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An In-Depth Review of ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences

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ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences

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Abstract

This portfolio reviews the class, ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences. This is junior-level class required for students majoring in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Communication (AESC) and is an elective for students minoring in AESC or in Leadership and Communication. The class was also approved as a required class for the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (ALEC) major that is anticipated to launch in Fall 2022. As a core requirement for ALEC, the enrollment is anticipated to increase from 25 students to 50 students a year. This class focuses on practical presentations strategies that connect to students' careers. Learning activities in the course include discussions, informal and formal presentations, and a variety of additional hands-on activities and demonstrations. Student evaluation comments supported that students enjoyed the active learning strategies utilized in the class and appreciated the detailed assignment feedback. Additionally, self-reported data indicated students felt more competent in all major skill areas taught in the class, including creating visuals, sounding and looking confident, and organizing presentations. Some students indicated they would appreciate more presentation opportunities in the future, but most liked the class how it was currently taught. To address the expected increase of enrollment in the future, a graduate teaching assistant has been secured for this class. Another improvement to this course is the addition of virtual reality programs to allow students to practice their presentations. Assignments and content will also be adjusted in the future to best meet the needs of the students enrolled in ALEC 305.

Keywords: presentations, science communication, public speaking, agriculture

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Memo #1

Key Goals in Creating a Portfolio

I am hoping to use this portfolio to improve the quality of my class, **ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences**. The portfolio will also be useful in ensuring the class is meeting the needs of my students since they represent a variety of majors and backgrounds. I would also like to use it to justify to my department the need for a graduate teaching assistant to help facilitate “recitations” for class so we can increase enrollment while still allowing students to practice in-person presentations. Finally, I would like to include this portfolio as part of my review for promotion and tenure.

Course Description

ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences is a course that prepares students to deliver engaging presentations through various modalities and for different types of audiences. The course is currently part of the core curriculum for Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Communication (AESC) majors. The course is also an elective for both the AESC minor and the Leadership and Communications minor through the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (ALEC). Additionally, the Leadership and Communication minor is required for students studying Hospitality, Restaurant, and Tourism Management (HRTM). Students participating in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resource’s Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (CUSP) also take this class to fulfill requirements for their selected minor. These students are from Rwanda, and English is a second language for many of them.

Starting in Fall 2022, ALEC 305 will serve as one of three “core” classes for students in the newly approved ALEC major, which includes options in AESC, agricultural education, and leadership education (AESC will no longer be a stand-alone major). ALEC 305 does not have any pre-requisites, nor does it serve as one for other classes. Ideally, students taking this class would be juniors so they have firm grasp of the concepts they are presenting (students select topics related to their major/career) and would be prepared for professional presentation opportunities in their senior year.

This class fits cohesively into the AESC curriculum with its focus on presentation strategies. It will also provide support to the new ALEC major as the only course focused on presentation strategies. However, the fit within the leadership and communication minor is somewhat unclear. Additionally, if the course stays focused within the context of agriculture as the name suggests, it would not support HRTM students appropriately. While all students should learn effective presentation strategies, discussing potentially contentious topics, like climate change or genetically engineered food, present unique challenges that should be addressed in this

class. If focused within this context of agriculture, this class would definitely support the goals of my program and department along with the science literacy initiative through IANR.

Course Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this course is to teach students “Presentation strategies used in agribusiness, education, government and public service. Attention to audience needs, organization, methodology, and technology when presenting about agricultural and environmental sciences.”

By the end of this course, student will be able to...

1. Demonstrate the proper use of presentation aids (visuals, voice, dress, etc) to complement the presentation;
2. Implement strategies to engage audiences in two-way communication;
3. Analyze presentations and provide constructive feedback to improve personal presentation skills; and
4. Demonstrate proficiency in delivering both formal and non-formal presentation.

A full syllabus for this class can be found [HERE](#).

The learning objectives represent the tangible skills I hope students can take away from my class. This is not a “public speaking” course, so the focus is less on our voice and presence in the room (which is still covered) and more on the tools and strategies we can use to make our presentations memorable, impactful, and engaging. I also want students to engage in a variety of different types of presentations, including an elevator pitch, webinar, and workshop facilitation. The goals are structured into the course through in-class activities as well as presentations the students complete. While some goals may be associated with only one or two learning assessments, the goals build on each other, so students are not being presented with all this information at one time.

Based on my experiences with students, they have limited opportunity to *learn* how to deliver presentations even if given ample opportunities to give presentations. In spring 2020, I learned the majority of my students did not know how to use PowerPoint and only used Google slides. I also found the students were somewhat uncomfortable in adding audience engagement to their presentations and had limited experience with delivering elevator pitches for jobs. I believe this class will help these students gain the confidence needed to secure future jobs and present information to employers or stakeholders in a clear and engaging way.

Why This Course?

I selected this course for the portfolio because I knew it would be used at the core class for the ALEC major and enrollment would significantly increase. There were 25 students enrolled in spring 2020, and it was somewhat difficult to schedule presentations. Not including the AESC and leadership and communication minor students, we are expecting between 45-50 students

needing to take this course each year moving forward. While this is not a “large” class size, the presentation aspect of this course poses problems. I think there could be some creative solutions to this issue I would like to explore through this program. Another issue I would like to address is the name of the course and the course description. Currently, the name is focused on presenting to agricultural audiences, which I would argue would reinforce echo chambers we see in the industry. I believe it may be appropriate to adjust the name to include the ANR context but not make the audience so narrow.

One of the key aspects of this course I would like to capture is how applicable the information is for the students. Quite a few reported the elevator exercise helpful while attending the UNL career fair and the class was in agreement the Webinar assignment had set them up for success in other classes when everything went remote later in the semester of spring 2020. Additionally, the students reported learning more about visual communication in our one-hour lesson on visual aids related to presentations than any other class they had completed.

Memo #2

What teaching methods (e.g., lecture, group work, question/answer) are you using during your contact time with students?

During my contact time with the students enrolled in ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences, I spend approximately 30% of the time lecturing and 70% of the time engaging students through active learning strategies, like demonstrations, discussions, group work, inquiry-based learning, and hands-on application of course materials. I tell my students they are in my class to learn, not to hear me talk for 90-minutes. I do my best to provide various activities that give them ownership over their learning so they can make meaning of the material within their own contexts. For example, rather than giving students a lesson on different strategies they could use to engage audiences in their presentations, I break my students into groups and task each group to research engagement strategies to teach back to the class. This allows them to gain meaningful insight into the topic area. Additionally, we will often watch different TedTalks, and I invite the students to critique the presentations. These discussions help the students to identify presentation strategies they should practice or avoid opposed to me alone telling them what they should or should not be doing. We also use class time for quick, informal presentation practice, like giving a toast or facilitating a discussion. These are all activities that provide me a formative assessment for how my students are understanding the key learning outcomes in my class related to presentations. These formative assessments also allow me to adjust my teaching to focus more on areas they may struggle with when needed.

Because this is a presentations class, we also use our contact time to practice delivering formal presentations. These formal presentations allow me to provide students a summative assessment for what they have learned in class. I can also engage all students during presentations by having the “audience” provide guided peer feedback to the presenter. I have found this strategy allows all students to continually reflect upon their own skills and learn new strategies to implement in future presentations. Additionally, presentations are all recorded, and presenters are asked to write a reflection based on their presentation experience and recording. Students often overestimate how much their nerves show during presentations, so watching themselves can help boost confidence more often than not. Writing a reflective piece also allows students to celebrate their successes while having them critically think about steps they can take to improve their presentations in the future.

What course activities outside of class (e.g., projects, laboratory experience, internet exercises, practica, or group work) are you using?

The course activities I give students outside of class have been created to help better engage them during our class time and to demonstrate the skills they have learned throughout the semester related to presentations. In a typical semester, this class would have weekly

discussion posts the students complete in groups of five to six. The posts contain the course readings/resources and ask students to respond to specific prompts. I use these discussion posts to get students to start thinking about that week's concepts before class. Typically, we discuss the readings at the beginning of class, or I ask students to elaborate on their responses to help get them ready to learn that day. Aside from the discussion posts, students also have "presentation preparation" activities, like submitting outlines or slides for presentations the day before they present. This helps them practice thoughtful planning for their presentations opposed to preparing right before class.

What course materials (e.g., textbooks, course notes) are you using?

