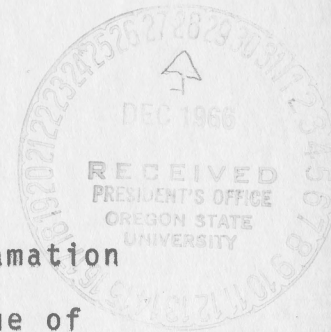


A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPEECH AT OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY



"There will be weekly exercises in Composition, Declamation and Original Addresses," stated the Second Annual Catalogue of Corvallis College for the academic year 1866-1867. "Elocution" was listed as one of the first term courses of study for all members of the freshman class. "Rhetoric" and "Logic" were required for juniors. The textbooks were Bishop Richard Whately's Elements of Rhetoric and Elements of Logic.

Until we find a copy of the First Annual Catalogue, it seems reasonable to assume that a similar statement appeared in that first publication. This was the character of liberal education in speech of that time and persisted through the first seven years.

From 1872-1873 through 1881-1882 the course on "Elocution" appears to have been dropped. "Rhetoric" and "Logic" remained in the curriculum. During this period, however, the curriculum included readings from Demosthenes, Plato and Cicero in Latin. Portions of Aristotle's Rhetoric were dealt with in a "post graduate" class in Moral Philosophy.

"Elocution" appeared again in 1882-1883 as part of the course of study both in the English Preparatory Classes and the English sophomore class. In 1888-1889 "Elocution" was included in the first year curriculum for winter and spring terms, while "Rhetoric" and "Logic" were second year subjects for all three terms.

Forensic Speaking appears to have been of major importance in the junior and senior English classes for a number of years around 1890. Speech work in parliamentary studies, interscholastic forensic activities and literary societies was taking place by 1892-1893.

In 1895-1896 the catalogue states that an instructor in Elocution was "to be elected." Then, in the 1896-1897 issue Miss Helen V. Crawford, B. S., was listed as Professor of Elocution. She offered four courses; two for freshmen, one for sophomores and one for seniors. These courses were listed under a separate Department of Elocution except for 1889-1890 when the department was called the Department of Elocution and Physical Culture.

In 1908, Ralph D. Hetzel served as Instructor in Public Speaking and Debate in the Department of English Language and Literature. Courses offered at the time included the Composition of Public Addresses, Argumentation Themes, Oratorical Themes and Delivery, Expression and Style, and Practical Public Speaking.

In 1910-1911 the department again became separate under the title, The Department of Public Speaking. Mr. Hetzel became Professor of Public Speaking. He was assisted by two other instructors. Course titles in the department program at that time consisted of Argumentation Themes, Presentation, Composition of Address, Extempore Speaking, Practical Public Speaking I and II, Debating, Oratory, and Elocution I-IV. Students interested in Dramatics were advised to take the elocution offerings.

The department was enlarged in 1911-1912 to four instructors and included within it four journalism courses. In 1913-1914 the work in speech was again absorbed into the department of English Language and Literature. Sigurd H. Peterson replaced Professor Hetzel as Instructor in Public Speaking. The speech courses and extra-curricular programs were under Dr. Peterson's guidance until 1920.

In 1920 a new department was formed under the leadership of Charles Buren Mitchell of Michigan State University. He was instrumental in forming a strong service department of Public Speaking and Dramatics. This new department constituted the first stable department of public speaking and dramatics to be organized in Oregon and the Northwest and one of the first three on the Pacific Coast. Service to the people of Oregon "and the integration of the personality of the student" were the basic objectives of the department.

From 1920 to 1930 the Department of Public Speaking and Dramatics underwent a vigorous growth and development in course offerings and activities. During this time a number of able young people joined the staff. Among them were Dr. E. W. Wells, Miss Elizabeth Barnes, Paul X. Knoll, Mrs. Norma Potter and D. Palmer Young.

During the first year of Professor Mitchell's service the department offered nine courses representing sixteen term credits in a wide variety of speech and theatre subjects. The second year of his tenure four more courses were initiated, including advanced courses, making a total of thirteen courses with thirty-two term credits.

It was during Professor Mitchell's leadership that forensic activities reached a high level. For several years four staff members were actively engaged in directing this program. Oregon State became a charter member of the Pacific Forensic League. Having joined the Intercollegiate Forensic Association of Oregon as early as 1895, it provided the executive leadership for this organization continuously from 1938 to 1960.

In 1925 an Oregon State debate team made a transcontinental tour for the first time. Since then the forensic teams have traveled widely on the continent and to Hawaii. Oregon State teams have represented the Northwest in the National Debate Tournament sponsored by the U. S. Military Academy at West Point on at least four occasions. International debate teams have appeared on this campus on numerous occasions to meet in public debate with the local teams.

Members of the Oregon State staff have been prime movers in the generation and development of the Western Speech Association and the Oregon Speech Association. Staff members have also been represented on the executive councils of the National Association of Teachers of Speech which later became the Speech Association of America.

In 1925 a new program called "Speech Correction" was added to the Department of Speech at Oregon Agricultural College. This program aimed to deal with communication disorders and grew out of the recognition that a certain percentage of any student body has

need for special help in developing normal speech. This early program carried no credit. In 1934, however, the first formal course in Speech Correction was introduced for three hours credit. In 1944 the course in Speech Science was added to this program.

