

## *Undergraduate Academic Program Review Template*

Name of Program: Communication (B.A.)

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Indicate whether the program is

on campus  
 online  
 both

**NCA Criterion 1—Mission and Integrity**

**NCA Criterion 2—Preparing for the Future**

**NCA Criterion 3—Student Learning and Effective Teaching**

**NCA Criterion 4—Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge**

**NCA Criterion 5—Engagement and Service**

I. Program Mission (NCA Criterion 1 and Criterion 5)

**Program mission statement (should identify constituency served) (1A, 1B)**

Department Of Communication Mission Statement

The Department of Communication strives to provide a high quality academic program that supports the Wright State University mission of being a catalyst for educational excellence in the Miami Valley. The central focus of this department is an analysis of the process of how human beings create, transmit, receive, and respond to messages and the interaction that ensues. The department provides curricula designed to increase an individual's intellectual, organizational, and social abilities, which can be applied to a variety of contexts, including interpersonal, organizational, and mass-mediated settings. The department's curricular offerings integrate theory and practice with the goal of cultivating communication competence.

The mission statement identifies the Department of Communication as an active component of Wright State University dedicated to educational excellence in the Miami Valley. Thus the university and Miami Valley communities are mentioned as constituencies served. The mission statement implies that students are the primary constituency by providing curricula that provide educational excellence. The department focus is on human communication processes and providing curricula for integrating communication theory and practice, but the mission statement does not identify its multiple constituencies in clear, concise terms.

The Communication Department mission statement needs to be revised to more specifically identify the diverse constituencies served.

## **Consistency with university mission (1C, 1E)**

### WSU Mission Statement

Wright State University will be a catalyst for educational excellence in the Miami Valley, meeting the need for an educated citizenry dedicated to lifelong learning and service. To those ends, as a metropolitan university, Wright State will provide: access to scholarship and learning; economic and technological development; leadership in health, education, and human services; cultural enhancement, and international understanding while fostering collegial involvement and responsibility for continuous improvement of education and research.

The Department of Communication mission statement clearly acknowledges its role as an active component of Wright State University dedicated to educational excellence in the Miami Valley. The department mission statement supports the university mission by providing curricula designed to achieve educational excellence, but needs to be revised to explicitly address other departmental goals and responsibilities such as leadership in education, research, service, cultural enhancement, and international understanding, and to foster collegial involvement and responsibility for continuous improvement of education and research.

## **Consistency with college mission (1C, 1E)**

### College of Liberal Arts Mission

The vision for the College of Liberal Arts is to continue and expand the international, national, and state recognition for our exemplary students, faculty, and staff, as evidenced by our outstanding educational, research/scholarship, and professional service programs. To accomplish this vision, our mission is:

- to provide our students with a quality general education program and undergraduate and graduate experience;
- to engage in creative, innovative, and applied scholarship and professional service in the region and beyond.

We pride ourselves in offering excellent teaching in the humanities, social sciences, and fine and performing arts.

The Department of Communication mission is consistent with the college mission in providing curricula designed to produce educational excellence in the humanities, social sciences, and fine and performing arts. The department mission statement could further be modified to explicitly include wording that expresses commitment “to engage in creative, innovative, and applied scholarship and professional service in the region and beyond.”

## **Consistency of goals, learning objectives with program mission**

Graduates with a major in Communication will be prepared to:

- a. hold entry level professional positions in a variety of communication related positions in fields including but not limited to journalism, broadcasting, public relations, organizational communication, human resources, and business or non-profit organizations.

- b. enter graduate programs in communication, law, marketing, political science, or other humanities and social science disciplines.
- c. advance to leadership positions requiring knowledge and experience in applied and strategic communication.

Key words and phrases that need to be considered to address consistency component with the university mission: leadership in education, meeting the need for educated citizenry dedicated to lifelong learning and service, effective teaching, scholarly research, fostering collegial involvement and responsibility for continuous improvement of education and research, cultural enhancement, and international understanding.

