

# Yearly Assessment Report of the Communication Studies Graduate Program

## I. Assessment Activities:

### A. Program Goals:

The MA Communication Studies program provides an opportunity for students to develop individual programs of theory, research, and application among the areas of interpersonal, organizational, educational and public communication. The program is designed for students who seek careers as communication professionals or who intend to pursue further graduate study in the field.

The program has not revised its goals during the previous academic year.

### B. Learning Outcomes/Data Collection

Grades students earned for assignments in CMM 601 (Problems and Methods in Communication Research) and CMM 606 (Studies in Communication Theory), the required graduate courses, provided data for analyzing related objectives and outcomes since the last report. For all objectives, the Department's goal is 80% achievement of A or B as its benchmark. While somewhat unrealistic a benchmark for our toughest courses (CMM 601 (Research and CMM 606 Theory), the 80% provides a goal to which effort can be continuously directed.

Objective 1: Distinguish among the major theoretical approaches to communication.  
Outcomes: In CMM 606 (n = 18) 78% students (n = 14) received an overall grade of B or A. The course as a whole has an emphasis on distinguishing among major theoretical approaches, indicating that the class as a whole was well able to distinguish the major theoretical approaches, though not quite achieving the 80% benchmark.

Objective 2. Achieve mastery knowledge of a theory or program of research.  
Outcomes. Examining student achievement on the term paper assignment for CMM 606 (n= 18), 72% of students (n = 13) received a grade of B or A, not achieving the desired benchmark. Engaging students in a feedback loop to discover strategies or emphases that might be helpful to them in achieving this objective will be implemented.

Objective 3. Describe major theories/research programs in a communication field (e.g., interpersonal, organizational, public).  
Outcomes: Group presentations in CMM 606 covering several theories discussed in a chapter provides evidence of the ability to clearly distinguish theories of a particular chapter. With a focus on accurate, clear content as well as delivery, that 100% (n=18) of the students received A or B provides evidence that students understand and can distinguish different theories in varied contexts. With the reaction papers, 89% (16 of 18) of reaction papers received A or B. However, these

reaction papers by and large focused on smaller units of content, encompassing perhaps a couple of theories. The cumulative evidence from the group presentation, and reaction paper assignments is that students can distinguish among communication theories.

Objective 4. Apply theoretical knowledge of communication to a particular context or situation. The proposal assignment in CMM 601 is situation/context specific. While 67% (10 out of 15) achieving an A or B falls short of the benchmark 80%, it should be noted that this is an improvement over the mean of previous years, and indeed the inclusion of the most recent results in the cumulative results contributed to the cumulative findings rising to 61%. While these results are derived from the course students believe is most difficult, nonetheless a continued press to move to the 80% benchmark will continue, by employing a feedback loop mentioned for Objective 2.

Objective 5. Demonstrate critical thinking/listening skills. Outcomes. As noted previously, students generally hold that CMM 601 and CMM 606 are conceptually the most difficult. A measure of listening skill is the accurate assimilation and appropriate application of course content evidenced in course tests. In CMM 606, 61% (11 of 18) of students made a course grade of B or A, warranting remedial action. (See Objective 2.)

Objective 6. Communicate effectively applying standards of the communication discipline. Outcomes. In CMM 606 (n=18), 100% received A or B, suggesting this objective is being achieved.

Objective 7. Explain major communication methodologies. Outcome. CMM 601 focuses on quantitative research, so while varieties of research methods are emphasized in the course (e.g., experimental and nonexperimental methods, different methods of obtaining data), this variety is within the quantitative approach. Qualitative research, such as analysis of discourse and rhetorical analysis, is not part of the course. Within the parameters of quantitative research, student ability to distinguish quantitative methodologies was assessed in discussions of experimental/nonexperimental methods and the exercise that accompanied these discussions. All students (N =15) were able to distinguish experimental/nonexperimental methodologies. While providing informal verification that this objective is being achieved, a more formal assessment, such as identification/assessment of relevant test items, will be implemented in the future.

Objective 8. Describe the validity elements of a major communication methodology. Outcome. 11 students (N = 15) were able to identify the validity elements of a major communication methodology in their proposals. 73% is one short of the 80% benchmark, evoking the feedback loop of Objective 2.

Objective 9. Analyze/apply a communication research methodology in a particular communication field (e.g., interpersonal, organizational, public) and situations. Outcome. This objective is most fully realized in the term paper for CMM 601, in which students are asked to use acceptable communication research methods in mounting a communication research proposal. On this assignment (N = 15), 67% of students (N =

10) earned either A or B. The feedback loop described in Objective 2 will be implemented.

### **C. Results :**

1. Overall, the limited results reported in this assessment show varied achievement of benchmarks.

A . Results for CMM 606 and 601 are the likeliest to show the greatest discrepancy in meeting the 80% benchmark, given these two courses are considered the most difficult and demanding by students.

C. However, my belief is that by far the strongest predictor of student achievement in any of the courses or assignments is simply the aptitude and work ethic of the students. Those who are our stronger students tend to do better in all courses, while weaker students tend to have more problems.

2. For future assessments, courses should continue to be examined focusing on individual contexts, such as interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and public communication to enhance assessment of Objectives 2-6. The n for these courses is likely to be less than the required courses, but they are worth examination.

3. The department is in process of integrating a Health Communication track, given the recent successful recruitment of a qualified faculty member. Such a track will be a major boon for the Department, the graduate college and the College of Liberal Arts.

4. Practical realities constrain other revisions. For example, on objectives related to methodology, only quantitative methods are taught in CMM 601. However, broadening the scope of the course is not feasible, given that the course must include 6-8 weeks' focus on using statistics in research. Offering a course in qualitative research was recently done as a special topics course, but given the 36 hour expectation for earning a degree, making this course a requirement is a difficult issue.

