

Director's Corner: The Speaking Center: A Central Hub of Activity

The Speaking Center has been bustling with activity since the beginning of the Spring semester. Teams are working on communication workshop preparations, staff members are preparing for professor request presentations, and they are working on various projects to create videotapes, both prescriptive and descriptive, to place on our website. Additionally, consultants are preparing to present at the National Association of Communication Centers conference in Richmond, VA this Spring. It's not an exaggeration to say that the Speaking Center is a veritable central hub of activity!

More students visited the center than any other semester during Fall 2010. Use of the new on-line scheduler software has streamlined the processes of scheduling appointments and creating automated logs of student visits and databases of feedback, thereby increasing our effective use of time. Undoubtedly, that has reduced the stress on our consultants and opened up more time to accommodate students who inevitably try to fit in their mandatory Speaking

Center consultations at the end of each semester.

As director, I believe it is important to lead this energetic program by acquiring the knowledge and know-how that is vital to maintaining a vibrant and responsive communication center. We need to find ways to better adjust to the changes in higher education curricular trends and the needs of our ever-changing student clientele. As such, I attended the National Communication Association, the largest and most highly-regarded association of communication scholars, presenting and chairing sessions and also judging for awards. Also, to keep abreast of the field, I continue to do research: one of my latest publications is "The Effect of Communication Centers on College Student Retention" accepted for publication in the *Journal of College Student Retention*. In this paper I argue that communication centers can play a significant role in all of the variables found in previous research to impact college student retention, namely communication competence, academic performance, interaction with students and faculty, and involvement in campus events.

All of these activities would not be possible without the dedication of the

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Online Teaching Tools at the Speaking Center

By Benjamin Saunders

This semester, several members of the Speaking Center are busy putting together a new way for Mary Washington students to refine their speaking skills. As part of our "Speaking Center Best Practices Project" we are creating a series of videos to make concrete some of the most frequently discussed problems students have when they are creating, practicing, and delivering speeches.

The project has two components. One part of the effort is the creation of a new instructional video that will take viewers, unfamiliar with the speech making process, through a public speaking assignment from start to finish. We have written our own original script and are ready to get going on the filming process!

The second piece of the project is a series of video clips taken from speeches made by Mary Washington students that exemplify what we consider to be "best practices." We have been combing through the communication department's Oratos website (www.oratos.org/wordpress) to find clips of the best introductions, conclusions, vocal inflection, eye contact, and a host of other important aspects of speech giving. If you've ever been a part of a public speaking class, you might be a new

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Speaking Center staff members. Most of them were brand new to the job last year, but they are skilled and confident as consultants today. Their energy and focus on assisting students with their communication assignments and concerns, allow us to do all of these tasks efficiently.

Lest this article sound too smug, I would like to state that despite all the dynamic changes and activities at the Speaking Center, one principle is constantly stressed among our staff members: we will always strive to be better in what we do. And we will keep in mind that the central focus is on how to better serve you, the UMW community, with its diverse communication education needs.

Esther Lee Yook, Ph.D.
UMW Speaking Center Director

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UMW Speaking Center star!

Once we compile all of the appropriate clips, the Speaking Center will be able to better serve the student body by having real life examples of the suggestions we make during consultations. All of us at the Speaking Center are very eager to get this new technological teaching tool up and running, so look for some new electronic additions in the near future!

Workshops

By Meagan Holbrooke

Throughout this semester, the Speaking Center hosted three great workshops on skills related to successful presentations. Our talented consultants discussed:

- Introductions and Conclusions
- Effective Delivery
- Using PowerPoint

Our first workshop taught techniques to grab attention in the introduction, and how to leave the audience with a take home message in the conclusion. The workshop on Effective Delivery showed students ways to deliver a speech working on eye contact, stance, tone of voice, and speed. The final workshop on PowerPoint went over how to create a successful visual presentation, which avoids distracting the audience and acts as an aid to the presenter.

All workshops were held in Combs 237, at 5:00 PM with pizza and light refreshments. Each semester we have a wonderful set of workshops lined up, which covers very important aspects of presenting and speech making. We look forward to seeing you next semester!

Establishing Credibility

By Rachel McGuirk

One of the key components of any successful speech is that the audience must trust what you are saying is true. This type of confidence is called *credibility*. It is developed when you support your ideas with evidence which is verified by research utilizing sources that are respected, reliable and relevant to the topic.

All sources exhibit a varying degree of credibility; your goal is to decipher what is and what is not reputable. Some credible sources are respected like newspapers, newsmagazines, books, experts, academic journals, and encyclopedias. All are authoritative and reliable. Others, like biographies, TV shows, self-help books, friends, or condensed articles, have less credibility.

Non-credible sources are easily detected by audiences. A student once gave a presentation on the existence of UFOs using the latest article of *The National Enquirer* to back up his argument. Listeners tried to be polite and conceal their smiles, but eventually the room erupted in laughter. The problem was the speaker, who was entirely serious, did not perceive that his sources had caused a credibility problem.

Here are a few examples of non-credible, hearsay, or “phantom” sources often cited in speeches:

“I was once talking to this guy...”

