

HUMAN COMMUNICATION

Annual Report

Creating Relevance Using Assessment Results

May 2016



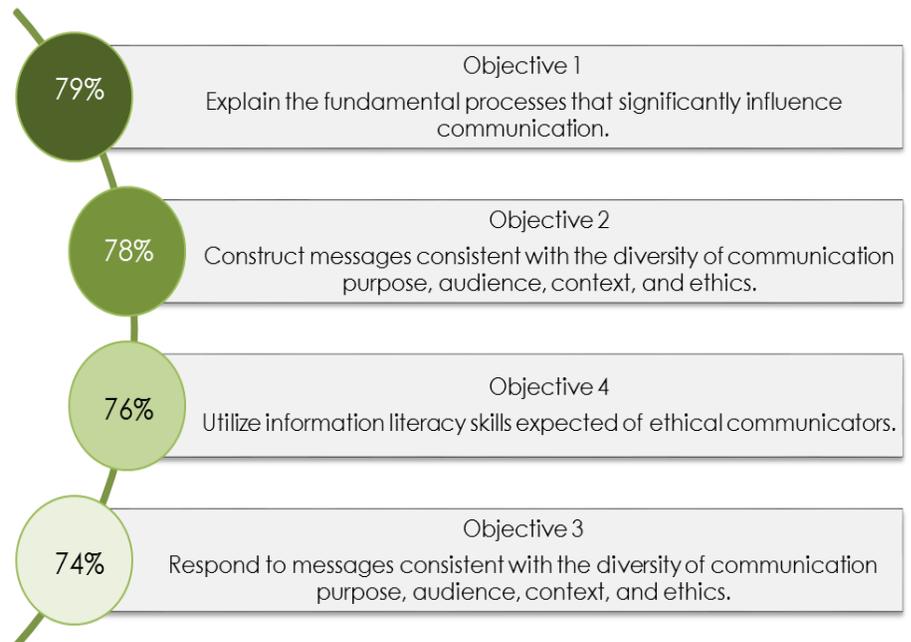
Using assessment results to improve student competence in the basic communication course remains a challenge. It is difficult for faculty to find aggregate data at the learning objective level relevant to their individual classes. As a whole, the discipline has more fully embraced speaking skills over listening skills. Student competence may be highly reflective of the amount of emphasis given to speaking rather than listening assignments.

Simply reporting results is not sufficient. In 2016-2017 the department will establish a more targeted approach towards using results for student learning improvement. Establishing a research agenda focused on pedagogy will help to reach this aim. Moreover, considering the adoption of a textbook more aligned with our current learning objectives may help our students achieve competency in all four areas.

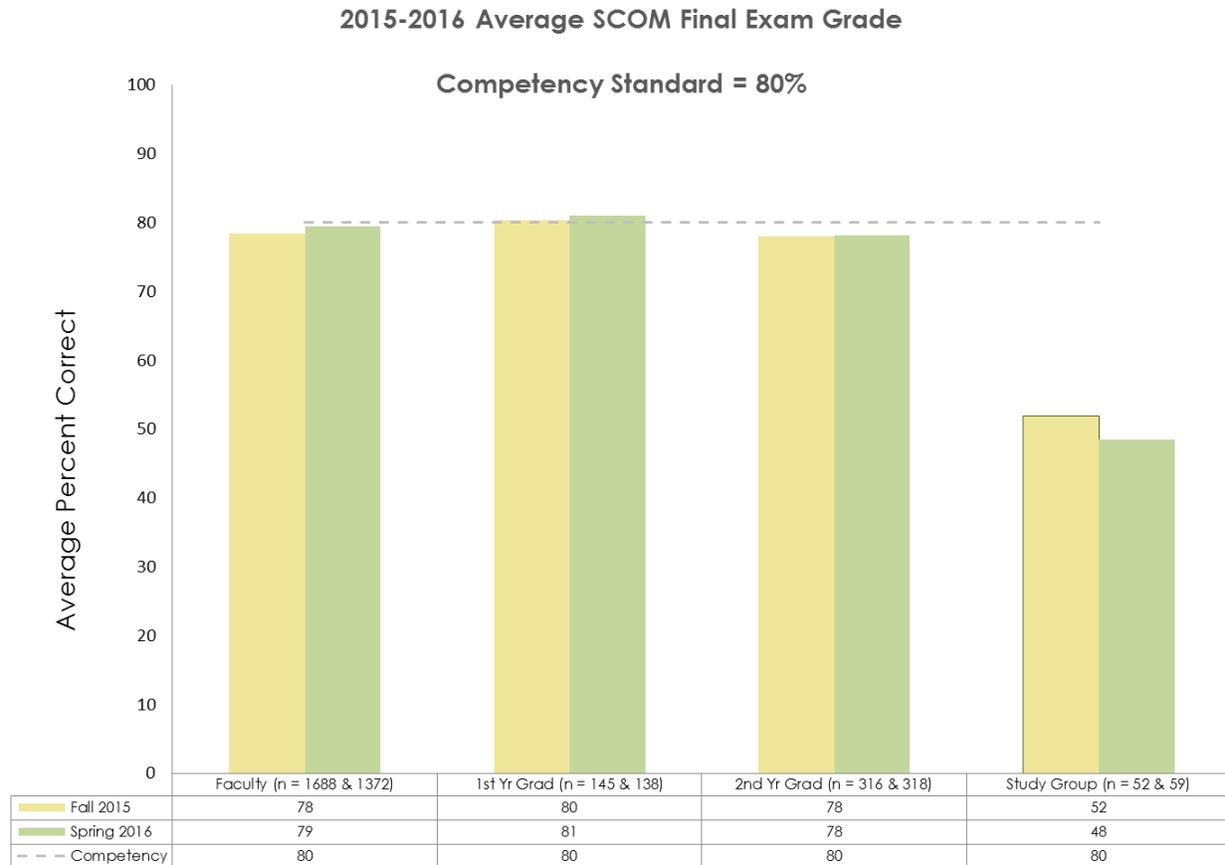
2015-2016 Cluster One Human Communication Student Learning Objectives by Student Competency

