

Millikin University
Student Learning in the Communication Major
Nancy Curtin (Chair), Thomas Duncanson, Samuel Meister, Brandon Hensley

2015-2016

Executive Summary

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 for a future life of meaning and value.

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.

Consequently, the University's goals of professional success, citizenship in a global environment, and a life of personal meaning and value are manifest in the Communication department's goal 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 service learning, internship projects, 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 and portfolio.

This past year work focused on five areas: 1) Search for an assistant professor, tenure-track position in the department; 2) Implementation (and tweaking) of curriculum redesign that took place last year; 3) Continued planning to move WJMU to the forthcoming new student center; 4) Preparation for and completion of an external review of the university studies curriculum; the Communication Department provides courses for the oral communication requirement in the university studies curriculum; 5) Assessment of the curriculum based on the capstone course.

First, the department conducted a national search for an assistant professor, tenure-track position. This position was temporarily filled for a couple years while the department completed a curriculum review and redesign. Since the curriculum was finalized, we determined what we needed in that assistant professor position, and thus, were ready to conduct a national search. The search was successful and the new faculty joins the department August 1, 2016.

Secondly, the department implemented and tweaked the new curriculum approved in spring 2015. We determined that one slight modification needed to be made: the senior internship

and capstone needed to be separated for logistical purposes. Therefore, this change was proposed and approved, resulting in CO 480 as the senior internship and CO 481 as the capstone.

Third, the WJMU General Manager continued discussions and planning for the future location site of WJMU. It was finalized that WJMU will re-locate to the new forthcoming student center.

Fourth, work focused on planning for and accomplishing an external review of the university studies curriculum. The Communication Department provides the basic course, public speaking courses that fulfill the oral studies requirement in the university curriculum. Historically and currently, the department chair has been serving to also coordinate the basic course so the chair's time and effort was focused on this also.

Finally, this report includes new assessment data of CO 481, the capstone course. This assessment of CO 481 is delineated and discussed on page 12 of this report.

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, service 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:

Learning Goal	Corresponding MU Learning Goal Number(s)
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 2015-2016 consisted of 4 full-time faculty and 5 adjuncts that helped deliver approximately 60 traditional and PACE classes for the year. We ended the Spring 2016 semester with 84 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 to take communication courses by the Tabor School of Business and for the secondary language arts degree requirements in the School of Education. 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 PACE adult degree completion program by providing courses for the Organizational Leadership major and general education needs.

The Communication department currently occupies offices on the 4th 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 in the basement of the Richards Treat University Center, including office space for a faculty member who also serves as general manager for the radio station. Editing equipment and software have been upgraded in the two facilities in the past including automation hardware/software for the radio station in January 2009.

The Communication Major

As noted in the 2014-2015 assessment report, the Department of Communication completed a self-study of its current curriculum and successfully passed through University governance a new curriculum structure that went into effect Fall 2015. After thorough review of existing classes and curriculum structure, three concentrations were modified and adjustments were made in the curriculum in areas of writing and ethics. The three concentrations (Media Studies, Public Relations, and Organizational Communication) now reflect a stronger, diverse, flexible and more in-depth curriculum targeted to that concentration. The diversity and choice of course options allows some flexibility for majors to complete a concentration even if they declare the major relatively late in their college tenure. There still remains a general studies option in the major for those not wanting to declare a concentration.

Immediately prior to the curriculum review and redesign, we dropped a fourth concentration, Sports Communication. Given the number of faculty and their teaching expertise, it was not feasible to offer a quality, in-depth Sports Communication concentration.

As of Spring 2016, there were 84 majors with about 48% declaring a concentration (40 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 2016 (which does reflect graduating Spring 2016 seniors) included: 20 Public Relations; 3 Organizational Communication; 17 Mass Media; 44 without a concentration designation. Many students do not identify a concentration until late in the process, but the current distribution shows where the bulk of the students see their professional aspirations heading.

As of Fall 2011, Communication majors have the opportunity to complete their communication program with a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Sciences (B.S.) degree. This option was created to allow students access to a degree program that was more appropriate to their skills, professional aspirations, and academic preparation. This option is also seen as an advantage to students transferring into the department from other universities/colleges or other majors at Millikin. This change has been very successful for student access to the major. The 2015-16 group of majors have approximately 32 students with the B.S. degree, and 52 with the B.A. Other double majors might have a program in another college.

