

# **Are Business School Students Prepared to Present?: The Pedagogy of Presentation Skills in Business Schools**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Business school graduates are expected to enter industry with the ability to communicate effectively. This study identifies business school learning outcomes surrounding presentation skills and reviews the literature on the integration of presentation skills into the business school curriculum. Business students, faculty and practitioners were surveyed on a variety of issues regarding presentations. The study finds that students are given some instruction in business-style presentation, but prepare the majority of their presentations in a different manner than do practitioners. Faculty and business practitioners disagree on whether recent graduates have adequate oral communication skills.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, oral communication, presentation skills

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The Importance of Presentation Skills for Business-School Graduates**

There is little doubt that business school graduates need excellent communication skills upon graduation. In particular, the importance of presentation skills has long been highlighted by both academia and industry. Two major accrediting bodies for university business schools, AACSB (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) and ACBSP (Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs), continue to have standards surrounding excellence in communication skills for business school graduates (AACSB, 2010; ACBSP, 2009). Gaining expertise in communication abilities tops the list of the AACSB assurance of learning standard in curriculum management (AACSB, 2010). Most ACBSP accredited schools have standards on communication. Indeed, many of the courses in the business curriculum require students to make presentations of some form.

According to Fallows & Steven (2000, p. 75), “Today’s challenging economic situation means that it is no longer sufficient for a new graduate to have knowledge of an academic subject; increasingly it is necessary for students to gain those skills which will enhance their prospects of employment.” Effective communication and presentation skills can give the newly minted college graduate a competitive advantage over her or his peers.

Business does not function in a vacuum. College graduates need to communicate both internally and externally, nationally and internationally. Shewchuk, O’Connor and Fine (2006)

maintain that communication skills are essential for executives. Verbal, written and interpersonal skills are more valuable now than they were even five years ago (Messmer, 2007). The ability to communicate topped the list of recruiting companies' desired traits among college candidates, according to the National Association of Colleges & Employers' 2006 Job Outlook.

Entrepreneurs are realizing that good presentation skills can help them compete against larger competitors who have bigger marketing budgets. Even though business owners may be knowledgeable in their particular areas of expertise, that does not automatically translate into being able to communicate effectively to their customers. Many agree that excellent communication skills lead to improved credibility with the customer, client or business associate. Poor communication skills "can make it more challenging to win over potential investors, prospective clients, employees and business partners" (Chura, 2007, para. 4).

### **Integrating Presentation Skills into the Business Curriculum**

Employers are demanding that graduates have excellent communication competence, including written, oral and listening skills. Communication and soft skill competency, including presentation skills, are being incorporated across the accounting and information systems curriculum (Woodward, Sendall & Ceccucci, 2010). Student presentations in the classroom have become "an important element in delivering positive learning experiences" (Alshare & Hindi, 2004, p. 6). Noll & Wilkins (2002) assert that soft skills should be integrated into the curriculum by including "writing, working in a team environment, delivering presentations, managing projects, and developing interpersonal relationships" (p. 153). Cappel (2002) suggests that faculty can assign individual and group classroom writings, group projects and presentations, internships, and involvement in student and professional organizations.

There is a continued tension in business schools to balance development of students' intellectual abilities versus development of practical skills they will use in the workplace (Morgan, 1997; Kelley & Bridges, 2005). Often, business schools require a separate course in business communication. A course in business communication would focus on teaching of interpersonal, critical thinking, leadership and teamwork skills (Mood, Stewart & Bolt-Lee, 2002).

At other times, acquisition of communication skills is incorporated across the business curriculum. According to Luthy & Deck (2007), the teaching of presentation skills "is no longer the exclusive purview of communications courses" (p. 67). Presentation skills should be incorporated into a variety of business courses, ranging from marketing, entrepreneurship, and management to accounting, finance, and strategy, while mirroring their use by professionals in each of these fields. Indeed, there is a trend in higher education to provide "soft" skills within discipline specific context. For example, McEwen (2003) purports that the responsibility of teaching students disciplinary writing (another soft skill required by business graduates) is not the sole responsibility of business communication faculty; all business faculty must share in this effort. In a study of marketing educators and practitioners that focused on the preparation of marketing graduates for entry-level positions, both parties agreed that marketing departments should consider teaching professional and career development skills by integrating them into existing marketing classes (Kelley & Bridges, 2005).

Hynes and Stretcher (2008) disagree with integrating business communications skills into the curriculum, but stress that transfer of learning from a business communication course into the separate business disciplines can be problematic. Their study of MBA students enrolled in a graduate finance course found no difference in the oral presentation skills of students who had

taken a managerial communications course and students who had not. Further, Gray (2010) purports that teaching communication in the disciplines must also acknowledge that there is difficulty transferring those skills from the classroom to the workplace. Gray (2010) also stresses the importance of transferring communication skills from the classroom to the workplace.

