

**Millikin University**  
**Student Learning in the Communication Major**  
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**2017-2018**

**Executive Summary**

Communication is about the construction of meaning between people and their various stakeholders: friends, families, professional colleagues, communities, and more. The study of communication focuses on understanding the symbols and the processes that construct those meanings, whether the symbol is a word, a gesture, a song, a billboard, a website, or any other meaning-generating object in our world. We also examine the relationship of those symbols to the people who use them. We examine the pragmatic and ethical principles that guide people's communicative choices. We apply this learning to our personal and professional lives.

The Department of Communication at Millikin University is committed to providing a market-smart, challenging, and high-quality major to students with a variety of professional and personal aspirations. We celebrate and inform our students about the wide variety of ways a major in communication can prepare them according to Millikin University's goals of professional success, democratic citizenship in a global environment, and a life of personal meaning and value. Consequently, these university goals are manifest in the Communication department's goals to enable students to become effective problem-solvers, critics, and practitioners in their personal and professional communities. This is accomplished through classroom learning, research projects and practical application of performance learning projects, internships, and media lab activities that help make these abstract ideas come alive.

Student skills and knowledge are assessed using a variety of techniques in the Department of Communication. Information is gathered through various sources and contexts: student exit interviews, internship evaluations, course evaluations, assignment evaluations, and the senior year capstone course.

**2017-2018 Update**

Last year's assessment report (last page of 2016-2017 report) identified two items under the "improvement plan/resource needs for the Communication Department." These two items included 1) identification of a basic course coordinator and 2) creation of a health communication concentration. Both of these items have been accomplished this past academic year in addition to other endeavors.

This past year department work focused on four areas: 1) Development and approval of a new concentration and certificate, Health Communication 2) Assessment of the curriculum based on the required methods course (CO 204); 3) Relocation of WJMU and continued work on programming quality and diversity, which resulted in **national recognitions and awards**; 4) Continued discussion, outreach, and promotion, both externally and internally, of the Communication major to generate more majors and minors.

First, since Dr. Amy Delaney joined the department in 2016, she and I (the Communication Department Chair) have discussed developing a health communication concentration. This academic year we accomplished that. We developed and earned approval for the concentration and certificate with course offerings that benefit multiple majors/disciplines.

Second, this report includes new assessment data of CO 204, Communication Research Methods. This assessment of CO 204 is delineated and discussed on page 14 of this report

Thirdly, after much planning, WJMU relocated to the new University Commons. Considerable work ensued to settle into the new space in Fall 2017 while also transitioning to new programming each semester. In addition to those endeavors, WJMU produced award-winning work: **Three national finalist nominations** for programming **and winning the national award for "Best Podcast" for the original program.**

Finally, discussion and efforts continued with the goal to generate more Communication majors and minors.

### **Communication Department Goals**

The drive to communicate forms the basis for human social behavior and is a critical element of any organization or field of employment, regardless of technological advancement or changes. Our department's commitment to the University mission of preparing students for professional success, democratic citizenship in a global environment, and a personal life of meaning and value is accomplished through a variety of discipline-specific learning objectives. Graduates with a Communication degree achieve the goal of professional success by becoming effective problem-solvers, critics, and practitioners in their professional communities. Our objective in addressing democratic citizenship in a global environment is to help students develop an appreciation for the power of symbols, awareness of the complexity of ethical choices in communication endeavors, and an understanding of the opportunities and constraints of technology. Classroom experiences, performance learning, and internships are designed to challenge everyday assumptions about communication in a rapidly changing world. Finally, our objective in addressing a personal life of meaning and value is to enable students to become effective problem-solvers, critics, and practitioners in their personal communities.

More precisely, upon graduation, students who major in Communication will be able to demonstrate communicative competence in three areas:

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats before diverse and varied audiences.
2. Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts.
3. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in communication contexts.

