

# **Public Speaking Resource Center Proposal**

**Presented to  
Dr. Emily Simmitt**

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There is a lack of accessible resources for students to practice, improve, and learn public speaking skills at the University of Oregon. Students place significant value on public speaking education but don't often get the opportunity to improve unless they commit to ten-week courses, expensive clubs or time consuming activities. The proposed program would provide students with the opportunity to become more confident in their public speaking skills in a safe, low commitment space.

## **Goal of the program**

Our goal is to create educational and accessible resources to increase public speaking literacy across campus. As of now, there are no known places on campus for students of all fields of study to hone in on their oral communication skills. Ideally, a resource where any student can receive guidance for public speaking events of all formats—academic speeches, presentations, interviews, etc. would be a large asset to the UO campus.

## **Objectives**

- Increase Students' Public Literacy
- Establish a space where students feel empowered to speak up and use their voices
- Relevant to all fields of study
- Free and accessible

### **→ Suggestions for Implementation**

- Course training for student volunteers
- Student-led one on one tutoring
- Various appointment lengths
- Workshops
- Guest alumni speakers
- Mock interviews
- Help at all stages: composition, argument, delivery and rehearsal

## **Research findings**

We conducted a survey composed of 21 questions to gauge where students of all different backgrounds and identities stand with public speaking. The survey was taken by students in all different fields of study, including Advertising, Philosophy, Physics, Autism Development, Biology, Public Administration, English, Art, Education, Global Studies, Dental, Architecture, Product Design, and more. Of the respondents,

- 55 individuals said that public speaking is a learned skill, rather than a natural talent, and they said they would like to improve their public speaking.
- Only about 13% of participants claim to never participate in public speaking.
- One of the most telling pieces of data we collected was that 21 participants said they would use a public speaking resource if the university offered one, 30 said maybe, and only 10 said no.

The majority of these findings from the survey support the creation of a public speaking resource on campus, especially with the overwhelming majority wanting to improve their public speaking literacy.

### **Other College Examples**

Stanford's Hume Center for Writing and Speaking has tutors available for both writing and public speaking assistance at any stage in the process of an assignment. Oral Communication Tutors (OCT's) are available by appointment and are equipped to help students with a variety of speaking goals. Students can specify what they need help with, whether it be an oral presentation, or mock interviews.

The University of Tennessee opened its Public Speaking Center in 2016. From John Haas, associate professor and director of the School of Communication Studies at UT, "The fear of public speaking is consistent across a number of studies," explaining how the center had been a work in progress over time.

In 2021, fourth year student, Chris Obolensky, at the University of Virginia felt his school lacked a place for students to improve their public speaking skills, and took that issue on as his to solve. The final product of Obolensky's work is what now goes by the UVA Speaking Center. The center allows students to make 15-minute, 30-minute, or hour-long appointments with student-volunteers who run the center.

### **Conclusions**

We, as students, felt it necessary to spend 10+ weeks researching and finding data to advocate for a center dedicated to supporting UO student's public speaking literacy. Again, we, as students, can confidently say we will utilize this resource and would have used it if it had been around when we arrived at the UO.

From the data we collected through our survey, and the research of other colleges' success with public speaking support, we feel confident this is a resource that would make an impact at the UO.

## **REFLECTION:**

Public speaking is a great skill that we thought people wouldn't think were going to have the perception that it was important enough to be taught. After the survey we discovered that a lot more people valued public speaking, and that they would use the public speaking tutoring program as a resource. As well as how many people agreed that we need this tutoring center here at the University of Oregon. We saw this even at the Undergraduate Symposium, which was very nice, because the support seems to be there for this center. With that being said, with all the support we got from students, classmates, Dr. Emily, I think this resource would be beneficial for the University. Especially with the survey, people would use this resource, and I think we would positively impact the community. In the University of Oregon toastmasters, they gave us their support as well. Coming from the club, we have very hungry people that have committed their time and effort every week to improve their public speaking. With a tutoring center like toastmasters that is free, I think we would create a great supportive environment that a lot of students would benefit from. Like said in this proposal, we see that the community will benefit from learning public speaking literacy from writing a speech to presentation skills. I resonate with the students in the survey that said they have speech anxiety, and this center providing a place that is supportive and helps you practice would help students including myself to battle this anxiety. Since public speakers are seen to be confident, we would get a center where we can learn to be confident and find confidence. Since the University of Oregon also doesn't provide many classes on public speaking, hopefully this will start something new. I have only taken one public speaking class here, and honestly, I did not get a lot from it. This center will help those who need the practice outside of class to practice their speech skills. This will also include other class help. In my business classes, we have given speeches, and we did not get the practice needed to feel comfortable. So, we would have to do it on our own, which isn't too bad, but this center would definitely help those in need of the advice and critique of others on how to improve their public speaking skills. Since communication is such an important part of every career, our University would even benefit from producing better public speakers. I think having this program will help those in the community communicate any of their ideas or concerns. This can include protests, innovation, and so much more. This would greatly benefit any community, especially the University of Oregon with things like awareness of movements, and problems within the community. Being able to communicate and have a voice for a community is powerful, and any organization, program, or community would benefit from this, especially if they got practice communicating their message effectively like in the tutoring center.

## **BIO:**

My name is Tristan and I am from Oceanside California. I am the Vice President of Public Relations for the Toastmaster Club, Philanthropy Chair for the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity, and majoring in Business Administration. Ever since high school I have always looked up to motivational speakers like Les Brown and Tony Robbins for their ability to public speak. So, I

have taken the challenge to become a better public speaker while in college, joining the Toastmasters Club, and the WSCR minor in the hopes to one day become a great public speaker.