### **Enhancing Students' Presentation Skills**

As business faculty strive to enhance students' presentation skills, many methods can be employed to facilitate learning. It is thought that providing students with extensive training as well as guidelines for enhancing classroom presentations will improve students' presentation skills. Martin (1990) recommends a dress rehearsal (with a minimum score to advance), guidelines and instruction on the criteria used to evaluate presentation for students to improve their presentation skills. Baker and Thompson (1994) recommend that a focus on the message (content of presentation) will bring about improved messengers (presenters). They use the OABC (opening, agenda, body, closing) approach as well as extensive PowerPoint and handout instruction to aid their students' in creating memorable and useful presentations.

When learning how to make presentations, students gain more than enhanced oral communication skills. Kennedy (2007) uses in-class debates as a mean for students to cultivate both critical thinking and oral communication skills. Auster and Wylie (2006) suggest that an active learning approach to classroom management will enable students to hone their presentation skills by encouraging both formal and informal student presentations on class topics. In a study of students' experiences in a certificate-level theology course, it was found that when students see the presentation in terms of developing a position to be argued, they are likely to work hard, experience material as having a high degree of personal relevance, accept a high level of ownership of their work, and, perhaps most importantly, develop a deeper understanding of what they are studying (Joughin, 2007).

Grading rubrics often enhance student performance. In a study that utilized business consultants to assess students' presentation skills and perform student interventions to improve presentation skills, students were given grading rubrics before their presentations that helped them improve their presentation grades (Pettinger, Miller & Mott, 2004). Before the administration of presentation skills training, more than half of the students demonstrated below average presentation skills. After their training, Pettinger, et. al (2004) found 100% of students demonstrated average or above for their oral presentation skills (as assessed by business consultants). Grading rubrics were also found to be very useful in developing and assessing oral communication skills as part of a general education public speaking course but it was also found that extensive time and training was needed to achieve a high level of intercoder reliability (Dunbar, Brooks, & Kubkcka-Miller, 2006). Lusher (2004) further states that grading rubrics not only help students gain a better understating of what is expected of them, but rubrics aid business schools in their assessment and subsequent curriculum changes to address program deficiencies. Kirby and Romine's (2010) study found that feedback provided by rubrics gave students a better understanding of their presentation strengths and weaknesses.

## **Perspectives of Practitioners and Faculty**

There have been many studies surrounding the pedagogy of presentation skills across both the college curriculum in general, and across the business school curriculum specifically. The current research seeks to understand how students learn and perform with regard to presentation skills (Ulinski & O'Callaghan, 2002; Kelley & Bridges, 2005; Dunbar, Brooks & Kubicka-Miller, 2006; Hynes & Stretcher, 2008; Gray, 2010). Many studies have also incorporated faculty and/or business practitioner opinion/input to better understand specific competencies in oral communications (Wardrope & Baylers, 1994; Maes, Weldy & Icenogle, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Nellermore, Weirich & Reinstein, 1999; Kelley & Bridges, 2005; Dunbar et al, 2006; Gray, 2010).

A study of 354 managers representing a wide range of industries identified oral communication skills as the single most important competency for entry level graduates; following instructions and conversational skills were highly rated. Presentation skills were identified as being used fairly frequently by recent college graduates (Maes, et al., 1997). Gray (2010) found that most employers place a high emphasis on hiring graduates with strong oral communication competencies. Further, employers noted that most oral communications skills were displayed by new graduates only "sometimes" or "seldom".

The current research provides varied evidence with regard to which oral communication skills are most important for business school graduates. Students, faculty and business practitioners have differing opinions about what competencies students need in the business world. Kelley & Bridges' study (2005) showed that both marketing business faculty and marketing practitioners agreed that business communication skills and presentation skills as the top two of twenty-three skills necessary for a successful career. However, in a study of MBA students and employers, students identified presentation skills as most important, but practitioners felt that following instructions and listening skills were most important (Ulinski & O'Callaghan, 2002). Further, Morgan's (1997) research using UK educators and practitioners found that educators did not place as much of an importance on graduates' ability to promote commitment and agreement in meetings as practitioners did. Practitioners rated graduates' ability to explain the purpose of a formal presentation lower than educators' assessment of students' skills. Wardrope and Baylers (1994) claim that classroom oral communication instruction is rigorous but that students need more instruction in using visual aids and that instructors should address students' fear of presenting. Their research investigated oral communication skill instruction from the faculty perspective only.

## **METHOD**

The primary goal of this study was to investigate how effectively presentation skills are being integrated into the business curriculum. To our knowledge, no recent research has been conducted using all three constituent groups: business students, business faculty and business practitioners. Understanding all three perspectives should allow for growth and adjustment of presentation skills education across the business curriculum.

