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Redesigning Public Speaking: A Case in the Use of Instructional Design to Create the Interchange Model

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Delivery models for public speaking courses certainly vary with the needs of students, departments, and institutions. Course directors may be encouraged to reconsider their models as students change, budgets are squeezed, or department heads shift their hiring priorities. Despite the sometimes shifting sands of higher education, course directors continue to support student learning while they juggle staffing issues, budgets, and pleas from students who need seats in Public Speaking. At one Research I institution, that same concern for student learning was evident during an experiment in instructional design that resulted in a good fit for the university, the department, and the students. A new model was designed to meet needs, maximize resources, and enhance quality instruction. This case study of the analysis, course design, and implementation of the Interchange Model at Virginia Tech focuses on the process of the design and the first year's successful implementation of the Interchange Model.

COURSE CONTEXT

At a campus with 15,000 undergraduates and no general education requirement for students to take Public Speaking, the Department of Communication offered approximately 500 seats in Public Speaking each semester. Eight years previously, the department had moved from autonomous sections, taught by instructors to a large lecture with lab sections staffed by graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and a course director who taught the large lecture and supervised graduate students. The course director, an instructor, devoted 75% of her faculty assignment to Public Speaking.

While most students enrolled in Public Speaking at other large institutions take the course as freshmen or sophomores (Morreale, Hugenberg & Worley, 2006, p. 420), students at this institution are not likely to take the class early in their academic careers. Although it is a 2000-level course designed for sophomores, the course routinely attracts juniors and seniors, most of whom are not majors in the Department of Communication.

By the fall of 2005, the course was providing good instruction to support students as they developed speaking skills, but increasing enrollment and logistical problems led the department to initiate a review of the course.

IDENTIFYING GAPS AND NEEDS

Across a semester, a Public Speaking Task Force met to analyze the demands of the course and to deter-

Table 1
Summary of Design Considerations

Areas of analysis	Goals for a new design	Components of the new design
Content ✓	Emphasize skill development; combine learning theory with disciplinary theory	All informative speeches in increasing levels of complexity; active learning
Rigor ✓+	Maintain rigor	Assignments requiring online time and attention equal to that of previous model
In-classroom performance ✓+	Continue in-classroom delivery of student speeches	Classroom delivery of speeches in groups of 20; community
Inconsistency across Sections ✓-	Consistency across sections	Use of Central Site, GTA scripts, and <i>Course Guide</i>
Limited enrollment ✓-	Increase enrollment with no new resources	Increase class size of individual sections
Cramped classrooms ✓-	Comfortable, well equipped classrooms	Use of large class sizes yields better classrooms
Overloaded GTAs ✓-	Fit for demands and competence of GTAs	Responsible only for section sites and in-class interaction and evaluation; use of GTA scripts to reduce planning time
Inefficiencies ✓-	Greater student responsibility for info	No "re-teaching" of online materials—only clarifications or response to questions
Minimal interest of non-majors ✓-	Learner-centered focus	REAL PS; ownership of learning
Minimal Technology ✓-	Learner-centered delivery of info with online component	Online component replaces large lecture
Insufficient engagement ✓-	Attention to learning theory; active learning	Highly active classrooms; relevance of assignments

Note: ✓+ Determined to be appropriate, effective;
 ✓ Determined to be adequate;
 ✓-Determined to be inadequate

mine potential new directions. Members of the task force—Jim Kuypers, Marlene Preston, Beth Waggenpack, and Emily Wilkinson Stallings—collected information from stakeholders on campus who sent their majors for instruction in public speaking; from faculty involved with the current model, including the course director; and from students who had responded to course evaluations and commented to faculty. The analysis, which is summarized in Table 1, revealed strengths and weaknesses of the previous model of Public Speaking and even more goals for a new model.

Initially, the content of the course and student performance in the course were considered. Conversations with administrators and faculty in other departments revealed overall satisfaction with the content of Public Speaking and the accomplishments of students who completed the course. This satisfaction was echoed by faculty involved with teaching the course, who were confident that the current content addressed many widely held content goals and was appropriately rigorous for a 2000-level course. All stakeholders agreed that the method of in-class speech performance was working well. Communication faculty were certainly willing to shift the content as other needs were identified, but course delivery issues quickly emerged as primary targets for change.

Related to the content considerations was the concern about consistency of information and evaluation provided by GTAs who were primarily responsible for the lab sections of the course. “Reliability across sections in rigor, grading, common content” is listed as a top administrative problem for basic courses nationally (Morreale, et al., 2006, p. 425). While a large lecture

provided consistent course material for those who attended, options for accessing that information were limited and implementation varied across lab sections.

Enrollment issues were also explored. Faculty in other departments indicated concern that their students weren't able to enroll in Public Speaking as freshmen or sophomores. Students were missing out on the opportunity to refine and practice new speaking skills as undergraduates; some students even took the course during the summer after they had participated in graduation ceremonies. Juniors and seniors have more rigid schedules, are devoting time to major classes and other pre-career activities, and are not getting the same benefits from the course that younger students might gain.

