

## • **Oral Communications Requirement**

To increase her proficiency in oral communications, a student is required to pass at least two oral-intensive courses (for a total of at least 6 credit hours) at least one of which must be a course taken for her major (or, in the case of multiple major, for each of her majors).

### **Oral-Intensive Courses**

A course designated as "oral intensive" is one in which the skill itself is a focus of the class and not just one of the requirements. All oral-intensive courses must devote a significant amount of class time to the development of oral skills. Effective oral communication in the classroom will vary and will require a range of simple to more complex skills according to different classroom environments. The following oral communication skills should be cultivated to enhance student learning and contribute to the overall quality of classroom discussions:

- a) listening for comprehension to understand the issues or gather information or facts;
- b) listening critically to evaluate the evidence and speaker's credibility;
- c) summarizing what has been heard;
- d) clarifying a concept or process;
- e) elaborating an idea made by the instructor or another student;
- f) contributing new information, facts or viewpoints;
- g) establishing credibility and integrity with good research and accurate information;
- h) asking relevant questions so as to better understand information or another's viewpoint;
- i) relating discussion to another's ideas or to the facts presented;
- j) being aware of how personal biases or stereotypes can slant or distort factual information;
- k) understanding the laws of logical reasoning (both inductive and deductive);
- l) persuading others of a like or divergent viewpoint;
- m) arguing or debating a viewpoint, putting forth reasons for or against, based on supporting evidence; fielding questions and challenges to an argument, acknowledging error, when appropriate, and modifying a position accordingly;
- n) developing an excellent vocabulary and the ability to express ideas in grammatically correct, concise, and complete sentences;
- o) organizing thoughts around a primary thesis and main points;
- p) using eye contact, clarity and articulation, pace, body language, and enthusiasm to be an effective speaker;
- q) practicing the "art" of oral communication and public speaking so as to gain self-confidence, fluency and proficiency.

### ***Activities for the Development of Oral Communications Skills***

The following activities may be useful in the development of oral skills:

- a) conduct a class session, introducing new material and leading discussion on assigned materials;
- b) summarize the previous class discussion at the beginning of class;
- c) form debate teams that could be assigned topics and given opportunities to argue divergent viewpoints;
- d) form small groups (3-5 students) who organize an oral presentation into sections, with one member giving the introduction, other members giving the main points and finally, one member giving a summarizing closing statement. These would involve the sharing and discussion of research "findings" in preparation for the group presentation;
- e) split into small groups to predict the outcome of a lecture demonstration; the professor or a student would then do the demonstration, and the whole class would discuss the results;
- f) give peer evaluations of student oral presentations, in which the professor guides their assessment and asks for justification of their judgments;
- g) lead discussion for all or part of a class session and find creative ways to bring others into the discussion;

- h) be divided up into groups or “factions” representing different views on an issue or different ideas about the best way to resolve a problem or controversy; they could be evaluated in part on their ability to qualify or modify their positions or proposals in response to those presented by the other groups, to compromise and negotiate as the group as a whole works toward a “settlement” or consensus;
- i) come up with questions on a particular reading or problem, and the class as a whole could evaluate the questions as to which ones were the most clearly formulated, the most thought-provoking, the most productive, etc.;
- j) choose one of their papers or projects in a particular course and use it as the basis for a formal presentation to the class at the end of the term;
- k) be videotaped and subsequently evaluated by the student, the instructor or the class.