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2013-2014

The Department of Communication at Millikin University is committed to providing a market-smart, challenging, and high quality major to students with a variety of professional and personal aspirations. We celebrate and inform our students about the wide variety of ways a major in communication can prepare them for a future life of meaning and value.

Communication is about the construction of meaning between people and their various stakeholders: friends, families, professional colleagues, communities, and more. The study of communication focuses on understanding the symbols and the processes that construct those meanings, whether the symbol is a word, a gesture, a song, a billboard, a website, or any other meaning-generating object in our world. We also examine the relationship of those symbols to the people who use them. We examine the pragmatic and ethical principles that guide people's communicative choices. We apply this learning to our personal and professional lives.

Consequently, the University's goals of professional success, citizenship in a global environment, and a life of personal meaning and value are manifest in the Communication department's goal to enable students to become effective problem-solvers, critics, and practitioners in their personal and professional communities. This is accomplished through classroom learning, research projects and practical application of service learning, internship projects, and media lab activities that help make these abstract ideas come alive.

Student skills and knowledge are assessed using a variety of techniques in the Department of Communication. Information is gathered through various sources and contexts: student exit interviews, internship evaluations, course evaluations, assignment evaluations, and the senior year capstone course and portfolio.

This past year, a couple significant changes occurred: 1) Long-term chair and faculty member, Dr. Jeffrey Brand left Millikin University; 2) A new chair of the department was appointed, Dr. Nancy Curtin, current faculty member; 3) A new faculty member joined the department, Dr. Michael Braun; 4) A curriculum review process started.

Starting in January 2014, the Communication Department initiated a curriculum review. Since the curriculum was last revised in 2006 and implemented in 2007, the new chair, Dr. Nancy Curtin, determined it was time to conduct another curriculum review with the help of the full-time faculty. While the curriculum review is still in progress as of the writing of this report, the department plans to propose a revised curriculum in Fall 2014; these proposals will then undergo the requisite curriculum review process through University governance. Plans are to have the curriculum completely implemented in January 2015.





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The Department of Communication in the Fall of 2006 completed a self-study of its current curriculum and successfully passed through University governance a new curriculum structure that went into effect in the Fall of 2007. After thorough review of existing classes and curriculum structure, three concentrations, or tracks, were created and adjustments were made in the curriculum in areas of writing and ethics. In the Spring of 2008, the department added a fourth track in sport communication to the major. These four tracks are the only formal tracks in the major; a general communication major is still available.

The breakdown of students in those tracks shows the distribution of interest in each track although students are taking courses throughout the Communication department curriculum in electives and for other professional reasons. The group ending in Spring 2014 (which does not

contract the number of sections, which enabled flexibility in the number of sections delivered. Even though this approach to deliver the oral communication program is seemingly cost-effective, it is not without other "costs" or ramifications.

Although the department values the quality and commitment of its adjunct faculty, the lack of administrative support for full-time faculty to help teach this general education requirement does not demonstrate strong commitment to this general education requirement.

In comparison, full-time, tenure line or tenured faculty teach a majority of all other general education courses. A review of the assessment reports by the other general education areas will confirm this observation.

The current full time faculty cannot contribute significantly to the oral communication requirement teaching load without further eroding the access students in the major have to terminal degreed faculty. For 2013-2014, part-time adjunct faculty members also taught 4 major specific courses, excluding the PACE program. The department is simply understaffed for the FTE it generates. Adjunct faculty are currently teaching the equivalent of five additional full time faculty for the department.

communication theory, after which they may select any required and elective course work, provided the prerequisites for the higher-level courses are completed. Our curriculum uses a non-hierarchical organization schema that allows for maximal flexibility in designing individualized plans of study. There are a few courses that do build onto each other in stages, for example: multiple public relations, video or radio production, organizational communication, and media courses. Majors are required to use an internship experience to round out their classroom experience. To that end, the department has a communication department internship coordinator who assists students in fulfilling this objective. Thus, communication majors are

newspaper, *The Decaturian*. Both concentrations offer students experiences with professional media outlets through internships.

- Organizational Communication: Students in the organizational communication track develop communications skills vital for the professional workplace. Coursework in leadership, conflict management, organizational culture and small group communication prepare students for a wide range of careers. Courses in management, advertising, and other areas from the University may be incorporated into this major track.
- Sport Communication: Like the mass media track, this one offers two concentrations, public relations or media. This track is for students interested in sport communication in areas such as publicity, event planning, marketing, broadcasting, editing, sales, etc. Students will be encouraged to take additional coursework from the English Department, Exercise Science Department, and the Tabor Business School as needed to supplement their program of study.

