

New speech lab aims to assist Ohlone orators

By ERIC DORMAN
Staff writer

"Here at the lab, our job is to take butterflies and make them fly in formation," according to Christeen Kelley, the new Maggie Morrison Speech Communication Lab coordinator, referring to the "butterflies" most people feel at speaking in public.

Ohlone's new speech lab opened about two months ago, aimed at helping prospective orators with everything from rehearsing their speeches to calming nerves. Ohlone's speech professors couldn't be more pleased.

"I'm really tickled about this," said Speech Professor Brenda Ahnholz. "We've been waiting for a speech lab here for ten years, and now we've finally got one."

'Life and times of life, time'

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Trent, using the football analogy. "And we can expect that they will continue to carry the ball long after we're gone."

Trent also noted that since these organisms could survive a trip through space, it was possible that life had come from another planet to earth in the form of an asteroid. Yet the opposite was also true, he said - life could have radiated out from earth after a meteor struck earth and flung bits of it into outer space.

Trent concluded his talk with the subject of global warming and its impact on humans. He said that as sea levels continue to rise, coastal areas, including much of the bay area, would be underwater, wiping out coastal cities and agriculture. Through it all, though, he said, life would continue.

"The question is not so much whether life will continue to exist," said Trent, "It's whether humans can continue to exist."

Trent works in the Bioengineering division of the NASA/Ames research center in Santa Clara, studying microorganisms to try to find out whether they might be able to survive in extremely inhospitable environments, such as those in outer space. He came to Ohlone as part of the sixth Ohlone NASA Science Night, a yearly event when someone from NASA comes to speak at Ohlone. The next Science Night will take place in late April and will concern biotechnology.

The lab, tucked unassumingly in room HH-216 at the back of the English Learning center in Hyman Hall, was named after the late Speech Professor Maggie Morrison. A narrow room, it has two rows of chairs, a computer, several CD players, and three video players, with a bookshelf on one end and a lectern on the other.

The lab employs 20 "peer consultants" - students who staff the lab and help other students with any problems they might have, said Kelley. The peer consultants are not paid for their time, but receive three units a semester for putting in two hours a week at the lab, which is open Monday through Friday.

"The most important resource we have are the peer consultants," said Kelley. "You can't replace support with equipment or technology."

Already, Ahnholz said she's noticed a large improvement in her class after the speech center opened. She now requires her students to spend at least one hour a week in the lab working on their speeches.

Since this is the first semester the college has offered speech tutoring, the peer consultants are not required to have taken the class they are tutoring. Often, said Kelley, two students from the same class will both come into the speech lab at the same time, one to tutor and the other looking for help.

The peer consultants are trained to answer the questions that most commonly come up, said Kelley, who came to Ohlone for the first time this semester after working four years at Cal State East Bay as communication lab coordinator. These questions range from finding

a topic, to organizing the topic, to audience persuasion, all of which can be worked through using the bookcase full of research materials at the lab. But most often, said Kelley, working on the speech comes down to simply practicing a speech out loud in front of a peer consultant.

"It can get loud," she said, laughing.

But most of the time, said Kelley, any trouble with a speech boils down to a case of nerves or "butterflies." About 85 percent of people, she said, are afraid of speaking in front of a large audience, and sometimes practicing the speech out loud again and again is the best way to do that.

Kelley plans on moving ahead with the speech lab next semester, when she hopes to receive money

for video equipment so that students can deliver their speech in front of a camera and play it back to see how they did and what they might need to work on. She also hopes to form two classes of tutors: junior peer consultants, working at the lab for the first time, and senior peer consultants, who would have already worked at the lab for a semester. The two classes, she hopes, would be able to share tips with each other more efficiently than she could share them.

Overall, said Kelley, the most important thing the lab can help students with is preparedness. "The more prepared you are," said Kelley, "the better it is."

For more information on the Speech Communication Lab, go to ohlone.edu/instr/speech or visit the lab in Hyman Hall's HH-216.

Views on semester

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For example, Bradshaw says that, in some of his classes, subject matter that would formerly take a class and a half to teach can now fit into one.

Still, not all faculty are enthusiastic about the 16-week semester. Chemistry Professor Maru Grant contends that the college never should have made the switch. Grant, who was against the shortened semester from the beginning, says that both her labs and lectures have suffered from it-her labs because two weeks of labs that were cut and the lectures because she feels that the increased lecture times are too long for students to concentrate through. She feels student workload is an issue as well.

"Students have more material to study, and less time to do it," said Grant. "There are only 24 hours in the day."

Student Linn Chie agreed, saying that the 16-week semester is "just too short."

History Professor Darren Bardell conceded that the shortened semester made a half-semester class he taught a bit more difficult, because he only had eight weeks to teach it instead of nine.

Still, he feels that the 16-week semester is definitely a step in the right direction. In fact, he was so much in favor of the shortening that he voted for a 15-week semester.

"I figure, if you're in for a penny, you're in for a pound," said Bardell.

Overall, though, students didn't mention being crunched for time much of an issue. Jernigan said he didn't feel any extra squeeze, even in the last days of class. Francia Valderaz conceded that finals were tougher under the shorter semester, but the extra vacation time "makes it worth it."

Spring classes will not start until Jan. 29, two weeks after classes have started in previous years.

For better or for worse, the 16-week semester is here to stay, said college President Doug Treadway. He said that judging by enrollment figures and faculty and student satisfaction, the new system looked to be helping the college.

"In the long run," said Bardell. "I think it's going to be beneficial for both students and faculty."

New online Monitor

By FRANKIE ADDIEGO
Staff writer

For students who like to read news, but don't like to get ink on their hands, a new online edition of "The Monitor" will be hitting the information super highway in the near future. The site will feature a calendar of events, blogs and stories you can't get anywhere else.

Currently at the helm of the project is Online editor Chen Lin. Lin said the goal of the site is to "provide the information that people are gonna want." He also said that the site's calendar will be "more comprehensive" than the calendar on Ohlone's main website.

Lin describes the features on the website in an optimistic manner. According to him, the site will contain, "interactive stuff... [to correspond with a story about] construction here on campus, we might make a flash animation. The site will also

contain stories that the print version didn't have room for.

Meanwhile, existing stories may be embellished once put online. "We might cut up a story a little bit and put the whole story online. Plus, we might have updates online."

Student curious to discover how editors feel about current issues may be in luck as the staff is developing blogs for the site. "We want editors to have their own columns," said Lin. However, the path to blogdom isn't always easy.

"There's some issues, administrative issues," said Lin, "[the advisor] wants to make sure it's okay for us to have a blog."

The site will also have multimedia functions according to Lin and "The Monitor" adviser Bill Parks. "The plan is to have a capability for streaming video," said Parks. Expanding on this, Parks said that the site is going to appear more "professional."



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