The supporting materials used for this class are all integrated into the various in-class and out-of-class activities. These materials are mostly posted with the weekly discussions that students are asked to respond to prior to class. Some materials may be used during class to have students analyze or summarize. There is not a textbook for this class, so most of the materials come from blogs, individual book chapters, or videos. All class PowerPoints are also provided in Canvas for students to download before class and to make notes where needed.

What is the rationale for the methods you have chosen?

All assignments and activities for the class align with the course objectives. When designing the course's curriculum, I broke the semester into multiple modules, each leading to a major presentation. During that module, I made sure each lesson focused on or reinforced skills students would need for the presentations. I wanted to give students ample opportunities to practice (and sometimes struggle) on low risk assignments so they could work through any challenges before their major presentations.

My teaching philosophy closely aligns with Kolb's Experiential Learning Model. The activities students engage in allows them to actively experiment with the content from class and build personal meaning from the experience. Within communications courses, project-based assignments are common. While tests and quizzes are not necessarily rare, I believe it is most critical for students to demonstrate competency in presentation skills opposed to being able to answer theoretical questions about public speaking. Another strategy I use with my teaching methods is to scaffold the major assignments so each new one adds new material while reinforcing prior information. For example, the first presentation is an elevator pitch that allows students to focus on content and delivery. The second presentation is a webinar that adds in the use visual aids. The third presentation is a persuasive presentation that tasks students to think about their body language and audience engagement. The final presentation is a workshop that requires students to once again demonstrate skills from their prior presentations, but a strong emphasis is placed on audience-centered communication and workshop evaluation. Throughout the semester, students engage in reflective exercises as well to help them consider how they will continue to use what they learned in the future.

How do your course choices link to the broader curriculum?

Most of the courses in the Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Communication program emphasize audience analysis and audience-centered communication. This class reinforces that idea and teaches students how to deliver presentations to target specific audiences. This class is also useful to all students and will be helpful for any other classes in their curriculum where they will need to deliver a presentation. I allow students to choose the topic for their presentation and desired audience as long as it is related to their major/career goal. This helps to prepare students for their future career by practicing delivering presentations within those specific contexts. Additionally, the elevator pitch presentation allows students to practice a vital skill before a career fair or job interview, and the webinar assignment is a portfolio piece they can use to demonstrate their presentation skills during the job search process.

How has this class changed from previous years?

I took over teaching the class in spring 2020. It was previously taught by a lecturer twice a year with a cap of 15 students per semester. We decided to offer it once a year to allow me to teach additional courses in the “off” semester, but this would also require me to increase enrollment size if the class were offered once a year. I taught 24 students in spring 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow me to complete the semester as I had originally intended. Because I have yet to experience a “typical” semester with this course, I am open to making changes to the format and assignments where needed.

Memo #3

Analysis of Student Experience

In Spring 2021, ALEC 305 was taught as two sections with 11 or 12 students enrolled in each section. In a “typical” semester, this class would meet as a group of 24 students twice a week for 75 minutes. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this class had to be separated into two smaller sections to account for social distancing limitation. The class was taught in a “flipped” format where students watched a short lesson and completed a “class prep” activity before attending a 90-minute meeting once a week. This class format allowed students to engage in new material on their own time during the week so the class meeting time could focus on hands-on activities, discussions, and presentations opposed to lectures.

Out of the 23 students in the class, 10 were taking the class as part of their major in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Communication (AESC) and 13 were enrolled to fulfill their minor in AESC or in Leadership and Communication. The class had a mixture of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Additionally, six of the students spoke English as a second language, which some noted caused concern for their presentations.

Throughout the semester, I focused on building students’ confidence when it came to public speaking through my communication and feedback. I also attempted to make the class engaging through active learning strategies. This teaching strategy connected with students, and many students made note of their learning experience on the course evaluations.

Comments on the course evaluations included:

- “Lessons were always very relatable and easy to understand. I **learned a lot about myself as a presenter** in this course because Dr. Ruth made the class very interesting and fun to participate in.”
- “Throughout the course Dr. Ruth gave us numerous opportunities to engage through different presentations. We **gained real life experience** giving elevator pitches, webinar, persuasive presentations, and hosting a workshop. **Class was engaging, and information was useful and attainable.**”
- “I like the feedbacks you provide on the assignment. This **feedback helped me to do better on the next assignments** and they contain tips that I will use in my career.”
- “There was always **individualized feedback for each assignment and helped me build my presenting strengths** for future assignments.”

- “The **support and interactions provided in this class are nothing short of essential**. It is an amazing experience every day I get to sit in your class. You extend grace without question, and that has been the most beneficial to my learning this year as my other professors have piled on assignments, deadlines, and exams and made me feel less than valuable in some respects.”
- “I think it's very beneficial that Dr. Ruth is **constantly providing opportunities to participate in the class**. For me personally I think this makes the class a lot more fun to participate in and is also making it a more **fun learning environment**.”

Analysis of Learning Outcomes and Assignments

The learning outcomes for ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences were as follows:

1. Demonstrate the proper use of presentation aids (visuals, voice, dress, etc) to complement the presentation;
2. Implement strategies to engage audiences in two-way communication;
3. Analyze presentations and provide constructive feedback to improve personal presentation skills; and
4. Demonstrate proficiency in delivering both formal and non-formal presentation.

Throughout the semester, students completed four major presentations:

1. Elevator Pitch (3 minutes, in-person presentation with no visual aid)
2. Webinar (5 minutes, online presentation with visual aid)
3. Persuasive Presentation (8 minute in-person presentation with visual aid)
4. Workshop (15 minute, in-person, group presentation with visual aid and audience engagement)

Each presentation was recorded, and students were required to write a short reflection about the presentation. Students also provided written feedback to other presenters about what they did well and what could be improved. There were also multiple in-class presentations that counted toward participation. These informal presentations included:

- Facilitating a discussion
- Giving a toast
- Responding to impromptu questions

To help assess these learning outcomes, students completed a survey at the beginning and end of the semester that asked them questions about their perceived competence in a variety of skill areas to measure any changes in their skills ($n = 22$). These findings, along with student

reflections, and course evaluation data/comments, have been reported for each learning outcome to assist in the assessment of ALEC 305.

Learning Outcome #1: Demonstrate the proper use of presentation aids (visuals, voice, dress, etc) to complement the presentation.

All of the activities in the class aligned with the first learning outcome in some capacity. Prior to recording their online webinars, students were required to submit a draft of their visual aid that was graded for use of fonts, colors, and overall layout. Students were able to create striking visuals for their presentations that would complement their topic and would not be distracting to the audience. An example of a visual aid draft can be found [HERE](#).

The pre and post-survey also demonstrated students gained competence in creating effective visual aids, as demonstrated in [Figure 1](#). By the end of the semester, 95.5% indicated they were extremely or somewhat competent in creating effective visuals compared to 72.8% at the beginning of the semester. When asked what they learned in class this semester, several students discussed visual aids:

- **“Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.”** This is something that has severely inhibited me when I create presentations or other projects. I have a cool idea in my head and work way harder than I should to make it happen, instead of just keeping it simple.”
- **“I will use the creative design tools I learned when it comes to making presentations to “spice” up my presentations as I continue to give them.”**

Throughout the semester, we also had several lessons talking about how to sound and look confident during presentations. Students were taught about pacing and volume when talking to an audience and we had discussions about body language and dress for our presentations. Students demonstrated improvement in these areas over the semester and many commented on this being an important skill that they had learned:

- **“[I learned] how to present in a way that's comfortable to me and works for me, and how to have less anxiety when speaking in front of people.”**
- **“One thing I learned was using body language to your advantage. Do something because there is a purpose not just to do it.”**
- **“Learning about confidence and presenting myself well through body language is very beneficial to my future career.”**

The pre and post-survey supported that students believed they were more confident in these areas as well ([Figures 2](#) and [3](#)) After completing the class, 81.9% believed they were somewhat

or extremely competent at sounding confident during a presentation compared to 59.1% before the class. Similarly, 86.3% indicated they were somewhat/extremely competent at looking confident while presenting after completing the course compared to 63.6% before the class.

Learning Outcome #2: Implement strategies to engage audiences in two-way communication.

Students were taught various strategies for engaging their audiences in two-way communication during their presentations, including using programs like Mentimeter and poll everywhere, and traditional strategies like discussions, think-pair-shares, etc. Students needed to include a two-way communication activity into their final workshop presentation, and students utilized a variety of strategies discussed in the class. A [Workshop proposal](#) for one of the groups has been included in the Appendix that outlines the various audience engagement strategies the students used.