Successful majors in Communication move into careers in media, sales, training and development, public relations, recruiting, human resources, business, and publishing. Recent graduates are currently pursuing graduate work, working for radio and TV stations, planning media events, working in universities, organizing PR campaigns, etc. A strong liberal arts background and intensive work in all aspects of communication uniquely qualify communication graduates for these positions. We expect that majors who have mastered the program learning objectives will, at a minimum, be successfully employed in their chosen field and/or successfully perform in any master's or doctoral program.

These departmental learning goals match well with Millikin's University-wide learning goals:

1. Millikin students will prepare for professional success.
2. Millikin students will actively engage in the responsibilities of citizenship in their communities.
3. Millikin students will discover and develop a personal life of meaning and value.

The table below shows how Communication Department learning goals relate to the University-wide learning goals:

<b>Learning Goal</b>	<b>Corresponding MU Learning Goal Number(s)</b>
Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	1, 3
Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts.	1, 2
Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts.	2, 3

### **Communication Department Snapshot**

The Communication department in 2017-2018 consisted of 4 full-time faculty and 6 adjuncts that helped deliver approximately 45 traditional and flexible-format DIFFERENT classes for the year (does not include multiple sections of the same course). We ended the Spring 2018 semester with 53 majors. In addition to majors and minors, we also service students throughout the University who take our courses to satisfy their general education requirements in public speaking, and sequential elements (University Seminar). Students are also required by the Tabor School of Business and the School of Education (for the secondary language arts degree requirements) to take communication courses. Various faculty and programs often encourage students to take communication courses for enrichment or remedial purposes. In

addition to courses in the major, Communication faculty also taught courses listed in IN 251 U.S. Studies, IN 350, Global Studies, International Cultures and Structures, January and May immersion courses, and in the flexible-format program (formerly known as PACE) by providing courses for the Organizational Leadership major and general education needs.

The Communication department currently occupies offices on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Shilling Hall and shares a secretary with the Organizational Leadership/Sociology and Math Departments. In addition, the Communication Department has radio broadcast facility on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the University Commons, including office space for a faculty member who also serves as general manager for the radio station.

### **The Communication Major**

As noted in previous assessment reports, the Department of Communication implemented a new curriculum structure that went into effect Fall 2015. At that time, we modified three concentrations (Media Studies, Public Relations, and Organizational Communication) to reflect a stronger, diverse, flexible and more in-depth curriculum targeted to the concentrations. The diversity and choice of course options allow some flexibility for majors to complete a concentration even if they declare the major relatively late in their college tenure. There remains a general studies option in the major for those not wanting to declare a concentration.

In addition to the three concentrations, the department added a fourth concentration and a first certificate in Communication this past academic year, Health Communication. The health communication course offerings benefit majors/disciplines in addition to communication majors as some of the courses are cross-listed as IN 251 or IN 350 courses. Dr. Amy Delaney, primary faculty member in the health communication area and the department chair have worked and continue to work to generate interest and awareness of the courses, concentration, and certificate.

**As of Spring 2018**, there were 53 majors with about 32% declaring a concentration (17 majors). The breakdown of students in those concentrations shows the distribution of interest in each although students are taking courses throughout the Communication department curriculum in electives and for other professional reasons. The group ending in Spring 2018 included the following:

<b>Concentrations</b>	Public Relations	4	
	Org. Comm.	3	
	Media Studies	9	
	Health Comm.	1	
	General Studies	36	
<b>Total Majors</b>		<b>53</b>	

Communication majors can complete the communication program with a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Sciences (B.S.) degree. This option allows students access to and flexibility with a degree program appropriate to their skills, professional aspirations, and academic preparation. The 2017-2018 group of majors have approximately 20 students with the B.S. degree, and 33 with the B.A. Other double majors might have a program in another college.

