

To: WSU Communication Department Faculty and Staff

From: Dean Madonne Miner

Re: Dean's Response to Communication Department's Self-Study, Reviewers' Report, and Communication Department's Response to the Review

Date: May 7, 2015

Thank you all for your many contributions to WSU's Communication Department Review process. All Communication faculty members participated in various stages of this review, and I am grateful to you for your thoughtfulness and thoroughness in addressing concerns of importance to the department and to the College. I want to convey special thanks to Sheree Josephson for serving as internal team leader, and to the four individuals (Alan Stavitsky, Sarah Partlow Lefevre, Azenett Garza, and Shannon Butler) who served as reviewers.

Like the writers of the Review Report, I would characterize the Communication Department as very effective in meeting the missions of the university, college, and department. Faculty members have been sensitive to changes in their discipline areas and have revised curriculum to keep up with those changes. They have been supportive of co-curricular activities, internships, and community-engaged learning. It is no surprise that the number of student majors in Communication has grown in recent years. During this same time, the department launched a Master's in Professional Communication Program; happily, the department has taken care not to sacrifice undergraduate education in favor of graduate. Faculty continue to be committed to teaching well at the undergraduate level.

With respect to challenges identified by reviewers and addressed by faculty:

1. Salaries are not competitive. Probably more than any other department in the College of Arts & Humanities, faculty in the Department of Communication can make "market-driven" arguments for enhanced salaries. With their talents and skills, Communication faculty could find higher-paid employment outside the academy or at other institutions of higher education. An operative principle in the College Dean's office has been to align salaries across the college (all entry-level, 1st-year tenure-track faculty make about the same, for example). This principle may be unsustainable.
2. High teaching loads, especially considering imperatives of the graduate program, co-curricular activities and faculty research. Reviewers and faculty suggest an alternative to the current practice of compensating master's level faculty with instructional wages funds; instead, we might allow faculty the option of teaching two undergrad classes and one grad class (without a stipend). Stipend funding would go to an adjunct who would pick up the one undergrad class that the master's level faculty member isn't teaching. I like this plan and urge the department to pursue it.
3. The need to promote diversity. I appreciate the Reviewers' suggestion that the faculty include "promoting diversity" in the departmental mission statement. I also am pleased to see that faculty members intend to integrate diversity materials in their classes, and to look for diversity awareness in candidates applying for faculty positions.

4. Better facilities for the TV studio and PRSSA. The department recently requested, and will receive, some capital funding to remodel a space for use by PRSSA. The TV studio presents a greater challenge, for which I currently don't have any answers.
5. Raise the department's profile. Since the department wrote its response to the Reviewers' Report, it has hosted a successful CommFest and Speech Showcase. In other words, the department already is taking steps to market and promote what it does. The department also is committed to distribute information about its activities via social media.
6. Ongoing financial stability for co-curricular programs. Like other departments in the college, Communication is challenged to develop funding streams for co-curricular activities. But the department's reply to reviewers points to several actions that will be taken to move toward greater financial stability. Although there currently are no scholarship funds specifically for PR/A students, I would imagine that with an increasingly large number of successful alums in this area, we should be able to cultivate scholarship donations in the near future.

WSU's Communication Department is healthy. It has taken many positive steps in the past five years. Its next steps--working with its new Advisory Board, encouraging students to do more with e-portfolios, and looking for innovative funding sources—will carry it yet farther along a road to success for students, faculty, and staff.

Madonne Miner, Dean
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