February 15th, 2013

Dear Prospective UMass Comm Major,

Congratulations on your acceptance to the Communication major at UMass Amherst! We are writing to let you know about a unique opportunity for your first year.

You have the opportunity to join the Communication Majors’ Residential Academic Program, otherwise known as the Comm RAP. This academic experience spans your entire first year at UMass and integrates your studies in the major with your residential living experience. Communication is one of the larger majors on campus, but with the Communication RAP you have the opportunity to live and study with around thirty of your fellow Comm majors, forging friendships and connections that will likely last throughout your four years at UMass and beyond.

In Fall 2013 you will take Comm 118: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication and Culture, taught in the residential area as a small class for only the students in the RAP. In the same semester you will take Comm 101: Communication First Year Introduction on the main campus with other non-RAP first year Comm majors – in this course you will learn about the department as a whole and have a number of guest speakers from the Communication faculty and other important offices on campus.

Then, in Spring 2014 you will enroll in a special 1-credit seminar designed especially for Comm RAP students. This seminar will allow you to delve into Communication topics that interest you in greater depth. It may involve additional guest speakers, a group project, or community service-learning.

In addition to the classroom elements of the RAP, you will receive special departmental advising. Professor Lynn Phillips, the Chief Undergraduate Director for Communication, will meet with you as a group for an advising workshop each semester. And every RAP student will be assigned to a peer advisor – a junior or senior Comm major – who focuses exclusively on advising RAP students.

We believe that the smaller classroom experiences, the specialized advising, and the camaraderie that you will develop in the dorm with your fellow Comm RAP students will make your first year a memorable one and be an exciting start to a great four years in the Communication major.
If you want to join the Comm RAP, please check out the “How to Join” page of the RAP website: http://ualc.umass.edu/rap/howtojoin/ The opportunity to hold a spot will begin on May 12th. Enrollment is on a first-come first-served basis. Be sure to read the information on the website so that you have time to take care of the steps necessary to hold a spot.

In addition to the Comm RAP, there are other RAP programs available that may interest you. These RAP programs also have the benefit of living and learning with a small group of students, which can provide a small school experience in the context of the large university with all of its opportunities. You are welcome to join any Topic RAP that has space available. Check out the full range of options at rap.umass.edu

A few Topic RAPs that may be of particular interest to Comm majors include:
Connecting Arts & Society in Cance Hall in Southwest OR in Van Meter Hall in Central
Connecting Self & Society RAP in Moore Hall in Southwest
Social Justice & Activism RAP in Gorman Hall
Exploring Society RAP in Webster Hall in Orchard Hill OR in Gorman Hall in Central

If the RAP experience doesn’t sound right for you, keep in mind that all first year Comm majors are assigned their own personal peer advisor and can drop in to meet with any of our peer advisors in the Comm Undergraduate Advising Office (411 Machmer Hall) during most business hours Monday to Friday during the semester. This advising is available to you in addition to meeting with your regular faculty advisor.

We hope you’ll consider applying to the Communication Majors Residential Academic Program, and we hope to meet you in Fall of 2013!

Sincerely,

Professor Emily West
Undergraduate Program Director
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Professor Lynn Phillips
Chief Undergraduate Advisor
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