# El Camino College
# Communication Institutional Learning Outcome Results

## Background

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO's) , formerly called Core Competencies at El Camino College, are the sets of skills which a student would be expected to develop through interaction with the college curriculum.  El Camino College currently has four ILO's covering *Critical Thinking*, *Communication, Community and Personal Development,* and *Information Literacy.* These Institutional Learning Outcomes are linked to and supported by Student Learning Outcomes at the course (SLO's) and program level (PLO's).

During the Spring 2015 Semester El Camino College assessed Institutional Learning Outcome #2 to determine how well students have mastered *Communication* skills based on the statement:

**Students effectively communicate with and respond to varied audiences in written, spoken or signed, and artistic forms.**
- **Comprehend, analyze and respond appropriately to oral, written, and visual information.  Effectively communicate/express information through speaking, writing, visual, and other appropriate mods of communication/expression.**
- **Effectively communicate ideas and opinions to a varied audience, including peers, faculty, staff and community.**
- **Respond to audiences from different arenas either in written, spoken or signed, and artistic forms to express ideas and opinions.**

The standard established for measuring this ILO is:

**75% of students assessed will achieve a 3 or higher in each area.**

## Methodology

When Core Competency III: Communication and Comprehension (now ILO 2: Communication) was assessed during the Spring 2010 term, the methodology involved student self-ratings, teacher ratings, and a Grade-Point Average (GPA) analysis.  The Assessment of Learning Committee determined that, while interesting, the student self-ratings and the GPA analysis did not enhance the discussion of how to improve instruction related to communication.  Student self-ratings were often inflated compared to the faculty ratings of student learning.  The GPA analysis added questionable value because courses included in the GPA did not necessarily belong to a course which was related to the Communication Core Competency.

For this round, the Communication ILO was assessed in courses that have SLO's linked to it and which were scheduled to perform an SLO assessment during the Spring 2015 term. These courses emphasized communication in artistic, spoken or signed, or in written form. Selected instructors were asked to replace the rubric used to assess the SLO with a rubric developed for the ILO created by unifying common themes across the SLO rubrics.

## Sample

There were 497 sections slated to assess SLO's which were linked to the Communication ILO during the Spring 2015 semester at El Camino College Torrance campus and the Compton Center. Through a combination of random selection and volunteered selection, 113 sections were selected to submit student ratings. An attempt was made to ensure the sample included a representation of courses which emphasize each type of communication: Artistic, Spoken or Signed, and Written. Most of the sections were randomly selected. In order to boost the number of sections selected using artistic and signed communication, some instructors were asked to become part of the sample. In all 30 sections- 22 at the Torrance Campus and 8 at the Compton Center returned completed student ratings covering 610 students (margin of error ±3.95%).

## Method of Assessment

Faculty were given the Synoptic Communication Rubric created by the Assessment of Learning Committee which directed faculty to rate students' communication in terms of organization, delivery, and substantive content (see Appendix A). A rating scale of 1-5 was established with 1 being "Poor" and 5 being "Excellent" for each of the three facets for effective communication. A student needs to be scored three or higher in each facet to be considered passing the ILO. Faculty were asked to use the same activity they would have used to perform the course level learning outcome (SLO) assessment, so assessment activities varied.

Of the 30 sections that returned assessments, most were based on writing assignments, including one which used writing assignments given throughout the semester. Other assessments were based on presentations, classwork and interactions, signing, math problem solving, and a graphic design project. See Table 1.

## Table 1: ILO Assessment Methods

| Assessment Method | Number |
|---|---|
| Presentation | 3 |
| Writing | 17 |
| Class interaction | 2 |
| Signed expression | 3 |
| Math word problems | 4 |
| Graphic design | 1 |

## Assessment Results

The results of the 610 assessments completed indicate the standard of 75% of students completing all three facets was not met. While the threshold for each facet of communication was met and all three had similar results, not enough students received a three or higher across the board. The overall rate shows students successfully completed the ILO just under the standard with 72.5% successfully completing all three facets of communication, but this number is still within the margin of error for the sample. However, when looking at each facet of communication, faculty were satisfied with student performance close to 80% of the time. See Table 2.

