November 9, 2010

To: David Jenkins  
From: David Payne, Course Director SPC 2608
Subject: Course Observation, Wednesday October 3

Thank you for inviting me to sit in on your Introduction to Public Speaking course. I found it to be a productive session, and I was greatly impressed by your classroom techniques.

The session was devoted entirely to a discussion of performance techniques. I must say that your students are very lucky to have someone with your extensive performance background and who can give them such insight and detail into nuts and bolts elements of stance, gesture, breathing, movement, etc., in their public speaking efforts. It was truly a great opportunity for your students, and they were clearly involved and engaged in the session.

While the range of tasks and content were limited in this session, I was able to form some positive impressions of your classroom techniques. To begin by getting them up and moving, pumping some blood, is, again, something an experienced performance teacher would do (and what a good thing!). Your own movement around the room, drawing students into the exercise and discussion, was terrific, and showed your own confidence and command of the space. That kind of animation is badly needed in what is a fairly awful, tunnelled classroom space where students in the back can easily lose connection to the front of the room. The final exercise of having them stand and introduce themselves—and repeat their efforts when faltering—showed all the signs of a mature teacher who adapts well to what is going on in the classroom.

Overall, these qualities do indeed stand out in your classroom persona: experienced, knowledgeable, confident, flexible, tuned in, and mature. You seem thoroughly comfortable in the role of teacher, confident in your abilities, and open and connected with students. Again, I think they are lucky to have you as a teacher, and I’m very happy you are working with us in the 2608 program.

XC: Dr. Elizabeth Bell, Dept. Chair