

Public Speaking Center: 2012-2015 Report

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Background: In collaboration with undergraduate student Lindsay Swiggum, I started the UW-L Public Speaking Center in Fall 2012. The Public Speaking Center supports student success by providing quality peer-to-peer consulting for all UW-L students seeking assistance on oral presentations. Peer consultants aid students with topic selection, outlines, content development, delivery, audio-visual aids, and managing speaking anxiety, and increasing confidence. This document includes a report on the growth of the Public Speaking Center, a summary of student-client assessment data and resulting changes made in the Public Speaking Center, and a summary of peer consultants' exit survey responses and resulting changes in and future goals for the Public Speaking Center.

I. Growth of the Public Speaking Center & Notable Activities

	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Director's role	Service	Service for Fall 2013; one course reassignment time for Spring 2014	One course reassignment time for Fall 2014 and one for Spring 2015
Usage/visits by UW-L students	150	521	1,277
Courses that utilize the Center	CST 110	CST 110, CST 190, CST 260, CST 499, ESL 250, EFN 205, THA 110, SPE 531, PSY 347	CST 110, CST 210, CST 230, CST 260, CST 350, BUS 230, BUS 735, BUS 750, IS 330, IS 755, ECO 471, ESL 250, MGT 308, MGT 449, MKT 309, MUS 110, Celebration of Research and Creativity, Conference presentation, Public Speaking Competition
Trained peer consultants	3	7	14
Grants Received Sole applicant: Tony Docan-Morgan	CLS Small Grant: "Creating a Public Speaking Center"	CLS Technology and Equipment Grant: "Public Speaking Center Technology"	CATL Faculty Development Grant: "Developing Resources for Research Presentations"
Notable activities and additions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicited department and administrative feedback and interest • Pilot tested Center using empty classrooms • Consulted with Murphy Learning Center and Writing Center Directors • Created mission statement and training materials • Created website with appointment sign-up sheet, public speaking resources, and FAQs: www.uwlax.edu/psc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured space and moved into the Murphy Learning Center in August 2013 • Initiated and moderated CATL workshop on Murphy Learning Center tutoring services • Partnered with UW-L Career Center; ran a booth on "Giving Elevator Speeches" at the Career Fair Boot Camp • Attended National Association of Communication Centers conference; presented, "How to Create a Public Speaking Center." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created and taught CST 392: Public Speaking Center Practicum • Received Tutor Training Certification from the National Association of Communication Centers. UW-L is one of 12 campuses in the nation to receive this certification. • Created and ran the Public Speaking Competition. Organized 3 rounds of speeches, 36 student speakers, 26 judges, 500 audience members. Created sample speeches/video resources for CST 110 students.

II. Student-Client Assessment & Resulting Changes

Student-clients (i.e., students who use the Public Speaking Center) complete an “Assessment Form” indicating their name, what class they are coming to the Public Speaking Center for, year in school, what they would like to work on in their session, and when the assignment is due. At the end of each consultation session, student-clients are asked to evaluate the peer consultant with whom they worked and provide feedback about the Public Speaking Center. The survey includes closed-ended items and open-ended questions. The below results are based on all Assessment Forms submitted from 2012-2015 ($n = 1,352$).

Results for closed-ended items	
	Average score
1. Today’s consultation was helpful.	4.88/5.00
2. The consultant addressed the reasons why I came in today.	4.87/5.00
3. I felt comfortable working with the consultant.	4.93/5.00
4. The session was beneficial to my proficiency as a speaker.	4.82/5.00
Combined items 1-4	4.88/5.00
<small>1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5= strongly agree</small>	