In terms of enrollments, faculty in the Department of Communication had long been aware that the course wasn't meeting the demand for seats, and they had heard complaints from students. Some students blamed the department for not offering enough sections of the course, but others would put off enrolling in the course or drop it when a semester became too complicated by major classes. The fact that students were not getting into the course as sophomores was sometimes a matter of student choice rather than lack of available seats.

Another enrollment issue emerged along with a new university mandate, which had the potential to create an even bigger backlog in Public Speaking. Virginia Tech had adopted a requirement for the integration of students' visual expression, writing and speaking across the curriculum. Each department was required to develop a plan that showed how its majors would acquire skills in those areas across the undergraduate curriculum, including any courses that would be required. This

increased attention to students' oral communication skills was certainly welcomed by the Department of Communication; however, any resulting increase in enrollments had the potential to create an even greater squeeze in the course.

Other logistical problems were also identified. The lab size of 22-24 and the need for smaller rooms only two days a week netted some of the worst teaching spaces on campus—tight, outdated classrooms. Such rooms precluded the use of PowerPoint for student speeches because the equipment was not easily accessible. The large lecture also demanded that 500 students would meet at the same time each week, creating an inflexible arrangement that tied up faculty, GTAs, and undergraduates. Additionally, the course gobbled resources, not the least of which were the paper and copying costs for tests in the large lecture.

Of course, all discussions about the course included some conversation about student issues, which included concerns expressed about graduate students who taught the course and undergraduates who enrolled in the course.

Communication faculty expressed concern about the GTAs who were responsible for the lab sections. While the course is an important training ground for GTAs, some were spending too much time preparing for their teaching, and they found it difficult to complete their own work as students in graduate classes. Because of undergraduate absences from the large lecture, GTAs spent time trying to re-teach the material in the lab sections, thus creating some difficulties for themselves and also some inefficiencies in instruction. They also faced the typical power gap that occurs in such courses. The

course director taught the large lecture and was seen by the undergraduates as the authority, so the GTAs sometimes had difficulty establishing authority despite their responsibility for evaluation of undergraduate performance in the lab sections.

Finally, considerations about undergraduate engagement involved both the content and delivery issues. Aside from enrollment and flexibility problems that affected the undergraduates, members of the task force heard concerns about students who begrudgingly took the course as a requirement, but who weren't at all interested in it. While this was certainly anecdotal evidence, the student complaints seemed to circle around the same themes. Students seemed to see the large lecture almost as an imposition. Since most were not communication majors, students resented having to learn any theory associated with public speaking. Among those who stayed in the class, some students would skip the large lecture; others would attend, but were sometimes inattentive. This led to gaps in students' understanding of the material and increased pressure on the instructional delivery system. Also, because this institution promotes the use of technology in course delivery, students' prior learning experiences led them to expect such technology even in a performance course. The existing model was highly dependent on in-classroom teaching and learning with minimal use of online resources.

Their disenchantment with the large lecture was certainly understandable based on profiles of contemporary college students. For example, in "Motivating Today's College Students," the authors describe the learning needs of these students:

This generation of college students has been raised on interactive technology and entertainment-style communication. We have been told by our students that straight lectures or PowerPoint presentations rarely hold their attention. Experiences that involve students and require them to interact as a part of their own learning are more likely to maintain their interest. (Crone & MacKay, 2007, p. 21)

At least at this institution, the lecture-lab model could not meet this demand for engagement.

CONSIDERING GOALS AND MODELS

All of these considerations were reviewed and prioritized as the task force became increasingly convinced that a new design was in order. One member of the task force was appointed to design the new model; she identified goals that emerged from the analysis and would serve as a foundation for the new model (see Table 1).

First and foremost, a new design would incorporate appropriate learning theory and disciplinary theory necessary to achieve student learning, skill development, and enhanced satisfaction among stakeholders. To meet this major goal, several criteria were established. Students would deliver speeches in a comfortable classroom setting to an audience of at least 20 classmates. To achieve learner-centered delivery, the course would be offered with flexible and convenient scheduling for undergraduates, building on their expertise with technology and allowing them to accept more responsibility for their learning. The course would include the rigor appropriate for a 2000-level course, and consistency across sections would be ensured with the devel-

opment of materials for undergraduates and training for GTAs. Those GTAs would be able to administer the course efficiently and effectively with consideration for their other role as students themselves. Finally, enrollment would be increased without new resources.

Given the research and newly established goals, the course designer reviewed various instructional models with an eye toward providing greater accessibility and flexibility for students, enhancing instruction, and maximizing resources. The large lecture model could not be revised to fit the new goals. As indicated in national surveys, this model is declining in favor across the United States (Morreale, et al., 2006, p. 424); it had run its course at this institution too. The task force rejected a wholly online model, which could certainly offer economy of resources; members were adamant that the speeches be delivered in a fairly traditional classroom setting. The model holding the most promise seemed to be the one variously termed as "hybrid," "web-assisted" or "media enhanced," which combines online and face-to-face instruction and reduces seat-time. Such a web-assisted model could offer the best of both the traditional and online worlds (Marold, 2002, p. 56).