*Table 2: Communication Segments Success Rate*

| ILO | Rate | N |
|---|---|---|
| *Overall* | *72.5%* | *607* |
| Organization | 83.3% | 609 |
| Delivery | 81.7% | 608 |
| Substantive Content | 79.7% | 610 |

ILO outcomes were disaggregated by communication type to determine if there were any differences in results based on method of communication (see Figure 1). Only 19 students were assessed for Artistic communication which is not enough to make statistically valid generalizations, but half of those assessed demonstrated difficulty with organization, though they did well with delivery and substantive content. There were 181 students assessed for spoken/signed communication and 410 assessed in written communication. Those assessing in spoken or signed communication not only passed the standard in each aspect of communication, they also passed the overall standard. Those being assessed through writing communication met the standard for each facet of communication, but did not meet the overall standard.

## ILO Pass Rate by Communication Type
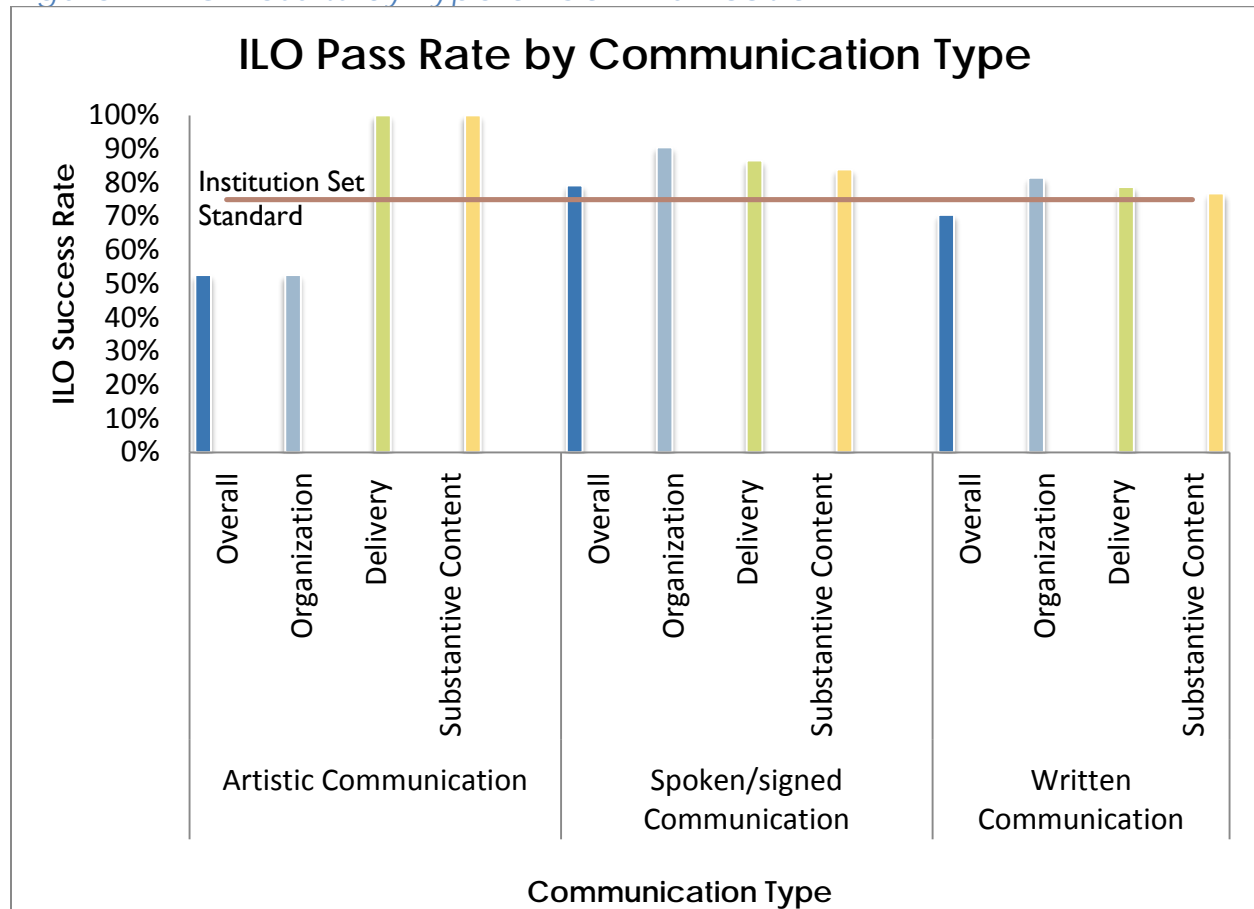


### Outcomes by groups

The results of these outcomes were disaggregated by demographic groups where possible. Data was disaggregated by gender, race/ethnic group, disabled student status, economic disadvantage, and veteran status. Because of the low response from the Artistic communication type, that group is excluded from the disaggregation, but is included in the overall ILO outcome.

