



**University of Michigan
Provost's Teaching
Innovation Prize**

2020 WINNER



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Good With Words: Transforming the Teaching of Public Speaking

Innovation Description

Although the ability to speak in clear, compelling ways is an asset in every profession and field, the skills involved are rarely taught explicitly. The Good with Words project consists of a suite of tools that teach these high-value skills efficiently and effectively to diverse audiences:

- pop-up workshops fit into students' schedules
- a library of 26 short videos
- a forthcoming book and massive open online course
- a growing corps of trained assistants who lead follow-up practice sessions

This range of resources lets students select opportunities and skills they are most interested in and practice them in low-stakes settings, either on their own or in groups. Professor Barry has worked with a team of research assistants to distill presentation and speaking pedagogy into a foundation of concepts, vocabulary, and exercises that can be easily tailored for different audiences. For example, in collaboration with Director Kwon, the team brought to the business school a series of workshops, including one focused on using narrative to concisely pitch a new product to investors. The schools of information, public health, and nursing have all hosted workshops, as well. The flexibility of the resources make it easy for instructors to include components of Good With Words in existing courses, and students can create their own pathways through the material to suit their time and interests.

Student Comments

The project provides students with resources for improving an often-overlooked skill that is invaluable no matter the field of study.

Different exercises help speakers of all levels improve concrete abilities: from calming your mind before presenting to remembering to breathe between sentences to harnessing the power of repetition.

To refresh my memory on tips to best pace myself during an upcoming speech, I can simply go to the video catalogue and watch a two minute and thirty-second video advising me on how to best build in pauses to my speech.

Non-judgmental, collaborative reflection [at an interviewing workshop for public interest students attending job fairs] was tremendously useful for my self-growth as a speaker.

Everybody was thoroughly engaged throughout the workshop and walked away with concrete examples of how to apply creative storytelling principles when pitching an idea.

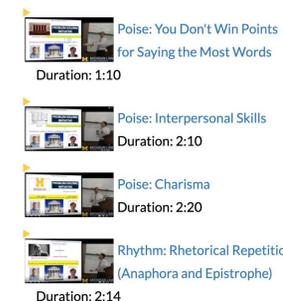
These workshops are motivating... Expect to walk away with tangible insights on how to be a more critical thinker and communicator.

The purposeful use of research assistants as community links and sources of knowledge is an innovative practice that can be replicated and scaled by other educators, departments, and units.

Examples of Teaching Innovation



The project sources inspiration from a wide range of disciplines.



Examples of video resources housed at <https://libguides.law.umich.edu/goodsentences/videos/speaking-videos>



This video clip focuses on overcoming self-consciousness and developing poise.