Throughout these tracks we have expanded the writing requirements for many majors, incorporated a senior-level internship experience, and approved inclusion of courses from other departments that might enhance our own tracks including coursework from the departments of Art, English, Psychology, Entrepreneurship and Marketing. Our students are also required to complete a 1-credit capstone course in conjunction with the internship experience designed to provide reflection, assessment, and preparation for future professional activities.

A communication program in the twenty-first century must be prepared to engage every facet of communicative competency from the physiology of sign production to the politics of institution formation and legitimation. A fully functional university program in communication must provide:

- First courses, non-remedial first courses, appropriate to the maturity and self-reflective habits of traditional university aged students and adult learners, instilling meta-vocabularies of risk, effects, and critique
- Skill courses, especially in the arts of public communication
- Intermediate and advanced courses, with special support for skill building, in interpersonal, small group, and organizational communication
- Initial and advanced courses in media production
- Spec

market-driven ways, and that there are extraordinary opportunities that remain to express leadership in communication education and win the rewards that go with that leadership.

The Communication Department assesses student skills and knowledge using a variety of techniques. One of our assessment goals is to create a consistent, ongoing assessment process to improve the quality and quantity of data useful to our department for program development and growth. Assessment data will be gathered from the following sources and contexts:

- Student Interviews: A random sample of students is interviewed each year. These have included exit interviews for graduating seniors, discussions held with student leadership, and student feedback provided in the capstone course.
- Internship Evaluations: Communication majors are encouraged to have at least one internship experience. At the end of the internship, students, supervisors, and the faculty advisor evaluates the intern's performance. These evaluations will provide us with data from several different perspectives about the students' professional competence and their ability to apply coursework in the professional arena. The internship advisor also collects informal data as she places student interns and checks in with employers.
- Assignment Evaluations: Assessment of particular assignments to track implementation of learning goals is planned. Each year, a select set of courses and assignments will be evaluated for their contribution to the major and to student learning.
- Student Activities/Experiences: Assessment of experiential activities will also take place at regular intervals to assess the contributions of departmental opportunities outside of the traditional classroom. The student radio station provides on-campus media



	contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	in relevant communication contexts.
CO 101 Introduction to Communication Theory		x	
CO 104 Argument and Social Issues	x		x
CO 200 Public Speaking	x	x	
CO 204 Investigative Methods in Communication		x	x
CO 308 Communication Ethics & Freedom of Expression		x	x
CO 47x Communication Internship	x	x	x
CO 480 Capstone Experiential Learning Seminar (1 credit)	x		x

	Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts.
CO 100 Interpersonal Communication	x	x	

CO 225 Issues in Mass Media		X	X
CO 242 Business and Professional Communication	X	X	
CO 251 Introduction to Public Relations	X	X	
CO 260 Seminar in Communication		X	X
CO 306 Topics in Discourse Studies		X	X
CO 310 Small Group Communication	X	X	
CO 314 Advanced Radio Production and Performance	X		X
CO 324 Advanced Video Production	X		
CO 331 Relational Communication	X	X	X

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CO 332 Gendered Communication	x	x	x
CO 341 Organizational Culture	x	x	
CO 342 Applications in Organizational Comm	x	x	

weaknesses. Our assessment resources and experience are limited. Progress has been made on assessment of our delivery of the oral communication requirement. We have three years of more developed assessment and the results from that assessment are encouraging. The data from that assessment is provided in a separate report for general education purposes. From the department's perspective, one of the greatest dangers facing the program's quality is the absence of full-time faculty teaching including assessment experience for the program. Other general education programs have full-time faculty teaching and a program coordinator with release time and support for program assessment. This general education requirement does not have the same resources allocated to its teaching or assessment.

We have experienced a wide range of feedback from students about the communication program. Some if it is beyond the control of the department and reflect shortfalls of administrated support in the areas of faculty and equipment. One example would be video equipment. For four-five years requests have been made to upgrade and develop these resources and those requests have been denied. Another example, no member of the department has release time to perform assessment responsibilities. The small size and limited faculty size makes assessment difficult. The department size has also been further reduced many years for a variety of reasons, for example, in the last four of five years, the Department has had one faculty member teaching for Millikin University in London or on a sabbatical leave for a semester. New teaching and advising duties were the priority for the department during these short-handed periods. In the Spring of 2010, both senior faculty members taught a fifth course in response to the University's financial crisis concerning instructional resources. Faculty are advising 30-40 students each and spend significant time helping to advise and mentor student majors. Time, resources, and opportunities for assessment are limited. Results of current assessment efforts include:

