



The Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates University of California The California State University Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

Summary of Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS) Actions on Assembly Bill 928 June 15, 2022

Background

The California Master Plan for Higher Education stipulates different roles or purposes for the different segments (California Community Colleges [CCC], the California State University [CSU], and the University of California [UC]) of higher education. The Master Plan embraces successful transfer from community colleges to a four-year postsecondary educational institution as an essential component of higher education access for California students. Judging the transfer process unnecessarily complex, confusing, and difficult for community college students to navigate, the Legislature passed AB 928 (Berman, 2021), the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act of 2021: Associate Degree for Transfer Intersegmental Implementation Committee. Governor Newsom signed the bill October 6, 2021.

The AB 928 legislation has two essential objectives:

1. A revision of the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC).
The IGETC established lower-division general education subject area and course requirements for CCC students to transfer to CSU and UC. Though there is significant course overlap between the two four-year university systems in the current IGETC, the requirements for transfer to the CSU and UC do differ slightly. AB 928 requires a single set of requirements, without increasing the 34-unit ceiling.
2. The promotion of a tighter alignment between the segments with regard to the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) pathway from CCC to CSU and UC, and the development of a comprehensive communications plan and guidance to inform community college students about the pathway.

In the 2021-22 academic year, ICAS engaged in discussion of AB 928 objective #1. This memo explains the consensus that ICAS reached in creation of the proposed singular, lower-division general education transfer curriculum framework. It does not address AB 928 objective #2 – action on ADT – both because that process does not belong to ICAS and because deliberations on the issue are just beginning. Readers are advised to scrutinize the legislation closely, inasmuch as the ADT implementation is entrusted to a committee created by the Legislature in which faculty play only a minor role.

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB928

Objective #1: The singular lower-division general education curriculum framework task

AB 928 reads:

(1) On or before May 31, 2023, the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates of the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges shall establish a singular lower division general education pathway that meets the academic requirements necessary for transfer admission to both the California State University and University of California. If the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates of the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges is unable to come to agreement on or before May 31, 2023, the respective administrative bodies of those segments shall establish a singular lower division general education pathway that meets the academic requirements necessary for transfer admission to the California State University and the University of California by December 31, 2023.

(2) Commencing with the fall term of the 2025–26 academic year, the singular lower division general education pathway established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be the only lower division general education pathway used to determine academic eligibility and sufficient academic preparation for transfer admission to the California State University and the University of California.

(3) The singular lower division general education pathway established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall not lengthen the time-to-degree and shall not include more units than is required under the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum on July 31, 2021.

In sum, the statute stipulates that there be one lower-division general education curriculum pattern for transfer that does not lengthen the time to degree and does not require more units than currently required (34 units) under IGETC. The process by which this will be determined is through ICAS. If ICAS is unable to complete the task, administrations of the respective segments will assume responsibility for it.

The ICAS process

ICAS began discussing its task in the fall of 2021. We consulted with CCC, CSU, and UC administrators on their understanding of AB 928. These consultations included, among others:

Daisy Gonzales, Deputy Chancellor, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO);

Marty Alvarado, Executive Vice Chancellor of Educational Services, CCCCCO;

Alison Wrynn, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Programs, Innovations & Faculty Development, California State University Office of the Chancellor;

Liz Halimah, Associate Vice Provost for Graduate, Undergraduate and Equity Affairs, University of California Office of the President (UCOP);

Monica Lin, Director, A-G and Transfer Policy Analysis & Coordination, UCOP.

ICAS also conferred with:

- Assemblymember Marc Berman, author of AB 928;
- Leadership of the CCC, CSU, and UC Student Associations;
- Other Legislators and their staffs;
- Jessie Ryan, Executive Vice President, Campaign for College Opportunity.

ICAS established a Special Committee on AB 928 to discuss and develop a recommendation to ICAS on the new singular GE framework. Membership included select members of ICAS (including segment Academic Senate chairs), transfer specialists and articulation officers from the segment administrations, and, notably, student representatives from each segment.