### **Oral Communication: General Education Requirement**

All Millikin University students are required to complete an oral communication course under the new general education requirements. In the 2017-2018 academic year, the Department offered 26 sections of oral communication courses (CO 200, CO 230 and CO 242) The breakdown is as follows:

Term	CO 200	CO 230	CO 242
Fall 2017	8 sections	2 sections	1 section
Spring 2018	7 sections	3 sections	1 section
Summer 2018	1 section		

Part-time, adjunct teachers taught most of these sections, with the exception of one section of the oral communication requirement. Even though this approach to deliver the oral communication program is seemingly cost-effective, it is not without other "costs" or ramifications. Although the department values the quality and commitment of its adjunct faculty, the historical lack of administrative support for a faculty member to oversee and coordinate this general education requirement does not demonstrate strong commitment to this general education requirement. Previously, the department chair contributed some basic course coordination (even with no course release for this endeavor), but it was very minimal and not an optimal situation. Effective the Fall 2018, the department chair will assume the role of Coordinator for the Oral Communication requirement for University Studies and have one course release (or equivalent stipend) per academic year for this role.

### **Communication Department Learning Story**

The Communication Department combines diverse perspectives to investigate the social creation and management of meaning through delivery of the Communication major, B.A. or B.S. degree. The major in communication builds upon a critical foundation that blends theory, methodology, and practice to prepare students for more serious study in their own area of interest. We study the interplay of messages and audience in a variety of contexts. Students develop an appreciation for the power of symbols, awareness of the complexity of ethical choices in communication endeavors, and an understanding of the opportunities and constraints of technology. Course work in theory and methods are central to the investigation and understanding of communication processes provides majors with tools for more intensive study in areas such as media production, public relations, organizational culture, and social issues. Thus, our curriculum and its corresponding pedagogy fully incorporate the University's mission of professionalism, citizenship, and a life of meaning and value, and it is intentionally designed to challenge everyday assumptions about communication in a rapidly changing world.

The Communication major ending in spring 2018 consists of a minimum of 39-40 credit hours, consisting of 21 hours in the core (required of all Communication majors) and 18-19 hours of Communication electives, depending on the concentration chosen. Regardless of the concentration chosen, at least 12 of the 18-19 credit hours of which should be numbered 300 or above. In the core courses, one course, the oral communication course, is required both for the major and for the MPSL university requirements. Thus, this course "double dips" for both. So technically, the major is 36-37 credit hours of additional Communication classes.

## New to the Communication Major in 2017-2018 Academic Year

As noted earlier, the major added a fourth concentration and the first certificate, Health Communication. The concentration is similar in structure and hours to the other three concentrations. The outline of the concentration is described below:

### Health Communication Concentration: 18 total credit hours; 12-18 must be 300/400 level

Introduction to Health Communication CO255: Communicating about Health (cross-lists with IN 251)	3 Credit Hours
Contexts and Relationships (2 courses, and 1 course must be in Communication) CO355: Provider-Patient Communication Topics courses approved by chair HM316: Social Issues in Health Care PH217: Bioethics	6 Credit Hours
Platforms and Practices (2 courses, and 1 course must be in Communication) CO455: Culture and Health Topics courses approved by chair	6 Credit Hours
<i>Culminating Experience</i> CO470: Persuasion Campaigns and Performance (3 credits)	3 Credit Hours

The certificate in Health Communication consists of 12 credit hours, two required classes and then a choice of two other courses, approved by the chair. The courses are delineated below:

### Health Communication Certificate: 12 total credit hours

CO255: Communicating about Health (cross-lists with IN 251)	3 Credit Hours
CO455: Culture and Health (cross-lists with IN 350)	3 Credit Hours
Two topics courses approved by chair	6 Credit Hours

## The Communication Major: The Rest of the Story

All communication majors begin their studies with an introduction to communication theory, after which they may select any required and elective course work, provided the prerequisites for the higher-level courses are completed. There are a few courses that do build onto each other in stages, for example: public relations, video or radio production, organizational communication, and media courses.

Majors are required to use an internship experience to round out their classroom experience. The internship requirement is also an important part of the learning process for our majors. This requirement contributes to developing the student's goal of achieving professional success after graduation. It also supports the University's mission of performance learning. Our students practice their communication training in real life situations and for actual organizations. The department generates significant credit hours through internship experiences. For 2017-2018 (Fall 2017; Spring and Summer 2018), students generated **56 credit hours for internships**. This requirement is unique on this campus, and it has been an asset for students seeking employment after graduation. To that end, the department has a communication department

internship coordinator who assists students in fulfilling this objective. Thus, communication majors are able to tailor their major both to explore their interests and construct a plan of study germane to their intellectual and career interests.

