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**Amount Requested:** \$150,000 over two years

**Project:** Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St. Lawrence University seeks the assistance of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to deepen our commitment to the core liberal arts mission of developing in our students critical thinking skills – to include critical listening skills – necessary to engage in productive and reflective discourse. To do so, our strategy is to implement a Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication, in which faculty and professional residential staff will develop pedagogical strategies to foster students' critical thinking and listening skills as they apply to oral communication. In the institute, faculty will re-evaluate and redesign both informal oral communication opportunities and formal oral communication assignments for students in their courses, while residence life staff will develop workshops for student residential staff intended to help students enhance discussion in their residence halls. Our three primary goals are to provide faculty and residence life staff with: (1) a deeper understanding of oral communication context and theory; (2) a broader sense of the link between oral communication and learning; and (3) pedagogical strategies to use in the classroom and residence halls that will promote more effective and engaged dialogues among students. Through participation in the institute, we expect faculty to develop skills that will help them create more interactive learning experiences for students while providing an environment that will encourage student confidence and competence in extemporaneous and deliberate discourse, especially when that discourse involves controversial or emotionally-charged topics. As part of their work together, the faculty will also develop methods to assess student progress and achievement in oral communication skills. To implement the Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication, St. Lawrence seeks a Project Grant of \$150,000, over two years, from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, after which time we will incorporate the project into an ongoing program supported through our newly-established Center for Teaching and Learning.

### RATIONALE

As a liberal arts institution, a central goal of St. Lawrence University is to foster the critical thinking skills that will prepare our students for life as responsible, contributing citizens. In our stated institutional "Aims and Objectives" we further define these critical thinking skills as "...a respect for differing opinions and for free discussion of these opinions; and an ability to use information logically and to evaluate alternative points of view." In the curriculum, we strive to meet this goal by helping students to listen and speak well, understand diverse cultures, and develop a personal ethic of considered values. St. Lawrence is committed to offering courses that encourage faculty to engage students in these critical thinking processes through a variety of pedagogies. On the St. Lawrence campus, the preferred pedagogical strategy for enhancing students' critical reflections on readings, performances, and presentations is through class discussion. It is our view that at the core of critical thinking skills is the ability for students to participate fully in a two-way communication process. This process will include not only the clear, coherent expression of the student's own views, but also the ability to listen well to the views of others and thoughtfully consider, reflect upon, evaluate and respond to those views in an equally clear, coherent manner. Research on public discourse in the United States suggests that when students arrive at college, their preconceived understandings of what constitutes good discussion or dialogue do not promote or lead to classroom discussions that will be productive encounters between people who disagree with one another (Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture*, 1998; Thomas Shachtman, *The Inarticulate Society*, 1995). Nor do students come to campus with an understanding of what constitutes the kind of engaged dialogue that we would like citizens of a democracy to practice. In fact, both Tannen and Shachtman suggest that the failure of productive discourse in society actually leads citizens to withdraw from civic engagement.

Despite the fact that classroom discussion represents a fairly widespread pedagogy on our campus, a recent survey by our Faculty Development and Teaching Committee indicates faculty are interested in devoting more faculty development time to improving discussion pedagogy that will better foster oral communication and reflective skills in our students. The primary objective of the proposed Teaching Fellows Institute is not simply to convey the mechanics of developing strategies for good classroom discussion, but to promote a deeper understanding of

the oral communication context in which those discussions will thrive. In particular, faculty need to identify and understand communication patterns within the larger culture, including ways in which students perceive themselves as communicators. Faculty also need a clearer understanding of the important role dialogue can play in both enhancing learning and the overall development of students.

Results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (2000) report that approximately 45% of first year and senior college students in this country state that they “often” or “very often” had serious conversations with students of different racial or ethnic groups. St. Lawrence results from this same survey are comparable to this national benchmark. As a result, we realize that fostering such conversations, and reaching that other 55% of our students, is a significant and enduring challenge for a University committed to the aims and objectives that St. Lawrence formally embraces. Further analysis of the St. Lawrence data from this national survey tells us that the best single predictor for students having conversations with other students whom they define as different from themselves – with respect to economic, social, political opinion, or different values – is working with classmates on assignments outside of class. This finding strongly suggests that the ways in which faculty organize their classes and assignments can, in fact, have a significant impact on the likelihood that students will actually engage in productive conversations both in and out of the classroom.