Oral Communication: General Education Requirement

In the Fall of 2007, the Millikin University faculty passed a new curricular structure including general education requirements. All students must now have an oral communication course under the new general education requirements. This requirement began with students entering Millikin University in the Fall of 2008. Thus, the university is entering into its 8th year with this requirement.

The Department offered 22 sections of oral communication courses (CO 200, CO 230 and CO 242) in the 2015-2016 school year between the traditional program and PACE. The breakdown is as follows:

- Fall 2015: 8 sections of CO 200; 3 sections of CO 230;
- Spring 2016: 7 sections of CO 200; 2 sections of CO 230
- PACE: 2 sections (1 each) of CO 242 in Fall 2015 and Spring 2016

Part-time, adjunct teachers taught most of these sections, with the exception of three sections 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 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. The department chair contributes to some basic course coordination, but it is very minimal and not an optimal situation. What is needed is a faculty member who is compensated to serve as basic course coordinator. The current full time faculty generally cannot contribute significantly to the oral communication requirement teaching load without further eroding the access students in the major have to terminal degreed faculty.

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 2016 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.

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 2015-2016 (summer and fall 2015; spring 2016), students generated 113 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.

New to the Communication Major in Fall 2015

There are a four new features to the Communication major as a result of the curriculum redesign in 2015. They are delineated as follows:

- 1) Added a two-hour course, CO 210, Communication Career Lab as a core course. This course provides an opportunity to explore a career using the Communication degree as well as prepares students for working in an internship and professional environment. Because there are many career options with a Communication degree, students often have trouble knowing about these and discerning which is best for them. Furthermore, we want to prepare students for professional behavior in the workplace prior to starting an internship. Therefore, we created this two-hour course taught every year in the spring. The goal is for students to take it their sophomore year and/or before they begin an internship.
- 2) All Communication majors must earn a C or above in four core courses:
 - CO 101, Introduction to Communication Theory
 - CO 200, Public Speaking or CO 230, Business Conversations (either fulfills the oral communication requirement)
 - CO 204, Communication Research Methods
 - Writing course, any writing course beyond IN 150/IN 151

Communication faculty felt strongly that Communication majors must be proficient in theory, speaking, writing and research in order to earn a Communication major. Therefore, we implemented these requirements.

- 3) Redesigned the concentrations to add more depth, rigor and flexibility. There are three concentrations (more details follow): Media Studies, Public Relations and Organizational

Communication. Each concentration requires 12 of the 18-19 hours to be 300/400 level hours. Each concentration has four parts: A) Introductory course(s); B) Contexts courses; C) Platforms and Practices courses and D) Culminating Experience course. Each concentration has some choices of courses for B and C.

- 4) Restructured the general studies option to also require 12 of the 18 credit hours be 300/400 level.

Highlights of the Communication Department, 2015-2016

- A new curriculum began in Fall 2015.
- All four full-time faculty in the department contribute their scholarship to regional, national, or international conferences and to publications. One adjunct faculty member was also active in research.
- Dr. Tom Duncanson completed a successful study abroad program in London with a large number of majors.
- A new assistant professor will begin August 1, 2016.

WJMU, the student-run campus radio station, highlights:

- Participated for the fourth consecutive year in the College Radio Foundation's College Radio Day. This international event is a day of programming which seeks to specifically highlight the benefits of noncommercial alternative radio, and the efforts of students and community members who dedicate their time and energy to staff and support college radio stations. WJMU again had DJs on air for 24 hours during the event.
- Created and supported programming for the Illinois Junior Academy of Sciences Exposition. WJMU student staff, with the cooperation of Millikin Public Safety, created parking and campus safety PSAs that ran throughout the IJAS Expo. WJMU staff also interviewed Millikin students, faculty, and administrators on air during the proceedings on topics ranging from senior thesis science and math presentations to the benefits of hosting IJAS at the Millikin Campus.
- Upgraded crucial audio editing software and hardware to industry standard programs and units.
- Sent a cohort of seven students to the annual Intercollegiate Broadcasting System National Conference and Awards Ceremony in New York City. WJMU received a finalist nomination in the "Best Show Promo" production category for senior Eric Shafer's *90s On Tap* segment, and won the "Best Radio Documentary" production category for alumnus Mallory Wiedenkiller's *Online Friendship* short.

