Longwood University has successful curriculum, which aids students in effectively communicating orally in multiple contexts within the discipline. Communicating orally in the biology field is just as important, if not more than the writing associated with it. By presenting your research through face-to-face or oral communication, the presentation can leave a lasting memory with the audience. Audiences are able to use visual aids and inflections in the presenter’s voice to gauge a presentation better than that on paper. Every biology course at Longwood requires some sort of oral presentation for each course, whether it’s semester long research or relaying information to the class. Through my Biol 288: Sophomore Seminar and Biol 488: Senior Capstone courses, I was able to improve upon my oral presentation skills to both classmates, professors, general audiences, and other professionals in the field.

In Biology 288, we were tasked with choosing a topic to thoroughly research and present to a general audience through a paper, as well as a final oral presentation. Due to my love of marine life, I researched the effects of rising temperatures on sea turtle survival rates. Through this research I was able to look into how sea turtle gender and nesting sites are negatively affected by rising temperatures. Through this research I was able to determine that hot sand and rising sea levels were causing reseeding nesting sites for sea turtles along beach coasts. I also found that sea turtle gender is temperature dependent, therefore as temperatures continue to rise, there is an increase in female hatchlings. These findings are incredibly important to the species overall wellbeing and alarm scientists for future endangerment. When presenting this information to my class, I needed a way to connect with my audience, while keeping them interested throughout learning the information I had discovered. I was able to use a personal story to connect at the beginning and lots of pictures throughout the presentation, which kept people from becoming uninterested. It’s important to be as interactive as possible with your audience in order to effectively communicate the information necessary.

Biology 488 is a writing and speaking intensive course. Here, we not only have the opportunity to work and present with groups, but also, we are able to give individual presentations. Starting off the semester, we were assigned to choose a New York Times article and present the information to the class in exactly seven minutes. While this task may sound easy, it takes practice to be able to effectively present information calmly when you’re being timed. I chose to present on an article about the Chinese horseshoe bat. There were lots of imbedded links to peer-reviewed articles, but I was able to choose the most important bits of information and relay it to the class in the allotted time. Also, in Biology 488, we are tasked with completing a semester long research proposal. Early on in the semester, we were told to prepare a two minute “elevator” speech, where we had to explain our chosen topic to the class giving background information, personal interest, and what we proposed as the experiment we would like to perform. On top of all of this, we weren’t allowed to use any notes. Here, I was able to show my oral presentation skills by conducting my speech in a way that was relatable. I practiced, stayed calm, and was able to relay the information necessary. While it can be daunting, it’s important to have these skills when in a professional setting.

Throughout these courses, I have been able to improve upon my oral presenting skills. It can be nerve-wracking to get up in front of a crowd and relay information in a calm and accurate manner. I believe that starting early in my college career and having the ability to improve throughout my courses has helped me tremendously. Presenting in different settings, to different people has allowed me to become more confident in myself and more confident for future presentations to come.