Faculty who have used or researched such a model seem convinced that rich learning can occur, and report increased student preparedness and in-class time for activities and other student engagement (McCray, 2000), but others caution about the potential for reduced student satisfaction (Benoit, Benoit, Milyo, & Hansen, 2006) and diminished connections with the campus that can enhance student success (Allen, 2006). With these cautions in mind, the course designer began to match

the goals to the pedagogy for in-class and online learning.

INTERCHANGE MODEL—OVERVIEW

The basics of this model, as shown in Table 1, evolved during subsequent steps of instructional design. While it incorporates features of some web-assisted models, the new model has a unique delivery component. The model emerged as an interchange with (1) consistent course content at the intersection of all groups and all sections of the course and (2) alternating loops for delivery of instruction and application. Just as one would expect at a thriving interchange of highways, the loops of this course are always busy. The classroom does not shut down while students are online, which is the case with other web-assisted models. This overview of the Interchange Model, as depicted in Figure 1, is followed by more in-depth discussions of the online component and the in-class component.

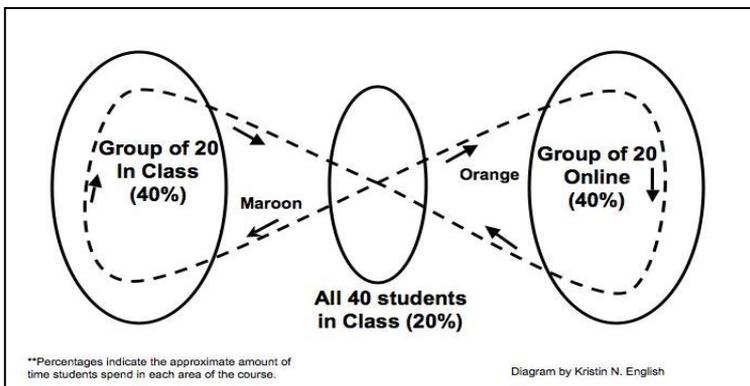


Figure 1: The Interchange Model of Public Speaking

The content of the new model includes aspects of many traditional public speaking courses, but three main features characterize the model. The first feature is the emphasis on informative speeches. Members of the original task force had discussed the possibility of including only informative speeches in the new model since student progress can be more obvious—to faculty and to the students themselves—if students are participating in similar types of assignments across the semester. Rather than shifting at the end of the course to persuasive speeches, the new model addresses the fundamentals of persuasion without expecting students to demonstrate mastery as shown in Table 2. The model includes requirements for four informative speeches: a narrative (informs the class about some event in the speaker's life), a progress report, a concept/definition speech, and an issue analysis.

The second main characteristic of the course is its dependence on a spiral curriculum. Since students are progressing from one informative speech to the next, they can focus on speech components that increase in complexity across the semester (see Table 2). Speech competencies and requirements for each speech are designated in one chart so that students can see that the expectations become greater with each presentation. While these competencies are explained at one point in the unit, students are expected to spiral back to the concepts with each successive speech. The use of a spiral curriculum allows students to revisit concepts and to apply them in various ways as they build skills (Bruner, 1960).

Finally, to emphasize the connections between each of the speaking assignments, the model includes a

Table 2
Increasing Complexity of Expectations for Informative Speeches

	Speech 1 Complexity: Level 1	Speech 2 Complexity: Level 2— includes Level 1	Speech 3 Complexity: Level 3— includes 1 and 2	Speech 4 Complexity: Level 4— includes 1, 2, 3
Type	<i>Narrative</i> — extemporaneous	<i>Progress Report</i> — extemporaneous with cited sources	<i>Concept</i> — extemporaneous with cited sources	<i>Issue Analysis</i> — extemporaneous with cited sources
Time	3-4 minutes	4-5 minutes	5-6 minutes + Q&A	7 minutes
Topic choice/focus	Personal story with autobiog. significance	Project in which stu- dent is or has been in- volved; or local project	New research or theory related to higher ed or major	Controversial topic based on student in- terest, experience, or major
Audience	Classmates; analysis— age	Audience who needs information about project	Audience of students in an intro course in your major	Audience who needs information about the controversy
Purpose	Inform/socialize	Inform	Inform	Inform
Credibility	Personal integrity; sincerity	Personal expertise as participant/ observer	Personal expertise and research from library databases	Variety of types of sources
Development	Illustration, narrative	Testimony, facts, examples	Definition, analogy, statistics	Variety of types of development

Table 2 (continued)

	Speech 1 Complexity: Level 1— includes Level 1	Speech 2 Complexity: Level 2— includes Level 1	Speech 3 Complexity: Level 3— includes 1 and 2	Speech 4 Complexity: Level 4— includes 1, 2, 3
Sources	Personal story	In-hand sources related to topic	Academic: textbook, journals, etc.	Public/Professional: journals, magazines newspapers, etc.
Organization	Chronological order	Chronological/ topical. Emphasis on intro and trans	Topical or spatial. Emphasis on conclusions	Comp/contrast or cause-effect or problem-solution
Voice & language	Vocal clarity and volume	Vocal variety	Language	Appropriate vocal variety and language choices
Physical behaviors	Eye contact; posture; use of speaking notes; facial expression to match mood	Movement; gestures; variety of facial expression	Management of technology; variety of physical strategies	Mastery of technology; variety of physical strategies
Presentation aids	Object; appearance	Illustration; transparency	PowerPoint (basic) to enhance speech	PowerPoint (advanced)
Other	Addressing apprehension	Minimizing apprehension	Building confidence	Building confidence