Traditionally, St. Lawrence has made a significant institutional commitment to help faculty develop pedagogical skills that will enhance their teaching. On an annual basis, each faculty member is eligible for travel funding to pedagogical workshops, over and above an already generous travel allowance for attendance at professional conferences in their specific disciplines. In recent years, this commitment has been heightened through the introduction of the “Shop Talk” series, an ongoing program of informal, faculty discussion sessions that focus on topics of relevant interest to faculty and aimed at helping faculty improve their teaching. Administered by the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, these “Shop Talk” sessions have proven to be a popular venue for faculty to share their own experiences, challenges, frustrations, and successes for mutual support and assistance from their peers. However, through our ongoing work in the University’s First Year Program (FYP) – in which development of students’ oral communication skills is a specific objective – and our recent work in our Hewlett Foundation Pluralism and Unity Project, faculty have come to realize that to truly change and improve the nature of classroom discourse will require a more in-depth and focused effort to understand and address this issue.

Most recently, and as a direct outcome of our Hewlett Pluralism and Unity Project, St. Lawrence has developed a plan for a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), which will be a permanent University resource for faculty seeking to improve their pedagogical skills. We have just been awarded start-up funding for it from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, which will enable us to move forward to implement our plans immediately, while we incorporate its ongoing costs into our operating budget over the next four years. We now seek the support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to implement the Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication as the first major program to be initiated by the CTL. We seek external funding to do so in order to implement this program in a pilot form now – leveraged by both institutional and Mellon Foundation funds – to help us gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop the Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication into an ongoing CTL program.

## **BACKGROUND**

St. Lawrence University demonstrates its commitment to developing students’ critical thinking skills in a variety of ways. Our First-Year Program (FYP) is a required, year-long residential living/learning experience that groups students into “colleges” in which they live and study together in a topical, discussion-based and seminar-style course that is team taught by two or three faculty members. Each FYP college seminar includes a special emphasis on the development of students’ communication skills, including writing, oral presentations, and listening and speaking skills. Other examples of ways in which we strive to develop our students’ critical thinking skills include: the recent addition to our graduation requirements that students complete at least two courses designated as diversity courses, which encourage students to reflect critically on issues of difference; an ongoing expansion of numerous intercultural course offerings developed through a ten-year succession of grant-supported initiatives and now continued through our new Global Studies Program; implementation of a University Fellows Program that provides resources for students to spend a summer conducting self-designed and self-proposed in-depth research, under the guidance of a faculty mentor; and programmatic outcomes from our current Hewlett Pluralism and Unity Grant.

Despite these ongoing commitments to the liberal arts ethos of critical thinking skills, St. Lawrence faculty

believe that the student learning goals for the “free discussion of opinions” and the evaluation of “alternative points of view” are not fully realized. One of the greatest and most frequently expressed frustrations faced by our faculty in the classroom is having the questions they pose to students – whether about a reading, film, presentation, or previous class assignment – met by either silence or a small number of students with entrenched, opposing opinions who monopolize discussion. In the case of the latter, all too often, these students are unwilling to consider the other perspectives of their peers and their dominance of the conversation silences others in the class. Understanding the factors that lead to these “non-communicative” responses is a critical element of beginning change. Data from a variety of studies suggest both why these responses are common and what their ultimate costs are in lack of communication for students. A first step in the Institute will be to discuss this data, as well as the research of Tannen and Shachtman, with faculty.