The Special Committee met three times in the winter of 2022. After extensive discussion, the Special Committee arrived at a consensus. The committee forwarded to ICAS a recommendation for a single general education transfer curriculum framework while keeping the total number of course units to 34. ICAS voted unanimously to accept the recommendation.

The recommendation retains key elements of each segment's pedagogical visions yet embeds distinct compromises in the realization of the unit-restricted singular general education transfer course pattern.

The Outcome: California General Education Transfer Curriculum or "Cal-GETC"

The name Cal-GETC was proposed by student representatives from the three segments. ICAS voted unanimously to adopt the name.

The proposed Cal-GETC pathway pattern stipulates the following (attached is a colored graph to facilitate further understanding):

- Following approval by the UC Academic Senate, UC will accept Oral Communication as a new (third) course in Area 1 – English Communication.
- Following approval by the CCC Academic Senate, the CCC will revise and strengthen courses fulfilling the Oral Communication subject requirement to meet new (forthcoming) core competencies.
- Following approval by the CSU Academic Senate, the Lifelong Learning and Self-Development requirement will not be part of the Cal-GETC.
- UC will remove its Language Other than English proficiency requirement and treat it as a UC graduation requirement.
- The number of courses in Area 3 – Arts and Humanities will decrease from three to two (one in Arts; one in Humanities).
- The number of courses in Area 4 – Social and Behavioral Sciences will decrease from three to two.
- The pattern includes a new Area 7 – Ethnic Studies requirement.

Additional substantive explanation

The addition of a third course in English Communication will prepare students in the area of

written and oral communications. CCC and CSU have a longstanding commitment to oral communication and document its importance for students. It is not a skills course per se. While oral communication is designed to enhance students' competencies in different rhetorical contexts, it does so by exploring the linguistic, psychological, and cultural bases of communication, the social and political significance of communication, and how communication operates within and across a wide range of social contexts. In instances where CCC courses do not currently reflect this pedagogical rigor, the courses will be bolstered accordingly. (For more, please see attached document... "The Necessity of the Oral Communication Requirement in General Education.")

CSU has long been committed to its Lifelong Learning and Self-Development (LLSD) course requirement, believing it teaches students the ability to access, evaluate, and integrate information, and also understand the importance of the decisions they make throughout their lives. Because UC has no such requirement and does not wish to add one, CSU agreed to remove Lifelong Learning from the Cal-GETC. The CSU Academic Senate will revisit the role of that requirement and the reduction relative to CSU's general education in Humanities and Arts. The CSU Senate will evaluate the possibility of moving LLSD to the upper division and/or as a CSU graduation requirement. CCC is interested in having LLSD as a CSU graduation requirement instead of an upper division requirement so as to give CCC students an option to take LLSD coursework at a community college before transfer.

UC has a longstanding commitment for its students to learn a language other than English. Because CSU has no such requirement and prefers not to add one, UC agreed to maintain proficiency in a language other than English as a UC graduation requirement.

The required number of courses in Arts and Humanities and the Social and Behavioral Sciences will decrease from three to two. This aligns these areas with the Physical and Biological Sciences, which also requires two courses. It is important to note that based on current IGETC course data, the new Ethnic Studies requirement will likely be satisfied by an Ethnic Studies course that is cross-listed in Social and Behavioral Sciences or in Arts and Humanities, thus increasing one of those areas by another course.

ICAS believes the proposed Cal-GETC fulfills the mandate of AB 928 while maintaining each segment's key pedagogical vision and commitments. The CCC, CSU, and UC Academic Senates will review Cal-GETC this fall to finalize the recommendation by May 31, 2023.

