

Qualitative Assessment—Sample Report for Communication Domain

Spirit Squad

1. **Name of Person Completing Report:** Joni Goodman
2. **Department:** Department of School Spirit (DSS)
3. **Name one initiative your department intended to assess. (Programs, activities, events, training sessions, etc.)**

The DSS intended to assess Spirit Squad members' self-reported growth in educating peers regarding campus traditions from the time of their initial interview in spring 2024 to their reapplication interview in March 2025. The results of this analysis will be used to make decisions regarding training needs for the 2025-2026 Spirit Squad cohort.

4. **How did you conduct your assessment?** Interview question analysis
5. **What Communication learning goal(s) did your department intend to assess?**

The DSS intended to assess the DOSA Learning Domain - Communication, goal b:
"Prepare and deliver informational presentations in various settings."

6. **Explain how you utilized the assessment methods in #4 to assess the learning goal(s) outlined in #5.**

DSS staff members, Joni Goodman and Bradford Pitt, conducted individual interviews of 33 Spirit Squad applicant finalists. The interviews were pre-scheduled between March 25 to April 5, 2024, in Student Commons 4200. Goodman and Pitt wrote individual notes for each applicant and then compiled their notes into one document for each Spirit Squad applicant. The interviews were not recorded. Interview topics included several related to the applicant's experience developing and delivering presentations.

- Tell us about your experience researching a topic and creating a presentation based on that research.
- Describe a presentation that you have presented to an audience.
- If you could choose between researching and developing a presentation or getting in front of an audience to give a presentation, which would you choose? Why?
- How would you grab and maintain audience interest in a presentation?
- Have you ever given a presentation that wasn't in the typical classroom/auditorium environment or was unique in some other way? If so, please describe.

Of the sixteen 2024-2025 Spirit Squad members, nine reapplied to be part of the 2025-2026 Spirit Squad, while seven chose to end their term at the conclusion of the 2024-2025 academic year. All 16 Squad members participated in a second interview in March 2025. These interviews were either a reapplication interview or an outgoing Squad

member interview. There were some common questions between these interviews, including ones related to the Squad member's experience developing and delivering presentations regarding campus traditions.

- What did you learn, or what was most helpful, from Spirit Squad training that prepared you for your campus traditions presentations, both formal and informal?
- Now that you have completed Spirit Squad training and have participated as a Squad member this academic year, how comfortable are you in researching and developing presentations and getting in front of an audience to deliver a presentation?
- What are your thoughts on the formal campus traditions presentations vs. the more informal Spirit Squad outreach mini-presentations, such as the golf cart theme days?

7. **Name of person overseeing assessment project:** Joni Goodman and Bradford Pitt
8. **Did your department assess more than one initiative?** No
9. **Summarize what was learned as a result of your department's assessment(s).**

Application Interview Themes

- a. Development vs. Presenting: Most applicants (29) indicated a clear preference for either researching, developing presentation materials (17) or for being in front of an audience giving a presentation (12). Four applicants reported being comfortable both developing and presenting informational material to an audience. For those most comfortable with researching and developing presentation materials, the source of confidence was primarily the ability to double check the accuracy of the material. Multiple applicants also indicated that they enjoy pulling a topic apart and determining how to explain the pieces in a way that makes sense. Those who were more comfortable being in front of an audience described themselves using phrases such as "the life of the party," "really outgoing," and "born for the stage." One applicant stated, "Give me something to talk about and I'll sell it for you." All four applicants who were comfortable with both aspects mentioned that they either had a background in debate or theatre.
- b. Worried About Questions: Another significant theme among applicants was fear of "looking stupid" if they were unable to answer a question during the question-and-answer portion of a presentation. "If I'm up there giving a presentation and am supposed to be an expert on a topic, and then I can't answer a question, then why am I doing the presentation in the first place. No credibility."
- c. Type of Presentation Experience: Presentation examples given by applicants were all based on classroom assignments, such as group projects or high school capstone

projects. None offered examples based on student organization or community involvement experiences. Related, only one student was able to offer an example of a presentation that had a unique element.

Reapplication/Outgoing Squad Interview Themes

- a. Practice Answering Questions: Nearly all Squad members spoke about being trained and practicing how to answer questions. One aspect of this training that they highlighted was learning how to answer questions for which they did not know the answer. “At first, I was so annoyed that we had to spend time learning how to tell people we didn’t know the answer. I mean, just tell them you don’t know. But then as we were practicing and actually had random weird questions thrown at us while we were standing up on the stage, I realized how hard that can be. It kind of makes you feel dumb to admit you don’t know something. I really wanted to make something up that sounded like a good answer. So, I get why Joni and B-man made us do it. People ask the craziest things.”
- b. Continued Training: Squad members enjoyed their campus traditions training and felt like they learned a lot. However, they also indicated a desire to revisit traditions throughout the year, especially as the timing for date-specific traditions drew closer. “You know, we talked about all of these things in training, but then it’s weeks or months before they roll around. We talk more about those things in the weeks right before them. We should make sure we all remember the details closer to time.”
- c. Development vs. Presenting and Formal vs. In-Formal Presentations: Squad members indicated a much more balanced level of comfort between developing a presentation and giving the presentation in front of an audience. Some found that they preferred larger group presentations, such as those for school groups or prospective student days, because they liked the security of having a structured presentation. Others preferred the more spontaneous education events, such as the Squad golf cart initiative, when they had a set of topics they were expected to cover, but could do so in more creative, off-the-cuff ways. “I loved that we could come up with oddball ideas to get info out about traditions. I think it attracted attention and made students want to see what was going on and listen to us. Plus, who doesn’t want an excuse to wear neon and tightroll their jeans? Being part of the golf cart team made me have to re-think what a presentation really is. We were presenting material in a way that didn’t feel preachy.”

Overall, Squad members felt it was useful to have completed training and have a good understanding of the content before developing campus traditions presentations for various audiences. This seemed to be in contrast to many of their prior experiences with classroom presentations. “I’d say that most presentations I’ve

done for class I've kind of made it up as I went along. Like, I'd decide I should talk about topic Z and then I'd go look some things up about topic Z. Then I'd decide to talk about topic J next. So I'd go look up topic J. I liked being able to get Squad assignments and be able to just sit down and think about how best to get the message out to that particular group and then just slot in from my knowledge base. I didn't have to go look anything up. It feels more creative and fun that way."

10. How will you use the outcomes for further planning?

Based on the themes outlined above, the DSS will focus efforts on improving Spirit Squad training. The Squad members valued practicing answering questions, so we will look at how to further enhance this element of training. For example, perhaps an initial exercise might have nothing to do with answering questions about campus traditions, but might have them watch a video and then have to answer questions about the video content so that they have even less prior knowledge from which to base their answers.

The suggestion to engage in continued training, with specific refreshers throughout the year, is an excellent idea! We will look at the timing of some of our traditions that fall later in the academic year and revisit within a month of the tradition date to ensure that our Squad remembers the details and is prepared to hype them up.

We will also support Squad members in stepping out of their comfort zone and engaging in presentation types with which they are less comfortable. We will do this by implementing a "buddy system" of sorts, where Squad members are intentionally paired so that there are presenters that are comfortable in that environment that can support their peer in the moment.

11. Please provide any supporting documents that will be helpful for PAT to better understand your assessment (charts, graphs, copy of instrument used, question list, references, artifacts, etc.).

Not applicable