Research conducted by the our Institutional Research office – and supplemented through our cultural audit under way as part of the Hewlett Foundation’s Pluralism and Unity grant – supports the work of Tannen and Shachtman by indicating that our students see no point in engaging in discussion unless they believe that they can persuade someone to agree with them. In her research at Grinnell College, Carol Trosset (1998) found that students’ motivation for talking with others of differing views is to persuade them to their own way of thinking, and not to speak and listen as ways of learning. That is, students tend to have an “advocacy model” of discussion. They base their opinions on their own personal experiences or the experiences of others they know or with whom they identify. These students tend to feel that the ideas they express in discussion are central to their own identities. As a result, they see no grounds upon which their beliefs can be challenged, nor any point in engaging in discussion with people who disagree with them. When Trosset visited our campus in the spring of 1999 (as part of our cultural audit), her observations indicate that this dynamic of the advocacy model is present at St. Lawrence as well (see Appendix A for her report to St. Lawrence). She notes that students believe that they disagree with one another in class, but faculty observe that these students are responding to one another with statements of their own opinion and not engaging in constructive dialogue with the person with whom they disagree.

Tannen (1998) and Shachtman (1995) argue that the “advocacy model” of discussion is actually promoted by the dominant pedagogies of secondary schools and reinforced by the media’s frequent portrayal of dialogue as people shouting at one another as they fail to listen to each other. If this is true, it is not surprising that the development of effective listening and speaking skills in informal settings – the types of oral communication that most clearly fit with preparing our students to be effective leaders and responsible citizens – is not a learning goal we have yet been able to realize. In fact, further St. Lawrence findings in the National Survey of Student Engagement indicate that our students assess their own abilities to understand themselves, and to engage in responsible civic functions (e.g., voting, contributing to the welfare of their communities, understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds), as lower than students at similar schools.

Another critical point that will be part of our faculty and staff development work is that dialogue is essential for constructing the self, and therefore, for understanding oneself and one’s place within communities (see Donal Carbaugh, *Situating Selves*, SUNY Press, 1996). Faculty and staff need to help students understand that through speech, they form an identity upon which they can reflect through their interactions with others. Thus, we can foster our students’ ability to understand, and reflect on themselves and others, through our work on oral communication. In order to do so, however, students need to feel safe enough with one another and with the faculty member(s) to allow themselves the freedom of exploration. In the Teaching Fellows Institute, we will help faculty and residential staff to understand potential obstacles to open communication in the classroom and within the residence halls, and to envision strategies that will allow students to confront these obstacles. By doing so, we will enhance their ability to help students develop identities that will include being citizens of respectful intellectual communities. This work will allow us to take better advantage of the integrated living/learning structure of the FYP by enhancing the potential of regular faculty and residential staff meetings to identify how classroom and residence hall discussions are interrelated, and by providing ideas for planning interventions that will ask students to consider how the selves that they construct in these realms are interrelated. Faculty teaching non-FYP courses will also be better positioned to address how “on-campus” student identities can enhance or impede in-class conversation.

Since conversation and dialogue are about cognitive content and emotionally-engaged relationships, the institute will help faculty develop strategies to engage students in discussion and to develop oral communication assignments that promote and develop both areas of dialogic skills. Nicholas Burbules suggests that central to

forming relationships that enhance communication are “communicative virtues” which he goes on to define: “They include such qualities as tolerance, patience, openness to give and receive criticism, the inclination to admit that one may be mistaken, the desire to reinterpret or translate one’s own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others, the self-imposition of restraint in order that others might have a turn to speak, and – often neglected as a key element in dialogue – the willingness and ability to listen thoughtfully and attentively” (1993, 43). Following Jane Fried’s discussion, we will add two more virtues: understanding how cognition and emotion are interrelated and “differentiating between understanding and approving” (1993, 125). Thus, we will focus on pedagogical strategies to develop and practice these virtues.

## **PROPOSAL**

### **Need and Preparation for this Work at St. Lawrence University**

As referenced earlier, St. Lawrence acknowledges the importance of student oral communication skills by incorporating the teaching of these skills into the FYP. However, the curricular demand for student oral communication skills beyond the FYP has increased considerably in the past five years with the growth of student research opportunities. For example, our annual Festival of Science has adopted a model of student participation to include both formal and informal student presentations. This year’s one-day festival included ten formal oral presentations and 55 informal poster displays over which students presided. Many academic departments are beginning to sponsor campus events at which students present and answer questions about their scholarship. Our students are becoming more accustomed to the expectation that they will be asked to articulate their scholarly ideas in formal and informal settings. This expectation is reflected by our findings in the National Survey of Student Engagement. Compared to the national average, our students report that they have made more class presentations than students at similar institutions, and that they discuss ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class at close to the same rate as students at peer colleges. Nevertheless, it is clear from data cited earlier that speaking, in itself, does not lead to the kind of critical thinking that the university seeks to inculcate.