Student Exit Interviews: The chair of the department conducted interviews with 25 students enrolled in the capstone course and planning to graduate from the department in December 2013, May 2014, or anticipating graduation in August or December 2014. Students were generally positive about their overall experience with the University and the Department of Communication. These interviews have been valuable sources of information on our students. Many of the changes made over the years in the department have started with student recommendations that occurred with the capstone interview or reflection paper. This process has resulted in almost every student being interviewed prior to graduation. Some of the more frequent and valuable comments are summarized below:

- Advising was highly praised by graduates from the major. On average, students were pleased that the department made an effort to help them graduate on time and that curricular and advising resources were available to make that possible. Students felt that their departmental advisor, the department secretary, and Registrar's office were meeting their advising needs. Ordinarily, freshmen receive an advisor who follows them through their four years in the major. Many students reported getting help on advising issues from multiple members of the Communication faculty, not just a single advisor. All full-time faculty are prepared for and expected to assist students with advising issues during their time in the department. Students described the advising experience in our department much more favorably than other departments they had transferred from prior to becoming communication majors. Many students mentioned that they have had multiple meetings during the semester with their advisor and that advising extended well beyond scheduling. Students received assistance in

their career planning, with issues concerning their courses and university services, study abroad, graduate school, and with other academic and personal challenges. This success has been possible despite communication faculty advising as many as 30 or more advisees each semester.

- Many students referenced at least one favorite faculty member and/or course in the department and recognized the collegiality and support Communication faculty provide to students and to each other. The variety of courses and faculty described demonstrated a breadth of courses and teaching styles that students found attractive and that helped them to succeed. Students in the major usually have at the minimum three of our full-time faculty in their major program, many have all of us at one time or another as they move through the program. The range of courses was interesting. The individual courses were important but so was their teaching style and success at contributing to student learning. Many of the core courses were included in their comments, students seem to appreciate, if only later in the process, the central theory and knowledge the core contributed to their preparation. Those courses included: CO 101 Introduction to Communication Theory, CO 107 Argument and Social Issues, and CO 204 Investigative Methods in Communication. Popular elective courses included: CO 306 Documentary Film, CO 432 Intercultural Communication, CO 332 Gendered Communication, and CO 343 Communication and Conflict.
- Students who have selected a track in their major were generally pleased with that option and outcome. Most would like even more upper-level coursework in their individual track areas—to deepen the amount of coursework in each track. This seem particularly true for students entering the major their freshmen year. The longer a student is a major in the department, the more our limitations become evident. Offering a variety of topics courses, including immersion courses, is helping this situation. However, with a limited faculty size, a heavy core course demand, and a significant number of majors, variety is going to be limited.
- Students in the media track were particularly critical of the options available to them at this time. Video production is limited to a reliance on instruction with an adjunct teacher. That position has been held by three different adjuncts in the last four years, making any development or improvement in that program difficult. Such turnover prevents the relationships needed for effective advising, independent study, or mentoring in this area of the major. Equipment limitations have compounded this problem. With only two limited use cameras for a class of 10-15 students, the Millikin University mission of hands on learning and performance learning is impossible to adequately develop. As long as the media area is not supported sufficiently, it is not delivering on our promise of education. Further information is later in this report as we assess the potential and practice of student learning in this area of our curriculum.
- The study abroad was referred to as a unique and positive experience during exit interviews. One popular program has been a London Semester program. Student experiences in the London Semester were rated exceptional and the students were extremely pleased to have had the experience and opportunity to study abroad. Other students have used their language skills, immersion courses and general education requirements to experience learning off campus. More options and types of opportunities for such learning were recommended.
- Students would like to see more activities outside of the classroom beyond the radio station. Our student honorary, Lambda Pi Eta, needs to become more active. Students also attended



Video Production Program Review: Each year we attempt to assess the status of one of our areas of the major and potential courses in that area. In 2012-13 we had concerns about the video production sequence in the major and its effectiveness in our curriculum; those concerns continued in 2013-2014. Through student feedback, enrollment and registration patterns, faculty and equipment assessment, and student project evaluation, we have concluded that the video production area is not meeting the departmental learning goals nor the expectations for a Millikin academic experience.

This area of the curriculum has been forced to utilize adjunct faculty for about 10 of the last 12 years. The understaffing of the program has led to poor instructor leadership in this area. Video production is an area that does not require an advanced degree to practice, only to teach. As a result, there are limited potential adjunct faculty out there. Thus, we are proposing that we hire professionally-qualified instructor, even if that entails a bachelor's degree, to teach video production. This proposal is being considered as of the time of this report writing.

