Undergraduate Program Assessment – Spring 2013
Department of Communication

Student Learning Objectives

Students Majoring in Communication will learn:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The relationships among communication, ethics, cultural engagement, social justice, and citizenship.

Assessment tools

- Indirect: review of standard university-wide course evaluation, senior survey, and student engagement data; feedback of Peer Advisors (PAs) on their own experiences in the major as well as their reports of the experiences of the ~400 majors and prospective majors they advise each year.
- Direct: Student work exhibited in forums such as campus and Five College Film & Video contests, the Undergraduate Research Conference, and the Communication Student Showcase. Communication majors produce scholarly papers, original research papers, video projects, online and multimedia projects, and community service projects, and engage in public speaking.

Highlighted recent activities

- Recent data indicate a strong undergraduate program in Communication. In the 2011 teaching evaluations, we scored at least a standard deviation above the campus mean in 5 of 7 categories despite our high student: faculty ratio and a student body at least twice as large as any other major with comparable scores. In the 2010-12 senior survey data, Communication is at or slightly above the campus as a whole in nearly all categories.
- Our assessment includes consultation with our 12 junior and senior PAs. Recent feedback emphasized how coursework encourages them to “pursue positive social change,” to “see beyond social constructions” and “view our world with a critical lens,” how it has helped them “become a more engaged and informed citizen” and be prepared for “a world that has become increasingly globalized and connected.” PAs report positive student feedback on the new curriculum, which allows for more student choice even at the 100-level, increases work at the 400-level, expands “tools course” offerings, and provides guidance on various pathways of interest in the major.
- Given our strengths in curriculum and teaching and students’ calls for more professional development, we have focused on developing an advising program and support for students’ career interests. The Peer Advising program, launched in Fall 2010, has been central to these efforts. Trained and supervised by the CUA, the PAs staff a new drop-in advising center, where majors and prospective majors seek advising during business hours. In addition, each direct admit Comm major is paired with a PA for mentoring throughout the first year. Peer Advisors coordinate events focusing on study abroad, internships, grad school, campus media resources, and professional development. The department informs majors and prospective majors about internship and career opportunities through the new weekly Comm Connection e-newsletter, Facebook page, and Peer Advising blog.
Program Assessment
• Will be carried out by the Undergraduate Studies Committee in consultation with faculty and Chair, and next steps include brief surveys to receive feedback on the main components of the revised curriculum, to be administered in 400-level IE classes and/or when students see PAs for advising.