<i>What was useful about today’s meeting? What did you learn today that you are likely to do or use in the future?</i>	
<i>Themes</i>	<i>Representative Examples</i>
Topic selection	“Helped me brainstorm and I picked my topic.” “I was able to figure out ideas for a topic.” “It aided me in narrowing down my topic and being able to complete my prep work sheet.”
Decreased public speaking anxiety	“Ashley calmed my nerves and she made sure my organization made sense.” “I got some of my nerves out!” “I learned some tips on how to be a better speaker and not so nervous that I will use in the future.”
Increased confidence	“She boosted my confidence and gave me some improvements.” “Helped me gain confidence and showed me I needed more practice.” “Practice more, how to build up my confidence.”
Content development and outlining	“I was able to ‘talk out’/discuss my ideas so that they formed an outline. I learned how to correctly format an informative speech outline.” “The meeting helped me with my content and structure for my preparation outline. I now have more of an idea as to how to go about things for this outline and future ones.” “I am now more comfortable with how to use Monroe's Motivated Sequence.”
Delivery practice	“I needed the practice. Great job telling me to move intentionally.” “Learn posture, hand movement, pause to allow statements to sink [in] more.” “Projecting my voice and making eye contact.”
Citing sources	“I learned how to cite my sources which I will be able to use in future speeches.” “I [now] know how to cite the source and follow APA style.” “Watched me through the steps of my outline and helped me with my citations.”
Visual aids	“Practicing slideshow & changing keynote.” “Helped with visual aids.” “Fine-tune my speech and PowerPoint.”
Additional resources/services	“The outlines provided were super helpful.” “The worksheets that I can use later.” “I liked being able to watch myself give the speech from the video.”
Outsider/peer opinion	“It was really helpful to receive guides from someone who has gone through it before me.” “I was able to have my question answered and get an outsider's opinion.” “It was useful getting another perspective.”

What suggestions do you have to improve the Public Speaking Center's services?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Representative Examples</i>
Clearer signage	“Post hours on door,” “Maybe put a sign on the door that says slide instead of pushing or pulling?” → As a result of these comments, we posted our hours on our door, a sign that indicates that the door needs to be slid and not pushed, and information about our website and Facebook page.
More hours	“More tutors available during busy times,” “Have more available tutors and more available appointments.” → The heaviest usage of the Murphy Learning Center is from 3-7 p.m. Monday-Thursday. We will continue to try to schedule open hours at these times and be open for 40-50 hours per week.
More rooms and more consultations at once	“More consultants going at once,” “more rooms,” “bigger room.” → We are exploring the possibility of moving to a larger space in the Murphy Learning Center and/or using this space when available for “overflow consultations.” This larger space poses privacy concerns, however.
Longer sessions	“Maybe longer time?” “Having longer sessions.” → We allow students to sign up for back-to-back appointment slots (30 + 30 minutes) and have begun informing them of this option when we make announcements about our services.
Aesthetic appeal of surroundings	“More colorful room,” “Put up a colorful poster.” → We obtained a corkboard and the peer consultants decorated it with maroon and black card stock and have posted PSC news and information. I ordered adhesive wall quotes and mini-posters recently. The Art Department has offered to add temporary displays of their work.
APA and citing sources	“Learn more fully APA.” → I created guide sheet that covers finding and citing sources , posted it on the Public Speaking Center website, and used it for training peer consultants. I also purchased additional copies of the most current APA manual.
Appointment scheduling	“appointment scheduling,” “The sign-up sheet needs an overhaul.” → We are currently exploring the possibility of moving from our free GoogleDoc appointment form to a system used by Writing Center (a service that requires yearly funding).
Podium	“Podium,” “Get a podium.” → We have ordered a podium via CST equipment funding.

III. Peer Consultant Exit Surveys & Resulting Changes and Goals

Peer consultants complete an exit survey at the end of each semester. The survey includes closed-ended items and open-ended questions. The below results are based on all exit surveys submitted at the end of each semester from Fall 2013 to Spring 2015 ($n = 38$). Note that peer consultants earn course credit for being trained and working in the Public Speaking Center. Peer consultants earned credit for CST 391 (Practical Applications in Communication Studies) prior to Fall 2014 and credit for CST 392 (Public Speaking Center Practicum).

Results for closed-ended items	
	Average score
1. How confident do you feel in providing student clients with constructive criticism?	4.76
2. How confident are you in your abilities to explain and demonstrate effective public speaking skills to student clients?	4.66
Combined items 1-2	4.71
1 = not confident at all, 5 = very confident	

Specifically, how have you grown by your experience working in the PSC? What has been personally and/or professionally useful about the experience for you? What specific skills have you learned, developed, and/or honed? How might you use these skills in the future?