Students join the communication major at many different times during a Millikin University experience. As an incoming freshman, transfer student, change of major, second major, or interdisciplinary student; our majors have a variety of demands to make on our curriculum.

With its flexibility, and as a small department with limited offerings, we are able to advise and teach students at all stages of their Millikin University experience.

As stated earlier, the department revised its curriculum in 2014-2015 in light of data and experience through self-evaluation, student feedback, and industry and disciplinary trends. The new curriculum structure offers clear concentrations in three areas of the major, it expands its emphasis on 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 improve our major in the following ways:

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

The three 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:** Communication careers in public relations include a wide variety of professional settings in corporations, non-profit organizations, professional associations, government agencies, and public relations firms. Students combine coursework in public relations, organizational communication, advanced writing courses, and applied internship experiences to prepare them for successful careers.
- **Media Studies:** Media students 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*.
- **Organizational Communication:** Students in the organizational communication track 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.

Throughout these concentrations we have expanded the writing requirements for many majors, 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 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 204, Communication Research Methods
- CO 341, Survey of Organizational Communication
- CO 342, Training & Technology Applications in Organizations
- CO 332, Gender Communication
- CO 432, Intercultural Communication
- CO 360, Crisis Communication
- CO 401, Topics in Persuasion: Environmental Advocacy
- CO 480, Internship
- CO 481, Communication Capstone

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.

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. Assessment data will be 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.

Core Courses	Learning Goal #1 Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	Learning Goal #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	Learning Goal #3 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

Elective Courses	Learning Goal #1 Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	Learning Goal #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	Learning Goal #3 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 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

Elective Courses	Learning Goal #1 Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	Learning Goal #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	Learning Goal #3 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 360, Seminar in Communication		x	x
CO 370, Internship	x		x
CO 391, Independent Study		x	x
CO 401 Topics in Persuasion		x	x
CO 432, Intercultural Communication	x	x	x
CO 470, Persuasion Campaigns & Performance	x	x	x

An Initial Assessment of CO 481

Beginning in Autumn 2015 the Department of Communication will require 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. It is time to begin assessing, where feasible, these experiences. In the 2014-2015 assessment report, it delineated an initial assessment of CO 101, Introduction to Communication Theory on page 12 of that report. For this 2015-2016 report, the Communication Department has made initial steps in assessing CO 481, Communication Capstone.

The Millikin Plan for Student Learning asked every instructional unit of the University to begin undergraduate majors with a theory course, require at least one course in research methods, provide at least one off-campus learning opportunity, and conclude with a capstone experience. The Department of Communication was one of the earliest and remains one of the purest adopters of this plan.

The capstone in the Communication major consists of a one-credit hour course that is designed to help bring together students' experiences at Millikin University into one place for the purposes of self-reflection and preparation for graduation. It is also designed to aid the department's efforts to assess its efforts to prepare majors for professional success, citizenship in their communities, and a life of meaning and value. Given those two goals, here are the course outcomes and objectives:

- 1) To communicate in a written project and in an oral presentation about the following:
 - Experiences in Communication coursework
 - Experiences in the internship(s)
 - Insights of how Communication coursework informed and prepared you for your internship experiences
- 2) To network with individuals in your targeted occupational field.
- 3) To prepare a resume specific to your targeted field/occupation.

This current assessment report will focus on two areas that students reflect on for their paper and for their oral report, the academic evaluation and the internship evaluation.

First, for the academic evaluation, students were to describe the courses and assignments that have been most useful in their development in the major as well as areas that they think the department needs more or less of in the major. We qualitatively analyzed students' reflections for thematic results. Consistently, students had a positive rating for the Communication Department faculty and the courses. Students liked and appreciated the applicability of the major. They also liked that small school environment in which professors get to know the students through multiple classes and formal and informal faculty-student interactions. For the most part, students feel challenged but acknowledge that the major has a wide degree of academic-performing students, some are honor students while others are on probation. This wide variety of student level is very often in the same classroom, making for pedagogical challenges for the professor. Students understand that pedagogical challenge and yet, the stronger-performing students want to be differentiated from the "weaker" performing students.