Cluster One assesses students' *Human Communication* knowledge, attitudes and behavioral skills. Knowledge and behavioral (mediated items) competencies are assessed through a 100-item course-embedded, computer-based, multiple-choice final examination.

Student competence, reported in the graph on the right, remained in the same order as previous years. Note that students performed least well on Objective Three -- listening.



How many students are reaching our desired competence level?

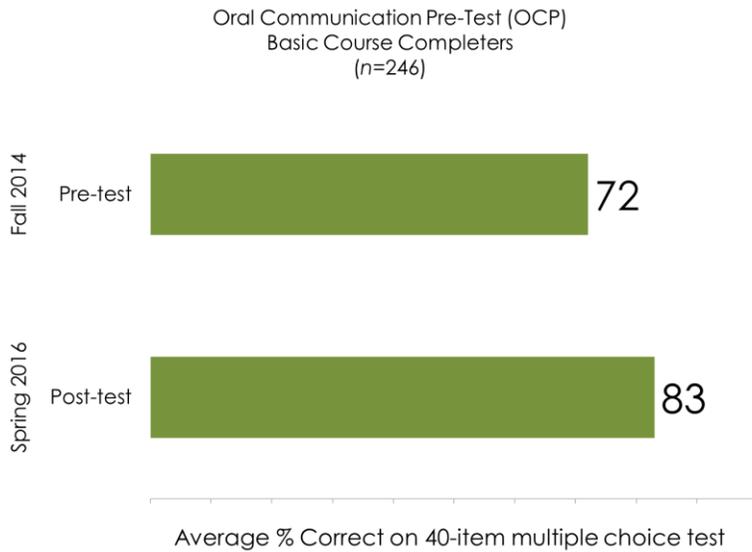


Our desired competency level, 80%, was set by faculty during a standard setting workshop in 2014. This year, 52% of the students met the desired competency, which is in line with previous years.

This is the second year for graduate students to be involved in instruction of the course. First year graduate students as recitation instructors, and are trained and supervised by full-time faculty. Second year graduate students serve as individual instructors of record. It is gratifying to see that the success of students taught by graduate students is the same as those taught by full-time faculty. It is important to note, however, that the number of students taught by graduate students is small and comparisons should be made with caution. Because of enrollment issues, we are contemplating adding an additional large section, which means that the following year there will be more second-year instructors available to teach additional sections. Student performance in graduate student-led classes supports this endeavor.

As noted on the graph, above, there is a population who are not performing well on the test. These are international students with low TOEFL scores who are participating in a pathways program designed to acclimate them to university life in the US. The low English scores may contribute to students' failure to achieve the competencies desired. Comparing international scores (both Study Group and FYR) with domestic US students' scores suggests that students from the two groups who are at the same ability level respond similarly to individual test items. In other words, the difference in scores appears to be due to differences in ability, rather than interpretation of item wording.

Do students need a basic communication course?