The surveys asked about the type of presentations made most often (individual or group), the number of presentations made, the purpose and the use of technology. Respondents were asked their views on instruction and feedback given to students and on the preparedness of graduates. The survey questions are shown in Appendix B.

Students taking classes in a variety of disciplines were surveyed, including economics, international business, finance, management information systems and marketing. Courses covered the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior levels. The student sample was from two private universities, one in the Northeast and one in the Southeast. Business faculty members from various locales were surveyed, as were practitioners from a variety of industries. Replies were collected in either electronic or paper form. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity.

## **RESULTS**

### **Types of Presentations**

The ability to speak in front of an audience is a skill that needs to be practiced repeatedly. Group presentations are attractive to faculty and students because they take less class time than individual presentations and they allow students to use the synergy of the group to perfect the final product. However, individual presentations are beneficial as they teach students to create the entire package by themselves and practice all of the necessary skills for giving successful presentations in the business environment.

The study asked students and faculty to report the average number of presentations they complete or require in a typical semester. This number is compared to the number of presentations business practitioners give in a typical quarter. Presentations are divided into group and individual categories. The results in Table 1 show both the mean number of presentations and the percentage of group to individual presentations (see Appendix A). Students report more presentations than faculty, perhaps because students typically take more courses per semester than faculty teach. Faculty at private schools report assigning more presentations than at public schools. The results also show the large mean number of presentations business practitioners give in a typical quarter. Faculty and students lean heavily toward group presentations over individual presentations (Table 1, Panel B). Business practitioners, however, give many more individual presentations.

Presentations take place across many venues. Table 2 reports the percentage of respondents who have completed or assigned a presentation in the respective setting. Most respondents have given a presentation locally in a classroom or office. Practitioners give more presentations off-site and online than students.

Table 3 shows the objective for presentations by showing the percentage of respondents who have given or assigned a presentation for the subsequent purposes. Presentations cover a range of intentions. Unlike students, many practitioners make sales and training presentations.

Presentations may incorporate a variety of visual aids, with PowerPoint being used by more than 90% of students and practitioners. Table 4 shows the percentage of respondents who have used the visual aids. SmartBoards are used mainly by students, with little use in the business environment. Webinars are popular with business practitioners, but not in academia.

Respondents were provided with a list of factors for a successful presentation and asked to rank them in order of importance from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important), with an “other” category available. Table 5 reports both the mean (Panel A) and the overall rank (Panel B) given to the attributes. Students rank Appropriateness of Content significantly lower than both faculty and practitioners. In Panel B, students rank Content as third most important while faculty and practitioners rank it as the number one criteria for a successful presentation. The faculty mean for Confidence is significantly different from both students and practitioners, but looking at overall rank, it is ranked either fourth or fifth most important by all three groups. Time Limit

is also significantly more important to faculty than students and practitioners. Faculty rank Time Limit as 8, while students and practitioners rank it as 9 and 10. A few practitioners ranked "Other" high. These "Other" responses focused on speech patterns (e.g. not saying "um" or "uh") and on the importance of tailoring content to the audience.

### **Instruction**

This study examined the instruction students receive in preparing and conducting presentations. Table 6 shows that students are somewhat tepid on whether they are receiving adequate education in skill development and in PowerPoint training, as the responses tended to neutral. Students and faculty differ significantly in their assessment of rehearsal prior to the presentation, with students reporting higher amounts of rehearsal. There is not much feedback given to students as they prepare their presentations, and both parties had similar views on whether PowerPoint slides are viewed after the presentation. Students and faculty concurred in their views that tutors would be helpful for students in preparing presentations and that business courses have improved their presentation skills. Utilizing rubrics establishes a more objective process. Table 7 shows that both faculty and students agree grading rubrics are helpful. Students also report that rubrics are more helpful if provided before the presentation. Feedback on presentations can come from the teacher or peers. Students report higher satisfaction with teacher feedback than do faculty. This is good news for faculty, as students agree that our feedback is helpful to them. When asked about peer feedback, faculty report higher value of peer feedback than students.

### **Preparedness**

Table 8 reports results from student, faculty and business practitioners on the preparedness of graduates. All respondents agree that presentations skills are important for job seeking students. When looking at the same question for freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors, the mean increases with each year. As students progress through their education, they change their assessment of the importance of presentations skills.

The respondents tended to agree that individual presentations provide better career preparation than group presentations. Practitioners have a more negative view than students and faculty when assessing the comfort level of recent graduates in both casual speaking and formal presentations. However, practitioners are more confident in students' comfort level with technology than both faculty and students. Faculty and practitioners agree that having members of the business community attend presentations would be helpful. Students disapprove of that idea.