**II. BOT Initiative 3 Compliance:** Not applicable to graduate programs.

**III. Plans for the current year:** The program will be collecting evidence from varied graduate courses during the spring and fall semesters of 2011. Continuing steps will be taken to forward implementation of Health Communication. Consideration of further development of qualitative research as a mandatory course, or an alternative to CMM 601 will occur.

**IV. Assistance Needed:** None at the moment.

**IV. What one most important thing has the department/program learned through this process?**

The required courses continue to be the most problematic in terms of broad achievement of objectives.

2010 CMM Graduate Program Assessment

Component / Course / Program Level					
Student Outcome: When a student completes the graduate program in Communication Studies, she/he should be able to	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
1. Distinguish among the major theoretical approaches to communication	Ed Woods	CMM 606 Final Grades	80% of students receive an A or B for the course.	N=18. 14 out of 18 received A or B for the course (78%)	Results show that this objective is close to the benchmark.
2. Achieve mastery knowledge of a theory or program of research	Ed Woods	CMM 606 Term Paper	80% of students receive an A or B for the term paper.	N =18 13 out of 18 received an A or B on term paper (72%)	Engaging students in a feedback loop about what new strategies or emphases might be helpful will be implemented.
3. Describe the major theories/research programs in a communication field.	Ed Woods	CMM 606 Group Presentations	80 % of students receive an "A" or "B" on the Group Presentations	N = 18 All students received an "A" or "B"	Results suggest that this objective is being fulfilled.
		CMM 606 Reaction Papers	80% of students receive an "A" or "B" on Reaction Papers	N = 18 16 out of 18 received an "A" or "B" on the reaction paper (89%)	

**Component / Course / Program Level**

Student Outcome: When a student completes the graduate program in Communication Studies, she/he should be able to	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
<p>4. Apply theoretical knowledge of communication to a particular context or situation</p> <p>5. Demonstrate critical listening/thinking skills</p>	Ed Woods	CMM 601 Proposal	80% of students receive an "A" or "B" on the term paper.	<p>N=15 10 papers received an "A" or "B" 67%</p> <p>(In previous years, 54% received "A" or "B" in 2008 out of an N = 13), 50% received "A" or "B" in 2007 out of an N = 10, 68% received "A" or "B" in 2005 out of an N = 19. Cumulatively, 35 out of 57 students received an "A" or "B".</p>	<p>Engaging students in a feedback loop about what new strategies or emphases might be helpful will be implemented.</p> <p>Cumulative totals reveal that the most recent results show higher achievement than the overall mean for four years.</p> <p>Engaging students in a feedback loop about what new strategies or emphases might be helpful will be implemented.</p>
	Ed Woods	CMM 606 midterm exam	80% of students receive "A" or "B" on midterm exam.	N=18 11 students received an "A" or "B" on midterm exam 61%.	
6. Communicate effectively applying standards of the communication discipline	Ed Woods	CMM 606 oral presentations	80% of oral presentations receive either "A" or "B" 80 % of papers receive an "A" or "B".	N=18 100% of oral assignments received either A or B.	Results suggest this objective is being fulfilled.
7. Explain major communication methodologies.	Ed Woods	CMM 601 discussion of experimental/nonexperimental methodologies and exercise	80% of students accurately complete exercise	N=15 All students were able to distinguish experimental/nonexperimental methodologies. 100%	Although results suggest this objective is being achieved, a more formal method of assessing methodologies will ensue for 2011 iteration of the course
8. Describe the validity elements of a major communication methodology.	Ed Woods	CMM 601 Proposal	80% of students be able to describe the validity elements of the measures of their proposals	N = 15 11 students were able to describe validity elements in the measures of their proposals. 73%	Engaging students in a feedback loop about what new strategies or emphases might be helpful will be implemented.

Component / Course / Program Level					
Student Outcome: When a student completes the graduate program in Communication Studies, she/he should be able to	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
9. Analyze/apply a communication research methodology in a particular communication field (e.g. interpersonal, organization, public) and situations.	Ed Woods	CMM 601 Proposal	80% of students make "A" or "B" on proposal.	N=15 10 students received A or B on their proposals 67%	A feedback loop with students will be established to identify strategies or greater emphases that will be helpful to students.

Instructions: Under student outcomes (Column I) please list the most current student outcomes/competencies to be demonstrated by your graduates. These should be in your assessment plan.

(Column II) Person/office responsible: If someone specific has been designated to collect the various pieces of evidence, please list their names in this column.

(Column III) Assessment Tool or Approach: Here you will need to designate the assessment measures you are using to assess the particular outcome. Measures/tools may include term papers, parts of essay tests, internship results; class projects; objective tests; standardized/normed or other licensure tests, or a variety of other measures that may indicate competence in a particular objective.

(Column IV) Standards/Benchmark: Here you may indicate a particular set of standards you have set for completion or if you are developing benchmarks, please indicate what those are. If you are using a national test, what are the indicators of competence. This also pertains to BOT Initiative #3 which asks us to measure students against some national standard.

(Column V) Results/Analysis: Indicate what the results were utilizing the assessment tool/measure and applying it against the benchmarks set. Please be fairly specific here, provide relevant data and a brief analysis.

(Column VI) Action Taken: Indicate any action taken based on the results/analysis you have completed.

PLEASE REMEMBER: Not all objectives have to be measured every semester or every year. All of your objectives should be measured in a 2 to 3 year cycle. Sometimes it depends on when particular courses are offered as to when objectives can be measured. A helpful tool may be implementation of the courses/objective matrix. Some programs have completed this some have not. If you are interested in completing one for your program, please let me know and this office will supply you with the forms and assist in completing this document.