Furthermore, students want to be challenged and want non-Communication majors to understand the rigor of the major. There is a perception that the major is easy, that it is a “fall back” major, etc. Quite simply, Communication majors want to be challenged, have a credible, earned degree (i.e., not easily earned) and be skilled communicators.

With that in mind, students consistently liked the topics, format and applicability of their classes. Students liked that many classes were discussion-based, activity-focused and challenged them to “think outside the box” in new, creative ways. As one student remarked upon exiting class discussions in CO 308, Ethics and Freedom of Expression (a core class for majors), “my brain hurt from thinking so hard.” Upon hearing this comment made in a presentation, others nodded their head in agreement.

Furthermore, students liked the applicability of the major. They stated that they changed their thinking and their communication based on courses. Here are a couple statements that reflect that:

“My academic experience here at Millikin is one that has truly changed me for the better. I never really thrived in a classroom setting, it just wasn’t where I focused my energy or put my effort towards. I think the reason for this was the fact that I never saw things I learned in the classroom be applied to real life situation or in a way that seemed to benefit me, it always just seemed like information to retain until a test came around then once you passed the test you could forget about it. I do not feel that way about the education I have received here at Millikin!”

“During our classes we have learned different ways to communicate to one another. We have learned how gender, conflict, race, sex, religion and many other things can affect the way we communicate with others around us. Learning these boundaries and acknowledging their presence I was able to change my way of communicating.”

“These classes helped shape my cultural awareness and allowed me to understand how to shape and cater my messages to those certain types of people. I love that in those classes we would always have case study books and get hands on knowledge in how situations dealing with gender or ethnicity would come up in the work place. This permitted me to place myself in those situations so that way when something like that happens to me I know exactly how to deal with it. These classes have proven to be instrumental to me in my professional life. I constantly look back at the role playing assignments and the handouts and try and put them into practice in my everyday life.”

“Each of these courses has instilled the ability to code switch with multiple audiences, network with higher ups and understand the true meaning and value of life beyond our undergraduate career because the end isn’t here, it is merely the beginning.”

A hallmark of a Millikin University education is performance-learning. The Communication major provides opportunities for students to engage in performance learning. Students overwhelmingly stated that they loved and valued these performance learning opportunities. Admittedly, while in the class, students sometimes struggled with the ambiguity and “messiness” of performance learning, they were proud of their effort and end resulting project.

Here are some excerpts from three students about their performance learning experiences:

"Each of these courses implemented performance learning, where students demonstrate proficiency in expected knowledge, skills and standards as they progress through their education. This is an advantage at Millikin, especially with the teacher to student ratio and being at a place where every student has the opportunity to do so."

"Communication Research Methods is one of my favorite courses to talk about in reference to performance learning. The collaboration within the class members, decision-making skills, and tangible results are all skills that employers seek in new college graduates. I love to talk about this project in interviews and highlight these skills. The analysis and research of current research projects in made me feel connected to the communication field and like I had put my knowledge to use. The presentation of our data was also very important and satisfying to me."

"[O]ur class acted as consultants for Peerless Cleaners for the semester. This class was a real game changer for me; being able to personally interact with Peerless in order to actually make a difference in their company felt like a real job to me instead of a class for a grade. The other thing about this class that has seemed to be a theme in a lot of my other classes is how well the individuals in our class worked together. Throughout that semester we really acted as a team with one common goal and EVERYONE put in effort to achieve that goal."

Students consistently remarked that more classes are needed in two distinct areas: public relations and media, specifically, broadcast and video courses. This feedback is nothing new; students have mentioned this for a few years. The department has been working to provide more classes focused on public relations. Providing more broadcast and video courses is a challenge that will continue until if and when the department hires someone beyond an adjunct to teach one course per semester.

The second component of the capstone paper had students describe and evaluate their internship experience(s) and their contribution to your career and educational objectives. Communication majors often complete more than one internship. Students can take up to six credit hours of internship toward graduation; three credit hours are required for graduation.