Tannen notes that the tendency to perceive issues as always having two opposing sides that should be debated until a “winner” is determined “obscures the complexity of research” and encourages “oversimplification, disinformation, and distortion” (1998, 289). Unfortunately, it is exactly this approach to discussion that Western education has tended to encourage and that the media and public discourse increasingly encourage. It is also closely related to an understanding that has guided many St. Lawrence faculty as we consider what it means to teach research skills to students in the FYP. Program faculty seek to help students perceive their research topics as issues embedded in on-going conversations that take place in many different reference sources. We want students to discover that research is the ability to find, consider, and evaluate those various “conversations” in order to understand the complexity of their topic. Our goal is not to have students stake out a premature claim and look for evidence to support it, but rather to discover that there are multiple perspectives and understand the roots of these perspectives. At the core of the FYP is the program’s philosophy and goals statement approved by the entire St. Lawrence faculty (2000-2001). It indicates that students should be able “to assess and represent the complexity of a particular line of inquiry and to enter responsibly into conversation about the issues it raises.” What we have not yet done is explicitly connect the instruction of oral communication to this goal.

The reality that faculty have not mastered the pedagogical techniques that foster productive exchanges of ideas between students, especially those who disagree with each other’s views, is not surprising to Jane Fried (1993). She notes, “When doctoral level faculty begin to teach undergraduates in a discipline, there is probably nothing in their own preparation that will help them cope with the open expression of conflict, or indeed, any strong feeling in the classroom” (p.123). At St. Lawrence, we seek to address this gap in faculty preparation by the development of the Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communications. As envisioned, the institute will help faculty reflect on ways to structure their teaching so that classrooms become places where dialogue is both valued and productive. It will seek to help faculty design effective oral communication assignments in their courses, and explore ways they can better teach oral communication.

Recent campus events indicate our faculty agree that there is need for such a resource – and that many will have an interest in participating in the proposed institute. Scheduling complexities during the semester have prevented multi-day workshops in which faculty can work collectively to reflect on their teaching practices. Instead, we have offered single session opportunities, and their good attendance rates indicate to us that faculty are concerned about their ability to teach oral communication. However, in the single workshop session format, discussion has centered on the design of formal presentation assignments. The format doesn’t provide enough time to focus on

dialogue and such complex issues as how to develop a safe classroom space that will allow for the development of communicative virtues. This spring, however, faculty were surveyed about what pedagogical topics they would like to cover in the next academic year's "Shop Talk" conversation series. The majority of responses indicated that the top priorities were the development of classroom discussion strategies and development of techniques to encourage students to listen actively to each other. More recently, faculty currently teaching in the FYP, and faculty scheduled to teach in the FYP next year, were asked to rank the importance of different teaching strategies within the FYP. Nearly 100% indicated they believed the following were either essential or very important to the program: teaching students to engage in productive dialogue with other students and with faculty; teaching students to listen carefully to the comments of others and to provide feedback to another student's formal presentation; and using informal oral communication to enhance understanding of texts. Nevertheless, only about 50% of faculty feel that they teach these skills well, and 50% would like to be able to teach them better.

In addition, University residential staff are in full agreement that constructive solutions to roommate conflicts and residence hall governance issues could be enhanced significantly if students understood better how to speak with one another about their opposing concerns. These staff welcome the opportunity to participate in the Teaching Fellows Institute and plan to work with their student staff to help them reinforce and develop communication skills in the campus residential communities.