IGETC Area		Subject	Proposed GE Pattern	UC 7-course pattern	CSU GE-Breadth
1	1A	English Composition	1 course (3 units)	2 English courses 1B = writing intensive	Area A – 3 courses English Language Communication & Critical Thinking Golden 4 (Oral Communication, Written Communication, Critical Thinking)
	1B	Critical Thinking & Composition	1 course (3 units)		
	1C*	Oral Communication (*currently CSU only)	1 course (3 units)		
2	2A	Mathematical Concepts & Quantitative Reasoning	1 course (3 units)	1 mathematical concepts course	Area B – see below Golden 4 (Mathematics/ Quantitative Reasoning)
3	3A	Arts (1 course required)	2 courses (6 units)	4 additional UC-transferable courses chosen from at least 2 of the following subject areas:	Area C – 3 courses Arts & Humanities
	3B	Humanities (1 course required)			
4	4	Social & Behavioral Sciences	2 courses (6 units)	Arts & Humanities Social & Behavioral Sciences	Area D – 2 courses Social Sciences
5	5A	Physical Science	1 course (3 units)	Physical & Biological Sciences	Area B – 3 courses (4 courses if independent lab is completed) Scientific Inquiry & Quantitative Reasoning
	5B	Biological Science	1 course (3 units)		
	5C	Laboratory (for Bio/Phys Sci course)	(1 unit)		
N/A	N/A	Lifelong Learning & Self-Development			Area E – 1 course Lifelong Learning & Self-Development
6	6A**	Language Other Than English (LOTE) (**currently UC only, carries no units)			
7	7	Ethnic Studies	1 course (3 units)		Area F – 1 course Ethnic Studies
TOTAL			11 courses 34 units	7 courses	13 courses

The Necessity of the Oral Communication Requirement in General Education

January 10, 2022

When Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 928 into law on October 6th, 2021, he remarked, “We’re turning commitments into reality by ensuring that our students have more access to high-quality educational opportunities, creating a change of course for generations to come and bolstering California’s innovation economy. Everyone deserves a shot at the ‘California Dream’ — we’re eliminating equity gaps and increasing opportunities at our universities to make those dreams a reality for more California students.”

In order to achieve that promise, we must preserve the current Oral Communication requirement as a part of every student's general education path.

Oral Communication is a critical competency for student success and achievement; this paper will highlight four specific areas where the necessity of this requirement is most evident:

- Acquiring Employment
- Achieving Equity
- Accreditation
- Advocacy and Civic Engagement

Respectfully Submitted,

A Team of CSU & CCC Faculty

Oral Communication and Employment

1. Oral Communication Competency is Crucial to Work Force Preparation

A 2018 survey of business executives and hiring managers by Hart Research on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that employers identified oral communication as the highest ranked learning priority across majors. A study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers explains that the ability to “Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization” was highlighted as necessary for career readiness.

The Hanover Research group has used “representative samples of executives and hiring managers from companies and organizations that employ college graduates.” They found “while the top-ranked outcomes vary from year to year...communication through writing and speaking have consistently been ranked highest over time... This finding has remained consistent across all of AAC&U’s employer research since 2006.” A Georgetown study utilizing Department of Labor data added that “communication is in high demand in every occupation.” The study also continues; of all essential competencies, communication has the highest earnings premium at 20%.

A 2018 survey from LinkedIn concludes that "oral communication remains the skill group with the biggest shortage in nearly every city across the country," and that "people with these skills are hired at faster rates than people without these skills."

2. Oral Communication Competency is Crucial to Career Success and Mobility

Gonzalez argues in a recent publication of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business that “How we develop and strengthen our soft skills is arguably the most important long-term indicator of success for any career path. The accumulation of our own set of strong soft skills over time evolves into our professional persona.” This was underscored by an analysis of 2.3 million LinkedIn profiles conducted for the Wall Street Journal found that stellar communication skills were crucial, and that 58% of LinkedIn job seekers with that skill were able to find new employment over a year (Davidson, 2016). That same study listed communication as the single most in-demand soft skill for those seeking to be hired into a new job (Berger, 2016).