theme across the semester. The "REAL PS" assignment is found in each unit and stresses the considerations that speakers must make for any speech: **R**esearch, **E**thics, **A**nalysis, and **L**anguage/**L**istening. To help students commit to the course, they need to recognize the relevance of the material to their academic, personal, and professional lives. That is, students are learning "real" public speaking—the kinds of speaking that they'll do as computer scientists, biologists and engineers—speaking beyond the public speaking course. The REAL PS assignments allow students to explore videos of professionals, to consider ethical standards required in the professions, and to review their own approaches to speech development. REAL PS is the intersection of all of the speech assignments, bridging coursework with professional applications.

Complementing the course content, the delivery of the course reveals the smooth and active nature of the interchange, allowing students to move through the loops of instruction, as they trade places, intersect, and exchange information. Students are enrolled in a section of approximately 40 students with a GTA as the face-to-face instructor. Assigned according to the school colors, half of the students in each class join the orange group; half join the maroon group. Students are responsible for "attending" the class three hours a week in one of the following three ways: in the classroom with all 40 students to preview assignments (approximately 20% of all class meetings); in the classroom with 20 students in their orange or maroon group to practice for speeches, to present, and to critique (approximately 40% of all class meetings); and online for reading assignments, quizzes,

and speech videos (approximately 40% of all class meetings).

GTAs are in the classroom every day with all or half of the class. While the orange group of 20 is online, the maroon group of 20 is in class.

Online, at the intersection of the instructional delivery is the Central Site—the Blackboard site used by all students enrolled in all sections of the course. The course director and the course coordinator provide online materials to supplement the information in the text and to provide application opportunities. Students use the Central Site to check reading assignments and take open-book online quizzes, designed to acquaint them with the materials before they present speeches. Each section of the course also has a Section Site on Blackboard for the use of the students enrolled in a particular section so that they can connect with each other and with the GTA who teaches that section.

In the classroom, students meet with GTAs to work on speech development and to make presentations. Once students are divided into two groups, they quickly learn that they will rarely meet with the entire class; instead they will have opportunities to interact with the 20 people in the group to which they have been assigned. This allows them to create a community in which they become increasingly comfortable making presentations and providing feedback to classmates. This feedback is based on the use of the "Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation" form so that language and emphasis are the same across all sections (Morreale, Moore, Taylor, Surges-Tatum, & Hulbert-Johnson, 1993).

To assure consistency across all sections of the course, various course materials support the teaching

and learning goals. Assignments and policies are provided in the Public Speaking Course Guide, written by the course director and updated each semester in response to feedback from students and suggestions from GTAs and the course coordinator. This guide ties the various course materials together and includes references to a handbook-style text (selected for ease of student access and emphasis on practical application) and the two Blackboard sites. The GTAs also receive scripts for in-class use so that they can expand on the course guide and engage students in the face-to-face meetings. Finally, the undergraduate students also have access to Virginia Tech's CommLab, a resource for student speakers who can meet with trained peer coaches to work on speech preparation and/or delivery.

The new course model created an interchange for student learning and the sharing of expertise provided by GTAs, the course director, and the course coordinator. The model addressed concerns of students, the department, and the institution and had the potential to meet the initial goals, including the increase of enrollment by 15-20% with no new resources, the assignment of larger and better equipped classrooms for 40 students per section, and the promotion of student learning and increased satisfaction.

Of course, the creation of a model was only a step along the path toward making the new course a reality. The next phase of the design process—building the materials, developing course policies, considering technology, and moving toward implementation—required several more months of work. To work toward that course development, administrative roles were reconfigured from those of the previous model, and a development

team was formed. The course designer was named course director; this team leader would complete the course materials, oversee the implementation, and train the graduate students. An experienced instructor who had taught Public Speaking and another basic course was named course coordinator. In this role, he would teach one section, serve as the face of the course to the enrolled undergraduates, coordinate equipment demands and sample videos, and contribute to the teaching scripts for GTAs. A second-year graduate student also joined the team as a technical advisor; she provided the GTA perspective and technology expertise. The three of them used the designer-director's plan to shift the Interchange Model from paper to pilot and then to full implementation.

ONLINE COMPONENT OF THE INTERCHANGE MODEL

Because the previous version of Public Speaking had not included online instruction, the development team devoted significant time to the consideration of strategies for online delivery. The main goal of the online component was to facilitate the students' learning by providing a place for them to locate and submit assignments, take assessments, and consult additional resources. This online component shifted more responsibilities to the students, including mastery of the material in the textbook, the initial speech preparation, and other assignments. Though this was a major shift, the development team felt that students would gladly exchange the responsibility for the flexibility the online

component offered them. While this article cannot address all aspects of online learning, it does provide a view into the practical applications necessary to establish an efficient and effective learning environment.

To design the online component, the primary goal was to develop a site for the course materials, assessment options, and additional resources. The development team quickly determined that they would not use a publisher's site as a main site for the course, recognizing that this decision would create not only more flexibility and ownership, but also more demands on their time and expertise.