Students commented that these audience engagement strategies were some of the most important things they learned this semester, saying:

- “I learned a lot about **how to make a presentation interactive so that it sticks** in people's minds.”
- “I **learned how to facilitate discussions** without becoming a part of the discussion and being overbearing as well as looking out for people who might not be participating as much.”

The pre and post survey for class also indicated students felt more competent in including audience engagement activities in their presentations ([Figure 4](#)). Prior to taking the class, 63.6% of the class believed they were extremely/somewhat competent at engaging their audience during a presentation while 95.5% were extremely/somewhat competent in this skillset after completing the class. Similarly, 57.1% believed they were extremely/somewhat competent at facilitating a discussion before taking the class, and 90.9% believed they were extremely/somewhat competent at facilitating a discussion after completing the course ([Figure 5](#)).

Learning Outcome #3: Analyze presentations and provide constructive feedback to improve personal presentation skills

Students had several opportunities to provide constructive feedback for presentations during the semester. In a typical semester, students would have been asked to write a critique for a presentation they attended that semester. However, COVID-19 decreased the opportunities to see live presentations, and the condensed semester made it challenging to fit this assignment this semester. In its place, a short, class preparation activity was introduced that asked students to critique an assigned online webinar. The activity asked students to comment what the presenter did well and what they could improve and to identify what they learned from the

video that could translate to their presentations. Below are excerpts from students' critiques detailing what they had learned from watching the presentation:

- "I will **definitely make sure to have well designed and appealing slides**. Although the content was there, I didn't feel inspired to read the slides."
- "I am going to make sure that I try to talk with passion during my Webinar. Also, I **would like to include examples/stories like he did during his**, which helps the audience connect to something they have done/seen."
- "I also **see how important audience engagement is now**. I will certainly be developing a poll or some thought provoking questions during my presentation to make sure I keep my audience on track and focused."

Students also filled out critique cards for each other's presentations during the semester to provide suggestions for how the presenter could improve and to share what they did well. After each presentation, students were asked to watch a recording of their presentation and to submit a one-paragraph reflection identifying what they did well, what they found challenging, and what they hoped to improve in the future. Below are excerpts from student reflections:

- "**Another thing I felt that I did well was not let the nerves get to me**, while this is something I felt that I did well, I did find it challenging to not let my voice waver. I have always had this happen, no matter what kind of speaking that I do. My throat constricts and makes it hard to finish saying a word or phrase. I also find it challenging to talk in front of peers, but overall, I found that **I did better than I thought** I did."
- "To improve my persuasive presentations, **I'll try not to move around or sway a lot, since that's what almost everyone suggested I work on**, and I can't agree more."
- "First of all, I would **like to have a more structured movement pattern so that I don't stand in the same spot as long**. I noticed that I stood in the same exact spot for almost the first four minutes of my presentation. To go along with this, I need to slow my pace just a little. I really get rolling, but need to incorporate a few more breaths and breaks to let the audience process information."

Learning Outcome #4: Demonstrate proficiency in delivering both formal and non-formal presentation.

Students were asked to complete a variety of formal (persuasive presentations, webinars, workshops) and non-formal presentations (elevator speech, delivering a toast, facilitating a discussion) over the semester. Students were asked which of the four major presentations they delivered was the most helpful in preparing them for their future careers, and 47.8% identified the persuasive presentation, followed by the webinar (36.4%), elevator pitch (9.1%), and the workshop (4.5%).

By the end of the semester, 81.8% of the students believed they were extremely competent at clearly organizing a presentation compared to only 18.2% before the semester ([Figure 6](#)). Additionally, students' perceived competence in delivering an online presentation, persuading people in a presentation, and teaching a new skill increased by the end of the semester ([Figures 7, 8, and 9](#)).

Student comments related to delivering different types of presentations included:

- “This is one of the classes that I may say has helped me **develop practical skills and confidence for being able to prepare for and present different topics in different settings to an audience**. I believe that in the future whether I am presenting in the organizing I will be serving or within my own business, this class has given me a chance to prepare for occasions where I need to present my ideas.”
- “I thought that **learning about facilitating discussions** was very beneficial. I think this is because it is **not something we talk about often in any classes**.”

Student Suggestions for the Future

Students were asked to provide suggestions for any activities, lessons, or types of presentations they believed would be beneficial to include in the class in the future during the end-of-the-semester survey. Several students said, “I don't think **there is a lot more that would need to be included in this class**, I thought it was really helpful overall,” and “none that I can think of; everything covered in the class was very helpful and enlightening.” There were a few comments about adding one more in-person presentation that could be “an informative” or “how-to” presentation. Other suggestions included adding a “presentation where you're **giving a pitch and trying to sell a product**” or a “product promotion presentation.”

Some suggestions also included more informal presentations like “Q&A sessions, interviews, and toasts” for impromptu presentations. Additionally, several students suggested adding a lesson on how to deliver a “**business meeting presentation**” or a “a casual update presentation like you would have in a meeting.”

In the course evaluations, a couple of students commented on the challenge of the class, stating “I did learn lots in this course, and it was nice to be able to have a stress-free class where I was able to learn effectively in, however, **I think maybe it could be a little more challenging**. I think that would still make it fun and useful, however, I would be driven to work harder.”

Analysis of Grades and Grade Trends

The average in the class was a 94.6% and the distribution of semester grades can be found in [Figure 10](#). The grade distribution was skewed toward A's, with four students receiving a grade of B+ or below.

Portfolio Summary

Course Successes and Opportunities

Upon reviewing the data collected in the Spring 2021 semester of ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences, there was enough evidence to support the class was currently meeting the learning outcomes outlined for the course, but there were opportunities for improvement as well.

Class Success

Students reported a perceived increase in competence across major skill areas taught in the class from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester. Additionally, students demonstrated a variety of presentation skills throughout the semester during in-class presentations and learning activities. At the end of the semester, students were asked to report what three things they learned in ALEC 305, and students mostly identified how to use visual aids, present with confidence, how to engage audiences, and how to present in different settings. These skills reflect the course learning objectives and further supported the class was meeting those objectives.

The class was taught in a flipped format for the first time this semester to accommodate for COVID-19 restrictions. While none of the students commented on the format of the class in course evaluations, the lack of comments would indicate no one had any major issues with the format. Students did indicate throughout the semester and in course evaluations they appreciated the communication and feedback in the class, which was an additional success.

As an instructor, it was personally rewarding to see students' comments support my teaching philosophy without me having directly shared the philosophy with the students. Comments on my evaluations reflected the active learning strategies I use in class and how I try to make students feel included and valued. I was happy to see this effort translated to my students' experiences and they commented on my approach as a strength for the class. Additionally, I want to make sure what I teach can translate to students' career goals, and many commented how this class was extremely applicable to their future.

Class Opportunity

Students provided excellent feedback about how the course could be improved in the future. Several students commented how they wished they had more opportunity for in-class presentations and would be interested in adding different types of presentations, like a business pitch, to the class. When asked which presentations were the most useful for their career goals, a limited number of students selected the Workshop presentation. There may be an opportunity to adjust or remove this assignment in the future to open time for additional

presentations. A newly approved class will be offered in my department that teaches about designing workshops and will be required for AESC majors, so removing this assignment will likely not have a major impact on students' overall experience in the program.

Another opportunity for this class could be to increase the rigor/challenge of the assignments. Some students commented on the challenge associated with the class and how it could be increased but did not provide specific recommendations. Additionally, the grades were skewed toward As, supporting that the class may have been "easy". I think there are potentially ways to increase the rigor of the presentation rubrics for this class, but I am currently hesitant to make the class more difficult only for the sake of making it difficult. For many students, the simple act of speaking in front of a group is challenging enough. Additionally, the majority of students successfully met the objectives of the class, which is why the grades were high. I believe there are opportunities to add additional presentation activities that would increase the value of the class without simply adding busy work to increase the overall "challenge." I also want to be careful to not make the class challenging to the point where it is stressful for students presenting since one of my main goals for the class is to build their confidence with public speaking.

Future Plans and Description of Changes

After completing this review of my course, I am extremely excited about the changes I have planned for 2022. The first major change is to the course name – **ALEC 305: Presentation Strategies to Communicate Agricultural and Environmental Sciences**. This name change removes the context of only presenting to agricultural audiences and helps to increase the applicability of the class to a variety of students. This name change has been approved and will be implemented for spring 2022.