3. Oral Communication Instruction Must be a Dedicated, Stand-Alone Requirement

The Hart Associates study found that employers consult the courses taken to assess skill acquisition. Much as all students write but specific courses in English and Writing are still necessary, students may have presentations or skills-development in some of their other coursework, but a dedicated course to review theory, research, and practice is vital to proper pedagogy. Understanding and practicing how other variables affect communication such as culture, gender, power, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. are essential for effective communication. These are the concepts introduced in the A1 Oral Communication General Education course.

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Fighting for Equity through Oral Communication

The public California State University (CSU) and the California Community College (CCC) systems each serve a diverse body of students. In the CSU system alone, more than one-third of students are first-generation college students and more than 40% receive Pell grants (CSU Fact Book, 2019). Due to systemic, racial, and economic barriers, lower-income and first-generation college students may not have access to family members and networks who can help them build social and professional capital to propel them through higher education and into their chosen careers (Tate, 2015). Further, professional management organizations and company surveys continue to indicate that communication remains one of the top two most important skills required for professional development and success (Cavanagh, 2019).

The oral communication course, as a part of the lower-division general education requirement, is a campus-wide opportunity for students to develop their professional speaking skills early and in a variety of modalities that benefit students regardless of their future professional pathway. Additionally, for the vast majority of CCC and CSU students who are reliant on financial aid, removing oral communication from the GE will eliminate exposure to important areas and skillsets needed for post-graduate success, as students on financial aid are typically advised by academic counselors to focus only on courses that will work towards specific major requirements to save tuition dollars. Only select students will have the opportunity to take courses where they can learn presentation, advocacy, and interviewing skills that will be vital to long-term professional success, thus creating further social inequities and economic barriers for these student populations.

1. Oral Communication Competency is Crucial for Advocacy for Self and Community

Advocacy involves speaking up for the needs, interests, desires, or rights of an individual or group. Advocates seek to bring awareness about social issues, argue for equal rights, increased access, more representation, or seek to change policies and practices that negatively impact individuals, groups, communities, and/or the environment. In oral communication courses, we teach effective advocacy techniques including:

- Thoroughly researching a topic or cause for which one is advocating
- Exploring opposing viewpoints and positions to understand and articulate differences and commonalities between options, causes, and outcomes
- Seeking collaborations among other community members who may also be interested in advocating for a cause
- Designing a timeline with specific and measurable desired outcomes

- Strategic construction of messaging using established persuasion techniques

As future innovators, activists, and leaders of California, our students are keenly aware of local and state-wide injustices that one can advocate for and persuade others to care enough about to act upon. Within the CCC and CSU systems, many students have experienced high rates of poverty, housing and food insecurity. A recent CSU study found that 41.6% of CSU students reported food insecurity and 10.9% of CSU students indicated experiencing homelessness in the last year. African American and first-generation college students experienced “the highest rates of homelessness (18%) and food insecurity (65.9%)” (CSU Study of Student Service Access and Basic Needs, 2019, p.1). The same study found that “Students who experienced both food insecurity and homelessness were impacted most adversely - their grades were lower and their negative health and mental health outcomes were more severe” (p. 3). Additionally, many students who attend CSU and CCC campuses are from communities where gentrification, poor air quality, food deserts, and dumping sites create unhealthy living environments that necessitate community and self-advocacy for health and wellness.

In oral communication courses, we teach students how to build inductive and deductive arguments to support their ideas and positions while also teaching presentation practices that help students manage communication apprehension and reduce stigma, build the confidence necessary for engaging in uncomfortable conversations to self-advocate, and find, evaluate and use evidence to effectively communicate and support their positions. Oral communication courses provide students with the skills to design messages so they are heard, have access to services, and can take full advantage of their rights.