And, the final question: Are business classes preparing students for giving presentations in the professional environment? While business practitioners remain neutral on this topic (neither agree nor disagree), students and faculty agree that their business classes are preparing them to give presentations in the real world.

## **DISCUSSION**

Our analysis of the pedagogy of presentation skills in business schools indicates that presentation skills education is prominent across the business curriculum, yet there is disagreement over outcomes. Students are giving presentations, faculty are assigning presentations, and business practitioners recognize the importance of good presentation skills for

college graduates. Further, as students progress through their business programs, they increasingly recognize that presentation skills are important for their future employment. This supports Fallows & Steven's (2000) notion that business graduates need more than just knowledge of an academic subject to secure gainful employment.

The study results support the argument that business students need to be prepared to give presentations once they enter the business world. Students and faculty agree that business classes have improved presentation skills. This is positive given that two accrediting bodies for business schools, AACSB and ACBSP, both have standards for excellence in communication skills. Unfortunately, practitioners have a lower view of the value of business classes in preparing students for professional presentations, and they do not think graduates are comfortable with public speaking. These views come despite the fact that faculty are assigning an average of one to two presentations per course. Part of the divide between practitioners and students might arise from the sample in this study. All students surveyed were from small colleges, while practitioners might be hiring graduates that come from both small and large universities. Our faculty sample indicated that professors from public universities (which tend to hold larger classes) assigned fewer presentations. Perhaps the divide arises because of the ways in which presentations for academe differ from professional practice, or perhaps the recent college graduate needs time to hone his or her skills in a business setting. That said, there is an opportunity for business faculty to change courses in a way that better prepares students for the business world.

While employers are still placing an emphasis on teamwork skills in their organizations (Chapman, Meunter, Toy, & Wright, 2010), our results indicate that individual presentations skills are also important to prospective employers. Business faculty may need to find a way to increase the number of individual presentations to ensure that students are prepared for the business environment that awaits them upon graduation. This may be complicated by class size. As Mood, et al (2002) point out, a separate business communication course might enable students to give more individual presentations. There is an opportunity for universities with large class sizes to find a way to incorporate individual presentations, but not at the expense of content delivery. They might consider a "lab" element where students are taped, assessed and given feedback by graduate students.

A second challenge for faculty is the settings for presentations. As the majority of business practitioners have given online presentations and webinars, it may benefit students if faculty can find ways to use campus technology to facilitate online presentations. Third, many practitioners make sales and training presentations; faculty may be able to think of ways that students may make presentations that require persuasion and/or peer education.

Within the classroom, students benefit from rubrics distributed beforehand, a finding consistent with Pettinger et al. (2004) and Kirby and Romine (2010). Students prefer faculty feedback to peer feedback. Faculty utilizing peer feedback may want to consider ways to make the feedback more relevant by assigning a portion of the grade to the peer review.

Viewing preliminary content, while time consuming, may be a way for faculty to pinpoint weak areas and help students improve their skills. Institutional support, in the form of 'presentation tutors' may help as well; many schools already provide writing tutors and the presentation assistance could be delivered in a similar manner. Similar to the way that writing tutor programs are used to enhance students' writing skills, presentation tutors could be used to enhance students' presentation skills. In a recent study of writing across the business curriculum both students and faculty agreed that as a result of working with a writing tutor, student writing

improved (Parent, Nielsen-Dube, Stowe, Schwartz, Sendall & Cain, forthcoming). Students strongly agreed that the writing tutor offered helpful comments, questions and suggestions for revision of their writing assignments. This process, used for presentations rather than writing assignments, would improve students' presentation skills.

Students did not think that it would be helpful to have professionals attend their presentations; however, the practitioners did consider it helpful. Attending presentations would require significant time and effort from the practitioners. Business professionals would likely come to campus, as it is not practical to take entire classes to the businesses. But, finding ways to include practitioners by inviting them to presentations would be a valuable experience for students. Gray (2010) stresses that communication skills (including presentation skills) must be transferred from the classroom to the workplace. The link with practitioners, while not important to students, must be strong.

## **CONCLUSION**

Today's business graduates are expected to have solid communication skills. Business schools, recognizing this expectation, are requiring students to research, write and present reports in many courses. A question addressed here is whether the skills that students gain in the classroom are transferring successfully to their professional careers.

In short, it appears that recent college graduates have impressed their business partners with their use of technology, but not with their speaking skills. Business practitioners frequently give presentations. Unlike students, many of these presentations are prepared individually; online delivery is common.

Future studies should pay close attention to differences in student's presentation skills depending on class size, type of institution, size of the institution, use of technology for presentations, and group versus individual presentations. It would be beneficial to conduct a study that matches employers to graduates from specific institutions. This would provide further insight as to whether or not specific business programs are teaching students oral presentation skills.