Overall, there was not much difference in outcomes between males and females as can be seen in Figure 2. Seventy-four percent of the females were successful in all 3 measures of communication compared to 70% of males. Both outcomes were below the 75% standard, although females were within the margin of error. Even though both males and females were near 80% successful in each component of communication, up to 10% of the students were not able to achieve a satisfactory rating in all 3 categories (organization, delivery, and substantive content). In the chart below, females are represented by the darker shading. The "combined" rates column in each section represents the rate at which the group was able to meet the standard for all three aspects of that type of communication.

*Figure 2: ILO Pass Rate by Gender*

**ILO Pass Rate by Gender**
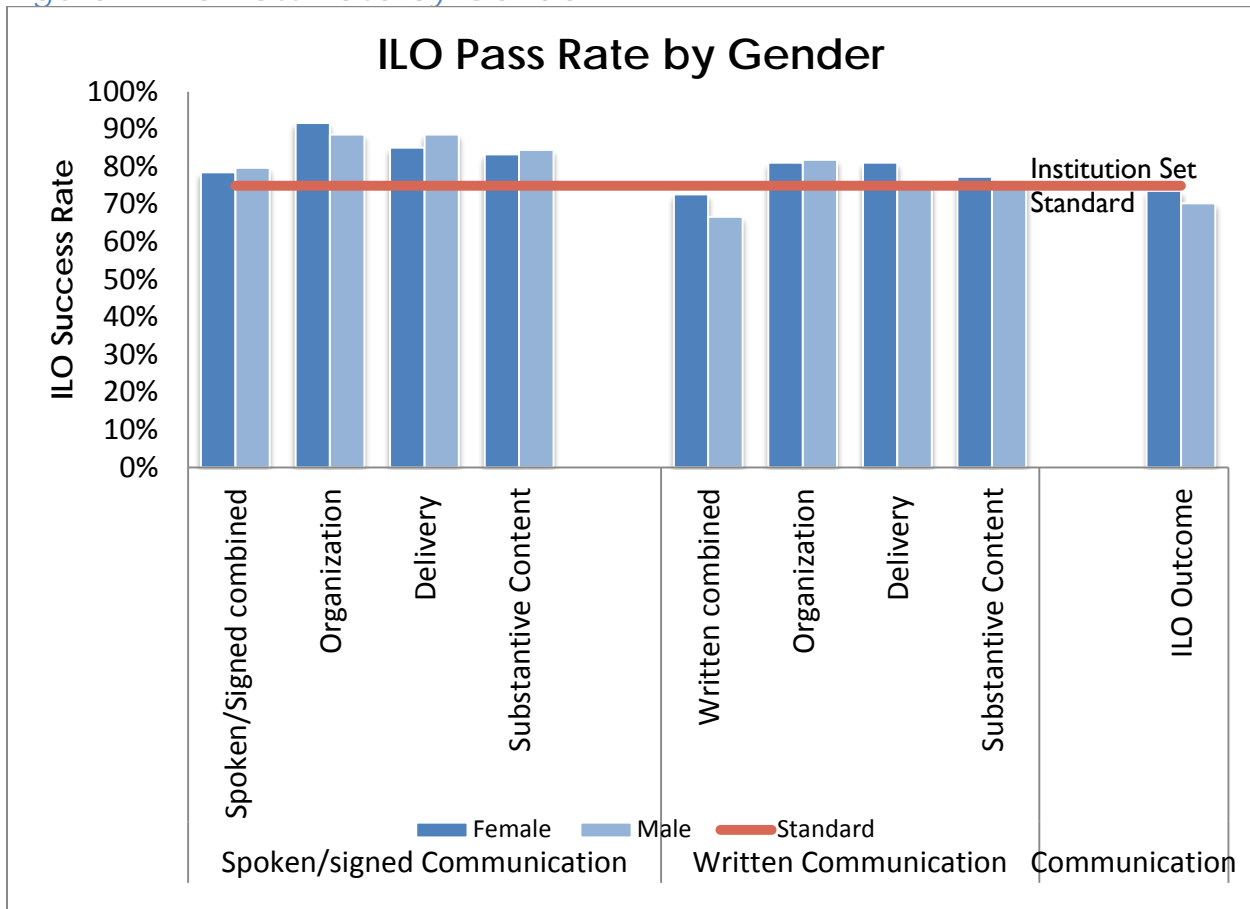


Outcomes were more varied when comparing racial/ethnic groups. African-Americans, one of the target groups in the college Student Equity Plan, had the lowest success rate in all but one category. African-Americans successfully completed the Communication ILO at 65% which is much lower than the institutional standard. The area of greatest difficulty for African-Americans in both spoken and written communication was the substantive content.

Figure 3 shows a clear difference in performance pattens by ethnic group for spoken/signed and written communication types. Asian students were the highest performing in each category for spoken/signed communication. Latinos also performed higher than White students in organization and delivery, but not in substantive content for spoken/signed communication. In written communication, White students