The new CTL at St. Lawrence provides the institutional framework from which to run the proposed Teaching Fellows Institute and provides a mechanism with which to document and retain what we learn in order to benefit faculty far into the future. The CTL will ensure that this work benefits faculty beyond the annual participants by: (1) working with faculty participants to offer at least three "Shop Talk" sessions focused on oral communication each year for the next five years; (2) working with the Associate Dean of the First Year and FYP faculty to ensure that work on oral communication is a central part of FYP faculty development and new FYP faculty orientation; (3) building a website that enables SLU faculty to learn from Institute Fellows; and (4) building a library of resources on oral communication, including all materials used in the institutes.

### **The Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication: Project Overview**

St. Lawrence University proposes to develop and implement a Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication (TFIOC) to be administered through our new Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). With the proposed support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, St. Lawrence will implement a two-year pilot operation of the Institute. In each year of the pilot program, two groups of faculty will be selected as participants, with approximately 12 members in each group. One group will be faculty teams teaching in the FYP and the other group will be faculty teaching non-FYP courses, and selected to represent a broad mix of disciplines and faculty ranks. Faculty in both groups will be joined by student staff/assistants, who will be selected by the faculty to learn alongside them and assist them throughout the project. Over the two-year period, the two parallel faculty tracks in this institute will always include at least one member from the Residential Life staff. Selection of the faculty participants will be based on an application process in which faculty will submit a brief proposal to a TFIOC Steering Committee. Faculty from the First Year Program will be selected as complete FYP teams, after consultation with the Associate Dean of the First Year. Non-FYP faculty will be selected based primarily on the quality of their proposals, but special consideration will be made to assemble a group representing diverse disciplines and ranks. Participants will be asked to make a time commitment to participate in a three-day January session during the semester break; a series of four two-hour sessions during spring semester; extensive reading and course development work in the summer; and periodic meetings during the following fall semester. For their participation, each faculty and staff member will receive a modest stipend and a collection of selected reference texts and materials.

The TFIOC will be jointly directed by the Director of the CTL and an Institute Coordinator, a position that will likely be filled by a faculty member through an application process, and who will be given a course-release for each semester of participation. In consultation with the TFIOC Steering Committee, composed of faculty and residence life staff (see Attachment 1, Governance and Staff), they will design the workshop syllabi, choose readings for the institute, conduct workshops, invite guest speakers, schedule all events throughout duration of institute, and plan opportunities for fellows to present their work to interested faculty and professional staff who are not participants in the institute.

The primary focus of activity for the TFIOC will be the redesign of one course selected by each faculty

participant. The participants from the FYP will use their team-taught course as the vehicle for discussion, while each non-FYP faculty member will select one discipline-based course on which to focus. At the beginning of the institute, each faculty member or faculty team will be asked to provide two course syllabi – one for the course they want to change and one for a course they are not planning to change, but which they will be teaching in the following fall semester. At the end of the one-year period, the faculty member will be asked to resubmit syllabi for both courses as part of the project assessment.

The two groups will meet for an intensive 3-day seminar at the beginning of the project and then will continue to meet on a regular basis throughout the spring semester. Some of these meetings will take the form of plenary sessions for the two groups together, but most will meet in their two distinct FYP and non-FYP groups. Their work over the course of the year will focus on informed discussions about oral communication theory as it relates to student learning, and on the development of new assignments for the courses they have selected for redesign (to encourage productive oral communication among students and between students and faculty). Members of the student residential staff will also participate in the working groups and concurrently develop new ways to use oral communication skills and strategies to prevent and resolve conflicts in the residence halls.

Participation of Student Life staff in the Institute activities is an important component of the project. In particular, those who are directly involved in the Division of Residential Learning Communities and Housing (RLCH) will join the group in order to enhance their own ability to work with students and to teach their student staffs methods and strategies that will promote productive dialogue through better speaking and listening. We see this involvement happening in two ways: (1) The RLCH professional staff, specifically the Director and Assistant Director of RLCH, will fully participate in the Institute (one in each faculty group). Their firsthand experience will give them skills and information that will be useful in their direct interactions with students, as well as a better understanding of the approaches that faculty will be taking in courses that have a living/learning component to them, such as the FYP. RLCH staff will also contribute their different contextual perspective, from which they will bring forward ideas for the institute to enhance the programs and workshops we will provide. (2) Professional Student Life Staff, who train and supervise student residential staff (CAs), will work with these students to help them better understand communication dynamics in residence halls and approaches to fostering productive dialogue. CAs will use this knowledge as they design programs and as they help students work through conflicts in the residence halls. This work with CAs will also help address the living-learning goals of programs such as the FYP by having both faculty and CAs use similar approaches to questions of oral communication.