2. Oral Communication Training Uses Community Cultural Wealth to Build Social Capital

The policies and practices within higher education are often veiled in a hidden curriculum that serves to systematically compromise the success of students of color and first-generation students (White & Lowenthal, 2011). Hidden curriculum is the unwritten and implicit norms, values, and perspectives embedded within higher education curriculum and practices (Alsubaie, 2015). Hidden curriculum is built on White, middle-class values that are often misaligned with or disparate from cultural norms within communities of color and lower-income communities (Delgado, 2020; De Lissovoy, 2011; Moreno & Gaytán, 2013). For first-generation college students, encountering hidden curriculum can translate into learning obstacles and stagnated social and academic mobility (Delgado, 2020; Reyes 2018). Teaching first-generation students how to interpret and navigate the hidden curriculum is vital to academic success as it impacts student performance in the formal

curriculum (Smith, 2013). Oral communication courses teach students communication practices for building interpersonal relationships, ways to communicate their questions and needs, and the ability to research and create effective messages to garner academic support.

Many oral communication courses build on Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model which offers a strengths-based perspective in recognizing the forms of capital that are important for students' college success. Colleges and universities can strengthen students' social and navigational capital through oral communication practices of self-reflection, audience analysis, and research practices for academic and career success.

In oral communication, we teach about navigational capital which equips and empowers students to overcome and adapt to the norms and expectations of the college environment. First-generation students often express challenges with navigating the institution (e.g., not knowing which classes to take). This acquired skill set is crucial for student success as campus resources and programs provide information and connections which translate to the acquisition of navigational capital and in turn promotes social capital (Luedke, 2019; Yosso, 2005).

Students' social capital consists of their ability to form and utilize connections with faculty and peers on campus (Yosso, 2005). Research shows that students who effectively communicate and form faculty relationships demonstrated increased intrinsic motivation, better school adjustment, and greater persistence in higher education (Lundberg, 2010; Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). Courses, such as oral communication, which foster student engagement and empowerment through formal and informal communication practices, can contribute to improving successful and timely completion of coursework and graduation rates. In other words, building students' capital can facilitate their college success.

3. Oral Communication Competency is Critical for Interviewing Skills

Introductory oral communication classes provide experience in an array of speaking situations that translate directly to the professional setting such as small group and mediated presentations. In introductory oral communication courses, such as the program at Cal State LA, interview and professional speaking assignments help students develop this necessary skill. Students learn best practices for interviewing, develop their resumes and cover letters for review, research a potential major-related company they would like to work for in the future, learn and practice methods for answering common interview questions, and then apply their knowledge through an active-learning mock interview experience.

Maintaining an oral communication requirement in lower-division coursework for two-year and four-year institutions, especially with its emphasis on professional development, could be essential for successful employment within the state since low income and first-generation college students, a large share of both the CC and CSU student body, are four times as likely to leave college after their first year as compared to students who do not share these experiences and most do not have the same access to interview advice from family members (Meertins, 2021). Further, many students from these demographic backgrounds, who start at a two-year institution, do not move on to a four-year (Engle & Tinto, 2008). It is important that students continue to benefit from a first-year oral communication course where they will gain vital knowledge and experience that can aid them in their professional pathways. If this opportunity is eliminated, with the assumption that these oral communication skills will be provided in upper-division program-specific coursework, this further disadvantages a large cross-section of CCs and CSU students.

The impact of oral communication on our student's professional success is not just theoretical. Across institutions, students consistently credit these courses with helping them to achieve immediate and long-term professional success. While there are likely countless examples such as these, here are a couple of examples where students reached out to oral communication professors to share their successes:

"I wrote my reflection on my professional speech about the mock "job interview." Today, I received an email and I was accepted for the job! I just wanted to thank you for helping me prepare."