One accompanying challenge is the equipment options for the program. The department has two aging cameras with some broken parts. It is impossible to hold a class that only is meeting once a week with two cameras and expect students to get a thorough enough education in their use. They are not High Definition capable that means students cannot get experience in the editing and production of high definition video. Multiple request each year for the past 4-5 years have been made to supplement our equipment. The Dean of A&S claims he has made requests for these materials and they have been denied. At this level of technology the courses cannot be offered. We have consulted with alumni and local video professionals who have offered suggestions on the technology we should invest in and without those resources, the video production area is in limbo.

Student feedback in the video production area indicates that they are dissatisfied with the equipment and instruction. Capstone and interviews and talks with students in the classes indicate that they are not happy with content, equipment, or teaching. The department as actually had students leave the University due to insufficient resources in the media area of the major. Student projects at the end of the semester in Fall 2012 were not well or completely executed and so the general evaluations of the program in seen in the assessment of student performance in the course indicate poor performance.

After this assessment of the video program, the department has taken the following actions. First, plans are underway as of the writing of this report to hire an adjunct for the interim to teach a 200-level course in spring 2015. Second, the media track and core courses in the major have been adjusted for the future. The core for the major has added a course, CO 225 Issues in Mass Media, that will insure that all majors have a better understanding of media and society. This improves all majors and opens the media track to other elective hours. The Issues in Mass Media course will also incorporate more media law content. The CO 425 Media Law and Policy course will no longer be required for Media Track majors. Although we have an adjunct very qualified to teach it, current students required to take it are lower; therefore the class had to be

Assessment Summary: The current level of departmental assessment is considered to be yellow as a performance indicator. We are expanding and improving on the range and quality of assessment and have plans to continue improvements. Current data is very encouraging for continued growth and potential for the department. The program has made some important and significant adjustments to its curriculum and goals. Student activity in the classroom and outside of courses indicates that the learning goals we have set for majors are being pursued and accomplished.

academic year promises new challenges, dangers, and opportunities for the Department of Communication. A summary of concerns and goals include:

- Adequate staffing for the department continues to be a danger. The loss of our media production faculty member, four years ago, threatens to limit our ability to grow and develop that portion of the major. In the short-term, we plan to hire a video production adjunct instructor. Further evaluation of staffing needs will occur with the curriculum revisions. With only 4 full-time faculty and consistently more than 100 majors and general education commitments, our department is too small to provide the level of curriculum necessary to meet the need. The major deserves resources commensurate with its contribution to enrollments and University graduation rates.
- Development of the public speaking requirement is too limited due to resource restrictions. A full-time hire for a basic course director who can also contribute to at least one other curricular track is needed, thus, the position would have  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  release time for basic course direction. The position would allow for better-informed assessment of this general education requirement, adjunct training and mentoring, and course development. An additional lecturer or instructor hire(s) would also improve the quality and consistency of the general education requirement. The first effort to begin assessment of this program has begun with the help of an adjunct with minimal support, but more should be done. This general education requirement needs to be supported as have others at the University.
- Resource needs in addition to faculty also limit the department's ability to meet University mission goals. Theory to practice, and performance learning is difficult to accomplish when the department's resources include only two cameras for a video production course. Students are not being afforded sufficient time to work hands-on with the equipment. The addition to the department's responsibilities of the oral communication requirement has also occurred without any resources improvements in staffing, equipment, office space, or office expenses. The current departmental budget cannot handle these expanded expectations without new resources.

The Communication Department has accomplished a great deal over the years. We expect to continue to function as a successful department with interesting courses and valuable experiences that are appealing to students at Millikin University.

Highlights from this academic year as a department include:



- WJMU, the student-run campus radio station, was busy with **software upgrades to both production and on-air automation computers, as well as hardware upgrades to the studio console and the installation of updated studio monitors.** This improved the **quality of programming.**
- WJMU nominated as two finalists at the annual Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Awards in New York for the following: the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary *War of the Worlds* remake and a spot news segment.
- WJMU received its license renewal from the FCC.
- All four full-time faculty in the department contribute their scholarship to regional, national, or international conferences and to publications. One adjunct faculty member was also active in research.
- Dr. Tom Duncanson completed a successful study abroad program in London with a large number of majors.
- The Communication Department continues to collaborate with Tabor School of Business on creating, modifying and cross-listing courses that serve both constituencies. Furthermore, some of communication courses are required and recommended for the new Integrated Marketing Communication minor, offered through Tabor School