The curriculum structure offers clear concentrations in four areas (new concentration added—more details below) of the major, emphasizes written communication skills, requires an internship experience for the professional development of all majors, and integrates ethical reasoning into the department's core course requirements. Our concentration programs have been a way to deliver a quality major in the following ways:

- Students have a stronger identity for their major and professional goals.
- The concentrations aid in the process of advising majors.
- The concentrations direct students to take more advanced coursework in their areas instead of a general set of choices.
- The concentrations help to recruit new students. Many of our applicants identify a specific concentration in their admissions profile.

The concentrations are designed to help students find greater meaning and interconnectedness in their curricular choices. Any students, for whom these concentrations do not fully meet their requirements, may choose another combination of courses with the consent of their advisor and the department chair. The concentrations and their professional intentions include:

- **Public Relations:** Learn to create and manage effective communication with both internal and external audiences. Build strong, positive and effective relationships with the public through application of modern communication techniques and strategies. Communication careers in public relations: PR practitioner, event planner, social media manager, media relations, research, promotions, fundraising.
- **Media Studies:** Study media's roles, messages, and effects in various contexts. Focus on radio and/or television production in addition to theory and professional practice in the media environment. Many media majors are involved with the student-run radio station, WJMU or the campus newspaper, *The Decaturian*. Possible career paths include social and digital media, editing, production, broadcasting, writing, promotion, advertising, sales, general operations.
- **Organizational Communication:** Develop communications skills vital for the professional workplace. Coursework in leadership, conflict management, organizational communication and small group communication prepare students for a wide range of careers. Courses in management, marketing, and other areas from the University may be incorporated into this major track. Possible career paths include corporate communication, training, recruiting, customer relations.
- **Health Communication:** Study the role of communication in the ways that humans understand, develop, promote, and maintain health, as well as prevent, diagnose, and treat illness. Engage in the application of knowledge in diverse health care contexts and issues. Possible career paths: health promotion, public health, community outreach and education, medical office manager, pharmaceutical sales, patient advocate, public relations for a health care organization.

Throughout these concentrations we include writing requirements, incorporated a senior-level internship experience, and approved inclusion of courses from other departments that might enhance our own concentrations including coursework from the departments of Art, English, Psychology, Entrepreneurship, Management, and Marketing. Our students are also required to complete a 1-credit capstone course in conjunction with the internship experience designed to provide reflection, assessment, and preparation for future professional activities.

A communication program in the twenty-first century must be prepared to engage every facet of communicative competency from the physiology of sign production to the politics of institution formation and legitimation. A fully functional university program in communication must provide:

- First courses, non-remedial first courses, appropriate to the maturity and self-reflective habits of traditional university aged students and adult learners, instilling meta-vocabularies of risk, effects, and critique
- Skill courses, especially in the arts of public communication
- Intermediate and advanced courses, with special support for skill building, in interpersonal, small group, and organizational communication
- Initial and advanced courses in media production
- Specific preparation for the norms and standards of specific communication professions and industries
- Research methods training
- Creative outlets for student performance
- Courses in discourse in historical and comparative contexts, especially as related to the dominant institutions of society
- Ample opportunities to practice communication skills and knowledge in real world settings, to engage in performance learning in the spirit of the Millikin University mission
- Developing leadership for communication industries

The Millikin Department of Communication has done all of these things, and the current faculty see tremendous demand that it does these things more, and in increasingly sophisticated market-driven ways, and that there are extraordinary opportunities that remain to express leadership in communication education and win the rewards that go with that leadership.

