Undergraduate Program Assessment

Department of Communication

Student Learning Objectives

Students Majoring in Communication will learn:

• Basic communication theories and principles in relation to a variety of communicative practices and contexts.
• Similarities and differences between specific types/sites of direct and mediated communication and approaches to their study.
• The significance of cultural differences in communication practices.
• Basic methodological and analytical approaches used in the study of communication derived from the social sciences and the humanities.

Students Majoring in Communication will be able to:

• Demonstrate an ability to write and speak effectively to a variety of audiences.
• Critically analyze, assess, and interpret scholarly and everyday discourse.
• Understand and conduct basic research into a communicative practice.
• Analyze and demonstrate basic familiarity with the tools available to and the choices that confront communicators.

Students Majoring in Communication are encouraged to value:

• A critical, systematic, and analytic orientation to the study of communication practices.
• The integration of theories and practices of communication.
• Local and global articulations and questions of diversity in communication.
• A broad understanding of the relationships among communication, ethics, cultural engagement, social justice, and democratic citizenship.

Journalism

Students should learn about and develop the following skills:

• Reporting: Interviewing; note-taking; familiarity with access and location of public records; understanding of Massachusetts open meeting laws; basic math skills; research tools including Lexis Nexis, database and Web research; libel laws, using public relations sources, following up on leads and maintaining relationships with sources.
• Writing: Storytelling, basic lead structures (such as the inverted diamond, delayed interest, etc.), basic news story and feature story structures, including use of quotations, transitions, attribution, accuracy, grammar and AP style.
• Concepts: Some attention to the impact on journalism of the 24-hour news cycle, new technologies and changing distribution systems; the importance of visual media; the movement toward narrative in the news; and professional standards, such as ethics, interactions with subjects and editors, getting all sides of a story, fairness, keeping one’s opinions out of a story, and developing good news judgment.

Assessment tools

• Indirect: review of standard university-wide course evaluation, senior survey, and student engagement data; student responses to newly revised curriculum.
• Direct: Honors student performance at Undergraduate Research Conference; analysis of student papers by juniors in the major in COMM 375 (planned).
• (Journalism) Indirect: review of Newswriting and Reporting foundational course, through instructor discussion, survey of student majors, senior survey data.

Highlighted recent activities

• Over the next several years, the Department plans to review student responses to the newly revised undergraduate curriculum, as well as student performance within it. Student input was used when drafting the new set of requirements, and student feedback will inform future revisions. Evidence to be used will include patterns of student responses from the Senior Survey, review of student work, focus groups, and individual conversations with students.