Themes	Representative Examples
Career direction	<p>“I have worked on skills that will be extremely beneficial for my career. I want to become a high school guidance counselor, which primarily focuses on the one on one interaction with students; so naturally every time I met with someone in a one on one setting it provided a useful experience for my future career as a counselor.”</p> <p>“I just wanted to say thank you Tony for this experience. It not only helped my own skills, but really pointed me in the direction of student affairs after getting a lot from helping students become more successful.”</p>
Giving feedback and constructive criticism	<p>“Providing constructive feedback to students. I think that I have become very good at both reinforcing good work in students as well as relaying criticism to them on aspects of public speaking that could use improvement, always in a constructive way of course.”</p> <p>“I can phrase weaknesses in way that does not make students feel bad or defensive.”</p> <p>“I feel prepared to work in environments where I need to train people or give constructive feedback.” → Note that two course objectives for CST 392 include: “offer constructive criticism and guide a speaker through meaningful revision” and “recognize strengths and weaknesses in preparation outlines and oral presentations.”</p>
Listening skills	<p>“I was also able to work on and improve my communication skills. One of these would include being more of an active listener. I believe this experience has allowed me to understand the importance of providing the proper feedback while also being able to focus on specifically what the client needs. This skill also led into the understanding of silence.”</p> <p>“I think becoming a better listener is something I have picked up.”</p>
Leadership	<p>“This opportunity has and will continue to allow me to be a better presenter, mentor, leader, and team player.”</p> <p>“This year has given me practical leadership experience. I have been able to see from a more administrative position, which has opened up my viewpoints on the process of supervising a group.”</p> <p>“Some of the specific skills I have been able to develop and hone in on are leadership, social media, and marketing.”</p>
Assessing others’ needs	<p>“The last two semesters have taught me the value in trying to interpret a student’s needs as soon as they walk in the PSC and I start talking to them.”</p> <p>“I believe I am strong in understanding the needs of students. ...this understanding/ attentiveness helps me meet the students where they are.” → Note that one course objective for CST 392 is to “identify client public speaking needs and create a prioritized agenda.”</p>
Adapting and problem solving	<p>“My ability to adapt to situations has greatly improved and the ability to problem solve.”</p> <p>“Being a consultant you have to look at things in different ways to make sure that the student</p>

	understands, jump into a topic and try to understand something that you may know nothing about, and help people that may be very different from you.”
Teaching skills	<p>“First, my time in the PSC has helped me learn how to ‘teach’ others. Teaching can be tricky because you have to make sure you understand a student’s needs.”</p> <p>“I also learned how to work one-on-one with students. Such skills will be beneficial to me as a future teacher.”</p> <p>“I have also learned the importance of adjusting how something is explained, depending on the student.”</p> <p>→ Note that one course objective for CST 392 is to “identify client public speaking needs and create a prioritized agenda.”</p>
Honing my own public speaking skills	<p>“I think I have become a better speaker/presenter from working in PSC. Working with outlines so much has taught me the value in connecting information and being clear and concise in speaking and writing.”</p> <p>“Through editing outlines and making outlines and guide sheets of my own, I’ve become very familiar with how to develop a speech and use presentational patterns. This will serve me well in the future, because I’ll be able to create and deliver strong sample speeches to guide students in the speech writing process.”</p>
<i>What do you perceive as the strengths of the PSC, what we offer, and our resources?</i>	
<i>Themes</i>	<i>Representative Examples</i>
Training	<p>“I think that the 12-hour training session that we received this summer was more than sufficient. I even think that we may have been over-trained/prepared.”</p> <p>“The training did its job. I felt that it covered everything that we needed to. It prepared me for every scenario that actually occurred this semester. I was comfortable going in that I can handle any situation.”</p> <p>“I also think a strength of the PSC is the training that consultants go through. Although it is long, I’m glad the training process is the way it is because it helps me as a consultant and shows the students that I’m tutoring that I’m qualified to do what I do.” → Note that one course objective for CST 392 is to “demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the Public Speaking Center.”</p>
Resources	<p>“I think the guide sheets were also very beneficial both for the consultants and the students during their appointments and as something that they can reference back to once they leave.”</p> <p>“We have textbooks available for students to use, resource guides, and a television for visual aids. I have used each of these resources with students in the PSC, and I think it is very beneficial to have them in the PSC.”</p> <p>“One of the biggest strengths of the PSC is that we offer so many resources to students. We have several guides that can be accessed in print, online, or video (students love the student outline examples).”</p> <p>“I also think our examples of the informative and persuasive speeches are a great tool for students to check to make sure they are following the correct format.”</p>
Peer feedback	<p>“I think students feel comfortable coming in because the tutors used to be ‘just like them,’ meaning we were once in similar positions where we also needed help with our communication materials.”</p> <p>“Peer-to-peer assistance makes it less intimidating.”</p> <p>“Being able to relate to the students. I really tried to talk to them as a peer rather than this person with superior knowledge. Sharing experiences of past speeches and personal tips really helped me connect with the students that I helped.”</p>
Scope of services	<p>“I also believe the scope of services we offer from outlines to practicing presentations. A student can basically come see us at any stage in the creating of a speech and we can give them help and feedback.”</p> <p>“Strengths of the PSC are by far the work we do with outlines and content development. Students always leave with better outlines than they come in with.” → Note that one course objective for CST 392 is to “recognize strengths and weaknesses in preparation outlines and oral presentations.”</p>
Adapting to	“We are very well versed (I think) in the expectations of CST 110 professors, especially when it