Consistently, students value the role of internships in exploring their career options, opening doors to the professional world, confirming their career choice or in some cases, enlightening them to discover they want to change their career focus. The following are some remarks students made about their internship experiences:

"It was nice to take theories and practices and put them into real content and experiences. DCC Marketing contributed to my career because it taught me that researching is always the best way to start. It also showed me how to write social media content for businesses instead of just social aspects or personal gain. I feel like I have truly enhanced my skills by holding this internship and it has allowed me to understand what I want to search for in the future even though it may not be directly in the Marketing field, I will always need the skills I have learned in Communication and Marketing to excel in any workplace."

"I quickly learned that communication and effective facilitation were a large part of the financial planning industry. All of the other interns were either majored in finance or economics, while I was majored in communication. They had to learn facilitation and communication skills while I had to learn the finance part of the business. The company trained me from the ground up and continued to pay for my certifications. I was able to effectively learn about finance through doing joint work with the various representatives of the company. The other interns were having a harder time learning facilitation and communication skills through the joint work representatives as they did not have a background for it. I am currently the most successful intern for the Champaign office which is why I was offered a job to work at their practice. This gave me a lot of confidence not only with my major, but with myself."

"Honestly, I didn't think I was going to get so much experience with planning just one event, but when I found out how many people I was going to be planning the event for, I knew it was going to be a lot of work. I've really enjoyed being an intern at the Decatur Area Arts Council. When I added the Public Relations emphasis, I didn't know what I wanted to do with it. I just knew that I enjoyed that particular topic the most. Assisting the Events and Services Coordinator has been a great experience, and after graduating, I would definitely be interested in becoming an event planner myself. Now I have a better understanding of what it could possibly take to plan different types of events."

Synopsis

Based on current levels of assessment, we have compiled the following results concerning our majors. We have a strong grasp of our program's strengths and weaknesses. Our assessment resources are limited. Progress has been made on assessment of our delivery of the oral communication requirement. The data from that assessment is provided in a separate report for general education purposes. From the department's perspective, one of the greatest dangers facing the oral communication general education program's quality is the absence of full-time faculty teaching, coordinating and completing more comprehensive assessment for the program. Other general education programs have full-time faculty teaching and a program coordinator with release time and support for program assessment. This general education requirement does not have the same resources allocated to its teaching or assessment.

We have experienced a wide range of feedback from students about the communication program. Some of it is beyond the control of the department and reflect shortfalls of administrative support in the areas of faculty and equipment. One example would be video equipment. While video equipment was purchased a couple years ago, more video equipment is needed. Another example is that no member of the department has release time to perform assessment responsibilities. The small size and limited faculty size makes assessment difficult. Faculty are consistently teaching four different courses every semester and advising over 20 students each, among other endeavors. Time, resources, and opportunities for assessment are limited.

As noted above in the CO 481, Communication Capstone portion, student papers are read to gather themes. Some other themes that have been gathered through these papers, faculty-student interactions and in oral presentations in the capstone include the following:

- Advising was highly praised by graduates from the major. On average, students were pleased that the department made an effort to help them graduate on time and that curricular and advising resources were available to make that possible. Students felt that their departmental advisor, the department secretary, and Registrar's office were meeting their advising needs. Ordinarily, freshmen receive an advisor who follows them through their four years in the major. Many students reported getting help on advising issues from multiple members of the Communication faculty, not just a single advisor. All full-time faculty are prepared for and expected to assist students with advising issues during their time in the department. Students described the advising experience in our department much more favorably than other departments they had transferred from prior to becoming Communication majors. Many students mentioned that they have had multiple meetings during the semester with their advisor and that advising extended well beyond scheduling. Students received assistance in their career planning, with issues concerning their courses and university services, study abroad, graduate school, and with other academic and personal challenges. This success has been possible despite communication faculty advising as many as 25 or more advisees each semester.
- Many students referenced at least one favorite faculty member and/or course in the department and recognized the collegiality and support Communication faculty provide to students and to each other. The variety of courses and faculty described demonstrated a breadth of courses and teaching styles that students found attractive and that helped them to succeed. Students in the major usually have at the minimum three of our full-time faculty in their major program, many have all of us at one time or another as they move through the program. The range of courses was interesting. The individual courses were important but so was their teaching style and success at contributing to student learning. Many of the core courses were included in their comments, students seem to appreciate, if only later in the process, the central theory and knowledge the core contributed to their preparation. Those courses included: CO 101 Introduction to Communication Theory and CO 204 Communication Research Methods in Communication. Popular elective courses included: CO 432 Intercultural Communication, CO 332 Gender Communication, and CO 343 Communication and Conflict.
- Students who have selected a concentration in their major were generally pleased with that option and outcome. Most would like even more upper-level coursework in their individual concentration areas—to deepen the amount of coursework in each track. This seem particularly true for students entering the major their freshmen year. The longer a student is a major in the department, the more our limitations become evident. Offering a variety of topics courses, including immersion courses, is helping this situation. However, with a limited faculty size, a heavy core course demand, and a significant number of majors, variety is going to be limited.
- Students in the media track were particularly critical of the options available to them at this time. Video production is limited to a reliance on instruction with an adjunct teacher. That position has been held by three different adjuncts in the last four years, making any development or improvement in that program difficult. Such turnover prevents the relationships