The development team met with instructional technology experts to consider possibilities, and the technical advisor took the lead in exploring technologies that could be helpful in implementing the course as well as maximizing the features of available technology. For the delivery of instructional material, Scholar course management software was compared to Blackboard. Other technological aspects were examined including the use of MP3 files, streaming video, and various Internet resources.

Assessing the technology involved many considerations about the needs and expertise of the GTAs who would teach the course and also those of the enrolled undergraduates. First, any new system would have to be relatively easy for the GTAs to learn and to manage over the course of the semester. In the previous system, Blackboard sites caused a heavy workload for GTAs because they created their sites without much specific direction. This situation led to inconsistencies and confusion on the part of students and GTAs alike. Next, the accessibility of the technology used for the undergradu-

ate students taking the course had to be weighed. What would be the most effective and efficient way of providing information to the students now that the amount of time spent in the classroom would be significantly decreased? The new system required a technology that was familiar to most of the population.

Blackboard was selected because of its familiarity to both groups and its proven dependability for the desired applications of the course. In order to facilitate the delivery of materials to large and small groups, two separate Blackboard sites were developed. By accessing two sites, the undergraduates would adapt to a new system of using coordinated sites that they had not used in other courses. At the Central Site, students could essentially experience a large lecture class without being restricted by class time. As a complement, the Section Site would provide a place where students would not feel lost in a crowd of hundreds of other students.

The Central Site houses the instructional material developed by the course director and the course coordinator. Putting all of this information in a Central Site fosters consistency across all sections of the course and provides efficiencies for GTAs and undergraduates. Of the three major components of the Central Site—the universal assignments, quizzes, and resources—two are discussed here.

A big challenge of an online course is the task of assessing the students' progress, knowledge, and understanding of the material. Certainly online tests free up valuable time in the classroom, maximizing the time for the coaching necessary in a skills course. On the other hand, security for online tests is difficult because of the lack of supervision.

With these aspects in mind, the development team chose to minimize the focus on quizzes; each quiz counts as 5% of a student's grade. Because Public Speaking is a skills course, the new model emphasizes students' demonstration of the skills, but students must first be familiar with the material in the text as they prepare speeches. Therefore, open-book quizzes are given online during a 12-hour period, with a time limit of 30 minutes, and focus more on the use of the book as a resource than rote memorization of the material. These multiple-choice quizzes are automatically graded by the system with grades appearing directly in the electronic grade book. Allowing students to use their books encourages the purchase of the text for current and future use, fosters students' use of the valuable information in the text, and reduces pressure for those students who are not good test-takers. Aside from the obvious assessment of content knowledge, presenting quizzes in this way respects the time of the students, prevents GTAs from having to take considerable time grading, and saves departmental paper resources.

In addition to the course assessment aspects, the resources available to students were also considered in the planning of the online component. A familiar resource used to aid students during the process of putting together their speeches is to show them samples of a completed assignment. Giving them a chance to look at the finished product—delivered by their peers—allows them to envision what is expected of them as well as provide a basic level of confidence for them to say “I can do that.” To create models, speeches were selected from current class sections. Since speeches are recorded during each class, several of the GTAs identified speeches that

would be useful examples for future students. The use of digital cameras allowed for easy transition to a computer hard drive for immediate use as well as for archival purposes. With permission from student speakers, sample speeches are posted on the Central Site. Students can choose to watch the video through the Blackboard Site or download it to their own computer.

Having the speeches so easily stored, compressed, and transferred provides a great resource for students and GTAs. Recorded speeches are also made available to students electronically by request for students' personal review and for consultation with GTAs. Additionally, recorded speeches are used for GTA training purposes to ensure that all GTAs are grading with the same strategies.

The Central Site is complemented by the Section Sites, which are tied to the individual sections and are controlled by the GTAs who are assigned to teach those sections. These sites allow the orange and maroon groups to find their schedules, submit assignments, and keep track of their grades. To maintain consistency and reduce the workload for GTAs, the new model includes a Blackboard template with a standard format for all lab sections. Each GTA customizes a Section Site by choosing methods for assignment submission, thus selecting the most effective ways to manage the workload for a particular section. The GTAs provide their own announcements, notes on assignments, and schedules for groups of students. They also determine the assignment submission process that will be used for the sections.

Because so many of the assignments are completed and turned in outside of class, the GTAs rely on two features of Blackboard. The digital dropbox allows students to upload their assignments to the site and then send

them to GTAs. In addition to the dropbox, Blackboard has an assignment feature that allows GTAs to create a place for students to submit individual assignments and for them to provide feedback. This feature also automatically creates an entry for the assignment in the grade book and transfers the grade once the GTA records it. Each GTA chooses the submission feature that works best for his or her style of grading and then instructs students about the process.

The planning and early implementation of this course design led to the development of an accessible and efficient online component for GTAs and students alike. Many of the problems encountered have dealt with access issues, misunderstanding on the part of students, and slow connection speeds. Quizzes were created to prevent problems with student access, but there are still occasions where an attempt is interrupted because of an Internet connection issue. Also, the streaming video can take a considerable time to load and often frustrates the students. A potential cause of these frustrations comes from procrastination on the part of students. Because many are not used to depending so highly on the Blackboard system for a course, the challenge is to get students to rely more consistently on consulting the sites on an everyday basis rather than waiting until an assignment comes due.

