demonstrate interesting trends that show a positive affect toward learning communication skills in an integrated manner.

CONCLUSIONS

In this new hybrid basic communication course, students saw the assignments and units as positive influences on their academic, work, and every day lives. In this way, the courses seem to provide a boost to students' self-efficacy beliefs, generality, and perceived outcomes. Although scholars know that basic communication courses are an important part of curricula and have many benefits for students, employer surveys highlight the importance of multiple modalities of communication (e.g., Hart Research Associates, 2010) for students' success. As the first step toward assessing the benefits—and potential drawbacks—to providing integrated communication instruction over two semesters, this research provides an encouraging nod to the benefits of this new hybrid.

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ⁱ Due to this institution's administrative configuration, the teaching of CC1 and CC2 is divided between faculty in a communication college and faculty in a composition division, housed in the arts and sciences college. Approximately 40% of the seats for the courses are allotted to the communication college. The data here reflects only those students taught within the communication college, as there were variations in the assignments between the two colleges.

ⁱⁱ When compared to the number of students enrolled in the courses after the final day to add a course, the response rate for CC1 was 59.97%; response rate for CC2 was 55.26%. However, students may have dropped the courses (either officially or unofficially), so these response rates may be artificially low. Furthermore, these numbers represent the number of students who completed the posttest *and* consented for their work to be used.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is important to note that due to university regulations, some students bypassed CC1 because of Advanced Placement testing, ACT verbal scores, or similar courses (primarily writing) taken elsewhere that served as an equivalent transfer. In this particular sample, only 5.5% of the CC2 students had taken CC1 under the curriculum described here. That proportion varies by semester.