performed the highest in each category and the success rates for Asians and Latinos dropped compared to their performance in spoken/signed communication. Like African-Americans, Asian and Latino students had the most difficulty with substantive content. White students were the only ethnic group to pass the ILO for written communication.
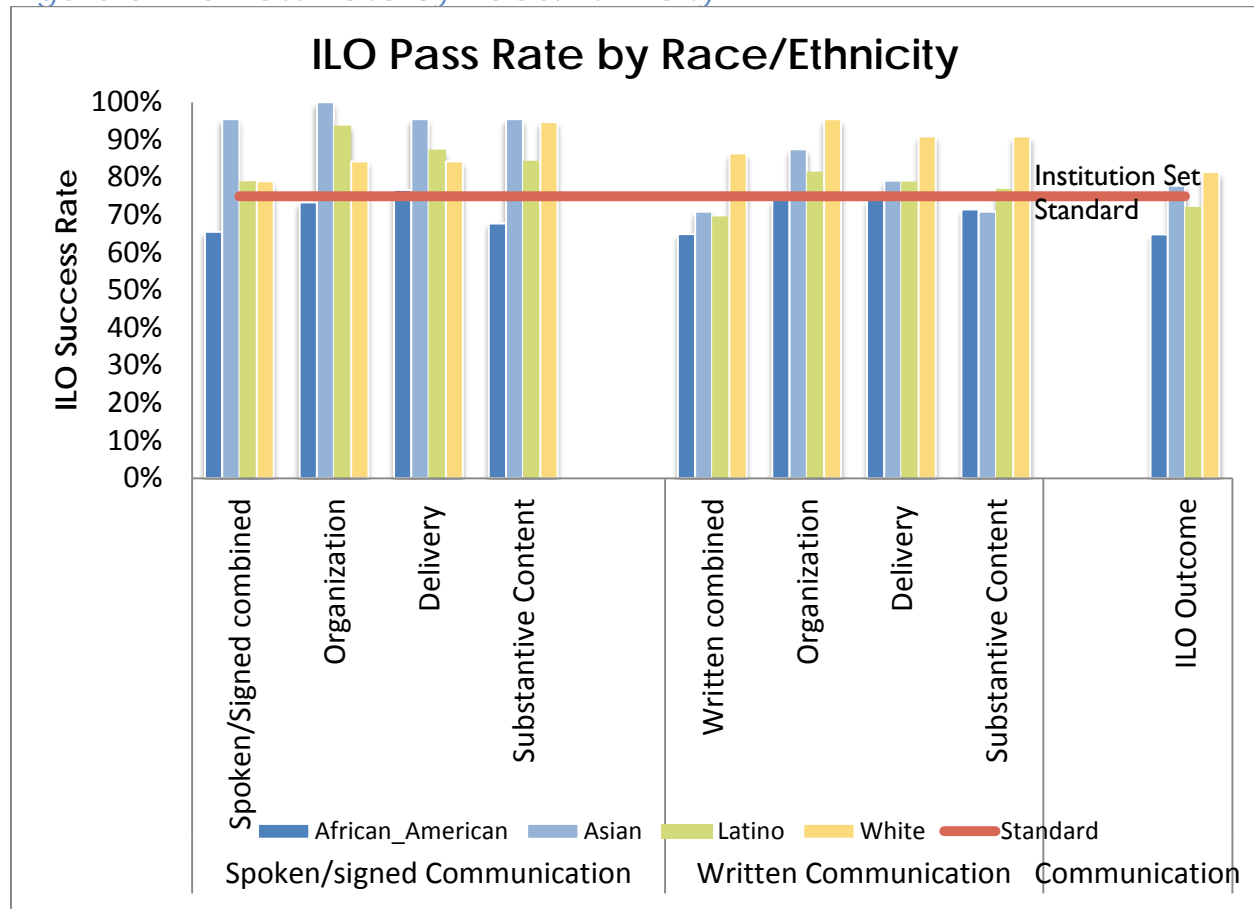
The college is required to disaggregate outcome data by veterans status, disablility status, and economic disadvantage status as well to ensure equitable outcomes are being achieved.  In many cases the sample does not include enough members of each group to disaggregate data.  For instance, only 11 veterans were identified in the sample.  Because of this, data is not disaggregated by communication type.  Only overall ILO outcomes are presented and those outcomes should be viewed for purposes of visualizing trends but should not necessarily be generalized to the entire campus.  The only groups with a substantial population which would allow for generalization are the general student group, which acts as the comparison group, and the economic disadvantaged group as identified by involvement in certain programs on campus such as EOPS and CTEA[1], as well as receiving financial aid in the way of a Board of Governor (BOG) fee waiver or Pell Grant.  Though the general group did outperform the economically disadvantaged group in each category, the difference is minimal (see Figure 4).  While the economically disadvantaged group did not meet the ILO standard, they did meet the standard in each communication component. Students identified as veterans and those students with a registered disability also underperformed compared to the general student