Key words and phrases that need to be considered to address consistency component with the college mission: excellent teaching and service to students, faculty, college, the university, and community; quality education, creative, innovative, and applied scholarship.

#### A Proposal for a Revised Department of Communication Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Communication is to provide a high quality educational program in communication designed to prepare students for a variety of future personal and professional communication contexts including interpersonal, organizational, and mass media settings. The department curriculum integrates theory and practice with the goals of cultivating communication competence and fulfilling the need for an educated citizenry dedicated to lifelong learning. The faculty is dedicated to excellent teaching, innovative and applied research, and service to students, the college, the university, the academic discipline, and professional service in the region and beyond.

The mission of the Department of Communication is to provide high quality baccalaureate programs in communication and to provide students in these programs with a full complement of high-quality courses taught in a challenging manner. The first priority of the department is to provide strong and effective teaching performance on a department-wide basis. Members of the department are expected to be productive in scholarly research and service to the department, college, university, community, and profession.

#### **Extent to which program prepares students to “live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society” (4C)**

The Department of Communication program prepares students to meet the challenges of responsible citizenship and to accept professional roles in the global community. All communication courses, textbooks, and media technology provide students with insights that enhance their understanding of multiculturalism in U.S. society, promote their understanding of cultural diversity and what it means to communicate and interact with diverse groups of people on a global scale, and increase their awareness of cutting-edge technologies that hold the greatest promise for enriching their experience in a rapidly changing world. The program also allows faculty members to identify the best practices for incorporating leading-edge technologies into the curriculum while helping students learn how to use them effectively.

### **Extent to which program fosters life-long learning (4A)**

The Department of Communication program encourages its faculty to engage in life-long learning through collaboration on knowledge and skills for the modern economy, career development, and scholarly research. Students also work with communication faculty to exchange ideas for producing independent scholarly projects to present at CoLA's annual undergraduate symposium, honors program, and professional conferences. Faculty members are also part of the International education study abroad program.

### **Interrelationship with general education (1C, 4B)**

Communication students must satisfy 56 hours of general education courses before they take courses in their primary major. Students can major in Mass Communication, Organizational Communication, or Communication Studies. Together with the general education courses, students must satisfy major requirement courses, core courses, electives, and 60 hours of 300/400-level courses. In addition to the general education courses, communication majors must take a minimum of 56 and maximum of 68 communication hours.

### **Community Engagement (parts 5C, 5D)**

A strength of the Communication department is its collaboration with the local business community and university departments. Interaction with these entities provides enhanced learning and engagement opportunities for students.

#### **Speakers**

Thirteen individuals from a variety of industries have been speakers at Communication classes since 2004. Speakers have included numerous journalists and executives from local media, including the Dayton Daily News, Clear Channel Communications, and WKEF/FOX-TV Channels 22/45 and an area law firm. In addition, students have benefited from hearing speakers from the university's departments of marketing, public relations, media relations, and communication. The campus chapter of the Public Relations Society of America has had an average of seven professionals per year participate in activities with the student chapter. Some of the organizations represented included Downtown Dayton Partnership, General Motors, Lexis/Nexis, MeadWestvaco, The Miami Conservancy District, Reynolds and Reynolds, Standard Register, and Time-Warner.

#### **Community Projects**

News writing students have participated in several community-based projects, producing marketing and public relations materials for local non-profit organizations. Engagement projects such as these offer students an opportunity to learn firsthand about an organization and the challenges of creating its communication materials. Student work is not only used by the organization, but also serves as an excellent start to a student's portfolio upon graduation. Some of the community organizations included the Cancer Prevention Institute, Center for Eating Disorders and Psychotherapy, Dayton Playhouse, Hospice of Dayton, Miami Valley Communications Council, Red Cross, SICSA, and United Way. In addition to working with outside organizations, students also write the quarterly CoLA Newsletter for the College of Liberal Arts, and produce Isthmus, the department's annual newsletter. For an interviewing course, students interface with communication professionals in the community. Students interview professionals in areas

such as public relations, human resources, and journalism to discuss their field of expertise.