An additional major change to the course will be the delivery format. There had been an increase in demand for ALEC 305 due to rising numbers in the AESC minor and the course requirement for the future ALEC major. Part of the reason I implemented a flipped class design this semester was to experiment with what the class might look like in the future with recitation meetings of smaller classes (12 students). Presentation classes are somewhat limited by the number of students/presentations you can fit in one class meeting, so I needed to explore ways to increase enrollment without increasing the class meeting size. **I was able to approach my department chair and share my idea to teach the class as a lecture plus recitation, with the recitations taught by a graduate teaching assistant.** This format would mostly follow the setup from this year, with the online content converted to being taught by me, in-person, during a weekly meeting with all students enrolled in the class. Small recitations would be led by a TA each week where students could then engage in various activities and deliver their presentations. **The GTA was approved, and we are excited to implement this format change in spring 2022.**

Due to the number of ESL students enrolled in the class, I have also been thinking of ways to better support them as they prepare for presentations. Because students indicated they

wanted more opportunity for practice, **I submitted a proposal to the Center for Transformative Teaching and was awarded a grant to secure a set of virtual reality goggles and a VR program that will allow students to practice presenting in virtual settings.** The VR program will provide students with data at the end of each presentation, including percent eye contact with audience, count of filler words, and words per minute. This is a novel teaching strategy that I am excited to integrate into the course that I believe will help support my course learning outcomes and increase students' overall confidence in presenting.

Based on student feedback and performance, there are a few changes to assignments/course content that I will implement in the future as well:

- Adjust *Elevator Pitch* assignment to an "Interview" where students will meet with me and/or the TA to deliver the pitch and answer interview questions for a job. This will allow them to practice their pitch along with impromptu speaking.
- Add a lesson and activity on facilitating a business meeting.
- Clarify students can use their *Persuasive Presentation* to deliver a business pitch and provide an additional lesson on this type of presentation.
- Expand the lesson on facilitating discussions. This could potentially be an additional "presentation" the students deliver to the class.

Lessons Learned from Program

This program served as a refresher for the teaching and learning classes I had taken during my graduate education. I was taught from the beginning to use backwards design while developing my classes, but I had rarely taken the time to collect the data at the end of the semester to determine whether my learning activities supported my class objectives. This program helped me to think through that evaluation piece of teaching to increase the visibility of the students' learning and to make adjustments when needed.

Because I was strategically thinking through this class more than I had in the past, I was able to proactively engage in discussions and submit proposals that resulted in the addition of a graduate teaching assistant and virtual reality program that will allow me to teach even more students in novel and engaging ways.

ALEC305

Presentation Strategies for Agricultural Audiences (Section 001)

Spring 2021



Tuesdays
2 pm - 3:30 pm | ACB 102

Dr. Taylor Ruth

Assistant Professor



taylor.ruth@unl.edu



402-472-8701



218 Filley Hall



By Appointment

WHAT WE LEARN

Presentation strategies used in agribusiness, education, government and public service. Attention to audience needs, organization, methodology, and technology when presenting about agricultural and environmental sciences.

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate the proper use of presentation aids (visuals, voice, dress, etc) to complement the presentation;
2. Implement strategies to engage audiences in two-way communication;
3. Analyze presentations and provide constructive feedback to improve personal presentation skills; and
4. Demonstrate proficiency in delivering both formal and non-formal presentation.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES



Canvas:

All readings, assignments, grades and resources will be posted on the course page throughout the semester. Students are expected to check Canvas frequently and are responsible for monitoring their grades on the system.



Remind 101:

This course uses Remind 101 for notifications for upcoming assignments, materials needed, and any other class reminders. All students are required to register for the semester.

Send a text to **81010** and enter the code **@ALEC305a** in the body of the text.

Note: There is no required text for this course.

COURSE FORMAT

Please see below for details about the class format this semester.

Hybrid Class Format:

- Part of the class is online and part of the class will be in person
- All new material will be posted to Canvas each week for you to prepare for class
- Online class preparation activities will be due on Mondays
- **We will have in-person meetings each Tuesday** to give you time to practice and apply your presentation skills

Weekly Class Preparation:

All lectures, readings, and activities for class will be posted to Canvas. You will have weekly, online activities throughout the semester you will need to submit through Canvas in preparation for Tuesday's class. These **activities will all be due at 11:59 pm on Monday** the week they are due.

Class Participation & Engagement:

Tuesday will be considered our class time and will give us a chance to apply the concepts we discussed throughout the prior week. Additionally, this time will be used for delivering presentations and providing peer feedback.

If a class activity is completed at the beginning of class and you are late, you will receive 50% credit if you made it in time to complete the assignment. If you do not make it in time to complete the assignment you will receive 0%.

Students may join class via Zoom if they are ill, quarantined, or have a university excused absence. **Students will not receive full credit if they Zoom into class for reasons other than those outlined above and without prior approval.** Additionally, **work will NOT be a valid excuse** for missing class.

Please make sure you **bring your laptop to class each week** to be able to complete the class assignments.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

- Each student can **miss ONE CLASS** without penalty, no excuse needed (not including presentation days)
- Any University excused absences must be presented to your instructor **one week** prior to the event.
- Please speak with me about any other excuses at least one week prior to missing class.
- **Failure to let me know ahead of time you will be missing class will result in loss of participation points.**
 - Extreme/unexpected circumstances are exceptions to this rule.
- You will have **one week upon returning to class to make-up in-class assignments or presentations for approved absences.**

{ If you are feeling sick at all, please stay home! You do NOT need a doctor's note to make up your participation points, but you do need to send me an email ahead of class letting me know you will not be there. }

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

All assignments will be submitted electronically through Canvas. Assignments will be graded and commented on by your instructor through Canvas. Directions for proper submission should be followed for each assignment.

When submitting assignments on Canvas, ensure you do the following:

- Your assignment is **submitted on the due date by 11:59 pm** unless otherwise stated.
- If you have technical issues submitting your assignment through Canvas, then you are to immediately e-mail your assignment to your instructor before the deadline.
- Technical difficulties will not be an excuse, so plan to submit before the deadline.

Submissions for In-Class Presentations:

- An outline/PowerPoint for in-class presentations will be submitted the Wednesday before presentations start (see assignment rubrics for specifics)
- A **reflection will be submitted within 24 hours of in-class presentations** through Canvas

Late Policy

- 10% will be deducted each day late
- Assignments are **not be accepted after 3 days late**

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Canvas Announcements:

Each Wednesday, I will send out a Canvas announcement detailing what we will be covering in class that week. This announcement will include 1) a weekly overview, 2) a weekly to-do list, and 3) any course updates or assignment feedback I would like to provide to the class.

I recommend forwarding your Canvas announcements to your UNL email so you do not miss anything!

Email:

All emails for class should be sent to taylor.ruth@unl.edu. **Do NOT use Canvas to send me emails.** For each email, please use "**ALEC305: [Topic]**" in the subject line. Emails should also include a greeting and signature.

When asking a question about class or about assignments, please include what steps you have taken to try to answer this question for yourself first.

Please be sure to check your UNL email regularly!

Remind Texts:

I will use Remind to send out assignment reminders or to update you on class changes that are time sensitive. Please only use Remind to contact me during emergencies or quick questions during work hours (9 am - 5 pm).

COVID-19 INFORMATION

My job as your instructor is to make sure we all have a safe and productive semester. To ensure the safety of everyone in our classroom, UNL and the ALEC Department have created a set of guidelines we are asking all students, faculty, and staff to follow.

Please do the following things before and during class:

- Wear a **face mask**.
- Use hand sanitizer available in the halls or wash hands with water and soap for 20 seconds.
- Stay at least 6 ft away from other people.
- Refrain from sharing items or food in the classroom.
- Follow your instructor's directions about where to sit.

Individuals who fail to follow these safety precautions will be asked to leave the building and will lose participation points for the day. For more information, please visit the official UNL policy posted in Canvas.

Please visit the links below for UNL's official policies regarding COVID-19:

- **Face Mask Policy:** <https://covid19.unl.edu/face-covering-policy>
- **Participation Policy:** <https://www.unl.edu/facultysenate/Course%20Attendance%20and%20Engagement%20Expectations%20Guidance%20for%20Spring%20and%20Summer%202021.pdf>

What happens if classes are changed to remote learning during the semester?

- You will receive a Remind text from me if we ever are unable to meet in person this semester.
- We will continue to meet at your scheduled class time each week via Zoom

Please **let me know if you or a close family member become infected with COVID-19** this semester, and we will make a plan that works for your situation.

