

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Master of Professional Communication
Weber State University
Fall 2014

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The following is a summary of the self-study document, highlighting important points. For complete information, please refer to the full, self-study document.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Master of Professional Communication program is to provide the advanced knowledge and communication skills working professionals need to succeed in career fields related to communication. Students receive an applied education grounded in theory. They learn how to conduct research, interpret research findings, write and present information in accordance with the conventions and standards of the classroom and the boardroom.

Curriculum:

The original curriculum consisted of 37 credit hours, including 22 credit hours of required courses, nine credit hours of electives and six credit hours of Thesis/Project I and II. In the original curriculum students were required to take two prerequisite courses before they could apply for admission.

In the three years the program has been admitting students, we have made some curriculum changes designed to give students more choices, improve scheduling and sequencing of courses for students and faculty, create a more manageable workload for faculty who advise theses and projects, and streamline the admissions process. Our goal for admissions is to draw a larger applicant pool so we can be more selective and admit students who are better prepared for graduate study.

The new curriculum, passed in 2014 and implemented in 2014-15, is listed below.

MPC Course Requirements 2014-15

Students must complete 33 credit hours with a minimum GPA of 3.0. At least 27 credit hours must consist of courses at the 6000-level.

Foundational Courses (12 hours)

MPC 6050 Intro to Grad Study/Communication Theory (3)

MPC 6150 Writing for Professional Communicators (3)

MPC 6210 Presentational Speaking in the Workplace (3)
MPC 6700 Research Methods for Professional Communicators (3)

Core Required Courses (12 credit hours). Choose four of the following six courses

MPC 6100 Team Building & Facilitation (3)
MPC 6300 New Media in Prof Comm (3)
MPC 6350 Visual Comm Design (3)
MPC 6400 Leadership Communication (3)
MPC 6450 Advanced Organizational Comm (3)
MPC 6600 Strategic Comm (3)

Electives (9 credit hours)

Students may choose to take three elective classes OR write a thesis or complete a professional project to fulfill their elective requirements. Consult with the MPC Program Director to plan your elective courses or discuss your thesis or project.

6000-Level MPC Elective Courses

MPC 6250 Interviewing (3)
MPC 6500 Topics in Professional Communication (3) (Topics vary each semester.)
MPC 6620 Conflict Resolution & Mediation (3)
MPC 6810 Web Usability (3)
MPC 6900 Thesis/Project I (3)
MPC 6950 Thesis/Project II (3)

Interdisciplinary Elective Courses

MBA 6140 Marketing Management (3)
MBA 6170 Corporate Communications (3)
MBA 6530 E-Business (3)
MBA 6540 Negotiations (3)
MED 6110 Introduction to Classroom Management (3)
MED 6120 Advanced Classroom Management (3)
MHA 6000 Health Care and the Health Care Economy (3)
MHA 6400 Strategic Health Planning and Marketing (3)

5000-level or dual-designation courses

MPC 5080 Intercultural Communication (3)
MPC 5220 Editing (3)
MPC 5400 Public Relations Media and Campaigns (3)
MPC 5820 Persuasive Communication
MPC 5850 Advertising (3)

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment:

There are five program level learning outcomes:

At the end of their study at WSU, students in this program will:

- 1) Write and edit at a level commensurate with a communication leader or manager in applied communication contexts.
- 2) Present information orally and in visual form at a level commensurate with a communication leader or manager in an applied communication context.
- 3) Demonstrate critical thinking in applied communication contexts.
- 4) Conduct academic or applied research in communication, report findings clearly and accurately, and interpret the meaning of research data.
- 5) Demonstrate knowledge in one or more cognate areas – strategic communication, leadership, organizational communication, team building and new media.

Assessment data collected over the past two years indicate that we are meeting the standards set for assessment on each measure. We have made a few small changes to the program based on examining assessment data. The Presentational Speaking course was moved from two to three credit hours to give students more class time for speaking assignments. Students make four presentations instead of two and have more opportunities for feedback from their professor and peers.