### **Internships**

Students benefit greatly from a host of faculty-facilitated internships with leading media and communication-centered organizations in the greater Dayton area. Undergraduates are increasingly recognizing the value of an internship experience as an important addition to their resumes and real-world training in their field of interest. Since 2004, more than 100 undergraduate students have completed internships with local organizations. Organizations partnered with the Communication department internship program include, for example, the Dayton Daily News WYSO-FM, WHIO-TV, WDTN-TV, Clear Channel Communications, Hara Arena, the Great American Bake Sale, the City of Dayton, Reynolds & Reynolds, National City Bank, and the Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine.

## **II. Program Description (NCA Criterion 2)**

### **Brief history of program, emphasizing past seven years (e.g., changes in administration, change in program direction, new degrees, minors, or certificates, de- or re-activation of program), including recommendations of any previous internal and/or external program reviews**

During the years 2000-2006 the Department of Communication was under the leadership of Dr. James Sayer. The department offered four majors: Communication Studies, Mass Communication, Organizational Communication and Social and Industrial Communication, all leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree. The department consistently had one of the best cost/revenue ratios within the College of Liberal Arts, which consistently had the best cost/revenue ratio in the University.

In 2004 the department explored the possibility of offering a master's degree program. An outside consultant noted that demand was high for undergraduate department offerings and that a successful master's program would require additional resources. The consultant also recommended that the department examine its undergraduate offerings to determine if changes were needed. The department curriculum committee undertook a complete review of undergraduate offerings, which resulted in the elimination of the Social and Industrial Communication major, major revisions to the Communication Studies and Organizational Communication majors and adjustments to some Mass Communication major requirements.

Enrollment in the Social and Industrial Communication major, offered in cooperation with the Sociology Department, had declined with only two students enrolled. The drop in enrollment was due in part to programs developed within other departments, such as Urban Affairs and Educational Leadership which were serving students who might have chosen the Social Industrial Communication major. The committee recommended dropping the major.

The committee also recommended changes to the department core, which all communication majors take. One change required that every student complete a course addressing diversity. Students must choose a course in either Intercultural Communication or Race, Class and Gender. A second change in the department core, required of all majors, was increasing two courses, COM 101, Essentials of Public Address, and Com 152, Introduction to Mass Communication, from three to four credit hours. The increases permitted COM 101 to cover material in greater depth and provided additional time for performances. In COM 152 the additional time was added to increase the emphasis within the course on media literacy, an area the committee felt was increasingly important in today's media-rich society.

A new course, Speaking in Professional Contexts, was added to the Communication Studies and Organizational Communication major requirements to provide students with a second performance course to help develop presentation skills. The Mass Communication majors take the Performance for the Media course as an equivalent. In addition, the department eliminated twelve courses, some of which had not been taught recently and others were not found to be meeting the needs of today's students. Some material from those courses was included in a new course, COM 104, Human Communication, or incorporated into eight redesigned and four new upper-level classes. These courses, coupled with the new major requirements, provide clear structure through which students can enhance core competencies.

The Organizational and Communication Studies majors both were restructured to provide students with a more cohesive curriculum aimed at improving basic competency and enhancing advanced skills. Tracks within both majors provide students with a clear path toward meeting degree requirements, reducing possible course choice errors and improving scheduling efficiencies. The Mass Communication major which already has tracks, was adjusted to reflect changes in the mass communication field.