expectations of specific classes	comes to outlines.” “Being able to develop a thorough understanding of rubrics and assignments as well as providing feedback and brainstorming strategies and topics.”
Supportive environment	“Overall, the PSC creates a positive and supportive environment and facilitates constructive learning.” “Building confidence within the student.”
<i>What do you perceive as your strengths as a peer consultant?</i>	
<i>Themes</i>	<i>Representative Examples</i>
Encouraging critical thinking	“Normally, I am someone who wants to jump in and say, ‘Here, this is how you fix that.’ This experience has taught me the benefits of being able to let the student think and try to come up with the answer first. As we are taught in college to think critically, I definitely agree that this is a great opportunity for students to do this here as well.” “I give them options rather than telling them what to do; I make sure that each decision made it their own, not mine.” → Note that one course objective for CST 392 is to “name, identify, and employ various strategies for facilitating a consulting session.”
Asking questions	“I also think I have developed a strength in asking questions to my peers versus giving all the answers. In the beginning I felt like students would draw blanks to my questions, but I have honed in on what types of questions work and what types of questions do not.” “Throughout the semester, I have become more knowledgeable and eager to ‘put the pen in the student’s hand’ and allow them to find the answers themselves.” → Note that one course objective for CST 392 is to “name, identify, and employ various strategies for facilitating a consulting session.”
Relating and comforting	“I think that I’m good at putting students at ease about their upcoming presentations.” “Being able to relate to the people coming in.” “I create a comfortable environment for the students.” “Helping to make students feel like they can always come back to the PSC if they need more help with the particular presentation they came in for or with another assignment.” → Note that one course objective for CST 392 is to “name, identify, and employ various strategies for facilitating a consulting session.”
Working with ESL students	“I have really learned how to work with ESL and international students.” “Skills for working with ESL and international students.”
Explaining information clearly	“I feel I have developed strong skills in explaining material in a clear manner.” “Ability to explain material in a thorough and understandable manner.” “I feel very comfortable teaching students the correct way to format an outline and create APA citations. I’m glad they can take these lessons with them into future classes.”
<i>What do you perceive as the weaknesses or areas the PSC can improve?</i>	
<i>Themes</i>	<i>Representative Examples</i>
Technology	“I think that the PSC could improve in regards to other resources that we planned to have but do not have yet, such as laptops, timers, iPads, etc. Sometimes students don’t come prepared with a computer on them, and peer consultants have to let students use their own laptops.” “Not having a clicker and those things to students could actually present like they would in the classroom.” → I applied for and received a CLS Technology Grant. We secured laptops, timers, clickers, video cameras, SD cards, and flash drives to use in the PSC. One goal is to secure future technology, including laptops and permanently installed video cameras with access to Mediasite software.
Communication between consultants	“Communication between consultants seems to be a bit disjointed. Passing information to one another or trying to schedule/reschedule things is messy and inefficient.” “I also would like to spend time talking with the other peer consultants just hearing about their experiences, and what they thought went well, what they struggled with.” → These comments arose in the earlier phases of the Public Speaking Center, when we had inconsistent meeting times and places. We now have set weekly meetings and trainings. One peer consultant mentioned recently, “Weekly meetings keep everyone on the same page.” A future goal is to have peer consultants take additional leadership roles in running more of these meetings.

