



## Communication

A department in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences offering the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Communication and the B.A. in Journalism.

### ■ The Review Process

In fall, 2004, the B.A. program in Journalism was moved from the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, where it had been a free-standing department, to the Department of Communication in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. The AQAD visiting team was asked to comment specifically on the issues associated with the merger and the future development of the Communication department under its new configuration. Reviewers were:

James W. Carey, chair (Columbia University)  
Larry Gross (University of Southern California)  
Dean R. Mills (University of Missouri, Columbia)  
Karen Tracy (University of Colorado, Boulder)

### ■ Main Issues

The visiting team first conducted separate evaluations of the programs in Journalism and Communication, and then offered comments on issues related to the merger.

- With respect to Journalism, the team found that although the program is dealing with “diminishing financial resources in the face of growing student demand,” it remains a “remarkably strong undergraduate program ... certainly at the top of public journalism education in New England.” “Indeed,” the team found, “its faculty, its teaching, its research and creative productivity and its students would be at home in the top professional journalism programs in the country.” In addition to praising the quality of the undergraduate program, the team examined Journalism’s research and creative activity and found that “for a program that has no graduate curriculum — not even a professional master’s degree — the productivity seems remarkable. It would be impressive even in a department that offers the doctorate.”
- The team offered many positive comments about the programs in Communication, finding that “all faculty are active researchers, research is regularly appearing in prestigious communication and multidisciplinary journals, book publications are commonplace, multiple Fulbright and other scholarships have been received by faculty members, senior faculty are keynote speakers in major national and international venues, and the department’s Ph.D. graduates regularly secure academic placements, including positions at prominent research universities.” They also noted that the “breakdown of faculty across ranks is refreshingly even,” and that “enviable gender parity and racial/ethnic diversity – again in comparison with peer departments – offers faculty and students the opportunity for an enriching environment.” Undergraduates are happy with their experience, and “the department has succeeded in delivering a good quality undergraduate major

inexpensively.” The team warned, however, that “the department is stretched to its limits,” and that further reductions in the size of the program should be considered. The graduate program was found to be “healthy,” with strong selectivity for and placement from the Ph.D. program. Suggestions were made for improving the consistency of graduate courses, and for reducing the extent to which Master’s students must take courses with Ph.D. students.

- In terms of the integration of Journalism and Communication programs within a single department, the team observed that typically such programs are either separate departments in liberal arts colleges or organized within a college of communication. The team recommended that success within a single department is most likely to occur if the two “distinctive academic communities that overlap in small ways, but differ in many important ones” are respected, and if “considerable independence” is accorded to both degree programs. Along these lines, the team felt it was “imperative” that Journalism be maintained as a separate degree program within the department. At the same time, the team agreed that Journalism and Communication do “share common interests in a number of areas, particularly media criticism and information technology. These common interests can be integrated into joint teaching efforts and in joint development of basic courses with an even broader and pertinent focus than is now the case.”
- Given the “critical moment in the life of this department, and the challenge and opportunity provided by the merger with journalism,” the team strongly urged an external search for a new chair when the term of the current chair expires to allow for the recruitment of an “energetic and visionary newcomer.”

## ■ Results of the Review

The Communication department generally agreed with the team’s findings. The department noted that many changes have already occurred as a result of the merger, including cross-listing of Journalism and Communication courses, changes in requirements to allow students in one areas to earn a double major in the other, and planning for development of a Journalism minor and a potential new major that would combine Journalism and Communication. The department reported that it is “committed to maintaining the identities, strengths, and integrity of both programs while at the same time trying to cultivate those areas of overlap that do exist, in order to provide new opportunities for our students.” The department indicated that it did not wish to further restrict enrollment in Communication, and wished to meet existing demand in Journalism, but that doing so would depend on the allocation of resources to the department.

The department agreed with the team’s suggestions regarding the graduate curriculum, and reported a number of steps already taken to improve consistency. The idea of an external search for a new chair was described as “intriguing.”

The Dean also endorsed the team’s main findings, and agreed to work with the department in carrying them out. The Dean reported that the team’s recommendations for future hiring in the department — in film studies, quantitative methods, and new communication technologies — would be reflected in the College’s hiring plan. The idea of an external search for a chair will be explored during the coming year.

“What remains unanswered,” according to the Dean, “is how the integration of these two departments is going to work.” Cooperation in moving forward is good, but is complicated by “ongoing enrollment pressure in both areas,” and the Dean committed to working with the administration to resolve the question of matching resources with enrollment demand.