"I was in your winter session public speaking class earlier this year. I wanted to reach out and thank you for being such a great professor and allowing me to find confidence in my speaking. I got an interview a week or two after completing the class with UCLA's center for pre-hospital care and got the job as a clinical instructor. The mock interview segment of class taught me so much, I was able to engage the interviewers in conversation and at the end I closed with a strong question. As stressful as it was in the moment I'm happy I was able to experience that both in practice and application"

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Oral Communication and Accreditation Demands

1. Oral Communication is a Core Institutional Learning Outcome

Oral Communication is such a vital skill that every CSU lists oral communication skills as a University Learning Outcome and every California Community College lists communication skills/expression as an Institutional Student Learning Outcome. The precedent for this wide-spread practice is institutionalized in the idea that the “Golden 4” courses are foundational courses that every student needs to be successful in college and in life. Further validation of the inclusion of oral communication in the collegiate systems are supported by WSCUC and AACJU. WSCUC includes oral communication as one of its five core competencies. They state, “Undergraduate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and life-long learning. These programs ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking” Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions. California colleges and universities understand that every student needs to be able to communicate well and, if it is not a mandatory class, students may not be able to participate as successfully in everyday situation.

2. Scaffolding Requires Stand-Alone Oral Communication Courses

Conducting proper assessment of WSCUC core competencies and the University/Institutional Student Learning Outcomes requires scaffolding skills into the curriculum to help students achieve a deeper understanding of the learning outcomes. The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) guidance for assessment and curriculum mapping suggests, “At a program-level view, curriculum mapping entails exploring the relationships between the courses in a program and the program learning outcomes. In addition to documenting that the learning outcomes are addressed by the courses, the use of (I) for introduced, (D) for developed, and (M) for mastered, enables faculty to focus attention on how learning is scaffolded over the course of the curriculum”

Oral communication (A1) courses introduce students to theories and practices based in oral communication. Students must be given the foundational knowledge and principles of oral communication to develop, and eventually master, their skills as communicators. To remove oral communication (A1) courses will hinder students’ ability because the students are not building upon any particular set of oral communication knowledge. Thus, a foundational, first year, oral communication course establishes an education framework for other courses to then build upon.

A great example of this can be seen within all CSU Nursing Departments. CSU Executive Order 1084 established the “Golden 8,” which is a list of eight prerequisite courses that must be completed to be accepted into a CSU Nursing Program. One of the required courses is A1: Oral Communication, which is an introductory oral communication course. When students enter the Nursing program, they are exposed to dozens of nursing courses that reinforce oral communication principles taught in the foundational A1 course. Thus, without this first oral communication course, we will see less prepared students to embark on their nursing careers. It is inevitable that the students will struggle with communication in other nursing courses without the basic oral communication course.

Beyond any specific department requirements, it is important to remember that students express their thoughts, opinions, and understanding in one of two ways: written or oral communication. To offer a foundational course in only one or the other means that students are only introduced to how to express their thoughts or understanding in one way. This will negatively impact their success in college. Students need both written and oral communication foundational courses so they are better prepared for their school, work, and personal lives. We are preparing well-rounded students, and the oral communication course is one of the ways this is completed.

3. Oral Communication Competency is Necessary for Community College Students as Preparation for Transfer

One of the primary goals of the community colleges is to prepare students for transfer to 4-year colleges and universities. It is at the heart of every institution’s mission statement. Unlike UCs and CSUs, community colleges accept 100% of applicants. As such, community college students have varying levels of college-readiness. In order to meet those varying needs, the transfer curriculum is designed to address the foundational skills necessary to prepare students for success for at their college/university destination of choice. The Oral Communication requirement is a necessary element in this preparation as it introduces students to the communication skills required for success in college/university studies. Without this introductory course, students will lack the foundation to build the presentation and communication skills necessary in future academic courses and the workforce. It is the reason the CSUs have designated it as one of the Golden Four courses to be completed in the first year. Many community colleges are also following suit and including Oral Communication as a first-year course as it not only teaches fundamental skills necessary for continued success but has also been shown to be a predictor of overall success and completion.

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Civic Engagement and Advocacy

1. The United States has experienced a potentially staggering decline in civic engagement necessitating a return to higher education's role in teaching the citizenry how to preserve, build and participate in our hard-fought democracy. The field of Communication Studies is critical to this endeavor.

