

Members of the Board and Colleagues:

Think for a moment about the role public speaking plays in your career. In fact, didn't your presentation skills contribute significantly to you reaching your current position? Few would deny that solid communication skills are essential qualities in business today.

In public speaking classes, our students learn to construct and support a strong thesis as well as develop their critical thinking abilities and build a logical argument. Equally important, mastering the art of impromptu speaking provides practice in thinking quickly and responding constructively, and is invaluable during the interview process. I fear that if speech is relegated to the Flexible Core, many students won't enroll partially due to fear and also because they don't realize how essential this skill is to their success.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook 2012 survey reports that strong verbal communication skills are consistently ranked among the top personal skills and qualities employers seek in job candidates. At the City University of New York, particularly at the community college level, our goal is to equip graduates to be workforce ready. Given the competitiveness of this new economy, our students need every possible advantage as they move into their careers, and we will shortchange them by not including a communications requirement in the General Education core.

One Pathways proposal is to incorporate public speaking into other courses. If we don't require a dedicated class to public speaking, I question if there will be adequate time and attention allotted in other courses to the essential elements of supporting an effective speech with it being only one of several course objectives. Presentation skills are polished as a result of having to speak consistently throughout the semester with constructive feedback.

In closing, let me give a brief example of my previous student, Karen Lopez, who enrolled in public speaking class in September. At the conclusion of that semester, she was awarded a scholarship from the New York Needs You organization, which required her to present a speech on the importance of the scholarship to her future. Karen was required to deliver her speech at the headquarters of one of the sponsors—Goldman Sachs. Karen ultimately was chosen as an ambassador for the program to recruit other students, and has also spoken to high school students on the importance of going to college. This is a student who began her first public speaking class in September, and within four months she was speaking before Goldman Sachs.

The confidence and ability to speak in public professionally is often the gateway to future opportunities. Hopefully, the committee will re-evaluate their decision in the best interests of the students.

Respectfully submitted,  
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