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[1] EOPS (Extended Opportunity Program & Services) and CTEA (Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act) are educational and student support programs whose criteria for participation include economic disadvantage, among other criteria.

group.  This is most evident in organization of communication where both groups perform much lower than the general student population.  An additional category combining outcomes for students who had a registered disability *and* were considered economically disadvantaged hints at a substantial disadvantage for those students.  While these groups individually performed lower than the general student group, combined they performed considerably lower.

*Figure 4: ILO Pass Rate by Student Group*
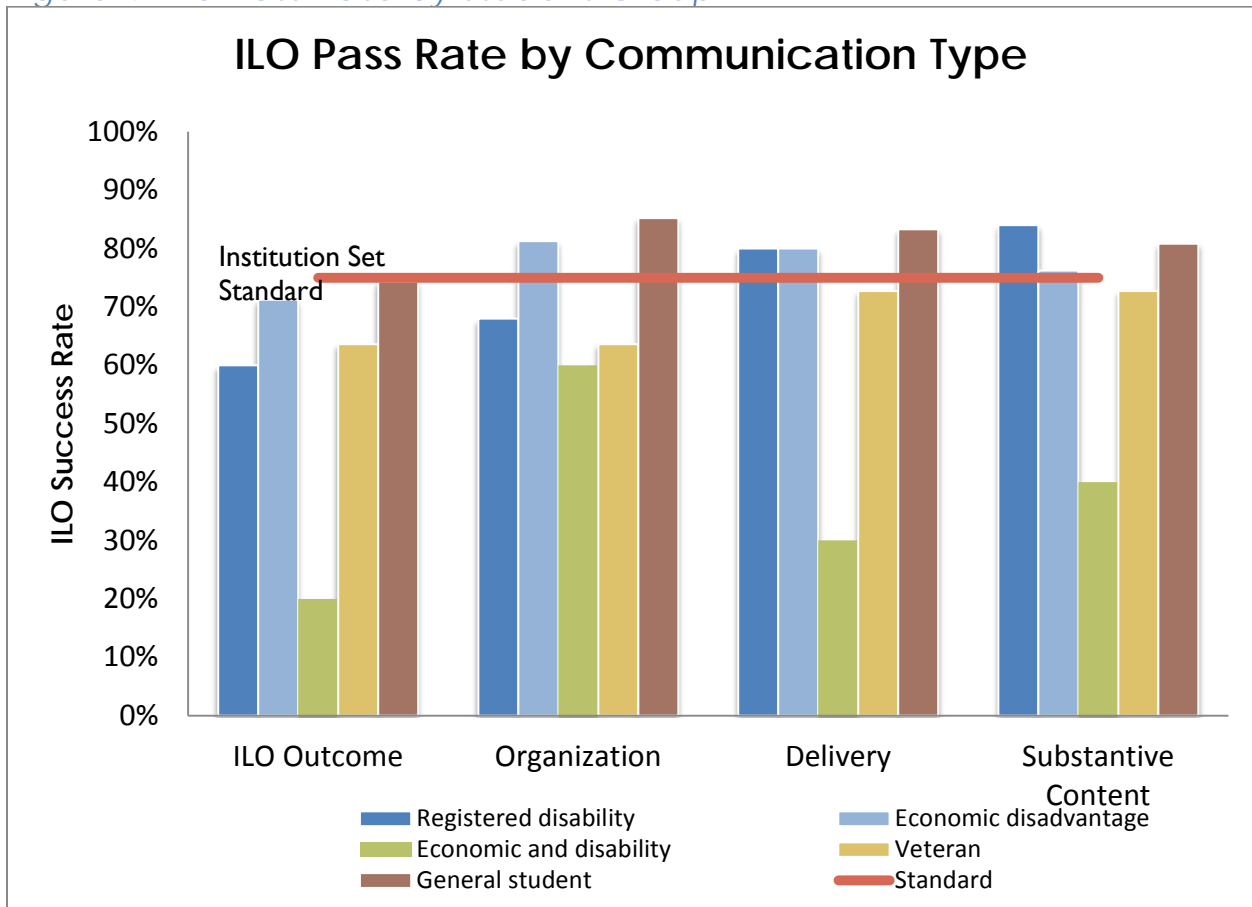


## Outcomes by units completed

Aside from demographic characteristics, ILO outcomes were also disaggregated by units completed prior to the semester.  Because of the low number of responses, artistic communication was excluded from this analysis.  Overall, there was little difference in ILO outcomes for students who had completed at least 15 units, with ILO passage rates of 76% to 78% (see Table 3).  Students with less than 15 completed units did not perform as well and did not meet the communication ILO.  While an increase in units completed correlated with an increased rate of success for completion of the ILO in spoken/signed communication, that was not the case for written communication.  The students who had completed 15 to 29 units performed the best in written communication and the other groups actually performed on par with the group of students who had completed less than 15 units.