Reports on "civic health" indicate a steady decrease over the past 50 years on all measures of civic engagement among young people since the 1970s, including a decline in "group members, attendance at meetings, working with neighbors, trusting other people, reading the news, union membership and religious participation" (Kawashima-Ginsberg, et al, 2013, p. 4). Not only is there a decline in civic participation, but there is also a lack of understanding of information. Research sampling students from middle school to college has revealed that while students are technologically savvy, they are surprisingly easily deceived when asked to examine the reliability of information presented to them from online sources (Wineburg, McGrew, Breakstone, & Ortega, 2016).

The decline in civic engagement in the US, in combination with divisive politics, the Covid-19 pandemic, the social media divide, and attacks on values of democracy and free speech, necessitate a recommitment not only to civic engagement but the communication skills necessary to foster civil discourse. The concern over the decline in civic engagement becomes more salient when considering that the skills and abilities required for engaged and active citizenry are not inborn (Butin, 2012). That is, active and productive civic engagement is a learned and developed skill, not instinctual. If society, in general, is to remain committed to the value of civic engagement, the oral communication requirement fulfilled by the field of Communication Studies must remain a disciplinary foundation in higher education. An engaged citizenry is the bedrock of democracy, but civic education without training in oral communication is not sufficient to attain and maintain this ideal form of effective government. The decline in civic engagement is occurring along with a shrinking middle class and growing income inequality, further exacerbating our country's equity issues.

2. A strong foundation of instruction in oral communication is necessary to promote civic engagement among disadvantaged groups who must have the agency to engage in equity work.

Marginalized individuals and communities are those who have been historically excluded from social, economic, educational, and political life. Ongoing communication training is needed for people at all levels with a "focus on participatory approaches for social change" and "as a process for empowerment for conflict resolution, and to negotiate with decision-makers to modify policy (Balit, 2007, p. 107). To effectively respond to the inequities in society, civic engagement work is inseparable from competent communication and its related skills of speaking and listening, demonstrating

sensitivity to diversity, understanding values and ethics, cultivating a sense of belonging, and thinking critically.

Considering the great strides made in social justice and equity in the past decades in the United States, marginalized groups remain at a considerable disadvantage. Without communication, repetitive patterns of oppression and resistance will continue. Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Malala Yousafzai, was denied the basic right to education. As a young girl, she discovered that her greatest power was her voice. This is a recurring theme in the discipline of Communication Studies in which historic rhetoricians, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, Barbara Jordan, Thurgood Marshall, Abraham Lincoln, Maya Angelou, Susan B. Anthony, Nelson Mandela, and Mahatma Gandhi rise to levels of prominence and transcend their relevance through having the capacity for oratory; recognizing the importance of social change, many of them risked their lives. All students should have the ability to learn about the timeless, enduring fact that anyone on the globe can participate simply by speaking up and speaking out. For groups that have been historically marginalized, communication is the only means for change. Further, communication can defy sexism, racism, ableism, ageism, classism, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination, including against LGBTQIA individuals, by revealing the inequities that exist and focusing on solutions. Malala was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Kailash Satyarthi, an Indian children's rights activist; the shared designation between a child from Pakistan and an adult from India signifies the transformative power of communication to heal conflict; further, the ability for communication to reveal shared principles was recognized by the Norwegian Nobel Committee, with their statement that the prize was awarded to both diverse recipients, "for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education" (NobelPrize.org). All students in Communication Studies are exposed to Martin Luther King, Jr. who expanded upon the work of other social activists; the coalescence of his understanding is examined for both what he conveyed and how he chose to convey it. As one of the greatest communicators of all time, he was routinely capable of eloquently expressing why communication is vital. In responding to a reader in his Advice for Living column, King stated,

"Love builds up and unites; hate tears down and destroys. The aftermath of the 'fight fire with fire' method which you suggest is bitterness and chaos; the aftermath of the love method is reconciliation and the creation of the beloved community. Physical force can repress, restrain, coerce, destroy but it cannot create and organize anything permanent; only love can do that. Yes love—which means understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill, even for one's enemies—is the solution to the race problem" (King, Jr., *Ebony*, January 21, 2013).

