

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Communication Department**

### **Self-Study Document, Fall 2019**

Author's Contact Information:

Sheree Josephson, Ph.D.  
Chair, Department of Communication  
[sjosephson@weber.edu](mailto:sjosephson@weber.edu)

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

#### **Mission Statement**

Communication is the most powerful force in the social world. Therefore, our mission is to (1) equip students with the communication resources and professional skills they need to change the world for the better; (2) contribute meaningfully to the creation and dissemination of creative and academic knowledge; and (3) serve the Department of Communication, the Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities, Weber State University, our community, and the communication discipline. We accomplish this mission through encouraging the free exchange of ideas, promoting and celebrating inclusivity, equity, and diversity of all kinds, maintaining the highest level of expertise in our fields, and committing to continuous improvement.

#### **Curriculum**

The Department of Communication at Weber State University is committed to providing an excellent education to about 450 Communication majors, 60 Communication minors, 50 Communication associate degree seekers, and to more than 1,500 general education students each semester. Our classes are taught by 23 full-time faculty members and about 25 adjunct instructors.

We offer three General Education classes:

- COMM 1020 HU Principles of Public Speaking
- COMM 2010 HU Mass Media & Society
- COMM 2110 HU Interpersonal & Small Group Communication

In all, we offer 61 different courses:

- 16 lower-division
- 45 upper-division

Classroom learning stresses knowledge and praxis in seven emphasis areas:

- Civic Advocacy
- Digital Media
- Interpersonal & Family Communication
- Multimedia Journalism
- Organizational Communication
- Public Relations & Advertising
- Communication Teaching

Classroom learning is augmented by hands-on application in five co-curricular organizations and student chapters of professional organizations:

- The Signpost, the campus news organization
- KWCR Wildcat Radio, the campus internet radio station
- Studio 76, the campus audio-video production studio
- Ogden Peak Communications, a student-run PR firm
- WSU Debate and Speech, WSU's oldest and most competitive team and the new speech team
- Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA)
- Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)
- National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ)
- National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)

### **Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment**

At the end of their study, WSU Communication graduates will:

1. **Writing:** Write at a level expected of a professional communicator in a selected emphasis area.
2. **Speaking:** Speak appropriately, effectively, and ethically in a one-on-one interpersonal interaction, and in front of small and large groups in a variety of contexts.
3. **Listening:** Listen actively to acquire and analyze information.
4. **Interpersonal/Small Group Communication:** Facilitate successful communication in interpersonal situations, small group settings, and within organizations.
5. **Media:** Use and produce media to appropriately and effectively to communicate messages and critically evaluate media messages.
6. **History:** Demonstrate knowledge of the history of the communication discipline and its societal and professional implications.
7. **Research:** Find and evaluate peer-reviewed or professional research studies, describe and utilize a variety of research methods, and interpret and analyze research data.
8. **Theory:** Explain how various communication theories have been developed, apply those theories, and evaluate them.
9. **Law/Ethics:** Demonstrate knowledge of communication law and ethics to enable legal and ethical communication.
10. **Critical Thinking:** Analyze information from a variety of perspectives for understanding, persuasive argument or problem solving.
11. **Career Readiness:** Demonstrate the skills required to enter a professional career or graduate school.
12. **Diversity:** Communicate competently across difference, identify, explain perceptual bias and discrimination, and know the value of diversity.
13. **Creativity and Innovation:** Devise new approaches to familiar problems or situations, resulting in original work.

Communication students graduate with extremely high marks from their internship providers on the internship survey and high but slightly lower ratings on their self-

evaluation on the exit survey. This is not surprising since internship providers were probably very satisfied with the extra help and since students uncertain about their future may lack confidence. Overall, writing and media are the two lowest rated areas, which is not surprising. Many students are not taught to write in high school, so the learning curve is steep in university. Communication students need to write at a professional level, and they are held to high expectations in the classroom and in the workplace. Media is continuously changing, making many feel they cannot keep up. Media skills are quickly lost if they are not practiced on a regular basis after a class ends. According to this data, Communication students excel at speaking and interpersonal communication skills, which is not surprising since those who like these skills are attracted to the Communication major. They are also sensitive to diversity issues and are culturally aware. Communication students also do well in research and critical thinking. Finally, and maybe most importantly, internship providers believe students are career-ready on graduation.

### **Academic Advising**

Majors and minors/BIS are assigned to a faculty member in Communication based on their emphasis area or minor/BIS. Most emphasis areas have two advisors with students assigned according to the first letter of their last name. Therefore, students are advised by faculty in their expertise area. The college's academic advisors handle advising for General Education requirements and associate's degrees. According to the exit survey given to graduating seniors, in 2017-2019, 88.73% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they received good academic advising in the Department of Communication. However, 5.63% were unsure and 2.11% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

### **Faculty**

We have 23 full-time faculty members: four professors, three associate professors, 10 assistant professors, and six instructors. This is the biggest faculty and the highest number of tenure-track faculty in Communication in the history of the department. This includes three digital media/film professors with MFAs, now recognized as a terminal degree in this area. Faculty have published almost 50 scholarly journal articles and book chapters in the last five years. Sheree Josephson has a book in press with Routledge, and Ash Soltani-Stone has a book forthcoming with University of Nebraska Press. Communication faculty also are some of the strongest teachers on campus with student evaluation numbers averaging 4.25 on a 5-point scale. Several have been recognized for teaching excellence with awards such as Master Teacher, Presidential Teaching Excellence, Brady Presidential Distinguished Professor Award, and Lowe Innovative Teaching Award. A culture of excellent teaching is nurtured by a department culture that means every class is evaluated by students every semester. Tenure-track faculty and non-tenure-track faculty member undergo regular and extensive peer, student, and administrative review of their teaching.