“Everybody knows that this is true...”

“Doctors recommend that...”

“Studies have proven it to be a fact...”

If you want to establish credibility with the audience, cite reputable sources in your speech. Check the reliability of your authors, publications, or so-called experts. Do not rely on hearsay, gossip columns, or fabrications of evidence. Consult the complete, original article rather than the condensed version. Be willing to spend some time researching ideas from sources. By citing specific sources, specific studies, and specific authorities, you establish a strong credibility with your listeners while building their confidence and your believability.



Profile of Dianna Booher

By Rachel Hirst



Her clients include IBM, American Airlines, the U.S. Senate, PepsiCo, and NASA. She has been inducted into the CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame® and is a member of the prestigious Speakers Roundtable. As a result of her hard work, she has been recognized as one of the “Top 100 Thought Leaders in America” by *Executive Excellence* magazine and one of the “21 Top Speakers for the 21st Century” by *Successful Meetings*. Starting with a master’s degree in English from the University of Houston, Dianna Booher has devoted her life to the field of business communication and has subsequently become one of the nation’s most influential speaking consultants.

In 1980, Dianna published a revolutionary book Would You Put That in Writing? It inspired corporations all over the United States to seek her advice on how to increase the productivity of their businesses. Dianna built a team of consultants to train engineers, accountants, lawyers, managers, and other professionals in the art of effective writing techniques. Her programs were so significant that some of her earliest clients, such as Texas Instruments and ExxonMobil, requested further training in other critical areas: oral presentations, customer service, and interpersonal skills. It was at this time that Dianna Booher’s career as a communication expert flourished and she founded Booher Consultants.

Today, Dianna and her team present programs and techniques for efficient business communication strategies all over the world. They are stationed in North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, and the Pacific Rim. Booher Consultants has received vendor-of-the-year awards from IBM and Frito-Lay for their overall impact on those organizations. Dianna also found the time to author over 40 books, including the best-seller, Speak with Confidence.

Dianna Booher captivates, motivates, and inspires her audiences and has had a remarkable impact on the successful communication strategies of some of today’s largest corporations. According to Dr. Mary K. Kickels, the Vice President of Product Development for the Encyclopedia Britannica Corporation, “Dianna Booher has changed the way corporate America communicates.”

Big Wins During OctoberFest

By Stacey Peros

October was an exciting month for the Speaking Center. The first-ever Octoberfest was held, and it was a success! It was a month when the students at the University of Mary Washington learned about the Center through different workshops and contests with prizes awarded throughout. The prizes for Octoberfest included an iPod shuffle, gift certificates to restaurants such as Choi’s Korean Kitchen and Poppy Hill, Speaking Center water bottles, and candy.

Two different contests were held: a writing contest and a Speaking Center logo design contest. The topic for the writing contest was: “What was your most memorable speech?” The winner of this contest was Brett Stones with his piece “I Love You.” As a prize, Brett won an iPod shuffle. For the logo design contest, participants were asked to design a logo for the Speaking Center. The winner of this competition was Joeliyn Thu-Tran with a logo that contained a professor, a consultant, and a student talking to one another, showing how the Speaking Center unites these three factions.

More prizes were awarded at our movie night and at our workshops. The showing of *The Great Debaters* kicked off festivities on October 1st. Next we had three workshops that provided not only prizes, but valuable information as well. These workshops covered issues such as speaking anxiety, speaking in a foreign language, and speech basics. The workshops were well received by the audience, as gift certificates, fun activities, and pizza were provided.

The biggest success of Octoberfest was our scavenger hunt. Over 100 yellow Speaking Center cards were scattered throughout campus. Students who found these cards returned them to the Speaking Center in exchange for candy, tubs of bubble gum, water bottles, and gift certificates to local restaurants. Not only did this scavenger hunt reward students, but it also allowed the student body to become more aware of the Speaking Center through learning about its location and goals. The staff of the Speaking Center truly enjoyed the introduction of Octoberfest, and we hope that it becomes an annual tradition!

Speaking Center Consultants to Attend the NACC

By Sam Waskowicz

Your Speaking Center, here at UMW, likes to think of itself as a worthwhile and helpful institution. But we, now as in the past, are always striving to make ourselves just a little bit better. Academic network institutions exist that can help bridge the gap between what we know and what we want to know. In trying various methodologies and tracking the successes and failures of each experiment, we have gained valuable experience and data we can use to evaluate the successes and setbacks that communication centers face. By sharing our experiences and learning from those of others we hope we can make the UMW Speaking Center an even better place.

Enter the National Association of Communication Centers or the NACC. Founded a mere 10 years ago, the organization, brings great passion and vigor to the field of communication science. The basic ideal, as stated in their bylaws is to “encourage and facilitate the exchange of scholarly and professional knowledge about issues related to communication centers.” The Mary Washington Speaking Center strongly supports these goals. That is why we are going to the annual conference in March- to share our ideas and learn from what other speaking centers across the country have tried.