COVID-19 can impact our lives beyond illness (work, stress, income, etc.) - please let me know if you are experiencing any difficulties with completing assignments and we can adjust your due dates.

Students will continue to wear masks while giving presentations. Please see below for some tips to help you feel the most comfortable this semester while delivering your presentations.

- Our faces have bigger expressions when we are presenting to an audience and projecting our voice. This can cause a mask you might normally have no issues with to move around on your face. This can become very distracting while trying to give a presentation!
- Find a mask that is easy to breathe in and large enough to completely cover your nose and chin.
- Make sure the mask isn't too big so you don't suck in the fabric as you take breaths during the presentations.
- Researchers have recommended the paper masks actually make it easier for people to hear you.
- Practice your presentation while wearing your mask once you know the content!

Visit <https://covid19.unl.edu> for the latest information.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

As the instructor, I am committed to helping you improve your skills related to delivering presentations. To that end, you can expect constructive feedback on your assignments and an opportunity to apply that feedback on future assignments.

I expect punctual attendance, collegial class participation, on-time submission of assignments, and honest effort.

Electronics Policy:

I expect you to be an active participant in class. If you are not using your electronics for academic purpose or you are distracting others, you may be asked to leave class.

Course Prerequisites:

None

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. The University's Student Code of Conduct addresses academic dishonesty. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision.

{ **Be aware of self-plagiarism. This includes re-using any written work, data, photos, or videos that you have previously completed.** }

CLASSROOM EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE INFORMATION

- **Fire Alarm** (or other evacuation): In the event of a fire alarm: Gather belongings (Purse, keys, cellphone, N-Card, etc.) and use the nearest exit to leave the building. Do not use the elevators. After exiting notify emergency personnel of the location of persons unable to exit the building. Do not return to building unless told to do so by emergency personnel.
- **Tornado Warning:** When sirens sound, move to the lowest interior area of building or designated shelter. Stay away from windows and stay near an inside wall when possible.
- **Active Shooter**
 - **Evacuate:** if there is a safe escape path, leave belongings behind, keep hands visible and follow police officer instructions.
 - **Hide out:** If evacuation is impossible secure yourself in your space by turning out lights, closing blinds and barricading doors if possible.
 - **Take action:** As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter.
- **UNL Alert:** Notifications about serious incidents on campus are sent via text message, email, unl.edu website, and social media. For more information go to: <http://unlalert.unl.edu>

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 232 Canfield Admin. Bldg.; 402-472-3787.

COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

UNL offers a variety of options to students to aid them in dealing with stress and adversity. Counseling and Psychological & Services (CAPS); is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively with Nebraska students to help them explore their feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve their mental, psychological and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached by calling 402-472-7450. Big Red Resilience & Well-Being (BRRWB) provides one-on-one well-being coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached by calling 402-472-8770.

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center, located in 102 Andrews Hall and satellite locations from 5-7 pm in Adele Hall, is a free service for all UNL students, faculty, and staff. You can work with an individual writing consultant on any type of writing at any stage in your writing process. For an appointment, call 472-8803 or schedule online.

CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Because the topics in this course may be emotionally charged or challenging for class members, I hope we can create an environment that is both intellectually productive and supportive for all. I realize there might be days when class members may choose to be silent. Beyond verbal participation, your active and supportive listening is also an important and valuable form of participation. I hope that we will continuously reflect upon our class processes so that we can build an inclusive intellectual community where all feel valued and supported in their learning.

SYLLABUS DISCLAIMER

Serious effort and consideration were used in formulating the syllabus. While viewed as an educational contract between the instructor and student, unforeseen events may cause changes to the scheduling of assignments, lectures, etc. I reserve the right to make any changes deemed necessary to best fulfill the course objectives. You will be made aware of any changes in a timely fashion using reasonable means.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

A	93.00% - 100.00%	C	73.00% - 75.99%
A-	90.00% - 92.99%	C-	70.00% - 72.99%
B+	86.00% - 89.99%	D+	66.00% - 69.99%
B	83.00% - 85.99%	D	63.00% - 65.99%
B-	80.00% - 82.99%	D-	60.00% - 62.99%
C+	76.00% - 79.99%	E	Below 60.00%

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	PRESENTATION DATES	PERCENTAGE
Elevator Pitch	2/8	2/9	5%
Visual Aid (Draft)	2/22	-	10%
Webinar	3/8	-	15%
Persuasive Presentation	3/22	3/23 & 3/30	20%
Workshop Proposal	4/26	-	10%
Workshop	-	4/27	20%
Class Prep	Varies	-	10%
Engagement & Participation	Varies	-	10%
TOTAL			100%

Grade Disputes:

All grade discrepancies are to be addressed with your instructor within one week of the assignment being posted to Canvas.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Online Prep	In-Person Class	Due Before Class
1	1/25	-	Course Overview + Telling a Story	
2	2/1	Pitfalls of Presentations + Audience Analysis	No Class	Week 2 Class Prep
3	2/8	<i>Practice Elevator Pitch</i>	Elevator Pitch* Audience Analysis Cont.	Elevator Pitch Outline
4	2/15	Structuring Your Presentation	Visual Aids	Week 3 Class Prep
5	2/22	Integrating Technology	Peer Review - Visual Aid Effective Presentations	Visual Aid (Draft)
6	3/1	Critiquing Presentations	Communicating Without Words	Week 6 Class Prep
7	3/8	<i>Work on Webinar</i>	Persuading People	Webinar
8	3/15	Prepping for Presentations	Speaking on the Spot	Week 8 Class Prep
9	3/22	<i>Practice Persuasive Presentations</i>	Persuasive Presentations*	Persuasive Presentation Slides
10	3/29	Presenting to Educate	Persuasive Presentations Cont.*	Week 10 Class Prep
11	4/5	Developing a Proposal	Engaging Your Audience	Week 11 Class Prep
12	4/12	Facilitating Discussions	Facilitating Discussions	Week 12 Class Prep
13	4/19	Looking to the Future	In-Class Work Time	Week 13 Class Prep
14	4/26	-	Workshops*	Workshop Proposal

*A one-paragraph reflection is due within 24 hours of delivering presentation.

CATTLE BODY CONDITION SCORING

The importance of your cows'
BCS at spring calving.



**Current Weather
Emphasizes
Importance**

**ELM CREEK, NEBRASKA
-36 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT**

01

Main Points



BCS

What is body condition scoring?

THE COW

How does proper BCS impact cow health and rebreeding?

THE CALF

What is the impact on the cow's BCS at calving on calf health and future?

THE ECONOMICS

What is the economic importance of a proper BCS at calving?

What is Body Condition Scoring?

- **What does it measure?**
 - Monitors nutrient reserves
 - Monitors adequacy of a nutritional program
- **How it is measured?**
 - 1-9 scale
 - Physical evaluation
- **When is the best time to have it measured?**
 - Weaning





TOO THIN at BCS of 3

Visible Backbones and Pins
Spine Visible
Muscle Atrophy
Ribs Visible

IDEAL BCS of 5

Spine NOT Visible
Pins Slightly Visible
Only 12-13th Ribs Visible



03

THE COW

How does a proper BCS ensure cow health and rebreeding?

- Energy Requirements During Cold
- Ensures Lactation Readiness
 - BCS of 5 or 6 increases IgG levels in colostrum
- Impact on Rebreeding and Reproduction
 - Lower Post Partum Interval at 55 Days
 - 30-40% Higher Pregnancy Rate

04



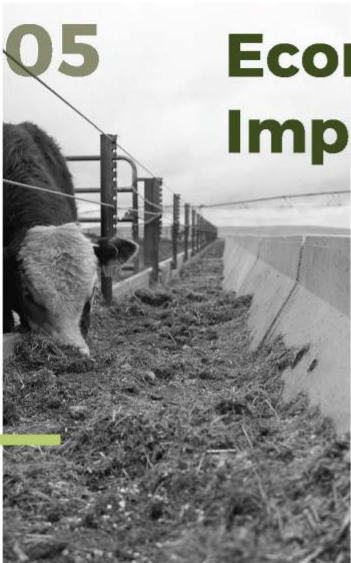
THE CALF

How the Cow's BCS at Calving Impacts the Calf

- **Calf Health**
 - Less Susceptible to InUtero Venereal Disease
 - Lower Abortion Rate
- **Impact on Dystocia**
 - Lower Calf Loss
- **Impacts Colostrum and Calf Immune System**
 - More and Higher Quality Milk
 - Stronger Immune System
- **Calf Weaning Weight**
 - Stronger at Birth
 - 70 lb higher WW

05

Economic Impacts



FEED COST IMPACTS

- Higher Cost for Higher BCS
- Waste Money with BCS Higher Greater than 7

REBREEDING RATES

- Without Calf = Lose 15% of Cow's Value
- Longer Post Partum Interval Impacts

CALF SALES

- Heavier Calves = High Total Price
- More Consistent Calves at Weaning

Importance of Body Condition Scoring

01

WHAT IS BCS

02

HOW BCS IMPACTS
THE COW

03

HOW BCS IMPACTS
THE CALF

04

ECONOMIC IMPACTS
OF BODY CONDITION
SCORING



Attention Livestock Producers

- Should you be feeding harder?
- When will you score your cows?