In 1935, a special course in Voice and Diction was added to provide training for those interested in voice development. This course was added at the request of the Secretarial Science department and also served to aid public speakers and actors.

When the Oregon State System of Higher Education was established in 1932, the major academic work in speech was transferred to the University of Oregon under the academic allocation system. This transfer resulted in Oregon State losing several of its staff members who moved to the University of Oregon to assist with establishing the program there. The department at Oregon State continued to develop primarily as a service department to the technical schools until recent years. At the time of the transfer, the department was offering over 19 courses representing 55 term credits. The staff was composed of seven full-time teachers.

In 1933, the year following the transfer, Oregon State opened a new area in Radio Speaking. At that time there was only one text book available in that field. The first course was offered using the facilities of KOAC. In 1934 another course, Radio Drama, came into being and the work was broadcast over KOAC. The radio program continued to use the KOAC facilities until 1940 when the Speech Department studios were established in Shepard Hall. The

radio facilities were "modernized" in 1952 and a Television Studio was added to the unit in 1955.

During the period of the 1920's and 1930's Oregon State had no theatre of its own. Dramatic productions were first presented in the old Majestic Theatre and later in a small makeshift theatre in Benton Hall. There was no university theatre facility until 1950 when Mitchell Playhouse was created by remodeling one of the original campus buildings which had previously served as an armory, a men's gymnasium, a women's gymnasium and a museum.

By 1945 the total course offerings of the department had increased to twenty-nine, representing ninety term credits. During this period new courses were added in Clinical Procedures, Group Discussion, Speech for Foreign Students, Recreational Drama, Radio, Television, and Puppetry.

In 1920 the department had a single office for its three staff members. In 1940 Shepard Hall, once the first college campus YMCA building West of the Mississippi River, became the speech center. This old building was remodeled to house the speech offices together with classrooms, the speech clinic, forensic rooms, radio and television studios.

At the time of Professor Mitchell's retirement in 1952, the department had changed its name to the Department of Speech and was one of the largest in the School in staff members, course offerings, and number of students served. When the old armory

was converted to a theatre it was named in honor of Professor Mitchell and has since been known as Mitchell Playhouse.*

Upon the retirement of Professor Mitchell in 1952, Dr. Earl W. Wells became chairman of the department. During his years of leadership the department maintained its national reputation in public speaking and forensics; orators coached by Dr. Wells gained national prominence (upon his retirement he was called, "Mr. Oratory") and the speech clinic grew in service and staff. During this period, also, the radio and television program increased its academic course work as did the program in theatre. The productions in Mitchell Playhouse kept the campus "in touch" with the world outside Oregon.

In 1962, Dr. Wells retired because of illness. Professor D. Palmer Young became acting chairman of the department for one year while a search for the new chairman took place under the direction of a departmental committee selected by the department for that purpose.

In the fall of 1963, Dr. John Keltner, who had left the academic world some five years before to become a Commissioner with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, was appointed chairman of the department.

* Recently, both Shepard Hall and Mitchell Playhouse have been condemned by the State Fire Marshall but temporarily made safe for restricted use only. What was once adequate facilities have now become obsolete, overcrowded and dangerous.

Since 1963 the department has undergone major changes in philosophy and direction. The total staff of over 15 full-time members has concentrated on modernizing and professionalizing the purpose and function of the department. This effort is leading to the development of stronger academic and professional work in the utilitarian, aesthetic and therapeutic aspects of oral communication. The spoken word in all its communicative aspects has become the central concern of the department.

Courses have been changed to bring the University to the forefront of professional studies in speech communication while at the same time maintaining the basic work in service courses. The thrust of the work of the department in this period is toward developing significant programs in interpersonal communication and public communication in theatre arts, radio and television, speech correction, speech education, group processes, intergroup relations and in human communication theory.

As evidence of its professional growth, in 1965-1966 the department of speech was one of the first six departments to be granted an undergraduate major in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. For the first time in the history of Oregon State, undergraduate students were able to work toward a professional baccalaureate degree in speech. Graduate programs of unique and interdisciplinary nature are being designed for the future. No longer is the department concerned with formal elocution or with purely "service" courses. It now begins its work with the personal development of an individual through his informal oral

communication. From this base, broad studies in the art, science and theory of oral communication are being developed.

Sixty-four courses are now available for a total of 209 credit hours. Some three thousand students were registered in the various speech courses during the school year of 1965-1966. In the Fall of 1965, when the undergraduate major first went into effect, over fifty students immediately chose some phase of speech communication as a major field of work within the department.

Oregon State is unique in that it has one of the oldest speech departments on the West Coast. Its growth has paralleled the development of the land grant college and at the present time has the potential of joining other departments in land grant schools throughout the nation in offering sound professional degree work as well as unique and special studies in the fields of oral communication. It is this area of special study, so badly needed in contemporary society that is becoming the hallmark of Speech at Oregon State University.

With the resurgence of the past few years, the Department of Speech at Oregon State University is again becoming a leader in the West in professional, pre-professional and service studies in speech communication. In this way it adds to the total contribution of the University, to the people of Oregon and surrounding states.