As technology evolves and/or becomes more available, faculty will continually examine the available options. Experimentation with podcasts and discussion boards has already begun. Podcasts or MP3 files provide a wider range of resources for the online component by allowing further exploration of different theories and extended explanation of assignments. Discussion

boards, currently used in a limited number of sections, could be implemented across all sections to strengthen the relationship between the students and GTAs as well as create greater community among students.

CLASSROOM COMPONENT— PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The online component has to mesh well with the classroom component of the course. Students follow a rhythm for each unit—read materials online, take the quiz, meet entire class (Maroons and Oranges together) to discuss the new unit, meet with half the class (the Maroons or Oranges) to prepare for the next speech, and finally present a speech to classmates in their assigned group. While the goal of the online component of the Interchange Model is to focus on delivery and assessment of course content, the in-class component is workshop oriented and allows students to work through assignments, practice skills, and present speeches.

To test the plan for implementation of the Interchange Model, a pilot version of the course was offered during the summer. Funded internally by a grant from Virginia Tech's Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, the course coordinator and four GTAs worked in pairs and co-taught three sections of approximately 15 students each. Because of the small class size and short summer semester, the pilot version of the course did not precisely replicate the plan for the fall-spring version of the course. Instead of breaking the students into two groups that alternated being in the classroom and online, the system was modified to a more typical

web-assisted model—all students worked three days in class and two days online each week.

The pilot had several goals. Fundamentally, it tested student reaction to the classroom/online interchange and allowed a preview of how the in-classroom work and speaking assignments meshed with online presentation of course material. Moreover, the pilot also gave the course coordinator and GTAs experience with the new course. Primarily, however, the pilot was designed to highlight strengths and weaknesses of the design on a small scale before making the leap to a full-length semester.

Both students and teachers reacted positively to the pilot version of the course. Students appreciated that the online component respected their time and that the classroom time focused on their presentations. On anonymous course evaluations at the end of the session, students were asked to provide some feedback about what they perceived as the best feature of the course. One student succinctly answered, “The overall layout. I liked the separate class time for actual practice and online time for preparation.” Another student echoed these sentiments by responding this way: “The time spent in class was very well spent. We focused on preparation of our speeches instead of listening to lectures.” A third student approved of “. . . the balance of online versus in class. Class time was not wasted on boring lectures. The small class size made assignments fun.” Another student commented, “The best feature is online because sometimes you learn more by doing your own research and work instead of taking notes from lecture.”

The instructors who had taught Public Speaking before also noted that students were learning the material

and building skills over the course of the summer session. Some thought that students were even better prepared because of the clear skill development provided with the recursive model of instruction.

Encouraged by these results, the development team considered changes that would be necessary for further implementation. During the summer, all materials were posted on the Blackboard site, and students had only a textbook for reference beyond the site. Feedback from students and GTAs confirmed the original plan for the publication of a course guide to show the flow and design of the course, to outline and clarify the goals and parameters of speaking assignments, and to provide speech critique forms. Also, some students characterized the online work as “busy work”; apparently, the relevancy of these assignments needed clarification. The course director used the months following the pilot to develop these materials with special attention paid to enhancing the online REAL PS assignments, which were eventually integrated into each unit.

With these changes in place, the development team prepared for the fall semester by creating new GTA orientation plans. Logistically, enrollment would leap from the pilot’s three sections of approximately 45 total students to the fall semester’s 18 sections of approximately 660 students. The fall teaching team consisted of the course coordinator and 10 GTAs, each of whom taught either one or two sections, depending on the individual GTA’s other responsibilities.

At this institution, a graduate assistant typically functions as a supplement to a professor and handles review sessions, holds office hours, or perhaps teaches small lab sessions for large lecture courses. The GTAs

for this course, however, would not have students who perceived a power differential between the professor and an assistant; instead, these GTAs would be seen by undergraduates as the instructors for the course. Since all the GTAs were master's level students and had never taught in the instructor position at the college level before, it was important to ease them into this new role.

To begin preparation, the incoming GTAs were sent a copy of the textbook during the summer in order to familiarize themselves with its content and layout. They were also asked to report to campus a full week prior to the start of classes for a series of orientation meetings. The course director, the course coordinator, and the second-year GTAs led the sessions.

Course content, classroom management, and student evaluation were the areas of focus for these pre-semester meetings. GTAs received the Public Speaking Course Guide and information about ways to approach the material. The course director and the coordinator also discussed strategies with the GTAs for working effectively and maintaining a level of respect with students who were so close to them in age. Speech evaluation, management of grade disputes, etiquette for office hours, Blackboard tutorials, and, of course, logistical aspects of the new course design were other topics discussed in the week prior to the start of the semester.

Once the semester began, the course director and the course coordinator maintained consistent contact with the GTAs. Each Monday, prior to any of the sections' meeting times, they held meetings to discuss the upcoming week and go over teaching strategies for the material to be covered in class. Those who had worked on the summer pilot were encouraged to address poten-

tial tripping points and suggest strategies for dealing with them. All GTAs were able to bring up any problems they were having and discuss them with the group as a whole. The course director also used these meetings to track areas of success and areas for improvement in order to make adjustments in future semesters.