In addition to the CAs, other upperclass students identified and selected by faculty participants will participate in the institute as well. These student mentors will serve as oral communication assistants for the courses that faculty modify. They will be available to assist students with various oral communication projects, and, as discussion partners for the faculty, will help the faculty by providing them with a student perspective on the classroom climate. They may also help students communicate better in more informal settings outside of class (perhaps in an informal intermediary role). As envisioned, the institute will provide one set of programs for faculty and students working with the FYP, and another track for those working with other courses, particularly those at the upper level.

**Each Faculty Participant in the Institute will be Expected to Meet the Following Guidelines:**

- Meet regularly with the teaching institute group for seminars and workshops
- Select one course or FYP course on which to focus pedagogical changes
- Share original course syllabi and materials with the institute group
- Integrate at least three new oral communication strategies in a selected fall course
- Develop means by which to assess the impact and effectiveness of chosen strategies
- Conduct two reciprocal classroom visits with a faculty partner from the institute
- Accept and provide feedback to peers
- Share results of his/her work with his/her department
- Offer a “Shop Talk” to campus community
- Be willing to serve on a panel during the introductory workshop the following year

Student Life staff participants will make a commitment to participate in the workshops with faculty in order to

learn how to build reflection on discourse into their programming. They will be asked to develop specific programming goals and to share their new strategies and assessments with the working group.

### **Specific Goals of the Program**

The proposed St. Lawrence University Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication seeks to:

- (1) Educate faculty on the context of students' oral communication styles and on factors that lead to a classroom climate that will foster more effective communication between students and between students and faculty.
- (2) Integrate student residential staff members and student mentors into the workshop structure in order to enhance the continued development of "communicative virtues" outside of the classroom.
- (3) Assist faculty in the development and design of their courses in order to incorporate writing, reading, and oral communication in ways that will help students understand the complexity of acquiring knowledge and making judgements. In particular, they should see dialogue as an important part of this process.
- (4) Prompt faculty to be more self-reflective about their own communication. For faculty who are team-teaching, this means that the team will reflect upon the implicit and explicit messages that their communication patterns send to students.
- (5) Create ongoing faculty development opportunities in the area of oral communication.

For students involved in the program as participants, whether as CAs or mentors, it is our hope that they will become much more effective communicators themselves, as well as develop skills that will help them foster productive discussion. Specifically, we seek to impart skills that will enable them to:

- (1) Better evaluate dialogue and conversation.
- (2) Reflect seriously and comprehensively on the role that they play in particular discussions.
- (3) Comprehend how dialogue can enhance learning.
- (4) View issues as having many sides and identify some of the intellectual and emotional reasons that people might support different positions.

St. Lawrence as an institution stands to benefit significantly from this project. In addition to the 24 -30 courses that will be transformed during the two years of the institute (with a total enrollment of approximately 900 students), we expect that the faculty involved will change other courses based on their increased knowledge about oral communication. Further, because we will build elements of the knowledge that we gain into new faculty orientation, FYP discussions and faculty development, faculty fora, and other public discussions of pedagogy, the faculty and staff participants will work with many other faculty members. If the mentor programs work effectively, we will continue those programs, thus providing a small number of students with training each year. Finally, the RLCH staff will be able to work closely with CAs to help them develop more effective residential communities.