## Table 3: ILO Pass Rate by Units Completed

| Communication Method | Units | ILO Passage Rate | Organization | Delivery | Substantive Content | People |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Spoken/ signed** | Total | 79% | 91% | 87% | 84% | 178 |
| | <15 | 59% | 85% | 71% | 71% | 27 |
| | 15-29 | 73% | 91% | 82% | 74% | 33 |
| | 30-59 | 84% | 92% | 89% | 88% | 75 |
| | 60+ | 88% | 91% | 95% | 93% | 43 |
| **Written** | Total | 71% | 82% | 79% | 77% | 409 |
| | <15 | 68% | 80% | 76% | 75% | 176 |
| | 15-29 | 78% | 86% | 84% | 82% | 120 |
| | 30-59 | 68% | 79% | 80% | 76% | 71 |
| | 60+ | 69% | 81% | 74% | 74% | 42 |
| | | | | | | |
| **Overall** | <15 | 66% | 80% | 75% | 75% | 206 |
| | 15-29 | 76% | 86% | 84% | 80% | 156 |
| | 30-59 | 76% | 85% | 86% | 83% | 152 |
| | 60+ | 78% | 85% | 86% | 85% | 91 |

## Instructor Analysis

Instructors were asked to discuss some of the issues they saw with each communication component.  While instructors felt most students did fairly well, there were some overarching issues which need to be addressed in order for students to succeed.  In terms of *organization* of a communication, the most common problem students had was developing transitions for their ideas.  A lack of cohesive transitions between sentences or paragraphs disrupted the flow of the ideas being communicated.  Other students had problems developing a thesis statement.