### **Performance Learning in the Communication Major**

Performance learning in the Communication major occurs in various classes. Some of the classes with performance learning include the following:

- CO 255, Health Communication
- CO 341, Survey of Organizational Communication
- CO 342, Training & Technology Applications in Organizations
- CO 332, Gender Communication
- CO 432, Intercultural Communication
- CO 455, Culture & Health
- CO 401, Topics in Persuasion: Environmental Advocacy
- CO 455, Culture and Health
- CO 470, Persuasion Campaigns & Performance

- CO 480, Internship

Specifically, these are classes that have completed projects and presented to external audiences (third-party, not peers who are taking the class also). There are some semesters in which some of these classes may not have this third-party component because of varying circumstances, such as lack of accessibility in securing a project or a new professor who has yet to develop an external project, etc. In short, while the Communication Department has many performance-learning courses, sometimes there is some variability.

There are other Communication courses that consistently incorporate a presentation component of presenting to peers in the classroom, like CO 200, Public Speaking; CO 230, Business Conversations, and most other Communication courses.

### **WJMU Activities Report (2017-2018)**

WJMU, the student-run campus radio station, is under the purview of the Communication Department. Prof. Sam Meister manages the radio station, advises students working in the radio station, and teaches courses related to the radio industry and production. Prof. Meister does outstanding work juggling all these responsibilities while consistently guiding students who generate award-winning work.

#### Production Space Relocation

The 2017-2018 academic year was an exciting and busy year at WJMU. In addition to relocating the broadcast studio, manager's office, and production workspace to the new University Commons, we were able to address the longstanding issue of limited production space by refurbishing a second production suite. In addition to traditional furnishings, this included the purchase and installation of additional audio monitors, amplifiers, production software computers, microphones, and a production console. With these additions, as well as numerous other upgrades and technical improvements, WJMU now stands as an aesthetically impressive facility which reflects the quality of the student output created therein. Moreover, these updates, in addition to making WJMU an even more productive and exceptional example of campus performance learning, put Millikin's student radio facilities on par with those of some of the finest private institutions in the nation.

#### Programming

These new facilities and the students they accommodate have already contributed to the MU campus substantially, as courses in the communication, political science, and university studies disciplines were able to utilize them for the creation of campus-oriented and public affairs programming. In coordination with MU Public Safety officers, WJMU also created PSAs reflecting the concern of active violent threats to campus personnel as well as general safety announcements. This programming supplemented the regular rotation of sports play-by-play, talk, music, specialty interests, and campus news offered 24 hours a day on WJMU to the Macon County community.

### Awards/Recognitions

Various aspects of WJMU's outstanding original entertainment programming were recognized nationally in 2018 when six of the station's executive board members traveled to New York City in early March for the annual Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Conference and Awards. WJMU students participated in roundtables, panels, and lectures with college radio staff from around the nation. At the awards ceremony Millikin students were honored by receiving **three national finalist nominations** for programming and **winning the national award for "Best Podcast" for the original program "Tunneling,"** created in the spring of 2017. These student accomplishments, as well as WJMU's technical compliance with the FCC National Emergency Alert System test in late September of 2017, and the digital Biennial Ownership Report in February of this year, have made the previous academic term both challenging and rewarding. As the station continues to grow and reshape itself with changing students, programming, and technical capabilities, WJMU remains a staple of the Millikin campus and Decatur community.

### **Assessment Methods & Analysis of Assessment Results**

The Communication Department assesses student skills and knowledge using a variety of techniques. One of our assessment goals is to create a consistent, ongoing assessment process to improve the quality and quantity of data useful to our department for program development and growth. Historically, assessment data has been gathered from the following sources and contexts:

- **Student Interviews:** A random sample of students is interviewed each year. These have included exit interviews for graduating seniors, discussions held with student leadership, and student feedback provided in the capstone course.
- **Internship Evaluations:** Communication majors are encouraged to have at least one internship experience. At the end of the internship, students, supervisors, and the faculty advisor evaluates the intern's performance. These evaluations will provide us with data from several different perspectives about the students' professional competence and their ability to apply coursework in the professional arena. The internship advisor also collects informal data as she places student interns and checks in with employers.
- **Assignment Evaluations:** Assessment of particular assignments to track implementation of learning goals is planned. Each year, a select set of courses and assignments will be evaluated for their contribution to the major and to student learning.
- **Student Activities/Experiences:** Assessment of experiential activities will also take place at regular intervals to assess the contributions of departmental opportunities outside of the traditional classroom. The student radio station provides on-campus media experience to students, both majors and non-majors. Lambda Pi Eta provides students with professional exposure and networking opportunities.
- **Capstone Project/Course:** All graduating seniors are to prepare a portfolio of their work at Millikin with a focus on their major. The department plans to assess these portfolios

as an individual assignment and as a measure of meeting the goals of the department. Additional assignments in the capstone course may also be assessed.