### **Project Timetable:**

#### **YEAR ONE: January Break 2002: Three-Day Seminar Series**

This intensive, three-day collaboration between facilitators and participants will occur during the winter break before spring semester classes begin. In advance of the seminars, participants will receive the reading materials (see Appendix B). The January meetings will bring all participants together for the first time and will introduce faculty and staff to oral communication theory in a higher education context. Participants will read and discuss a variety of perspectives addressing influences on students' oral communication assumptions and the effects of these variables on classroom dynamics. A second series of readings and discussions will center on the link between the development of oral communication skills and learning. These conversations will provide the groundwork for the spring semester's work.

An oral communication specialist from another liberal arts institution will serve as a consultant for the January session and will co-facilitate the seminars with the Director of the CTL, the Associate Dean of the First Year, and the Institute Director. Participants will be introduced to communication theory and texts, general instructional and assessment strategies, the semester's reading list, and the sequence of planned workshops for the spring. All participants will receive a customized instructional design workbook with assigned readings, instructional resource materials, and an extensive list of oral communication resource websites that will be the source of their common enterprise in the spring semester.

The following topics will be covered during the January introductory seminars:

- Considering Students' Oral Communication Contexts: Classroom and Residence Hall Rhetoric
- The Extracurricular Educators Influence on College Students' Speaking and Listening Styles: Television, Marketing, and Peer Groups
- Communication Styles, Democracy and Citizenship
- Communication and the Construction of Self
- Oral Communication as Active and Collaborative Learning
- Faculty and Staff Goals for Participation in the Institute

**Spring Semester 2002:** Starting in early February, participants will come together for two hours approximately four times over the course of the spring semester (for workshop reading list, see Appendix B). The workshops will combine conversations about the readings with experiential exercises that ask participants to test with one another and subsequently assess oral communication teaching strategies presented in the workshops. These workshops will be conducted by the Director of the CTL, the Associate Dean of the First Year, the Institute Director, other interested faculty and student life professionals with expertise in oral communication, and invited speakers. Over the course of the semester, faculty will modify and add oral communication assignments to their selected syllabi, as well as work on developing techniques and pedagogies for creating dialogue opportunities for students in class.

Additionally, beginning during the January workshop and continuing throughout the spring, participants will periodically reflect on their own work as a group and the roles that they play in group discussions. That is, part of the pedagogy of the seminar will be to build a discourse community. We will integrate discussions on assessing the effectiveness of such pedagogies throughout this first semester of work. By mid-semester, each FYP college team and each non-FYP faculty member will identify the student mentor for the fall's courses. After spring break, the student mentors will attend a special workshop session with the faculty that will be designed to introduce them to the goals of the institute and their respective roles for tutoring students in the classroom and holding office hours outside of class time.

### **General Outline for Workshops**

#### **Meetings 1 and 2 (February): Developing Learning Objectives and Course Materials**

- Defining teaching and learning goals for the roles of listening and speaking in class
- Integrating oral communication opportunities into your syllabus
- Framing assignments and assessing student performance

#### **Meeting 3 (March): Collaboration, Cooperation, and Conversation in the Classroom**

- Reconstructing classroom dynamics

#### **Meeting 4 (April): Collaboration, Cooperation, and Conversation in the Classroom**

- Peer tutoring and instructional support

\*Student mentors join the working groups at this meeting

**Summer 2002:** Approximately one week before fall semester begins, Teaching Fellows and student mentors will reconvene for a two-day series of conversations with the institute facilitators.

#### **Summer Seminar (August): Creating the Student-Led Discussion and Then Letting Go**

- Teaching with your mouth shut
- Talking students, listening teachers
- \*Invited facilitator conducts experiential workshop on successful and unsuccessful classroom discussion techniques with a focus on diversity issues and controversial topics
- Final drafts of course syllabi and residence hall programming will be discussed and the agenda for the fall semester will be fully developed. The reciprocal classroom visitation process will be described and faculty will have an opportunity to plan the sequence of visits with their faculty partner.

**Fall Semester 2002:** In the fall, Institute participants will be brought back together for five 90 minute meetings to discuss the progress, problems and solutions encountered as the new pedagogies and assessments are implemented. During this semester, the Institute Fellows will assist in developing an evaluation tool for the program and the web site that will link to the Center for Teaching and Learning home page.