With these frigid temperatures, it is more important than ever to ensure that your cows are at a proper BCS to boost calf health, rebreeding rates, and meet your bottom line.

**Are your
cows at a
proper BCS
this calving?**



Praying for you this calving season!

Workshop Proposal Example

Context

Your boss at [Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship] is soliciting workshop proposals related to [meaningful conversations] to be presented at an upcoming [personal development retreat] for [young adults].

Workshop Purpose

The purpose of this workshop is to help young adults build interpersonal skills that facilitate meaningful interactions among their peers, teams, and families. This unique framework is essential to engaging in deeper than surface-level conversations. During this workshop, we will teach young adults to understand the acronym BRAVE, curate their own questions, and initiate a brave conversation. In the young adult stage of life, it is important that individuals communicate their emotional thoughts and needs, and this workshop will give the information necessary to perform this communication.

Audience Analysis

Educational Need

Our audience needs to learn how to facilitate BRAVE conversations in order to be able to connect deeply with others. These skills hold the key to connection, creativity, productivity, and our ability to thrive in diverse environments.

Demographics

Our workshop is going to be focused mainly on college-aged individuals around 19 years old and up to those in their mid 20s. This age group is most likely to be involved in an on-campus organization with their peers and hold similar interests and/or life experiences. Our workshop is primarily intended for women because the framework resides on a foundation of

woman-centered research. However, the workshop is open to all genders. Ethnicity, income, and occupation does not play a significant role in our audience because of the well-distributed diversity on campus.

Psychographics

Our audience values having a group of close friends, what others perceive of them, and portraying a stable physical and emotional lifestyle. Our audience believes they are the only young adult struggling in their friend group with life's happenings. This audience is often over-worked and under-supported throughout their college career. Currently, these individuals have advanced interpersonal skills for engaging in cliché to ideas/judgements conversations, but not the skills necessary to reach peak communication.

Workshop Objectives

Objective 1: By the end of the workshop, 80% of participants will understand and be able to explain the BRAVE acronym.

Objective 2: By the end of the workshop, 95% of participants will have completed a take-home reminder card containing the BRAVE acronym and two self-written example questions.

Objective 3: In the six months following the workshop, 60% of participants will have engaged in a minimum of one BRAVE conversation.

Materials Needed

- PowerPoint slides
- 15 printed deliverables
- 15 printed courtesy cards
- 15 breakfast snacks

- 15 coffee pouches
- 15 disposable coffee cups to contain all materials

Learning Outcomes

Outcome 1: Define and explain the purpose of each letter of the BRAVE acronym.

Outcome 2: Formulate two unique questions that align with the BRAVE framework, one opening question and one reflecting question.

Outcome 3: Create a deliverable to use as a reminder of BRAVE conversation guidelines to be able to implement conversations in your daily life.

Outline of Content

Interest Gaining Approach (2)	Welcome participants to the workshop and show a one-minute video clip of Elisabeth to inspire and brief them. Outline the learning outcomes and activities we are going to achieve.
Activity 1 (3)	Give some context of the video and have them reflect on how it made them feel or what they thought – have one person share back to the class. Ask questions about the types of conversations they have daily and have them write down how they choose to respond, then have them pair and share their responses. Pass out the coffee cups.
Activity 2 (3)	Define the BRAVE acronym using a PowerPoint and GIFs. Imagination session of the environment of BRAVE conversations. Share examples of opening feelings question. Take one minute to

	fill out applicable areas on the deliverable.
Activity 3 (3)	Share three sets of example questions with the group via PowerPoint and have them select the one that aligns with our teachings. Explain the why behind the selections. Brainstorm a question to write on the deliverable with a new partner.
Wrap Up (2)	Recap the BRAVE framework, show a clip of impact stories, and answer any final questions the audience has.
Learning Assessment (2)	A short multiple-choice survey relative to the framework, environment, and wordage. A quick look around the room to see that deliverables are complete and that they are taken home.

Evaluation Plan

At the end of the workshop, we will place a QR code on the screen that links to a quick survey over what they learned. Questions include:

- What does 'B' stand for in the acronym BRAVE?
- What does 'R' stand for in the acronym BRAVE?
- What does 'A' stand for in the acronym BRAVE?

- What does 'V' stand for in the acronym BRAVE?
- What does 'E' stand for in the acronym BRAVE?
- Why is feedback not included in these conversations?
- What can make people feel comfortable in the environment?
- Which question best represents a deep, introductory question?
- What question did you come up with to use in your next BRAVE conversation?