In summary, students, faculty and business practitioners understand that business school graduates need excellent presentation skills as they enter the workforce. While progress is being made, there are still gaps in students' presentation skill development. Educators must continue teaching business students presentations skills across the business curriculum with a focus on boosting individual presentations and online presentations. The result will benefit graduates in the job market and beyond.



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**APPENDIX A**

**Table 1: Number of Presentations in a Typical Semester or Quarter**

**Panel A: Mean Number of Presentations**

|               | Group | Individual |
|---------------|-------|------------|
| Students      | 3.88  | 1.27       |
| Faculty       | 1.92  | 1.07       |
| Practitioners | 6.66  | 20.87      |

**Panel B: Percentage of Total Presentations in a Typical Semester or Quarter**

|               | Group | Individual |
|---------------|-------|------------|
| Students      | 77%   | 23%        |
| Faculty       | 69%   | 31%        |
| Practitioners | 23%   | 77%        |

**Panel C: Mean Number of Presentations Assigned by Faculty in a Typical Course**

|                    | Group | Individual |
|--------------------|-------|------------|
| Public University  | 1.45  | 0.90       |
| Private University | 2.12  | 1.16       |

*Notes: N=192 students, 86 practitioners, 51 faculty. 13 faculty are from public institutions and 36 private; the remainder did not identify.*

**Table 2: Setting for Presentations**

Percentage of respondents who have given (or assigned) a presentation in the following settings

|               | Local<br>(Classroom or Office) | Off-Site | Online | Other |
|---------------|--------------------------------|----------|--------|-------|
| Students      | 98%                            | 15%      | 9%     | 4%    |
| Faculty       | 93%                            | 5%       | 10%    | 7%    |
| Practitioners | 95%                            | 59%      | 57%    | 6%    |

*Note: N=194 students, 57 faculty and 95 practitioners.*

**Table 3: Purpose for Presentations**

Percentage of respondents who have given (or assigned) a presentation for the following purpose

|          | Transmit Ideas | Argue a Position | Demonstrate Understanding | Report Results of Research Paper | Report Results of Case Study | Other |
|----------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| Students | 75%            | 46%              | 87%                       | 65%                              | 81%                          | 5%    |
| Faculty  | 68%            | 33%              | 63%                       | 37%                              | 51%                          | 23%   |

|               | Transmit Ideas | Argue a Position | Sales | Report Company Results | Training | Other |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|-------|------------------------|----------|-------|
| Practitioners | 70%            | 30%              | 29%   | 44%                    | 54%      | 15%   |

*Note: N=198 students, 57 faculty and 95 practitioners.*

**Table 4: Visual Aids**

Percentage of respondents who have used (or required) the following visual aids for presentations.

|               | PowerPoint | Video Clips | Smart Board | Webinars | Other |
|---------------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------|
| Students      | 98%        | 59%         | 27%         | N/A      | 6%    |
| Faculty       | 82%        | 28%         | 5%          | N/A      | 12%   |
| Practitioners | 92%        | 34%         | 5%          | 43%      | 23%   |

*Note: N=198 students, 57 faculty and 95 practitioners.*

**Table 5: Rank of Importance of Factors to Successful Presentation**

**Panel A: Mean Ranking**

|                                | Student<br>Mean | Faculty<br>Mean | Practitioner<br>Mean |     |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----|
| Presenter's Knowledge of Topic | 2.64            | 2.74            | 2.96                 |     |
| Organization                   | 3.22            | 2.79            | 2.86                 |     |
| Appropriateness of Content     | 3.73            | 2.37            | 2.82                 | a,b |
| Confidence                     | 4.66            | 5.50            | 4.23                 | a,c |
| Use of Visual Aids             | 5.28            | 5.36            | 5.96                 |     |
| Vocal Qualities                | 5.37            | 5.79            | 5.90                 |     |
| Eye Contact                    | 5.84            | 6.24            | 6.42                 |     |
| Audience Interaction           | 6.39            | 6.75            | 6.54                 |     |
| Adherence to Time Limit        | 7.68            | 6.38            | 6.92                 | a,b |
| Humor                          | 7.99            | 7.69            | 7.34                 |     |
| Other                          | 8.90            |                 | 4.00                 |     |

*Notes: Ranking uses '1' as most important. N=179 students, 42 faculty and 95 practitioners.*

*a=Significant difference between students and faculty.*

*b=Significant difference between students and practitioners.*

*c=Significant difference between faculty and practitioners.*

*All differences are significant at the level of 3% or better.*

**Panel B: Ordinal Ranking**

|                                | Student<br>Rank | Faculty<br>Rank | Practitioner<br>Rank |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Presenter's Knowledge of Topic | 1               | 2               | 3                    |
| Organization                   | 2               | 3               | 2                    |
| Appropriateness of Content     | 3               | 1               | 1                    |
| Confidence                     | 4               | 5               | 5                    |
| Use of Visual Aids             | 5               | 4               | 7                    |
| Vocal Qualities                | 6               | 6               | 6                    |
| Eye Contact                    | 7               | 7               | 8                    |
| Audience Interaction           | 8               | 9               | 9                    |
| Adherence to Time Limit        | 9               | 8               | 10                   |
| Humor                          | 10              | 10              | 11                   |
| Other                          | 11              |                 | 4                    |