The following guidelines apply to the fall implementation semester:

- Institute participants continue to meet as group
- Faculty will include new oral communication assignments in their courses
- Seminar discussions will focus on specific assignments, pedagogies, and assessment strategies
- Faculty pairs will visit each other's classes to observe the implementation of a particular oral communication assignment or general communication dynamic; faculty pairs will discuss their visits and provide formative feedback
- Assessment techniques will be implemented and reviewed by respective groups

## **YEAR TWO:**

The general format of the second year will remain the same but the discussion topics, attendant readings, and frequency of the spring and fall meetings will be determined by the feedback received from year one participants. At the end of the two year pilot program, it is our plan that institute faculty and staff will assess the project's success, make necessary adjustments, and work to institutionalize the program by fully incorporating its operation into the CTL programming on an ongoing and annual basis.

### **Project Assessment, Evaluation, and Measuring Outcomes:**

The Teaching Fellows Institute for Oral Communication will use several evaluation measures to assess its success. Included will be an assessment of the workshops and various methods of instruction, as well as a measure of the improvement of faculty and student skills. We propose to use the following strategies.

**To Assess Faculty Inclusion of Oral Communication Theory and Strategies:** (1) Faculty participants will select a course to modify through their participation in the institute and submit the original course syllabi and assignments prior to the institute. Following the institute, faculty will submit amended course syllabi and assignments for an analysis of any changes. (2) Before the institute begins, faculty participants will submit course syllabi and assignments for classes they do not plan to change. Following the institute, faculty will re-submit the course syllabi and assignments for these courses and a comparison of the two will determine if the institute had an unplanned effect on their course. (3) Faculty reciprocal classroom visits will be used as an opportunity for peer feedback. Prior to the visits, faculty partners will share their respective oral communication goals and strategies and later provide informal feedback and assessment.

**To Assess Student Learning:** A survey instrument will be developed and administered as pre- and post-benchmarks both to students enrolled in "oral-communication intensive" courses and to control groups. This survey will ask questions regarding: self-confidence gained in public speaking; feedback/guidance they received from faculty members regarding improved speaking and listening; increased learning of subject matter through oral communication assignments; frequency of group discussions held in class; the roles students played in class discussions; and evaluation of skill improvement regarding critical discussion.

**To Assess the Institute's Effectiveness:** (1) At the beginning of the institute, all participants will complete a survey that asks how much they know about a variety of oral communication concepts ranging from active listening to group roles to conflict management in small groups. The scale for response options will range from "a great deal" to "almost nothing." Toward the end of the fall semester, participants will have another opportunity to complete the same survey, providing pre and post data. This data will be linked, and pre and post-institute responses will be analyzed to see how participants changed. (2) Faculty participants will offer a number of "Shop Talks" for the campus community. The content and potential outcomes of these conversations among faculty will be assessed by workshop evaluations following the "Shop Talks" sessions.

**Other Assessment Measures Include:** (1) To assess student mentors, the existing Teaching Assistant evaluation materials for students will be updated to determine the level of their effectiveness. (2) To assess the impact on CAs job performance, focus groups will explore their perceptions of how their special training may or may not have helped them with programming and one-on-one conflict resolution. (3) To assess impact on residential communities, pre- and post- surveys will determine the level of satisfaction with oral communication in the residence halls and will be administered before and after the institute. Data will be compared longitudinally to see how effective the institute continues to be each year. (4) To assess impact on all students, we will measure the relative progress made by seniors at the time they graduate, using a standardized national survey. This will be

used to provide benchmarks to measure how students benefit from the oral communications efforts. We will look at how our students compare with peer institutions, how students who attended oral communication intensive courses compare with students who were not in these courses, and we will look at how students changed over time by comparing freshman survey results to senior year survey results. We will customize the analysis to assess oral communication skills by adding questions that assess: to what extent “communicating well orally” has been enhanced by the undergraduate experience; how frequently students engaged in class presentations; how frequently students engaged in discussions with students whose beliefs differ from their own; and how frequently students engaged in discussions with students about “academic” topics.

**Website Posting:** See Appendix C

**Probability of Success:** See Appendix D