King's perspective highlights the importance of listening, understanding, and being able to trade words instead of violence, which then allows for recognition, inclusion, and community; this same process happens at the group, societal and global levels. Without an understanding of communication, students lack the skills to become agents of change and to recognize when systems of oppression and discrimination are volatile.

3. Higher education has been tasked with promoting Civic Engagement, a mission that stands incomplete without development of oral communication skills.

Although the declines in civic engagement may seem critical, they are often not positioned in higher education as urgent; however, they have serious implications for maintaining our democracy. Struggles around preserving our democracy are not new, as similar concerns emerged after the trauma of World War II. At the time, higher education was re-examined considering the social role it must play in strengthening democracy at home while also rebuilding democracy abroad. These matters were so compelling that at the time President Truman appointed a presidential commission on higher education charged with examining the function of higher education in our democracy and how these functions can best be performed. This resulted in the well-known Truman commission report on higher education of 1946, which eloquently outlines the role American's higher education system must play to rebuild a world ravaged by a war that narrowly gave victory to democracy over authoritarianism:

“The social role of education in a democratic society is at once to ensure equal liberty and equal opportunity to differing individuals and groups, and to enable the citizens to understand, appraise, and redirect courses, men, and events as these tend to strengthen or to weaken their liberties” (The Truman Commission Report on Higher Education, 1947).

Most of these recommendations are enacted through robust Communication Studies training. Perhaps that is why all twenty-three California State University campuses currently list communication and/or expression as an official, explicit institutional learning outcome, or as a core competency embedded in their mission, values, or campus-wide learning outcomes statement. Although outlining them is beyond the scope of this paper, it is mentioned to illustrate that we are once again amid traumas and struggles with dire implications for our democracy. There is a sense of urgency for higher education to act, as illustrated by the increasingly wide-spread calls and proposals for some form of subsidized higher education for all. Now is the time to strengthen the role of higher education in preparing citizens for productive democratic participation, not weaken it.

American Association of Colleges and Universities, *A Crucible Moment*, stressed the need to reinvest on a national level in the social, intellectual, and civic capital, by emphasizing communication, critical thinking, information literacy, historical, and civic skills along with the ethical responsibilities participating in a democracy (AACU, 2012).

4. The theories and skills taught in the oral communication course are essential for productive civic and political engagement.

The oral communication requirement fulfills both an interdisciplinary need and real-world demand by providing students with the oral communication skills necessary to advocate

for their academic fields and careers, local and national communities, and personal well-being. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2016) identifies communication as an essential component of civic engagement in higher education with an emphasis on listening, deliberation, negotiation, consensus building, adapting ideas and messages based on others' perspectives, and productive use of conflict. For example, Campus Compact, an organization devoted to advancing the public purpose of higher education by deepening the ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility, is promoting training in deliberative dialogues which are structured discussions on pressing social issues in which participants explore the prevalence, severity, and parameters of an issue and then explore ways of addressing it. Skills like deliberative dialogues are foundational to the field of Communication Studies in general, and the oral communication requirement in particular.

Ultimately, oral advocacy skills are vital for navigating the socio-political times we find ourselves in. Students must be able to use oral communication to influence their world, in personal, professional, and public spheres, by articulating a clear position, supporting it with well-reasoned, fully supported arguments and adapting their message to the listener. Students must also have the oral communication competency to disagree, even while continuing their persuasive efforts to achieve what they view as needed change. Instead of shutting down in the face of disagreement, including heated disagreement, students need the oral communication confidence and skills to lean into disagreement to achieve their desired influence, or failing that, to achieve at least mutual understanding and a sense of common ground. If civic education is to be successful, the skills taught in oral communication courses are essential (Zorwick, L.W. & Wade, J.M. 2016).

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