In addition to the weekly meetings, the course director occasionally met with the GTAs individually to discuss teaching, provide feedback, and troubleshoot difficulties. She also visited each GTA's classroom during each semester to observe and get a sense of the in-class environment. Toward the end of each week, the course director and the course coordinator met in order to plan ahead and discuss the course. During these meetings, the coordinator described what was working well in the classroom and what could be improved.

The course coordinator was also available as a point of contact for all undergraduates enrolled in the class. Since GTAs cannot be named as the instructor of record at this institution, the coordinator was listed as the instructor for all sections of Public Speaking; therefore, students saw his name during course registration and were aware of him as a resource. His primary role as course coordinator was to troubleshoot technology difficulties with undergraduates. However, other than the students in his own section who wanted to discuss their individual speeches and written assignments, no undergraduate asked to meet with him in order to address a grievance about the class or the teaching. Although he had expected to respond to undergraduates who tried to seek a higher authority than the GTA, his only contact with undergraduates outside his section took place over email and dealt with either technology or clarification of

course policies. Apparently, routine interaction with the undergraduates was handled effectively by the GTAs through in-class discussion, email, and Blackboard.

Prior to each of the units of the course, the course director and the course coordinator developed scripts for every class meeting that covered the major talking points for each class. These teaching notes were not designed to be read verbatim by the GTAs; rather, they were written in outline form and gave the GTAs a detailed and guided plan for every class. They were strategically structured so that each class meeting would flow coherently, cover the necessary materials, and provide an effective mix of discussion, student brainstorming, speech development, and practice speaking activities.

These scripts successfully accomplished a number of goals that the new course design hoped to achieve. First, they functioned to “prop up” the new GTAs. Since experienced instructors developed the scripts, the scripts ensured GTAs had an effective plan going into each class meeting, which gave themselves and the course credibility. Second, they greatly minimized GTA preparation time. The scripts freed the GTAs from having to come up with their own class plan and allowed them more time to focus on other areas of the course, such as speech evaluation, and, more importantly, their own learning and scholarship. Third, the scripts helped maintain consistency, ensuring that undergraduates were learning the same material from section to section and from class meeting to class meeting. Moreover, the course director was able to ensure that the material covered in class clearly and coherently linked to the material she developed for the online component of the

class as well as the textbook. Finally, the scripts included activities to foster community and skill-building; the GTAs could be confident that the activities were manageable within the timeframe suggested.

EFFICACY OF THE INTERCHANGE MODEL

Naturally, the new model met with areas of success as well as need for improvement. While data collection about the Interchange Model will be ongoing, preliminary data about the efficacy of the course are positive.

The most encouraging element of student response to the course was that students reported effective learning of speaking skills in their self-evaluation essays at the end of the semester. The new course model was designed to meet many goals, but it was of utmost importance that student learning was not sacrificed. For example, one student wrote,

At first I was apprehensive about having to give speeches to an audience. However, after completing the class, I have learned valuable skills on how to set up a speech, address the audience, and connect with the audience that will make public speaking a strength of mine as I enter the workforce.

Similarly, another student wrote,

I did feel over time I started getting better at some of the things I was really bad at and even better at the things I was already good at. . . [The class] helped me overcome most of my fears of standing in front of a group of people and taught me how to cope with anxiety beforehand. I'm glad I took this course because I

have gained so much more confidence in myself because of the tips, the presentations and the feedback.

In a semester-end course evaluation, students even reported that they appreciated the subject matter. As shown in Table 3, with 92% of the students responding, the mean response on this item was 3.27 (out of 4), an increase from the previous semesters when the mean was 2.8. This increased "appreciation of subject matter" was an unanticipated change in students' perceptions from one model to the next.

Table 3
Comparison of Evaluation Results
from End-of Semester Surveys

	Average per semester— Sp 05, F 06, Sp 06 (large lecture model)	Interchange Model Fall 2006 (in-class surveys)	Interchange Model Spring 2007 (online surveys)
Number of students completing	494	659	685
Percentage of enrolled students responding to course evaluation	71%	92%	29%
"Subject matter stimulating" (4-point scale)	2.8	3.27	3.59
"Overall rating" (4-point scale)	3.1	3.52	3.70

Note: Minimal data were collected for the 2007 spring semester because of the tragic events of April 16, 2007.

There were no formal course evaluations, but an online survey was offered for student rating of instruction.

Not only did students express that they learned effective speaking skills, but they also reported satisfaction with the Interchange Model in general. In a survey conducted at the midterm of the fall semester, 81% of enrolled students reported they would prefer taking some form of the Interchange Model to a large lecture or traditional “in-class only” model. One student summed up her satisfaction with the Interchange Model at the midpoint of the semester with this comment: “So far, the content, text, practice, in-class activities/discussion, and instructional delivery of the class have all been very helpful to me and I have taken so much from this class already.”