**Total number of students served (Fall Quarter)**

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
1398	1376	1444	1581	1532	1516	1508

**Number of Communication Study majors**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female	79	111	121	109	81	84	70
Male	47	59	48	41	36	44	45
Total	126	170	169	150	117	128	115

**Number of Mass Communication majors**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female	62	68	67	86	89	102	128
Male	37	45	63	54	50	52	59
Total	99	113	130	140	139	154	187

### Number of Organizational Communication majors

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female	28	35	23	16	24	15	21
Male	17	10	12	8	0	3	3
Total	45	45	35	24	24	18	24

### Number of Social/Industrial Communication majors

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female	10	9	3	4	4	1	1
Male	3	2	2	2	2	1	0
Total	13	11	5	6	6	2	1

### Number of Communication minors

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female	9	21	19	22	NA	NA	29
Male	6	6	6	5	NA	NA	12
Total	15	27	25	27	0	0	41

### Number of faculty by gender

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female	4	4	4	5	7	7	8
Male	8	8	8	8	7	7	7
Total	12	12	12	13	14	14	15

### Number of faculty by rank

Year	Instructor	Lecturer	Asst. Prof.	Assoc. Prof.	Prof.
2000		2	5	2	3
2001		2	5	2	3
2002		2	5	2	3
2003		2	5	3	3
2004	2	2	3	5	2
2005	2	2	1	7	2
2006	2	2	2	7	2

### Number of faculty by rank by gender

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Female instructors	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
Male Instructors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Female Lecturers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Male Lecturers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Female Asst. Prof.	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Male Asst. Prof.	3	3	2	2	1	0	0
Female Assoc. Prof.	1	1	1	1	2	3	3
Male Assoc. Prof.	1	1	1	2	3	4	4
Female Prof.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Male Prof.	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Total	12	12	12	13	14	14	15

## **Student/faculty ratio, average class size**

### **Faculty/Major ratio (Ratio rounded to nearest whole number)**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Majors.	283	339	339	320	286	302	327
Faculty	12	12	12	13	14	14	15
Majors per faculty	24	28	28	25	20	22	22

### **Faculty/Student ratio (Fall quarter, ratio rounded to nearest whole number)**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Students	1398	1376	1444	1581	1532	1516	1508
Faculty	12	12	12	13	14	14	15
Students per faculty	117	115	120	122	109	108	101

While the tables above indicate the ratios, the data do not give an accurate picture. One of the department faculty members is director of the Center for Teaching and Learning and teaches a reduced load. He did not teach at all for two years while completing duties related to NCA re-accreditation. . Another factor is that one faculty member is on a half-time contract. The ratios present a better picture than actually exists. Five faculty members have no academic advising duties, which raises the advisor/advisee ratios. Since the department attempts to assign advisees to a faculty member who teaches courses in their specialization, the mass communication faculty members generally have more advisees assigned to them.

Average class size would be a meaningless calculation because of the nature of our classes. The limits of all performance and writing classes are determined by of the nature of the class. The writing and media skills classes, Com 200, 256, 346, 358, 360, 364,366, and 458 are all taught in computer labs and have class limits of 24. Other classes which have performance requirements also have limits set by the nature of the class work to be accomplished. It seems reasonable to say that the average communication class will be limited to 30 students or less, though the actual average class size may be larger.

### **Balance in rank of program faculty**

Seven of the faculty hold the rank of associate professor. Ranks of instructor, lecturer, assistant professor and professor each have two members. Of the associate professors, five have been in rank less than five years.

### **Number of staff**

The Communication department support staff consists of one administrative assistant and two student assistants.

## Diversity (gender, race, ethnicity) of majors, faculty, and staff

**Majors:** The department did not begin receiving race or ethnicity reports on its majors until 2004. The department majors are overwhelmingly (67 percent) female, of whom 80 percent are Caucasian. This reflects national enrollment in communication which is predominantly white female. Females comprise a majority of each major: Communication Studies, 61 percent; Mass Communication, 68 percent and Organizational Communication, 88 percent. The following table reports majors by race/ethnicity/gender. African/Americans comprise the largest minority group, representing 21 percent of the majors.