Figure 1. Perceived competence to create effective visual aids

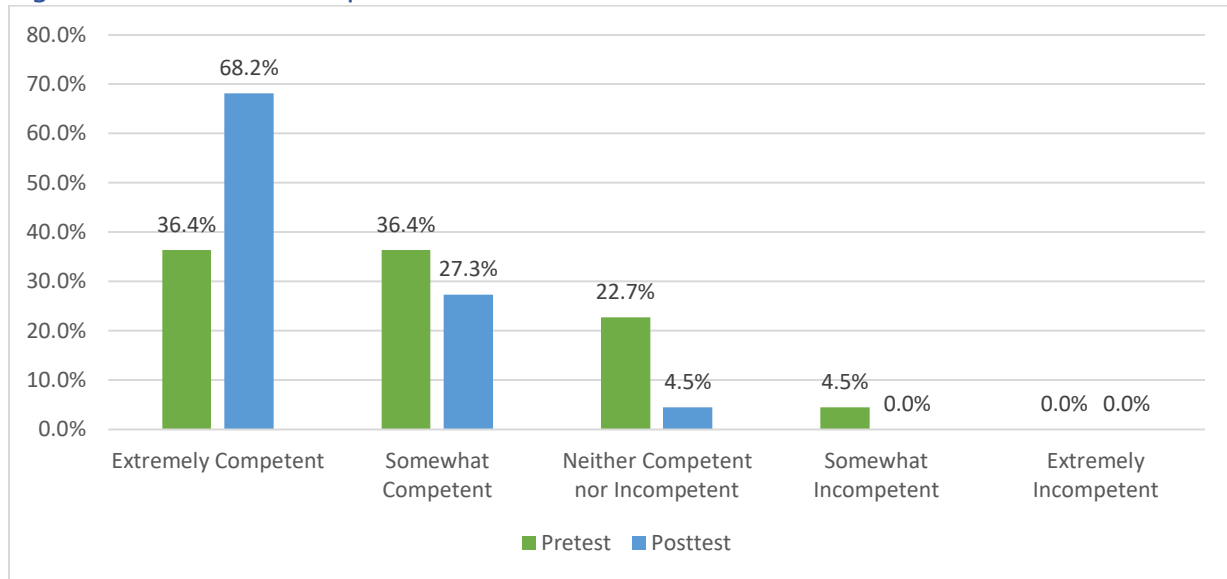


Figure 2. Perceived competence to sound confident during a presentation

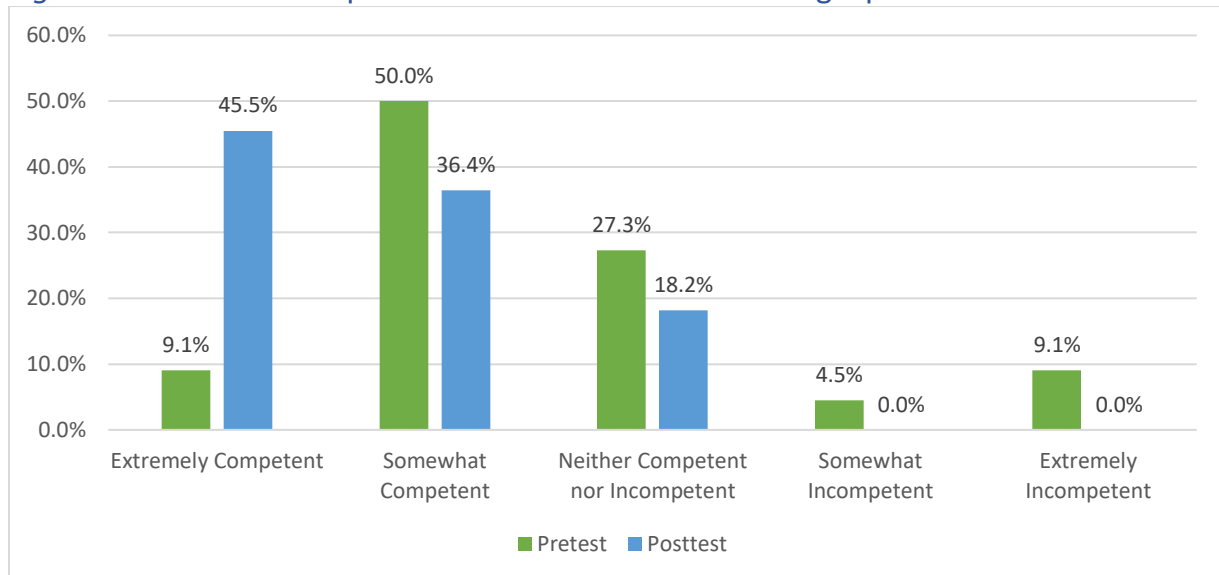


Figure 3. Perceived competence to look confident during a presentation

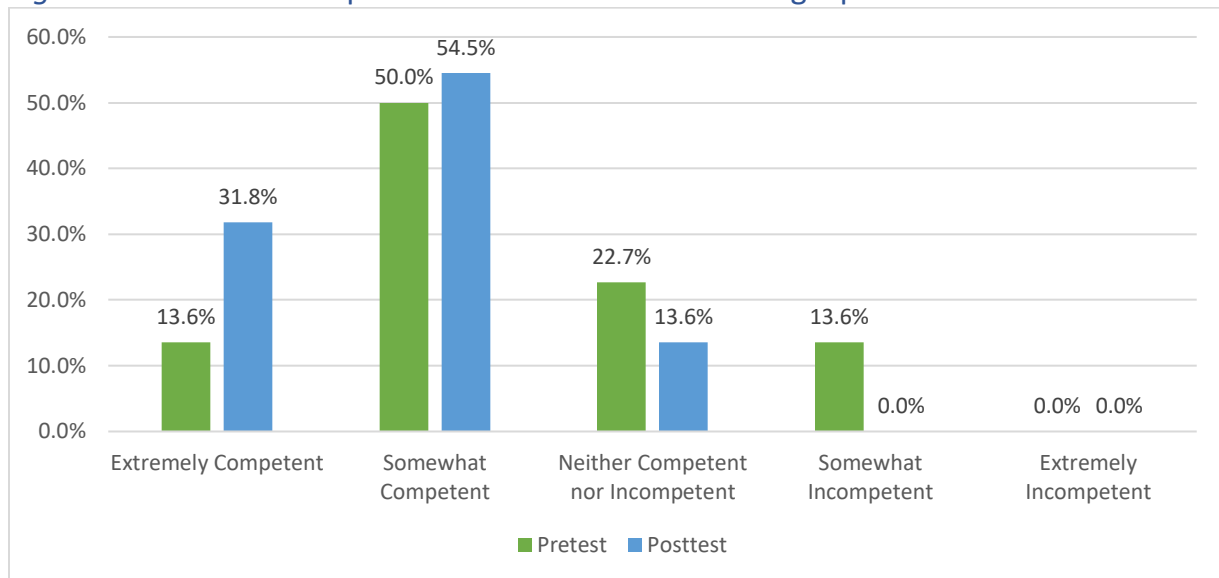


Figure 4. Perceived competence to engage audience during a presentation

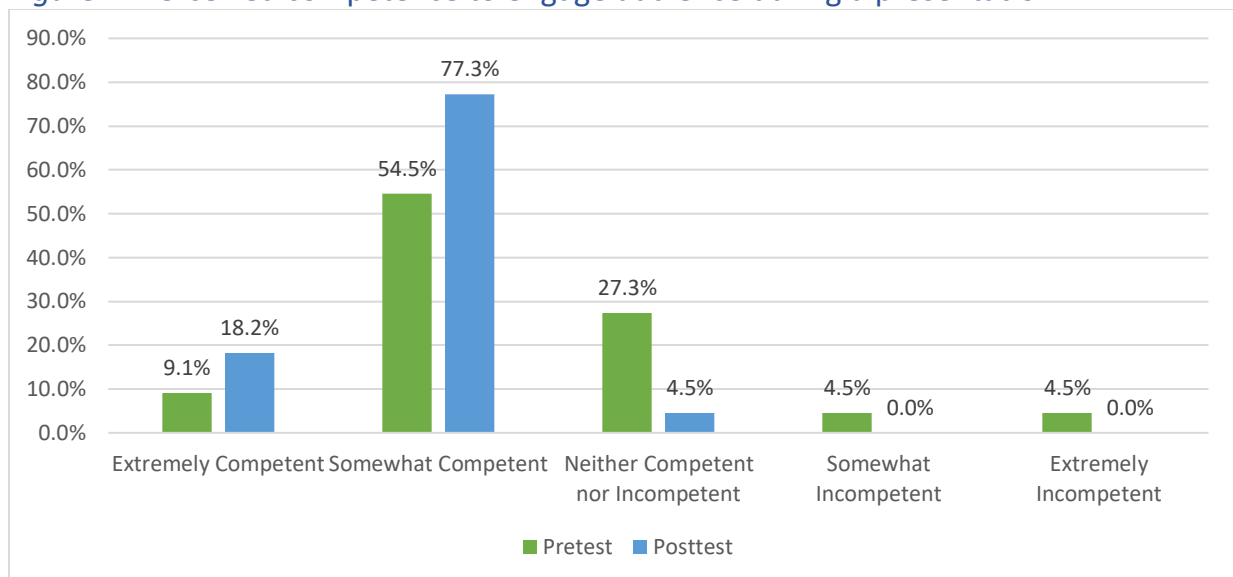


Figure 5. Perceived competence to facilitate a discussion

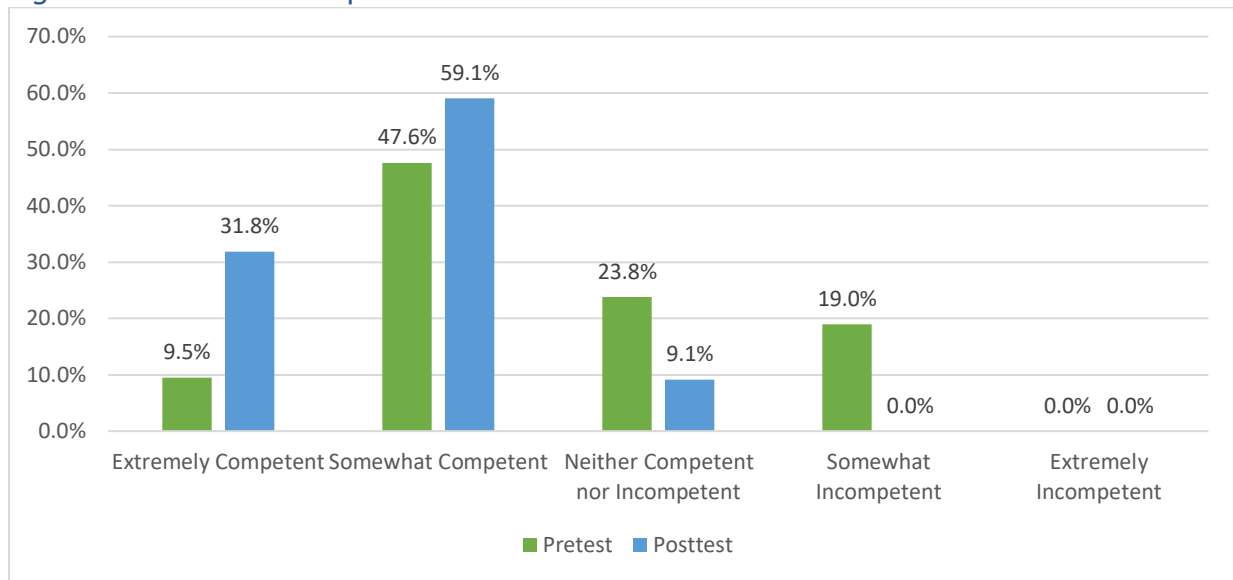


Figure 6. Perceived competence to organize a presentation.