Based on our departmental learning goals, a curriculum map has been created to illustrate the contributions of individual courses to student learning.

<b>Core Courses</b>	<b>Learning Goal #1</b> Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	<b>Learning Goal #2</b> Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	<b>Learning Goal #3</b> Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts.
CO 101, Introduction to Communication Theory	x	x	x
CO 200, Public Speaking; CO 230 Business Conv.	x	x	
CO 204, Communication Research Methods		x	x
CO 210, Communication Career Lab	x		
CO 308, Communication Ethics & Freedom of Expression		x	x
CO 480, Communication Internship	x	x	x
CO 481, Communication Capstone	x		x

<b>Elective Courses</b>	<b>Learning Goal #1</b> Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	<b>Learning Goal #2</b> Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	<b>Learning Goal #3</b> Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts.
CO 110, Introduction to Radio Industry	x		x
CO 181, WJMU Radio Laboratory	x		
CO 220, Introduction to Video Production	x	x	x
CO 225, Media History		x	x
CO 242, Bus. & Prof. Speaking	x	x	
CO 251, Introduction to Public Relations	x	x	
CO 255, Communicating about Health	x	x	x
CO 260, Seminar in Communication		x	x
CO 306, Topics in Discourse Studies		x	x
CO 307, Argumentation & Advocacy	x	x	x
CO 310, Small Group Communication	x	x	
CO 314, Advanced Radio Production and Performance	x		x
CO 324, Advanced Video Production	x		
CO 330, Interpersonal Communication	x	x	x

<b>Elective Courses</b>	<b>Learning Goal #1</b> Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	<b>Learning Goal #2</b> Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	<b>Learning Goal #3</b> Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts.
CO 332, Gender Communication	x	x	x
CO 341, Survey of Organizational Communication	x	x	
CO 342, Training & Technology Applications in Organizational Comm.	x	x	x
CO 343, Communication and Conflict	x		x
CO 344, Leadership & Communication	x	x	
CO 345, Leading Organizational Change	x	x	x
CO 351, Topics in Writing for Communication Professions	x	x	x
CO 355, Provider-Patient Communication	x	x	x
CO 360, Seminar in Communication		x	x
CO 370, Internship	x		x
CO 391, Independent Study		x	x
CO 401 Topics in Persuasion		x	x

<b>Elective Courses</b>	<b>Learning Goal #1</b> Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	<b>Learning Goal #2</b> Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	<b>Learning Goal #3</b> Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts.
CO 432, Intercultural Communication	x	x	x
CO 455, Culture & Health	x	x	x
CO 470, Persuasion Campaigns & Performance	x	x	x

### **Assessment Methods and Analysis**

Beginning in Fall 2015 the Department of Communication required seven experiences of every major: 1) Introduction to Communication Theory; 2) Research Methods in Communication; 3) Communication Career Lab; 4) an advanced writing course beyond the all-University IN150/151 requirement; 5) an ethics course (for most of our majors, by far, in recent years, Communication Ethics and Freedom of Expression); 6) and a senior internship and 7) capstone. These experiences have been assessed over the years in various assessment reports:

- 2014-2015 Report: CO 101, Introduction to Communication Theory
- 2015-2016 Report, CO 481, Communication Capstone
- 2016-2017 Report: CO 308, Communication Ethics and Freedom of Expression
- Current Report: CO 204, Communication Research Methods

### **CO 204 Communication Research Methods: 2017-2018 Assessment**

This section of the 2017-2018 Communication Department Assessment Report will discuss the rationale, scope, and effectiveness of CO 204, Communication Research Methods, a required course for all Communication majors.