### Communication Majors by Race/Gender 2004-2006

		2004	2005	2006
African American	Females	26	24	31
	Males	7	13	16
	Total	33	37	47
Asian	Females	4	5	5
	Males	2	1	2
	Total	6	6	7
Caucasian	Females	150	166	176
	Males	75	76	85
	Total	225	142	261
Foreign	Females	1	1	1
	Males	0	1	1
	Total	1	2	2
Hispanic	Females	1	4	5
	Males	0	0	0
	Total	1	4	5
Unknown	Females	9	7	7
	Males	6	4	1
	Total	15	11	8

**Faculty:** As earlier tables indicated women comprise the majority of the department faculty. The department has one African/American female, one Native American female and one Asian male.

**Staff:** The lone staff member is a Caucasian female.

## Budget

	2000-01	20001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Payroll	\$636,769.00	\$642,951.00	\$629,882.00	\$751,696.00	\$809,076.00	\$817,457.00
Benefits	\$138,403.00	\$148,682.00	\$156,610.00	\$178,502.00	\$178,993.00	\$202,461.00
Pay&Benefits	\$775,172.00	\$791,633.00	\$786,492.00	\$930,198.00	\$988,069.00	\$1,019,918.00
Operations	\$39,075.00	\$84,281.00	\$152,347.00	\$190,512.00	\$185,551.00	\$239,722.00
Total						
Expenditures	\$814,247.00	\$875,914.00	\$938,839.00	\$1,120,710.00	\$1,173,620.00	\$1,259,640.00

## Facilities and equipment

### Communication Department Computing Resources

Each full-time Communication department faculty member has a private office equipped with a phone, a computer, and direct access to the campus network, which provides access to the laser printer located in the department workroom. The workstations are either Pentium based PCs or Macintosh computers with at least a 15" display, a 40GB or larger hard disk drive, a CD-ROM or CD-RW/DVD drive, a network card, and USB ports.

In addition to the laser printer, the Communication department workroom has a fax machine, a high speed digital copier, and a copy machine. All faculty computers have the following software installed: Windows XP operating system with latest security patches and updates installed, Microsoft Office XP Professional software (Access, Excel, Front Page, PowerPoint, Word), Novell network client software, Hummingbird FTP and Telnet utility, CD/RW & DVD software, Adobe Acrobat Reader, and a local e-mail client. Macintosh computers have the equivalent software.

Each Communication department faculty member has a WSU Campus Computer Account. This account gives faculty unlimited internet access, remote network file storage space, a personal web address, email storage space, access to Novell shared network file storage, and a Wright State email address. Faculty can access the internet and their Novell storage space from any computer connected to the campus network. Additionally, faculty can access their personal Novell file storage space and WSU's web-based email system from anywhere with any computer that has a browser and internet access. Two wireless access points are located within the Communication department, providing wireless network connectivity to the Campus Network for the faculty, staff, and students located in the building.

### Classrooms & Teaching Labs:

The department utilizes classrooms and teaching labs throughout the university but has no classrooms or labs under its control.

## Technology and information resources and services

The College of Liberal Arts has a full-time staff member who serves as the College technology coordinator. The technology coordinator provides hardware and software support for the faculty and staff computers in the college. The Center for Teaching and Learning staff provide support for developing multimedia presentations and web-based course creation and management. The CTL also provides assistance and training to

faculty in preparing online courses and multimedia classroom presentations. The CTL also provides portable equipment, such as projectors and laptops, to faculty for short-term uses. In addition the CaTS Help Desk, Network Services, and Desktop services staff provide support if the college technology coordinator is unavailable or if further technical assistance is needed.

**Program cost**

	2000-01	20001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Pay&Benefits	\$775,172.00	\$791,633.00	\$786,492.00	\$930,198.00	\$988,069.00	\$1,019,918.00
Operations	\$39,075.00	\$84,281.00	\$152,347.00	\$190,512.00	\$185,551.00	\$239,722.00
Total Expenditures	\$814,247.00	\$875,914.00	\$938,839.00	\$1,120,710.00	\$1,173,620.00	\$1,259,640.00

**III. Program Effectiveness (NCA Criterion 3 and Criterion 4)**

**Achievement of student learning outcomes (Please summarize program assessment findings for past five years and subsequent improvements to program) (3A)**

Summary of Assessment Report, 2001-2006

Outcomes Assessed:

Objective 1: Communication Skills

A. Oral Communication—Students will show competence in audience analysis, organization, evidence use, and gestures.

B. Written Communication—Students will show competence in basic writing skills to communicate to a large audience, including having purposes, strategy, organization, style, and grammar, for both media and non-media organizations.