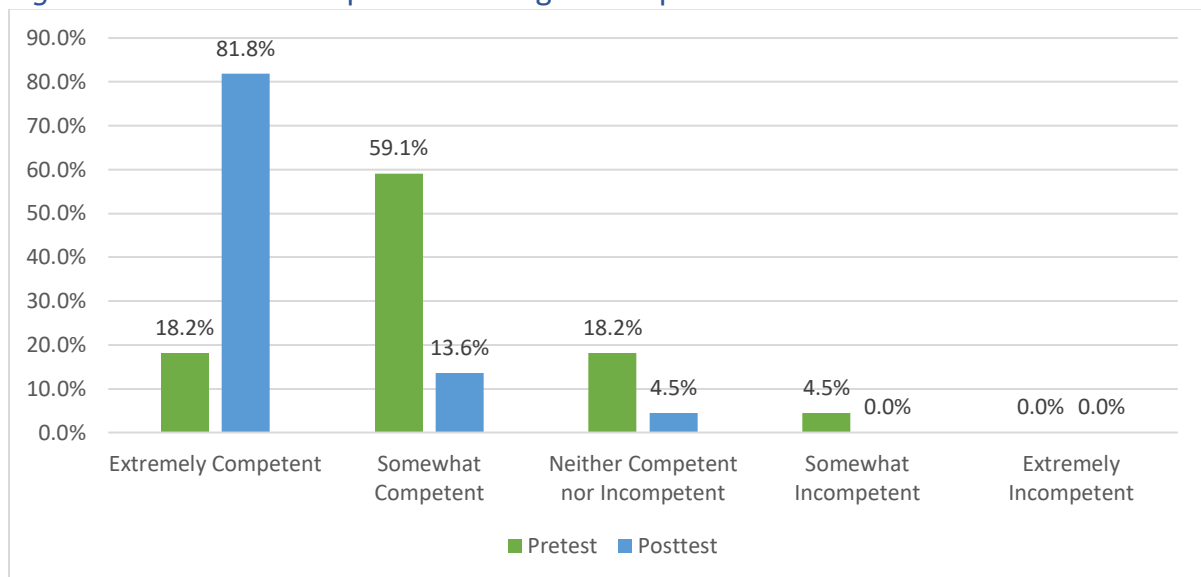


Figure 7. Perceived competence to deliver a presentation online

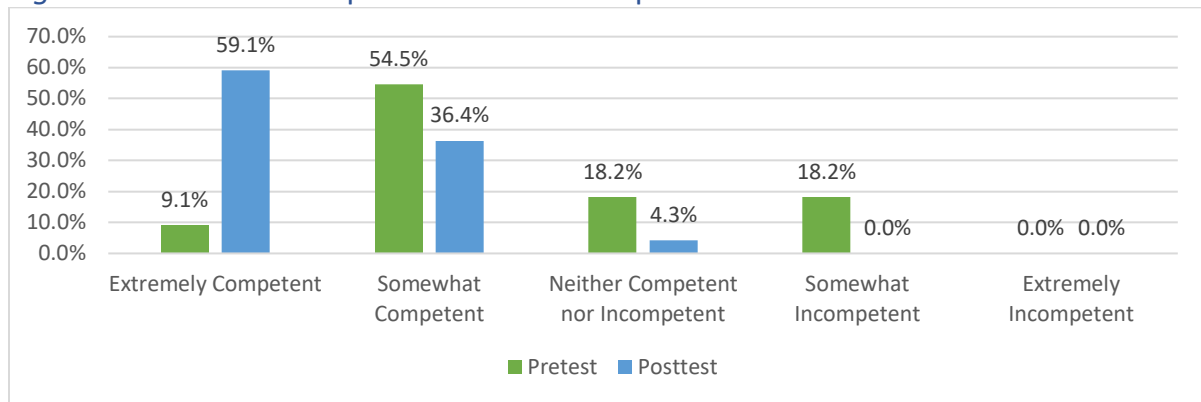


Figure 8. Perceived competence to persuade people in a presentation

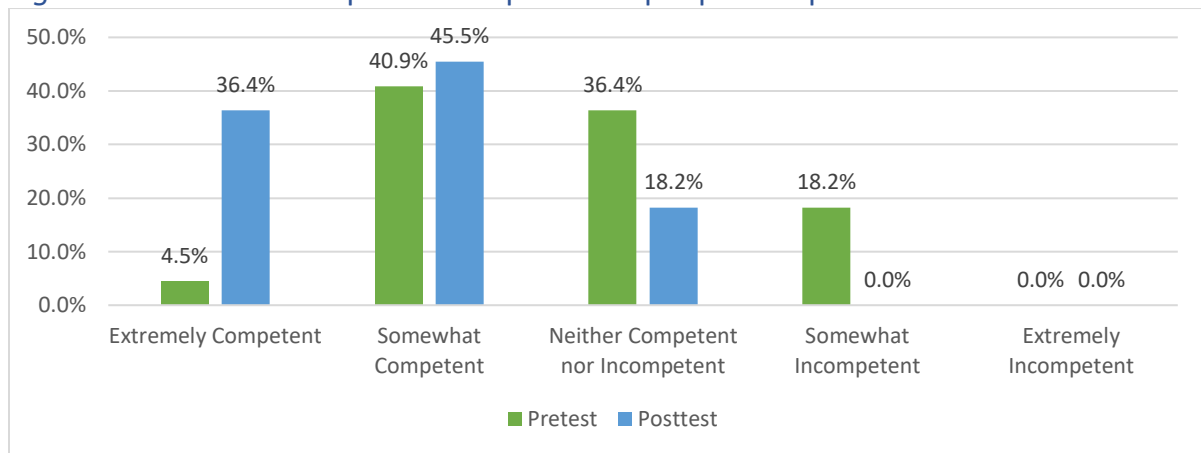


Figure 9. Perceived competence to teach a new skill

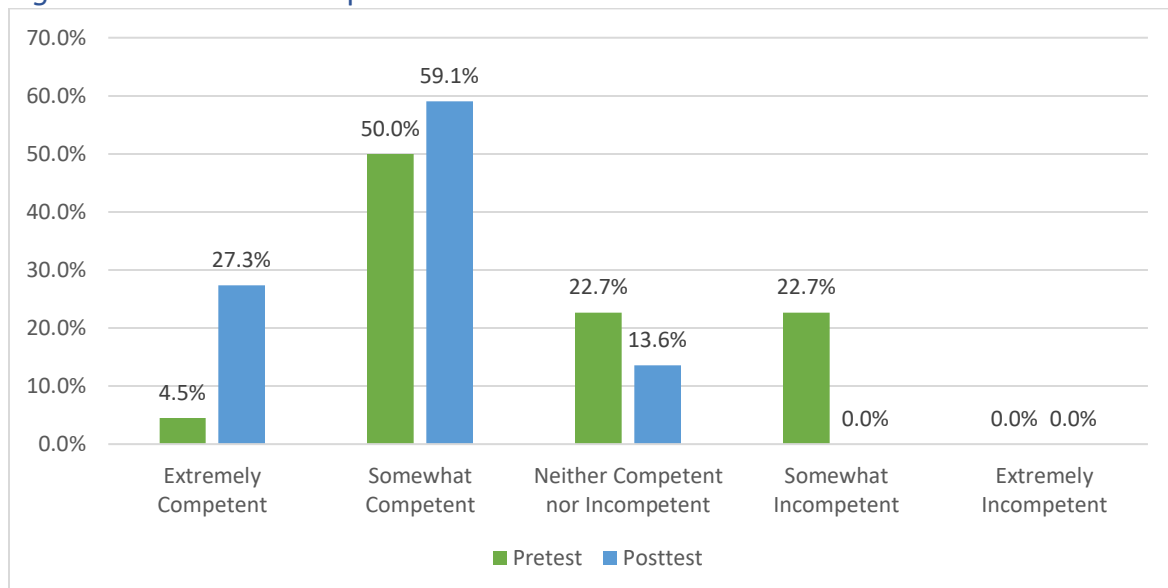


Figure 10. Grade distribution for ALEC 305 in Spring 2021