The Oral Communication Pre-test (OCP) is a 40-item pre-post multiple-choice test administered to a random sample of students during each JMU Assessment Day. As indicated on the graph to the left, entering JMU students have limited knowledge of communication principles. Not only do they need the course, but after completing the course, they maintain the skills with an average

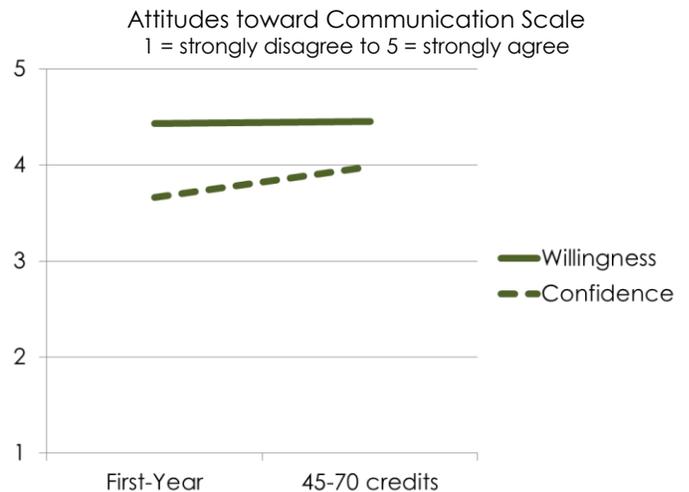
>10% point increase.

JMU course completers score higher than students who transferred credit, were currently taking the course, or who had never taken the course.

How do JMU students' attitudes toward communication change after completing their JMU Communication requirement?

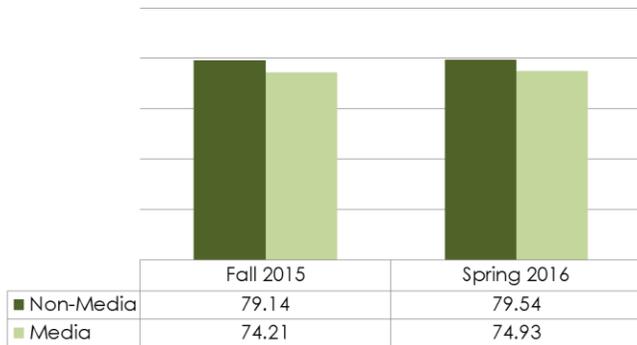
The Attitudes toward Communication (ATC) is an 11-item Likert-type scale that assesses students' willingness to and confidence in engaging in oral communications. The ATC is administered with the final examination and the pre-post assessment test.

When compared to their entering level of *confidence*, JMU students reported higher *confidence* after completing their communication requirement. Entering JMU students reported high *willingness* to communicate and maintained those levels after completing their JMU communication requirement.



How is JMU assessing behavioral competencies in human communication?

Mediated and Non-Mediated Items
Average Percent Correct



The SCOM final exam includes both mediated and non-mediated items. Although not a direct form of behavioral assessment, the mediated items serve as a proxy for behavioral assessment and can tap into skills, such as listening. With the size of the JMU student body, direct behavioral assessment would have a dramatic impact on faculty resources. Nonetheless, all SCOM courses require graded public speaking performance. However, these scores are not included as part of the general education program assessment. The difference in student performance on mediated items – students find them more challenging -- is of great interest and leads to several research questions:

- 1) Do students lack familiarity with this type of item?
- 2) Is actual listening behavior more difficult than content knowledge?

SCOM Basic Course Fact Sheet

Competency

2251 out of 4329 students met the competency standard set by faculty.

Students scored **~5%** points higher on non-media items compared to media items.

Sophomore students scored **>10%** higher on the OCP test than first-year students.

Enrollment

SCOM provided **4287** seats in the Human Communication Basic Course during 2015-2016.

This figure represents **>100%** of the available seats in the non-Honors courses.

Given over-enrollment in regular SCOM 100-level courses, there was **1 uninhabited seat**.

264 continuing students still need to meet the human communication requirement.

Resources Used

79% of students enrolled in SCOM 123 were taught by full-time faculty.

100% of students enrolled in SCOM 121/122 and honors sections were taught by full-time faculty.

Coming soon

- In response to increasing enrollment and lack of additional resources, next year's seat cap has been increased in all sections of the 100-level course. Additionally, a second large lecture section will be added.
- A new edition of the Rothwell textbook will require review. SCOM will continue to use the 4th edition in 2016-2017.
- A new version of Adaptex is under development, which may improve the functionality for lab personnel and faculty.
- Recommended changes to the common final examination
 - We should increase the number of items available, in hopes of developing a second form of the test.
 - A backwards translation, mapping the current items back to the student learning objectives, is recommended.
- Faculty research on human communication pedagogy will continue. Some areas of interest for 2016-2017 include:
 - Mediated items
 - Attitudes toward Communications
 - Listening competencies