Objective 2: Career Success—Students will find their major provided useful skills and habits of mind for career choice.

Measures Employed:

1. Students speeches are assessed in all oral communication courses, such as COM 101 (Essentials of Public Address), COM 399 (Advanced Public Speaking now replaced by Com 221 Speaking in Professional Contexts), and COM 400 (Senior Seminar in Communication).
2. Student writing is assessed via pre-and post-tests in COM 200 (Writing to Communicate).
3. Student writing is assessed via a final portfolio of written work in COM 400 (Senior Seminar in Communication).

## Assessment Findings:

### Objective 1: Communication Skills

A. During the period, students showed improvement in a variety of areas at the conclusion of COM 101 (Essentials of Public Address). The most notable is students' increased level of confidence in their own speaking skills, followed by improvement in speech creation mechanics such as use of appropriate supporting materials and visual aids, and better use of gestures and body movements.

At the end of COM 399 (Advanced Public Speaking) improvement was noted in all areas of oral communication competency, while this was also indicated for student completion of the oral component of COM 400 (Senior Seminar in Communication).

B. Pre- and post-tests administered in COM 256 (Basic Media Writing), documented the improvement in students' mastery of writing skills for both print and broadcast media audiences.

In COM 200 (Writing to Communicate), students exhibited both a statistical and qualitative improvement in writing skills as a result of instruction. During the period, the improvement noted average varied from one percent to forty-three percent in on class in 2002, to 17.5 percent across various sections during 2006.

From 2004 on, assessment of students completing COM 400 (Senior Seminar in Communication) included some improvement in portfolio preparation, and movement to CD-ROM and web-based portfolios.

### Objective 2: Career Success

During the period, student completion of the Exit Surveys (565 total) stated they felt that their courses prepared them for a career in their major. Those students who stated that courses somewhat prepared them cited the need for more practical experiences (such as internships) particularly in the Mass Media field. The minority of students who did not feel that they were adequately prepared cited the lack of a departmental broadcasting major and/or related courses.

### Program Improvements:

During the period, improvements ranged from the addition of courses as a result of adding one new faculty line in 2001, to the adoption of outcomes meeting the North Central Accreditation standards in 2003, to the development of a communication specialization track within the Master of Public Administration graduate program in 2004, to the revision of the departmental core curriculum and majors during 2005 and 2006.

**Student retention rate (3A)**

The department has not tracked the retention rate of its majors.

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**Number of graduates annually (3A) (undergraduates)**

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
108	65	119	94	121	111	101

**Placement of graduates (e.g., employment, graduate study) (3A)**

The department has only anecdotal information on its graduates. The department asks students to report their employment but few do so. Developing and maintaining a database of relevant information would require resources the department currently does not have.

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**Teaching effectiveness (3B, 3D)**

The department highly values teaching and requires student evaluation of faculty teaching. The department requires that every course taught by every faculty member be evaluated at least once a year. For tenured and tenure track faculty, the department follows the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The Communication department provides mentor support for new faculty and peer review of teaching. Faculty members are also encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities for improving teaching through seminars and workshops through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Most faculty members have participated in those opportunities.?

**Faculty productivity (e.g., publications, grants) (4A)**

During the years 2000-2006, the communication department faculty produced five books, eight book chapters, 54 articles and 58 conference papers.