The first year we assessed writing by examining students' theses and projects at the completion of the program. While there is value in looking at their capstone projects to examine the quality of critical thinking, research methods, knowledge of cognate areas and writing skills, we realized that the final draft submitted to the library may have undergone several revisions based on feedback from faculty. We also added a measure to assess writing skills as demonstrated by the final project in MPC 6150 Writing for Professional Communicators.

Academic Advising:

The graduate program director serves as the advisor for the 45-50 students enrolled in the program at any given time. Students are required to meet with the director the summer between their first and second years to plan their electives and chart a path to graduation. Under the new curriculum, students will likely have advising questions more frequently because they have a greater amount of choice among core requirements.

Career advising is also handled by the graduate program director. In 2014-15, she created an experimental course on building a professional brand on the Internet and in social media. Several students have chosen to use this course to develop online portfolios and websites to further enhance their job search. Other students are creating content to position themselves as thought leaders in their industry or profession.

Faculty:

Thus far 14 faculty members have taught at least one class in the MPC program. Eleven of the 14 have earned a doctorate in Communication. Three faculty have master's degrees in Communication, coupled with at least five years of professional experience related to the subject of their MPC course. The majority of faculty members list "white" on ethnicity reports. One public relations and advertising professor is a black woman who emigrated from Guyana. The gender distribution of nine women and five men reflects the demographics of our discipline.

Program Support:

Dean Madonne Miner provides strong support for the program. She has allowed us to capture our tuition revenue in the program's base budget. In turn, we are using the budget to hire additional faculty lines to support the instructional needs of the MPC and Department of Communication programs. As we are building the base in preparation for new faculty lines, we have been able to use one-time carry forward money at the end of the fiscal year to establish a scholarship endowment and student travel funds.

Facilities in Elizabeth Hall provide modern, well-equipped classrooms with smart classroom technology. Occasionally we experience network problems in the building or find technology that needs to be replaced on a more frequent basis.

Relations with External Community:

The MPC program maintains relationships with the external community by bringing communication professionals in as guest speakers and working with a newly formed external advisory committee for guidance on curriculum and placement. The program gives back to the community by sponsoring events for the local chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), through faculty service on local and national advisory boards and through applied projects students complete for clients and their employers as part of their course work in the program.

Student, Faculty, Contract/Adjunct Faculty and Staff Statistics:

The table below presents interesting data about the students admitted during our first three years. On average, our students are 37-38 years of age with an average of 9-12 years of professional work experience. One of the justifications for the program is to provide further educational opportunities to alumni and mid-career communication professionals seeking a graduate degree to advance their careers. The demographics suggest we are reaching this population.

Please provide information on the entering class for each of the past 5 years:

Entering Class	Ave. GRE Verbal	Ave. GRE Quant	Ave. GRE Analytical Writing	Ave. GPA (undergrad)	Ave. Age (years)	Ave. Post-Undergrad. Work Experience (years)
2009-10	NA	NA	NA	NA		
2010-11	NA	NA	NA	NA		
2011-12	150	142	4.0	3.39	38.1	12 years
2012-13	152	145	4.0	3.26	37.8	9.5
2013-14	150	143	4.0	3.4	37.3	10.75

We have been somewhat surprised to learn that about one third of our students come from other academic disciplines or career fields and are seeking to change careers. The top five undergraduate majors among our students are Communication, English, Psychology, Visual Arts and various health professions including Nursing, Health Administrative Services (HAS) and Health Promotion and Human Performance (HHP). Career tracking of MPC graduates suggests that the MPC program has helped these students make a career change. One notable example is a graduate from the first cohort who was a nurse when she started the program. After graduation she was hired as the Emergency Planner and Crisis Communications Manager for a municipality in Missouri.

Results of Previous Program Reviews:

Not applicable because this is our first program review.

Information Regarding Current Review Team Members:

Kenneth L. Smith, Ph.D., Communication & Journalism, University of Wyoming
Daniel J. Lair, Ph.D., Communication and Visual Arts, University of Michigan-Flint
Becky Jo Gesteland, Ph.D., Department of English, Weber State University
Matthew Mouritsen, Ph.D., Master of Business Administration, Weber State University