

25 September 1996

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members University Senate

FROM: University Senate Council

RE: AGENDA ITEM: University Senate Meeting, Monday, October 14, 1996.
3:00 PM Proposal to amend University Senate Rules, Section V - Oral
Communication Requirement, University Studies Program.

Proposal

All programs currently offering alternative routes to fulfillment of the USP oral communication requirement outside the Department of Communication who wish to continue those offerings may submit requests for recertification of those alternatives to the USP Committee over the next three years (until the end of the 1998-99 academic year). Those alternatives not requesting and receiving recertification will no longer qualify as alternative routes beginning in the 1999-2000 academic year. During those three years a moratorium on any new alternatives is declared while the recertification process is completed and evaluated. At that time a decision will be made regarding whether the moratorium should be lifted.

The USP Committee will develop, in cooperation with the Department of Communication, a set of criteria outlining the basis for recertification which will be made available to all programs currently offering alternative routes for fulfillment of the oral communication requirement. The Department of Communication will provide an evaluation of recertification proposals to the USP committee prior to the USP Committee's decision.

To be recertified alternatives would typically satisfy the following minimum criteria in addition to those developed by the USP Committee. For those alternative routes composed of multiple course sequences it would be expected that these criteria would be met by the sequence though perhaps not by every course in the sequence.

-Students will receive instruction from instructors with appropriate expertise in the development of oral communication ability

-Students will utilize substantial and credible resource materials (e.g., textbooks focused on oral communication skill development)

-Students will be provided substantial opportunity to practice, receive feedback, and be evaluated on the core oral communication competencies

-Students will be required to develop the ability to communicate across diverse audiences

-A significant part of the final grade(s) offered in the course(s) will be dependent on the acquisition of the oral communication abilities taught

This proposal is offered in the hopes of ensuring that students acquire the oral communication skills necessary to fulfill their role as an active member of a democratic society while recognizing the realities of the current University environment. The ability to use language ethically and effectively in oral communication contexts and across a diverse community of interests is a quality of any liberally educated person in contemporary society.

Rationale:

For the 1995-96 academic year the USP Committee reviewed the alternative routes for satisfying the Oral Communication requirement in general education which were approved when the program first went into place in 1988. Some of these routes appear to be quite effective; others are little more than superficial attempts to provide students with an opportunity to speak in front of a group. In the latter case the USP Committee was dismayed both by the absence of any special competency on the part of the instructor and by the paucity of classroom instruction regarding the principles and practices of public speaking or interpersonal communication.

In addition, the USP Committee found that in alternative routes, the focus of oral communication instruction was on communication practices specific to particular professions rather than on the development of general oral communication abilities applicable across a variety of communication contexts. The goal of University Studies is to provide foundational skills and knowledge which are applicable across many different situations and circumstances. Courses in USP do not take as their primary objective preparation for a particular major or profession although academic programs typically do supplement areas of USP with specific applications (e.g., in writing, history). General studies courses in oral communication, like those in other areas, should prepare students to function in a multiplicity of contexts and across varied groups of people. For this reason, the USP Committee recommended that the oral communication requirement be fulfilled with the foundation of offerings in the Department of Communication, where highly qualified persons in the field can establish a basis on which to add professionally oriented courses in public speaking or interpersonal communication. The Committee commended the efforts of some programs for creating such specialized opportunities across the curriculum in hopes they would continue those programs for their majors as supplemental to the general education program.

The USP Committee believed that it was time to place the responsibility for developing the students' general oral communication skills precisely where it belongs *i.e.* in the Communication Department. For that reason the Committee recommended to the Senate Council that all alternative routes for fulfilling the oral communication requirement be eliminated over a three year period.

However, after extended discussion with involved parties the Senate Council arrived at the present compromise solution which allows for recertification if alternative routes which meet criteria designed to ensure students receive meaningful instruction in the development of oral communication ability.

If approved, the proposal will be sent to the Rules Committee for codification.

Implementation Date: Immediate