**Interrelations of the program’s teaching, research, service activities (3A-D, 4A-C, 5A-C)**

The Communication department has clear goals and objectives for student learning outcomes, and these are expressed in its course descriptions and Assessment Plan. In addition, the Communication department bylaws emphasize the importance of teaching, research and service. Although the bylaws allow for an individual to assign different weights to each area, all areas are required. Faculty members believe that research and service provide a means for remaining current in their discipline, while enhancing their teaching. Faculty members serve as reviewers for journals and paper competitions, discussants and panelists at conventions, and moderators at a variety of professional meetings. Faculty members also serve in a variety of communication related positions with local organizations.

### **Integration of technology into curriculum and instruction (3C)**

The faculty have taken advantage of the technology provided by the university and college and the support provided by the Center for Teaching and Learning and Computing and Telecommunications Services. Faculty utilize the computer equipment in classrooms for not only displaying PowerPoint presentations but also demonstrating online search methods and other interactive communication technologies. Many faculty utilize technology in delivering electronic materials. A number of courses are web-assisted and some are offered as online-only courses. The ability to interact online with students has enhanced several department courses. Integrating emerging communication technologies into the classroom, however, has been hampered by the cost of equipment and software. Some classrooms are neither Internet ready nor electronic classrooms.

### **Description of how program ensures that it is always current (4C)**

Several communication department faculty attend important academic conferences every year and present papers or participate as discussants. Individual faculty members belong to the major national communication associations (such as the National Communication Association, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the America Semiotics Association, and the Public Relations Society of America) and regularly attend and participate in conferences. Several department members consult regularly. In addition, as noted elsewhere, several classes incorporate community projects and have communication professionals as speakers for classes. Faculty would attend more conferences if travel funds were available.

### **“Comparative advantage” (e.g., distinctiveness in terms of students served, differentiation from programs offered at other regional institutions, strengths attributable to collaborative/interdisciplinary nature of program, etc.)**

The Communication department is unique in that it combines interpersonal, organizational and mass communication in one department, permitting students to be grounded in each while pursuing an area of specialization. Many of our students are non-traditional (are older, have full time jobs, and are heads of households). This provides the opportunity for students to learn from each other, which fits well with a number of department courses. The ability to offer internships and other work experiences fits well with the goals of many of these students, who want to see the practical application of communication theory.

### **IV. Program Needs/Areas in Need of Improvement Summarize the program needs (e.g., personnel, facilities, equipment) identified in this program review and the areas in need of improvement.**

Since the Communication department just completed a major revamping of courses and majors, many of the needed changes have already been accomplished. The department will closely monitor those changes during 2007 and 2008 and determine if they have accomplished the intended goals. Once that is determined the department will be in a position to examine a potential master's program again.

While the Communication department, for the most part, has been able to meet most needs with the existing the full-time faculty, the facilities and equipment, improvement in the departments offerings, including a possible master's degree program will require

additional support including additional faculty. The elimination of undergraduate teaching assistants, a goal set two years ago, has not been accomplished because the support needed for graduate teaching assistants has not been adequate. In addition innovative programs such as an electronic portfolio system to aid both assessment and student placement require additional funding. Better tracking of majors and graduates could enhance retention and placement but would require additional support, as would improved communication with potential and existing students, communication professionals and potential employers.

## **V. Proposed Improvement Action Plan**

**Summarize the actions that will be taken in response to the findings of this program assessment. Provide a timeline that indicates how these changes will be implemented and assessed over the next seven years.**

**Summarize the program needs (e.g., personnel, facilities, equipment) identified in this program review and the areas in need of improvement.**

Following are the proposed activities to be developed or completed by the department faculty, a timeline for meeting the development and implementation requirements, and the proposed assessments.

### Activity

1. Vote on proposed new mission statement, Faculty, Spring 2007.
2. Explore methods to track retention. Curriculum Committee, Report Spring 2008.
3. Review enrollments in new courses. Curriculum Committee, Fall 2007.
4. Seek resources to develop database of graduates, Chair, Fall, 2007.
5. Explore methods to improve communication with alumni. Ad hoc Committee. By spring, 2008.