**Table 6: Presentation Instruction**

|  | Student | Faculty |   |
|--|---------|---------|---|
| I am provided presentation skill instruction in my business courses.                     | 3.72    | 3.54    |   |
| I am provided Power Point instruction in my business courses.                            | 3.42    | 2.64    | * |
| I practice a presentation before the final presentation.                                 | 3.79    | 3.25    | * |
| My professors view my slides or dress rehearsal before final presentation.               | 2.68    | 2.27    | * |
| My professors view my slides after my presentation.                                      | 3.8     | 3.76    |   |
| It would be helpful if tutors other than my professor were available to help me prepare. | 3.35    | 3.6     |   |
| My business classes have improved my presentation skills.                                | 3.99    | 3.94    |   |

Notes: \*Significant difference at the level of 4% or better. N=194 students, 50 faculty.  
Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

**Table 7: Feedback and Grading Rubrics**

## Are Rubrics Helpful?

|          |      |
|----------|------|
| Students | 1.59 |
| Faculty  | 1.77 |

Notes: 1=Extremely helpful, 2=Somewhat helpful,  
3 =Not helpful at all.

## Are Rubrics Helpful when Provided Before or After Presentation?

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Before presentation | 1.56 |
| After presentation  | 1.78 |

\*

## What type of feedback is helpful?

|                               | Students | Faculty |   |
|-------------------------------|----------|---------|---|
| Professor feedback is helpful | 4.27     | 3.93    | * |
| Peer feedback is helpful      | 3.85     | 4.44    | * |

Notes: N=184 students, 45 faculty. \* Differences significant at the level of 5% or better.

**Table 8: Student Preparedness for Business Presentations**

|  | Students | Faculty | Practitioners |     |
|--|----------|---------|---------------|-----|
| Presentation skills are important for job seeking students.                          | 4.34*    | 4.61    | 4.49          |     |
| Individual presentations provide better career preparation than group presentations. | 3.58     | 3.35    | 3.45          |     |
| Students are comfortable with casual speaking.                                       | 3.7      | 3.69    | 3.2           | b,c |
| Students are comfortable making formal presentations.                                | 3.55     | 3.42    | 2.75          | b,c |
| Students are comfortable using technology to make online presentations.              | 3.44     | 3.2     | 3.86          | b,c |
| It would be helpful if members of the business community attended my presentations.  | 2.97     | 3.63    | 3.97          | a,b |
| Business classes prepare students for giving presentations in the real world.        | 3.85     | 3.79    | 2.99          | b,c |

Notes: All differences are significant at the 1% level. N=191 students, 46 faculty.

a=Significant difference between students and faculty.

b=Significant difference between students and practitioners.

c=Significant difference between faculty and practitioners.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

|   | Freshman | Sophomore | Junior | Senior |   |
|---|----------|-----------|--------|--------|---|
| * Presentation skills are important for job seeking students. | 3.93     | 4.36      | 4.48   | 4.62   | d |

Notes: N=40 freshmen, 77 sophomores, 46 juniors and 29 seniors.

d=Significant difference between freshman and all other classes at the 1% level.

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree



## APPENDIX B

### Faculty Survey on Presentation Skills

1. What type of presentations do you prefer your students to give?

Group     Individual     Both group and individual

2. In what settings do your students make presentations? (Check all that apply)

In a classroom     Through the internet to an online audience  
 At an off-campus site (e.g. a local business)     Other - Please specify:

3. On average, how many presentations does each student make in one of your classes?

Group: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Individual: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

4. What is the purpose of your assigned presentations? (Check all that apply)

So that students may:

Transmit ideas to their classmates     Report results of a research paper  
 Argue a position     Report results of a case analysis  
 Demonstrate understanding of a topic     Other - Please list:

5. What visual aids do you require for your students presentations? (Check all that apply)

PowerPoint     Smart Board  
 Video clips     Other - Please list:

6. Please rank the following items in order of importance to successful presentations, with '1' indicating the most important, '2' indicating second in importance and so on. If an item is not important, leave it blank.

| Ranking | Item   | Ranking | Item                 |
|---------|--|---------|----------------------|
|         | Organization of presentation                   |         | Vocal qualities      |
|         | Appropriate content, based upon the assignment |         | Audience interaction |
|         | Presenter's knowledge of the topic             |         | Confidence           |
|         | Visual aids (e.g. slides, video, etc. )        |         | Humor                |
|         | Adherence to time limits                       |         | Other, please list:  |
|         | Eye contact                                    |         |                      |

7. Do you provide grading rubrics to your students for their presentations?

Yes, always.     Yes, sometimes.     No, never.