#### **Broader Rationale**

Communication faculty feel strongly that every major should be trained to read and to produce research focused on communication issues/topics. The faculty intentionally required the class at the 200-level to provide a foundational framework and knowledge for future communication courses. The intent, then, is for students to take this course earlier rather than later in the major; the course is typically taken the second or third year of study in the major. In short, this

research methods training will benefit students in their future course work and in their career endeavors. Furthermore, we demand that they be competent in research methods by requiring that they earn a C in the class or they must re-take the course.

**The Scope of CO 204**

The overall scope of CO 204, Communication Research Methods is best summarized with the following course description from Dr. Amy Delaney’s syllabus. Dr. Delaney has been the primary professor for this class since August 2016/

Communication research is a cyclical process of asking and answering questions about our social world. Research on communication helps us better understand our relationships, the organizations in which we work, the effects of media, and how culture shapes our experiences. In this course, you will gain an understanding of the research process in communication studies, including review of literature, formulation of research questions/hypotheses, and quantitative and qualitative research methods. You will leave the class as a more knowledgeable consumer and conductor of research as you improve your skills in finding, reading, summarizing, and evaluating empirical communication research. (Delaney, Fall 2017 CO 204 syllabus, p. 1; underline added for emphasis)

The following are the course learning goals, outcomes and objectives for the course:

**CO 204 Course Learning Goals, Outcomes & Objectives**

<i>By the end of the semester, you will be able to:</i>	<i>And you will show that to me through:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate the development of knowledge through empirical research in the study of communication and related fields.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Research Proposal</u></b>, Translations, CITI training</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe and explain the social science research process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exams, Translations, Friday Forums</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectively locate, understand, and explain empirical research in the field of communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Research Proposal</u></b>, Translations, Friday Forums</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critically evaluate research to assess its value, rigor, contribution, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translations, Friday Forums</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make informed decisions for research efforts, including decisions related to developing research objectives, sampling, qualitative vs. quantitative methods, measures, and analyses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Research Proposal</u></b>, CITI training, Exams, Friday Forums</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate methodological knowledge into tangible insight for both academic and professional endeavors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translations, Friday Forums</li> </ul>

For purposes of this assessment, I will discuss findings from the research proposal, which directly relate to three specific outcomes (identified above) and indirectly relate to the other three outcomes. Artifacts for this assessment include research proposals from two semesters—the most recent times the class was taught (Fall 2016 and Fall 2017).

The research proposal includes proposing an original empirical research study. The research proposal follows a "milestone" system in which students are conducting each step of the proposal in steps or milestones. The milestones are delineated as follows:

Milestone 1: Research Question--Select a topic and pose a research question seeking to answer.

Milestone 2: Sources—Identify five sources to review existing research on the chosen topic.

Milestone 3: Annotated Bibliography—Summarize research to formulate goals for study.

Milestone 4: Methods Outline—Develop plan for how collecting and analyzing data.

Milestone 5: Final Proposal and Presentation—Resembles first two sections of a published research article (literature review and method sections).

### **Is CO 204 Effective?**

To answer this question, consider the following items that students must perform in their research proposal project:

- 1) Pose communication-related topics/questions/hypotheses.
- 2) Identify and summarize existing research related to topics/questions/hypotheses.
- 3) Describe a method (sample, procedures, measures, and analysis plan) to answer questions or test hypotheses.

#### Pose communication-related topics/questions

Students posed various topics/questions, all related to communication. Here is a sampling of topics/questions addressed from Fall 2016 and Fall 2017:

- How the amount of watching TV correlates to interracial relations attitudes
- What methods are effective for adolescents to grieve and cope with loved one's death
- Relationship between time on social media and self-disclosure
- Relationship between players' attitudes toward sports and parental involvement in sports
- Whether computer-mediated communication can reduce stressors in long-distance dating military relationships
- Perception of and reasons for racism in news reporting
- Sexual assault awareness campaigns' effect on college students
- Relationship between college students' peer communication about hookup culture and societal sexual scripting
- Role of communication in athletic team's success and factors affecting team communication

#### Identify and summarize existing research related to topics/questions

All the papers required at least five scholarly articles reporting on empirical studies. Many articles came from communication journals while some came from other disciplines, such as psychology, health, and sociology to name a few.

