**James Madison University**

**Institutional Student Learning Outcomes Assessment**

**2023 Report on Human Communication**

James Madison University assesses direct measures of student learning at scale across a number of key academic programs, including General Education. The University’s regular assessment process is to require all first-year students, who are randomly assigned into subgroups, to complete specific assessment instruments during Orientation in August (pretest); after completing 45-70 credit hours at the University, these students complete the same test again on JMU’s Assessment Day in February (posttest).

For Oral Communication, the University deploys the JMU-designed *OCP* instrument, which in the current assessment cycle examined how students changed in their oral communication knowledge and skills for General Education from Fall 2020 to Spring 2022. The *OCP* test consists of 40 items developed by JMU Human Communication faculty that directly map to each of the four objectives – ten questions designed for each objective:

Explain the fundamental processes that significantly influence communication.

Construct messages consistent with the communication purposes, audiences, contexts, and ethics.

Listen to messages in manners appropriate for the communication purposes, audiences, contexts, and ethics.

Utilize digital literacy skills expected of ethical communicators.

For the previous five years, results from the *OCP* test have demonstrated statistically valid gains in student learning due to completion of a required Human Communication course. Unfortunately, in this last cycle, on average student *OCP* scores did not significantly increase after completing the Human Communication General Education requirement: results show a 1.9% increase from pretest to posttest. We attribute this finding to deviations in our regular practices resulting from the pandemic: both testing pretest and posttest sessions were held remotely, rather than in-person; students had several weeks to complete the assessments, rather than completing the test on a single day, in a single session; and the number of students assessed varied, with 499 students taking the pretest (August 2020), and 313 students completing the posttest (February 2022). In the future, as the University returns to the regular deployment of our instrument, we anticipate that results will again show meaningful learning improvement over time.

A secondary process for assessment of Human Communication skills is represented in the infographic that follows. Here, data analysis from a course-embedded, JMU faculty designed final exam, required of all students in Human Communication courses, shows important gains in learning.