8. If yes, are they provided before or after the presentation?

Before     After

9. Are the grading rubrics helpful to students?

Extremely helpful     Somewhat helpful     Not helpful at all     Not applicable

10. What kind of feedback is provided on students' presentations?

Feedback from professor only

Feedback from peers only

Feedback from both professor and peers

Indicate your response to each of the following statements.

|     |  | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
|-----|--|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 11. | The feedback students receive from peers is helpful to them.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 12. | The feedback I give students is helpful to them.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 13. | I provide students with presentation skill instruction.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 14. | I provide students with Power Point instruction.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 15. | My students practice presentations before their final presentation.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 16. | I view my students' Power Point slides, notes, or a dress rehearsal <b>before</b> they may give presentations.                   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 17. | I require my students to submit Power Point slides, notes, or some other material <b>after</b> they give presentations.          |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 18. | My students seek help from me prior to their presentations.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 19. | Students would make better presentations if tutors or college staff, other than professors, were available to help them prepare. |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 20. | Students would make better presentations if members of the business community attended presentations.                            |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 21. | Presentation skills are important for job seeking students.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 22. | Individual Presentations provide better career preparation than do group presentations.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 23. | I prepared students to give presentations in a 'real world' setting.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 24. | My classes improve my students' presentation skills.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 25. | My students are comfortable with casual public speaking, such as talking in class or making an informal speech.                  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 26. | My students are comfortable giving formal presentations.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 27. | My students are comfortable using online systems to make internet presentations.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |

28. Please provide comments on any of the above questions:

29. What is your rank?

Adjunct Instructor \_\_\_\_\_ Assistant Professor \_\_\_\_\_ Associate Professor \_\_\_\_\_ Professor \_\_\_\_\_

30. What is your gender?

Male \_\_\_\_\_, Female \_\_\_\_\_

31. In which discipline do you teach?

\_\_\_\_\_ Accounting  
\_\_\_\_\_ Management

\_\_\_\_\_ Finance  
\_\_\_\_\_ Marketing

\_\_\_\_\_ Other - Please specify:

32. What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_ 20-29 \_\_\_\_\_ 30-39 \_\_\_\_\_ 40-49 \_\_\_\_\_ 50-59 \_\_\_\_\_ 60-69 \_\_\_\_\_ 70+

## STUDENT SURVEY ON PRESENTATION SKILLS

Professors at multiple colleges are investigating the types of presentations that business students make. The goal is to learn students' opinions on many aspects of class presentations. Student opinions will be used by professors to improve the presentation process. Please respond thoughtfully and honestly. All surveys are anonymous, and no individual answers will be released.

1. What type of presentations do you prefer?

Group     Individual     No preference between group and individual presentations

2. In what settings have you made presentations? (Check all that apply)

In a classroom     Through the internet to an online audience  
 At an off-campus site (e.g. a local business)     Other - Please specify:

3. In this semester, how many total presentations have you made in all of your classes? (Include any remaining in this semester.)

Group: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)  
 Individual: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

4. In your college career, how many presentations have you made? (Include any remaining in this semester.)

In School of Business classes: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)  
*School of Business includes Accounting, Business, Economics, Finance, Management & Marketing.*  
 In Public Speaking or Communication classes: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)  
 In other classes: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

5. What is the purpose of your presentations? (Check all that apply)

Transmit ideas to my classmates     Report results of a research paper  
 Argue a position     Report results of a case analysis  
 Demonstrate my understanding of a topic     Other - Please list:

6. What visual aids do you use for your presentations? (Check all that apply)

PowerPoint     Smart board  
 Video clips     Other - Please list:

7. Please rank the following ten items in order of importance to successful presentations, with '1' indicating the most important, '2' indicating second in importance, and so on. If an item is not important, leave it blank.

| Ranking | Item   | Ranking | Item                 |
|---------|--|---------|----------------------|
|         | Organization of presentation                   |         | Vocal qualities      |
|         | Appropriate content, based upon the assignment |         | Audience interaction |
|         | Presenter's knowledge of the topic             |         | Confidence           |
|         | Visual aids (e.g. slides, video, etc. )        |         | Humor                |
|         | Adherence to time limits                       |         | Other, please list:  |
|         | Eye contact                                    |         |                      |

8. Do your professors provide grading rubrics for your presentations?

Yes, always.     Yes, sometimes.     No, never.

