

Faculty First Grant Report – 2017

*Redesigning the Speech Anxious website:
Engaging more students in more meaningful ways*

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Project Overview and Course Overview:

This project redesigned a speech anxiety website (<http://myfops.cci.utk.edu>) that was first created in spring 2009 with a Faculty First Grant (*Facing the Fear: Tools and Strategies to Effectively Manage Speech Anxiety and Apprehension*) and enhanced in spring 2010 with a Project RITE Grant (*Using Technology to Manage Speech Anxiety*). It is an open-access site used extensively by students in the speech anxious sections of CMST 240 Business and Professional Communication and is also used as a resource for all students enrolled in CMST 240 and CMST 210 Public Speaking. Due to its open access nature, all students at UT as well as anyone finding the resource via a search engine can explore it. It is information-laden yet desperately needed to be redesigned to be more interactive and engaging.

Semesters the course has been and/or will be taught:

The updated website will be made available in the spring 2018 semester. The new url is <http://speechanxiety.utk.edu/> and can be accessed through the former website for a while.

Number of students affected:

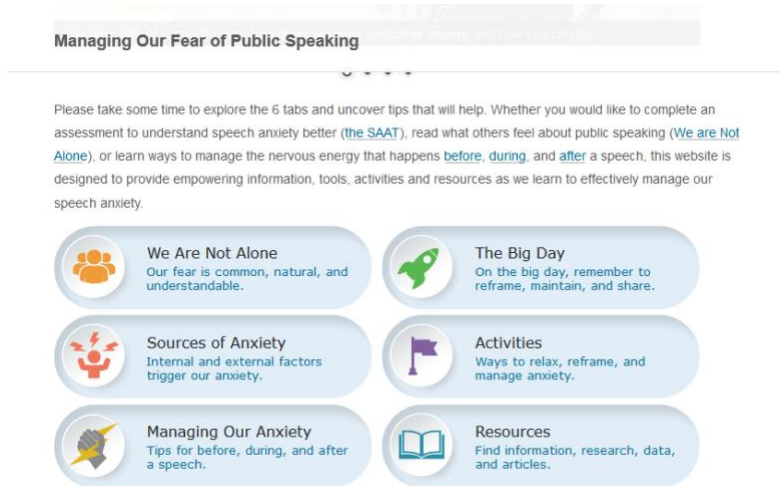
As this is an open-access site not tied to any one course, the hope is that it will help countless students and individuals. Our entire campus can benefit from this project as all students have access to the website and can reference it at any time. Considering how many of our courses require presentations and other deliverables that heighten the speech anxiety experience of our students, this can be an invaluable resource. It also will serve the 1800+ students each term who enroll in our CMST 210 and CMST 240 classes.

Project outcomes and products:

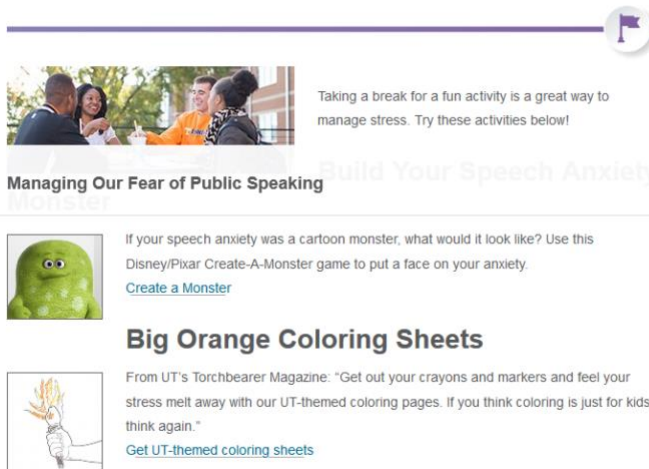
The primary focus of this project was the redesign of the current speech anxiety website. Student input was instrumental from the beginning as it was a student's comment about the site being "helpful but outdated" that initiated this endeavor. Classes in the spring and fall of 2017 contributed suggestions and ideas for the content and design of the new website. As they are the target audience, it is imperative to hear what they want and need in this resource. Some of their suggestions included: include better

pictures, make the website more colorful, limit the text, make it more engaging and make it easier to find.

Here are a few screenshots:



Activities



Student Evaluation:

As mentioned, the feedback received from students was integral to the design of the new website. Once it is made available, we will continue to seek their input and feedback. They are, after all, our all-important audience. We will also use analytics to gauge interest, searchability, and overall usage. We will explore the creation of a brief Qualtrics survey assessing these factors that will be hosted on the site.

Project benefit for the department and UT:

As detailed in the Faculty First proposal, redesigning this website directly supports our Top 25 Initiative as data reflects that the majority of our students experience speech anxiety and that for some the level can be debilitating. In conversations with those students, many have mentioned that they considered leaving the university due to the anxiety associated with meeting their Oral Communication General Education requirement. The majority of these students have been able to enroll in sections of CMST 240 for highly speech anxious students, working with 15 students in a class, usually 30 a term. However, as we have 1800+ students a semester in our CMST OC classes, we need to provide a more readily available resource. This website does just that. Learning how to effectively manage speech anxiety directly relates to retention which is a central factor in a Top 25 designation.

Conclusion:

Without a doubt, this project has far exceeded my goals and expectations. The site looks amazing, incorporating the suggestions of students for content and design.

Collaborating with Susannah Finley of OIT was the best part of this project and her talents and skills are the keys to its success. In addition to being a gifted designer and an expert in instructional technology, she is a great listener and amazing partner to work with. We worked together on the initial Faculty First project that launched the website years ago and it was amazing to work with her again. I appreciated her creativity, patience and flexibility. She also is teaching me how to maintain the site. She rocks!

Future plans will include expanding the links and resources and exploring additional activities and games based upon student/user feedback and suggestions.

I would recommend collaborating with the professionals at OIT for any and all projects as they are always professional, friendly and very, very competent. Thank you so much!