UMW is sending three groups to present at the NACC conference this year. The first group, led by Ben Saunders, explores the implementation of an online video repository, containing informational videos that students can use to prepare for their trip to the Speaking Center. Dr. Yook, head of the Speaking Center, will also be making a presentation, highlighting the importance of keeping students engaged and involved while explicating how a communication center can be an integral piece in accomplishing that goal. The last group presenting on Octoberfest, led by Rachel McGuirk will discuss the results of the outreach effort made last October, discussing ways the engaged students in the Speaking Center’s mission. These delegates will also be attending the presentations of other communication centers and are looking forward to being exposed to the ideas that could make tomorrow’s Speaking Center more helpful to the student population.

Emotion and Expectations: Obama’s Tucson Speech

By Rob Belcourt



In the aftermath of the Tucson Arizona shootings, many found that words could not begin to express the sorrow, fear, and uncertainty that we all felt when so many brave Americans needlessly lost their lives. Yet, before the nation could move on to resume daily activity and start the process of closure, President Obama delivered what has become one of the most emotional speeches of his presidency. Gathered at the University of Arizona, Obama spoke not only to victims and families, but to a large crowd of students and the nation. Surprisingly, the tone of the speech was upbeat, bright, and hopeful. Little time was spent focusing on the sad event, but rather celebrating the lives of those passed, and praying for those still struggling to survive. “Our hearts are broken” Obama said, “Our hearts are broken. Yet, our hearts also have reason—for fullness.” This memorable speech allowed the country to come together, and in the wake of a national tragedy, we found unity.

Effective orators understand the importance of tone, diction, hand gestures, and credibility. Yet, what is often lacking from many speeches is emotion. Emotion is something that cannot be practiced and cannot be written into an outline. Emotions let the audience know that you are human; it helps us take action and most importantly helps us remember. President Obama set an upbeat and positive tone, yet underlying every sentence, every phrase was a hint of raw emotion.

An important part of Obama’s speech highlights the need to look towards the future and to examine our own morality, our own conscience. He specifies that “we recognize our own morality, and we are reminded that in the fleeting time we have on this earth, what matters is not wealth, fortune, power or fame, but rather, how well we have loved and what small part we have played in making the lives of other people better”. Here Obama emphasizes the importance of responsibility. Each of us should actively engage our community and seek new

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Interview with Katie O'Leary, Former Speaking Center Consultant

By Abbie Yirrah

The atmosphere at the UMW Speaking Center is not just work! work! work! After all, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. We are like a family: we work as a team and have each other's back. It is for this reason that we still keep in touch with the consultants that graduate. Our featured former consultant remembers how working at the Speaking Center prepared her for life outside UMW. Currently a Camp director for the YMCA, Katie O'Leary, is the epitome of a great leader and communicator.

Abbie: Hi Miss O'Leary. Will you please tell a little about yourself, and what you have been doing since you left UMW?

Katie: I graduated from UMW in '09 with a BS in Psychology. Since graduating, I have pretty much been a wanderer until this past January. In September 2009, I decided to pack my car and move to Miami where I was an Assistance Teacher. After about four months, I decided I wanted to go traveling and see Europe. From traveling, I learned I had a passion for seeing and learning about different cultures. If it weren't for running out of money and not having a job, I would have continued my adventures. Being back in the States I soon realized that I wanted to be involved as well as make difference and accepted a position as a Camp/Teen Director at the Westerly YMCA located in Rhode Island.

Abbie: How has working at the Speaking Center helped you in your life after school?

Katie: The Speaking Center taught me a lot about non-verbal communication. While traveling, I had to depend on non-verbal techniques. I would most likely have not of been as comfortable with this if it weren't for the Speaking Center. Also, I have to present to different committees as a Camp Director. I am always asked if I am prepared or nervous before I have to present. With my experiences at the Speaking Center, I find myself very calm and collected before my speech.

Abbie: As a communication expert, what attributes do you think define a good speaker?

Katie: A good speaker is prepared, confident, organized, and passionate about their topic. A good speaker has completed accurate research on their topic as well as organized their speech in a way that

is easy to follow and understand. I define a confident speaker as one who is able to captivate as well inform the audience.

Abbie: Any advice to the current consultants at the Speaking Center and to the lovely students of UMW?

Katie: The Speaking Center prepared me for the working world by teaching me the importance of communication and giving me confidence in my speaking ability. To the current consultants I would say take in all you can at the Speaking Center because you will most likely use the techniques that are discussed. As for the UMW students, take full advantage of the services that Mary Wash offers. I wish I had those services available to me in the working world.

Obama's Speech *continued from page 4*

and better opportunities. Furthermore, by becoming active participants within our individual communities, tragedy can be avoided.

What truly makes this a memorable speech is the manner in which Obama involved the audience. Active audience participation is important to any public speaker. In this type of setting, Obama masterfully combined sorrow with hope and passion. Many times interrupted by applause, Obama called upon the nation, in the climax of the speech, to live up to our country's standards and to "do everything we can to make sure this country lives up to our children's expectations".

Without doubt, this speech is one of the most important in Obama's presidential term. He was faced with the task of uniting a divided nation in the wake of a horrible event. By combining vocal skills, emotion, and a call for expectations, Obama delivered a masterpiece and its message should never be forgotten.

Sudoku

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The Speaking Center



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