In all these papers, students had to review and summarize each source to write a cohesive literature review that then provides the foundation for their proposed studies.

#### Describe a method (sample, procedures, measures, and analysis plan) to answer question

Here are some examples of methods proposed for various studies:

- Survey targeting 100 people over age 55.
  - Use paired t-test to compare groups with low and high exposure to interracial relations in media and how those effect interracial relations attitudes
- Interview 20 adolescents (10 male and 10 female) between ages 13-18 who have lost a loved one in the last five years.
  - Qualitative analysis of participants' grieving process according to positive outcomes, negative outcomes, and moderate outcomes. Coding categories/themes will also be developed.
- Survey 400 people at a university who have at least two social media accounts
  - Determine the correlation between two variables—social media accounts and amount of self-disclosure.
- Survey students at a university who have played a sport at least one point in their lives.
  - Find the mean, median, and mode of responses
- Survey people at least 18 years old and in a romantic relationship of at least six months. Participants complete a perceived stress scale and to prioritize the modes of communication over a two week period.
  - Calculate a t-test to compare participants' level of stress at beginning and end of the study (two weeks) calculate an ANOVA to measure the stress levels of participants using three different modes of communication.

In all the research proposals, students must identify the independent and dependent variables, identify and justify the method they are choosing, and how they would analyze the data. This is an important, significant component for students to know and do—to identify *what* they will study, *why* it is important to study said topic, and *how* they will study that topic. Requiring students to do this in a 200-level course (when many universities have this type of class at the 400-level) speaks to our expectations of Communication majors; we want them to know this sooner than later in their program of study.

In short, the faculty feel that students are learning the identified goals and objectives of CO 204, Communication Research Methods. Consistently, students walk away from the course better consumers and producers of scholarly research because of this class. We plan to continue to require this course and to cover the same course content in future courses.

### **Synopsis**

Based on current and previous levels of assessment, we have compiled the following results concerning our majors. We have a strong grasp of our program's strengths and weaknesses.

- CO 204 students consistently perform to the department's expected quality and level of research method knowledge and skills.
- Progress has been made on coordination and assessment of our delivery of the oral communication requirement. Starting next academic year, the department chair will have a course release for basic course direction.
- The oral communication required course data and assessment is provided in a separate report for general education purposes.
- Students benefitted from new courses offered by our new faculty member, Dr. Amy Delaney. She taught two new courses, Health Communication and Culture and Health

this past year. These classes led up to the creation and approval of the Health Communication concentration this past year.

- Performance learning, a hallmark of Millikin University, continues to expand in various Communication courses.
- In the past, students have often cited a lack of video classes for the Communication major. The department is now coordinating some video course needs with faculty in the Arts Technology program. We plan to continue this coordination to deliver what is needed for the Communication majors.

### **Improvement Plan/Resource Needs for the Department of Communication**

The 2018-2019 academic year promises new challenges, dangers, and opportunities for the Department of Communication. A summary of concerns and goals include:

- Recruitment of new majors is our most important goal since the number of majors is one of the lowest levels in recent history. Faculty have been contemplating and discussing various recruitment strategies, independent of the Admission Office.
- Increase awareness and publicity of the major is another goal. By promoting current students' work and alumni's careers, we hope to address the infamous question, "What can I do with a Communication degree?". This effort ties into our above goal, to recruit new majors. We plan to do this primarily via campus visit days, direct, internal communication with exploratory studies personnel and students, social media, the department website, and the Marketing Department.
- Continued communication and collaboration with other health-related disciplines on campus to promote and deliver our health communication courses to various students.
- Increased coordination and assessment of the basic course, courses that meet the oral communication requirement.

The Communication Department has accomplished a great deal over the years. We expect to continue to function as a successful department with interesting courses and valuable performance-learning experiences that are appealing and educational to students at Millikin University.