9. If yes, are they provided before or after the presentation? (check all that apply)

Before     After

10. Are the grading rubrics helpful?

Extremely helpful     Somewhat helpful     Not helpful at all     Not applicable

11. What kind of feedback do you receive on your presentations?

\_\_\_\_\_ Feedback from professors only

\_\_\_\_\_ Feedback from peers only

\_\_\_\_\_ Feedback from both professors and peers

Indicate your response to each of the following statements.

|     |  | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
|-----|--|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 12. | The feedback I receive from my professors is helpful.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 13. | The feedback I receive from my peers is helpful.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 14. | I am provided with presentation skill instruction throughout my business courses.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 15. | I am provided with Power Point instruction throughout my business courses.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 16. | I practice a presentation before a final presentation.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 17. | My professors view my Power Point slides, notes, or a dress rehearsal <b>before</b> I give my presentations.               |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 18. | My professors view my Power Point slides, notes, or other material <b>after</b> I give my presentations.                   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 19. | It would help me make better presentations if tutors or staff, other than my professor, were available to help me prepare. |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 20. | It would help me make better presentations if members of the business community attended my presentations.                 |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 21. | Presentation skills are important for job seeking students.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 22. | My business classes have prepared me for giving presentations in a 'real world' setting.                                   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 23. | Individual presentations provide better career preparation than do group presentations.                                    |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 24. | My business classes have improved my presentation skills.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 25. | I am comfortable with casual public speaking, such as talking in class or making an informal speech.                       |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 26. | I am comfortable giving formal presentations.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 27. | I am comfortable using online systems to make internet presentations.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |

28. Please provide comments on any of the above questions:

29. Which class are you a member of? \_\_\_ Freshman, \_\_\_ Sophomore, \_\_\_ Junior, \_\_\_ Senior, \_\_\_ Graduate

30. What is your major?

\_\_\_\_\_ Accounting

\_\_\_\_\_ Finance

\_\_\_\_\_ Other - Please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_ Management

\_\_\_\_\_ Marketing

31. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_ Male, \_\_\_\_\_ Female

32. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

## Business Practitioner Survey on Presentation Skills

1. What type of presentations do you observe in your industry?

Group     Individual     Both group and individual

2. In what settings are presentations made? (Check all that apply)

Locally (e.g. conference room, on-site)     Through the internet to an online audience

Off-site (e.g. customers, off-site meetings)     Other - Please specify:

3. On average, how many presentations do you personally make in a typical quarter?

Group: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Individual: \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

4. What is the purpose of your presentations? (Check all that apply)

Transmit ideas to my colleagues     Report company results (internal or external)

Argue a position

Training

Sales (product or service)

Other - Please list:

5. What visual aids do you require for your presentations? (Check all that apply)

PowerPoint

Smart Board

Video clips

Other - Please list:

Webinar (or similar technology)

6. Please rank the following ten items in order of importance to successful presentations, with '1' indicating the most important, '2' indicating second in importance and so on. If an item is not important, leave it blank.

| Ranking | Item   | Ranking | Item                 |
|---------|--|---------|----------------------|
|         | Organization of presentation                   |         | Vocal qualities      |
|         | Appropriate content, based upon the assignment |         | Audience interaction |
|         | Presenter's knowledge of the topic             |         | Confidence           |
|         | Visual aids (e.g. slides, video, etc. )        |         | Humor                |
|         | Adherence to time limits                       |         | Other, please list:  |
|         | Eye contact                                    |         |                      |

Indicate your response to each of the following statements.

|     |   | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
|-----|---|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 7.  | Presentation skills are important for job seeking students.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 8.  | Recent college graduates are prepared to give presentations in a 'real world' setting.  |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 9.  | Recent college graduates are comfortable giving formal presentations.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 10. | Recent college graduates are comfortable using technology to make online presentations.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 11. | Recent college graduates are comfortable with casual public speaking, such as talking in meetings or making an informal speech.               |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 12. | College graduates would be better prepared for presenting in the workplace if members of the business community attended their presentations. |                          |                 |                |              |                       |
| 13. | Individual presentations provide better career preparation than do group presentations.   |                          |                 |                |              |                       |

14. Please provide comments on any of the above questions:

15. What is your functional area?

Accounting\_\_\_\_\_ Finance\_\_\_\_\_ Marketing\_\_\_\_\_ Sales\_\_\_\_\_ IT\_\_\_\_\_ Operations\_\_\_\_\_

Project Management \_\_\_\_\_ General Management\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

16. What is your title? \_\_\_\_\_

17. What is your gender?

Male \_\_\_\_\_, Female \_\_\_\_\_

18. Age Range:

21-30 \_\_\_\_\_, 31-40 \_\_\_\_\_, 41-50 \_\_\_\_\_, 51-60 \_\_\_\_\_, 61 + \_\_\_\_\_

19. What industry do you represent? \_\_\_\_\_