needed for effective advising, independent study, or mentoring in this area of the major. Equipment limitations have compounded this problem. With only five limited use cameras for a class of 15 students, the Millikin University mission of hands on learning and performance learning is impossible to adequately develop. As long as the media area is not supported sufficiently, it is not delivering on our promise of education.

- The study abroad was referred to as a unique and positive experience during exit interviews. One popular program has been a London Semester program. Student experiences in the London Semester were rated exceptional and the students were extremely pleased to have had the experience and opportunity to study abroad. Other students have used their language skills, immersion courses and general education requirements to experience learning off campus. More options and types of opportunities for such learning were recommended.
- Students would like to see more activities outside of the classroom beyond the radio station. Our student honorary, Lambda Pi Eta, needs to become more active. Students also attended events hosted by the Public Relations Society of America Central Illinois Chapter. These quarterly meetings give PR majors the chance to interact with PR professionals and students at other universities. Eventual growth into a PRSSA organization would be beneficial. Events for majors both semesters went well and students are hungry for additional opportunities to gather. Our majors have also been active in other non-Communication organizations including the Greek system, student life, student government, DECA, and the Decaturian student newspaper. Our majors have traditionally participated effectively in student organizations and have held positions of leadership in many of them. Exit interviews reinforced the benefits and enjoyment that our majors had from their involvement in campus organizations.

Consistent with the mission of the university for performance learning engagement, the departmental requirement for student internships has been a successful one. Student internships were located in a variety of places, both on campus and in the community at large. Summer internships also included experiences outside of the Decatur community. Students worked with campus organizations, corporate organizations, small businesses, and not-for-profit organizations. Examples of sites for internships over the past year include: WAND TV, DCC Marketing, St. Mary's Hospital, Decatur Public Schools, Partners in Education, Disney World, United Way, An Affair to Remember, Macon Resources, Neuhoff Media, Cromwell Media, YMCA, Investment Planners, and other locations on campus, in the community, and beyond.

The Department continues to have an internship advisor who has been instrumental at getting students meaningful and interesting learning positions. The students complete a learning contract, submit a portfolio, certify their hours, and receive feedback from the internship site. It takes a lot of time and effort to implement the department's internship requirement. However, it has been a valuable experience and distinctive requirement for our majors.

Improvement Plan/Resource Needs for the Department of Communication

The 2016-2017 academic year promises new challenges, dangers, and opportunities for the Department of Communication. A summary of concerns and goals include:

- Development of the public speaking requirement is too limited due to resource restrictions. A full-time hire for a basic course director who can also contribute to at least one other curricular track is needed, thus, the position would have $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ release time for basic course direction. The position would allow for better-informed assessment of this general education requirement, adjunct training and mentoring, and course development. An additional lecturer or instructor hire(s) would also improve the quality and consistency of the general education requirement. The first effort to begin assessment of this program has begun with the help of an adjunct with minimal support, but more should be done. This general education requirement needs to be supported as have others at the University.
- Resource needs in addition to faculty also limit the department's ability to meet University mission goals. Theory to practice, and performance learning is difficult to accomplish when the department's resources include only two cameras for a video production course. Students are not being afforded sufficient time to work hands-on with the equipment. The addition to the department's responsibilities of the oral communication requirement has also occurred without any resources improvements in staffing, equipment, office space, or office expenses. The current departmental budget cannot handle these expanded expectations without new resources.

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.