Expanding clientele and advertising	<p>“I think it is really good that we are helping a lot of CST 110 students, but I am glad that we are reaching more and more departments as well. I think that the PSC could maybe reach out to even more departments by maybe making announcements for classes in the other departments.”</p> <p>“I think if we could tap into the other introductory classes and advertise our services, that would help us tremendously. I do not know how we would do this exactly, but I think this is an area we could work on.” → We have begun working more closely with the College of Business (CBA), specifically in BUS 230 (Business and Economics Research and Communication), a course all CBA students take. Peer consultants make announcements in many BUS 230 sections about Public Speaking Center services, I conduct workshops in many BUS 230 classes, and the Public Speaking Center is listed as a student resource on the CBA website. I hope to continue to build relationships with departments across the university, specifically increasing CBA usage and targeting the College of Science and Health over the next few years.</p>
Space	<p>“...the room not having shelves or anything. We just have two boxes on the floor.”</p> <p>“As for improvements, we need to vamp up our space! I think the PSC needs more posters and signs inside.”</p> <p>“Sometimes it seems kind of cramped in the space that we do have.”</p> <p>“I think our biggest area of improvement would definitely be trying to acquire more space to run multiple sessions at one time.”</p> <p>“Our space is small for videotaping students and when more than one student is in the PSC.” → We secured two large storage cabinets from the Murphy Learning Center and will be receiving a bookshelf and wall files via CLS equipment funding. We are currently exploring the possibility of moving a larger area within the Murphy Learning Center and/or using this space when available for “overflow consultations.” Currently, we have concerns about moving, as this other space does not provide privacy. I am investigating possible solutions.</p>
New scheduling system	<p>“I think the scheduling aspect is confusing and could be cleaned up. A software like the writing center’s would be great.”</p> <p>“I believe that we can improve in our scheduling, either by adding more time slots or changing out appointment sheet to be less confusing and more informative for our clients.”</p> <p>→ We have improved our current scheduling system. However, we are currently exploring the possibility of moving from our free GoogleDoc appointment form to a system used by Writing Center (a service that requires yearly funding).</p>
<p><i>What do you perceive as your areas to improve as a peer consultant? What are some actions you or others can take to help you improve?</i></p>	
<i>Themes</i>	<i>Representative Examples</i>
Asking guiding questions instead of providing answers	<p>“I have noticed that I have a tendency to provide a few too many examples of what students could use in their presentations. I have to work harder at teasing the answers from them, instead of providing them myself. To remedy this, I think that I just need to be very cognizant that I am doing it from the beginning. I have to acclimate more to silence during a consultation to give students time to think up their own ideas.”</p> <p>“I tend to sometimes offer answers rather than have them think about it. I understand to progress a student you must challenge that process. To improve upon that I just have to keep in mind, ‘Is this beneficial to them in the long run rather than short?’” → As a result of these concerns I added a reading from the <i>Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring</i> that addresses asking questions. Further, we role-play question asking in our training sessions, and discuss types of questions to ask and when to ask them.</p>
Working with ESL students	<p>“I wish that I had more knowledge and was able to help ESL students a little bit more.”</p> <p>“[I] should be better at working with ESL students (like knowing when to correct grammar and outline structure).”</p> <p>“My weakness would be working with the ESL students. It's sometimes difficult to understand specifically what they are looking to get out of sessions, so that is challenging.” → After seeing these comments, I invited Carrie Melin, an ESL instructor to provide a 45-minute workshop for peer consultants. Peer consultants responded positively to the workshop. I would like to have Carrie and other ESL instructors provide additional training for peer consultants. Further, we now read a chapter from <i>Public Speaking from Non-Native Speakers: A Handbook for</i></p>

	<i>Instructors. I plan to devote additional time to discussion on this topic in future semesters.</i>
APA citations	<p>“Citing APA, I am decent at it, but I always get some questions that I am not confident about. Practice will make me better.”</p> <p>“An area I need to improve on is looking over APA citations. I am not as familiar with APA as I would like to be. I will look over APA more in order to improve this area.”</p> <p>→ I created guide sheet that covers finding and citing sources in APA, posted it on the Public Speaking Center website, and used it for training peer consultants. I also purchased additional copies of the most current APA manual.</p>