

## Supplemental Digital Appendix 1

### Tool to Evaluate the Communicating Science Elective Course, Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science, Stony Brook University



**We hope to learn about your feedback on the Communicating Science elective and your interest in future Communicating Science Courses.**

***Thank you for your help!***

**1. Are you interested in Communicating Science being part of your medical school curriculum?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you answered Yes, where do you think it would best fit into the curriculum?

If you answered No, please explain why.

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**2. What topics would you be interested in learning more about within Communicating Science? (Choose all that apply)**

☐ **Introduction to Health Communications:** This is a comprehensive introductory course that covers health literacy, social marketing, cultural competency, communications, health media, interviewing and being interviewed.

☐ **Distilling Your Message:** This course helps students speak clearly and vividly about their work and why it matters, in terms non-scientists can understand.

☐ **Writing to be Understood:** This course explains how to write about scientific and health material clearly and vividly, in ways non-scientists can understand.

☐ **Improvisation for Scientists:** This innovative course uses improvisational theater techniques to help students be more direct and responsive communicators. This course is not about acting; it's about helping current and future scientists connect with their audiences.

☐ **Connecting with the Community:** In this course, students will learn how to use communication techniques, cultural competency, and health literacy concepts to reach and mobilize the community and key stakeholders on health- and science-related issues related to their research, outreach or community education objectives.

☐ **Using Digital Media:** In this course, students will learn how to use blogs, podcasts, Twitter and other forms of social media for two-way communication with different segments of the public, including colleagues in other disciplines.

☐ **Introduction to News Media Concepts and Institutions:** In this course, students will learn how the U.S. news media work, how news decisions are made, and how the press deals with scientific uncertainty.

☐ **Developing Media Skills:** In this course, you will practice how to be interviewed for television by seasoned journalists, with taping and critiques of mock interviews.

☐ **Other:** \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

**5. How would you rate this elective on a scale of 1 to 5? (5 is the best)**

**6. Is this elective what you expected it to be? Yes or No (Please circle one)**

**7. What were the strengths of this elective?**

**8. How would you improve this elective?**

**9. Would you suggest this elective to your fellow students? Yes or No (Please circle)**

**10. Is what you have learned and practiced in this elective relevant to you as a future health care professional? Yes or No (Please circle)  
Please explain and be specific.**

## Supplemental Digital Appendix 2

### **Student Comments about the Communicating Science Elective Course, Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science, Stony Brook University, 2012-2013**

Evaluation forms completed by first- and second-year medical students over the first two years that this elective was given included the following comments:

“I felt like coming to this course was more valuable than most other classes in our curriculum...one of the top two classes of the year (this and physiology).”

“... the course was different than our clinical simulations b/c we practice with trained patients who know exactly what to say and how to react to our statements and they never seem confused or question why we are asking unrelated questions to their chief complaint...in the improv sessions I quickly realized that not only do I have to ask the right questions, but also I have to explain to the patient why I am asking those seemingly unrelated questions...”

“I have already changed my approach to patient education mostly by doing more listening. Thank you for a great experience.”

“Distilling your message was a valuable class that showed me how to pick out what is important and how to phrase it in a way that is easy enough for a general audience to follow.”

“The first session entitled “Improvisation” has helped me build rapport with patients quickly enabling the patient encounter to go smoothly. Before focusing on the patient’s medical condition I spend the first 10 to 15 seconds casually conversing with the patient while my hands are drying. I use my posture, hand gestures, and facial expressions to project a calm caring presence to the patient. I use this time to quickly assess the patient’s mood and adjust my language and body posture accordingly. I introduce myself as “[Full name], a Medical Student” so that they can choose what they will call me and I use motivational interviewing phrases like, “I hear what you are saying,” when actively listening.”

“You learn how to engage with other people. You learn how to be in a two-way communication. Exercises like ‘Yes...And’ in which you have to learn how to move the conversation towards productive direction while being receptive of the other person’s ideas really cultivates health communication skills. Students also become very aware of what they communicate and what the other person wants.”

“This elective was very helpful because the future of medicine is going to be a greater emphasis on prevention, and one of the best ways we can achieve that is by learning how to communicate in a way that patients can digest. The more they understand about their condition, the better our partnerships with them will be. I’m never going to forget to approach explanations from their perspective: getting to the point first and then giving further explanations if they so desire it. Additionally, I’m not going to be quite as afraid of talking with media professionals in the future. This class, in my opinion, is almost an essential component of becoming an effective medical professional and leader.”