In looking at *delivery* of communication, the most common problem indicated was poor grammar.  Other delivery problems which were prevalent involved voice.  This refers to both the intonation of the speaker as well as the formality.  Many students spoke with monotone voices or with improper inflection, or had poor sign execution.  In writing, some students used a familiar rather than academic voice to try to convey their ideas.

Instructors had an issue with student ability to provide support through research and to correctly cite sources when it came to issues of *substantive content*.

## Conclusion

The evaluation of Institutional Learning Outcome #2: Communication provided some insights which can be used to improve communication instruction.  The college fell short of meeting its goal of 75% ILO success, but the outcomes were within the margin of error.  Problem areas which can be addressed are student understanding of the rules of grammar and proper use of research to support ideas.  Added emphasis in these areas could help improve outcomes.  This is particularly true for the substantive content portion.  Instructors were asked about support

services used.  Many listed tutors and the Writing Center, but few listed library services as resource.  The Writing Center is available and able to help students incorporate research into their writing, but librarians are available to work with instuctors to show students how to find the resources that can inform their writing.

The ILO results also show a clear difference in outcomes for African-Americans compared to other racial/ethnic groups.  African-American performance was comparatively low regardless of gender.  There is a body of research which discusses issues of communication patterns related to African-Americans[2].  It is possible that some of the issues creating the gap between African-American and White or Asian student performance is related to differences in these language patterns.  Training instructors to recognize these patterns and giving them tools to help students switch between African-American Vernacular English and Standard English may also help improve outcomes for African-American students.

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[2] Two examples to start with are:
Labov, William. 1972. *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Baugh, John. 1999. *Out of the mouths of slaves: African American language and educational malpractice*. University of Texas Press.

## Appendix A: Synoptic Commnunication Rubric: Assessment of ILO #2 – Spring 2015
## Standard: 3 or higher in all areas is considered successful

| Communication Trait | 1 Poor | 2 Below Average | 3 Satisfactory | 4 Above Average | 5 Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organization<br>• Thesis/purpose<br>• Flow of ideas<br>• Intro/body/conclusion<br>• Artistic composition<br>• Grammatical structure/linguistics | **Not executed;** does not have clear structure or organization | **Somewhat executed;** some portions have clear structure and organization | **Mostly executed;** most portions have clear structure and organization | **Majorly executed;** majority of portions have clear structure and organization | **Fully executed;** all portions have clear structure and organization |
| Delivery<br>• Verbal, Syntax<br>• Non-verbal<br>• Shows awareness of audience<br>• Technical skill<br>• Phonology, correct pronunciation, non-manual signs, parameter | **Not executed;** does not use appropriate syntax, technique, non-verbal cues, etc… | **Somewhat executed;** some use of appropriate syntax, technique, non-verbal cues, etc… | **Mostly executed;** mostly used appropriate syntax, technique, non-verbal cues, etc… | **Majorly executed;** majority use of appropriate syntax, technique, non-verbal cues, etc… | **Fully executed;** full use of appropriate syntax, technique, non-verbal cues, etc… throughout |
| Substantive Content<br>• Adequate and appropriate data<br>• Research/support/ evidence<br>• Accuracy of content<br>• Artistic creativity/ originality<br>• Lexicon, vocabulary | **Not executed;** does not demonstrate sufficient research, sound data, or original thought | **Somewhat executed;** Some demonstration of sufficient research, sound data, or original thought | **Mostly executed;** mostly demonstrated sufficient research, sound data, or original thought | **Majorly executed;** majority demonstration of sufficient research, sound data, or original thought | **Fully executed;** full demonstration of sufficient research, sound data, or original thought throughout |

## Appendix B: Courses included in analysis

The following courses had ratings submitted for the Communication ILO analysis.

ART-101
ART-102B
ART-141
ART-205B
CIS-13
ENGL-20A
ENGL-36
ENGL-A
MATH-130
MATH-150
MATH-37
MATH-40
MATH-73
NURS-154
SLAN-111
SLAN-112
SLAN-200