### **Program Support**

The current office support staff of one full-time department administrative assistant and one part-time Work Study student is adequate. However, the department office and department overall would be better covered with the addition of at least one part-time (20 hours per week) person to help with recruitment and advising and perhaps communication tasks such as updating the department website and posting social media messages. Some of

our co-curricular organizations could benefit from assistance as well. The Master of Professional Communication program has a part-time assistant who assists the department overall, especially when the main administrative assistant takes vacation or sick leave. Dean Scott Sprenger provides strong support for the program. He advocates for higher starting salaries, has increased faculty travel by \$250 per academic year, and provides other financial assistance whenever he can, especially for student travel. The Provost's Office and Continuing Education have also been supportive with instructional monies to help with the increased enrollment. Facilities in Elizabeth Hall provide modern, well-equipped classrooms with smart classroom technology

### **Relations with External Community**

We maintain liaison with the external community in seven dynamic ways:

- Well-established internship program required of all majors
- Concurrent Enrollment communication courses in 19 local high school
- Regular invitation of community members as guest speakers and as clients for hands-on projects in classes and for co-curricular organizations
- Extensive service-learning component throughout curriculum, beginning with COMM 2110 HU Interpersonal & Small Group Communication.
- Faculty members who serve on community boards
- Co-curricular activities that reach a broad segment of the community
- Impressive and active advisory board

### **Student, Faculty, Contract/Adjunct Faculty and Staff Statistics**

#### **Students Pursuing Bachelor's Degrees**

	<b>BA</b>	<b>BS</b>	<b>Total</b>
Civic Advocacy	8	11	19
Digital Media	32	56	88
Interpersonal & Family	11	28	39
Multimedia Journalism	22	29	51
Organizational Communication	12	37	49
Public Relations & Advertising	45	80	125
Communication Studies Teaching	1	2	3
Multimedia Journalism Teaching	0	3	3
Comm Major No Emphasis	23	37	60
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<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>437</b>

#### **Students Pursuing Associate's Degrees**

AS in Communication	47
AS in Workplace Communication & Writing	10
AA in Workplace Communication & Writing	14

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**TOTAL** **71**

## **Students Pursuing Minor or Bachelor of Integrated Science (BIS)**

Communication Minor	48
Communication Teaching Minor	4
BIS	10

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**TOTAL** 62

### **Full-time Faculty: 23**

Professors:	4
Associate:	3
Assistant:	10
Instructors:	6 (contract)

**Adjunct Faculty: 28** (in 2019)

### **Staff: 3**

Full-time admin:	1
Work Study student:	1
MPC assistant:	1

## **Results of Previous Program Review**

### **ISSUE 1**

#### **Problem Identified**

Continue to develop a sustainable, long-term funding structure for co-curricular programs, including a model for debate and the Weber Media Group concept for the newspaper and electronic media

#### **Action Taken and Progress**

We will continue to work with the new development director for the College of Arts & Humanities on fund raising. He has spoken to a number of potential donors and helped us develop ways for donors to give out of their paychecks with automatic deductions. However, not much has happened yet.

### **ISSUE 2**

#### **Problem Identified**

Continue to seek to increase course releases to allow faculty more time for scholarship

#### **Action Taken and Progress**

Because of large number of scholarships, the dean now pays for an additional course release for internship director each academic year. Three faculty members are receiving course releases for scholarship through the Center for Engaged Learning. However, this poses a challenge to getting General Education courses covered in primetime hours.

### **ISSUE 3**

#### **Problem Identified**

Develop a written assessment plan and continue to extend assessment throughout the curriculum, increase “closing of the loop” of curricular revision based on assessment findings

#### **Action Taken and Progress**

We spent extensive time during the program review process, reviewing program learning objectives to update them and make them more obtainable with what happens in the classroom. We also added a 13<sup>th</sup> learning objective called “Creativity and Innovation” to reflect something very important in Communication. As part of this process, we are also reviewing the learning objectives for all 61 classes to ensure they align with the learning objectives in the curriculum grid. We also will work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Canvas to pull in rubrics for assessment purposes, especially for the Communication core classes.

#### **ISSUE 4**

##### **Problem Identified**

Continue to develop the Advisory Board for student networking, internship placements, alumni philanthropy, and portfolio reviewing

##### **Action Taken and Progress**

We reorganized the Advisory Board to jump start it and ensure we have representatives from all emphasis areas, the master’s program and the interdisciplinary programs, such as Film Studies. We have begun drawing upon the board members to evaluate ePortfolios, provide internships, and talk to student groups. We need to get their assistance in alumni philanthropy.

#### **ISSUE 5**

##### **Problem Identified**

Build a framework for seeking increased external support for department programs and priorities, and to increase support staffing levels

##### **Action Taken and Progress**

The point about external support is addressed above. We have been able to hire an administrative assistant for the master’s program who does help out with the undergraduate program. We could use administrative assistance for co-curriculars.

#### **Information Regarding Current Review Team Members**

Louise Moulding, Ph.D., Professor, Teacher Education  
Weber State University  
[lmoulding@weber.edu](mailto:lmoulding@weber.edu)

Todd Norton, Ph.D., Associate Prof., Department Head, Communication & Media  
Boise State University  
[toddnorton@boisestate.edu](mailto:toddnorton@boisestate.edu)

Lawrence J. Mullen, Ph.D., Professor, Public Policy & Leadership  
University of Nevada-Las Vegas  
[lawrence.mullen@unlv.edu](mailto:lawrence.mullen@unlv.edu)