Furthermore, on the course evaluation forms administered at the end of the semester, one question asks students to rate their perception of overall instruction on a four-point scale. The average response was 3.52, an increase over the previous three semesters.

While students seemed to enjoy the unique aspects of the Interchange Model, it was not an entirely smooth ride. Perhaps the biggest tripping point was conveying the schedule in an accessible manner, especially at the beginning of the semester. Students had experience with other online or web-assisted courses, but the Interchange Model required more consistent activity, assignment submissions, and attention to dates for class attendance. To counter the confusion, the instructors had to be vigilant about keeping updated schedules posted on their Section Sites and sending email reminders. Students also expressed an interest in quizzes that covered fewer chapters and clearer distinctions between the two Blackboard sites.

One of the other goals of the Interchange Model was to increase student enrollment in Public Speaking using the same resources available as previous semesters. The new model actually increased student enrollment using fewer sections of the course. The average number of students completing Public Speaking for the previous three semesters in Public speaking was 494 students. The number of students completing in fall of 2006 with the Interchange Model, increased to 659 students. With fewer but larger sections, the model also resulted in the improvement of classroom space. These larger classrooms provide more space for group interaction and usually include ceiling-mounted projectors so that students can project their visuals. Although the model increased the number of students and the size of the sections, there was no increase in the number of GTAs. Furthermore, administration of the new model required the equivalent of a half-time faculty appointment compared to a three-quarter-time faculty appointment needed for the previous model.

The Interchange Model also decreased the cost of the department's photocopying. All student work was submitted electronically, quizzes were administered online, and all the resources the students needed (e.g. outline templates, speech critique forms, etc.) were provided to them in the Public Speaking Course Guide, which they purchased at the bookstore. Consistent with the findings of Benoit et al. (2006), this web-assisted model provides an economy of resources, including staff and materials.

Overall, the model met the goals that were developed from the initial instructional analysis. Ongoing evaluation will determine the long-term impact of this

change to the new model and will help the department to implement refinements as necessary. For the current needs of all involved, the Interchange Model is a good fit, enabling effective and efficient teaching and learning.

EPILOGUE

Anyone interested in this Interchange Model might justifiably be wondering what happened to the course and its students in April of 2007. In the second semester of the new model's implementation, the Virginia Tech campus experienced a horrifying incident during which some faculty and students were violently attacked. While the campus community will grieve this loss and recover from the shock for years to come, the immediate response to this disaster forced numb students and faculty to finish out the semester's course work, including Public Speaking. The new course model was shaken to its roots and proved resilient.

This carnage occurred at the beginning of the 13th week of the semester when students in Public Speaking had completed 80-85% of their course work, with some variance across the Maroons and Oranges. Until that point, students had been progressing as had the refinements of the course. At midterm, students again reported overwhelming preference for a web-assisted model over a lecture-lab model. When the tragedy occurred, classes were canceled for a week. GTAs sent email to their classes, sharing grief and promising that students would somehow be able to finish the course. Although focusing was difficult for everyone, the course

director and course coordinator used the week to rearrange schedules and to plan for potential scenarios that might play out in each class and with each student.

By the time classes resumed, several faculty members had agreed to accompany the GTAs as they met with classes for the first time. The faculty support person was there to help with distraught undergraduates and to help out in any way the GTA might need. With freshly revised scripts in hand, the GTAs awaited the return of their students, ready to lead them in discussion, to comfort them, and to answer their questions. The undergraduates flocked to classes—even to Public Speaking. They seemed to appreciate the opportunity to talk in small groups, based on their original identities as Oranges or Maroons. Some discussed the public expression they had witnessed on the part of students and media; others talked about friends who had suffered, and in one class, a student who had died. Clearly, the classes relied on the sense of community they had established in Public Speaking as they discussed the events of the previous week and their responses to those events.

Students were given choices to take the grades as they stood before the tragedy, to complete all remaining work, to select any part of the remaining work, to change to pass-fail status, or to drop the class with no penalty. These choices were overwhelming, not only for students, but also for faculty and GTAs who needed to calculate grades basically on an individual basis. The course coordinator and the course director conferred with GTAs as they ran into one new problem after another. The GTAs worked overtime calculating grades and arranging final speeches for those students who

still wanted to present. Attendance dropped off as students returned to their homes; some submitted final on-line assignments, including the optional exam.

While there were no formal course evaluations, 199 of the students enrolled in the course responded to an online survey that asked similar questions to those that students would have answered under normal circumstances. For example, students were asked to rate the degree to which the course made subject matter stimulating or relevant; the average student response was 3.59 on a 4-point scale as shown in Table 3. Moreover, the average student response to the item asking them to give an overall rating of instruction was 3.70 on a 4-point scale. Also, echoing student responses from the fall semester and summer pilot, 88% of students responding indicated they would recommend the web-assisted model over a more traditional lecture-lab model or some other version of the course.

The course almost seemed to evaporate by the end of the semester as students and assignments trailed off. However, the Interchange Model proved to be adaptable in the worst of circumstances and manageable by fairly inexperienced teachers. Students were able to build skills, albeit in a modified fashion, and not only demonstrate those new skills, but also express their appreciation for the GTAs and one instructor who handled this horrible change of circumstances with sensitivity and professionalism.

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