

Millikin University
Student Learning in the Communication Major
Nancy Curtin (Chair), Thomas Duncanson, Samuel Meister, Michael Braun
2013-2014

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, a couple significant changes occurred: 1) Long-term chair and faculty member, Dr. Jeffrey Brand left Millikin University; 2) A new chair of the department was appointed, Dr. Nancy Curtin, current faculty member; 3) A new faculty member joined the department, Dr. Michael Braun; 4) A curriculum review process started.

Starting in January 2014, the Communication Department initiated a curriculum review. Since the curriculum was last revised in 2006 and implemented in 2007, the new chair, Dr. Nancy Curtin, determined it was time to conduct another curriculum review with the help of the full-time faculty. While the curriculum review is still in progress as of the writing of this report, the department plans to propose a revised curriculum in Fall 2014; these proposals will then undergo the requisite curriculum review process through University governance. Plans are to have the curriculum completely implemented in January 2015.

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 2013-2014 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 2014 semester with over 120 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, 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 Political Science Department and Math Department. In addition, the Communication Department has a video-editing lab in the basement of Staley Library and a 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 five years including automation hardware/software for the radio station in January 2009. The current video equipment is inadequate. Two cameras are available for use for a class of 15 in addition to use for other student projects. The lack of adequate camera equipment is considered a significant threat to the video production area of the major. The program can no longer sustain video production at this level of technological support. In fact, this past academic year, our department did not offer any video production classes. There are plans to resurrect the course in spring 2015.

The Communication Major

The Department of Communication in the Fall of 2006 completed a self-study of its current curriculum and successfully passed through University governance a new curriculum structure that went into effect in the Fall of 2007. After thorough review of existing classes and curriculum structure, three concentrations, or tracks, were created and adjustments were made in the curriculum in areas of writing and ethics. In the Spring of 2008, the department added a fourth track in sport communication to the major. These four tracks are the only formal tracks in the major; a general communication major is still available.

The breakdown of students in those tracks shows the distribution of interest in each track although students are taking courses throughout the Communication department curriculum in electives and for other professional reasons. The group ending in Spring 2014 (which does not reflect graduating spring 2014 seniors or incoming fall 2014 freshman) included: 20 Public Relations; 6 Organizational Communication; 16 Mass Media; 4 Sport Communication; and 43 without a track designation. Many students do not identify a track until late in the process, but the current distribution shows where the bulk of the students see their professional aspirations heading.

A new option for Communication majors was implemented in the Fall of 2011. Students 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 2013-14 group of majors have approximately 32 students with the B.S. degree, and 60 with the B.A. Other double majors might have had a program in another college. A few years ago our student capstone interviews started indicating a real desire for this option, and it is proving itself.

As stated earlier, the Communication Department started another curriculum review in January 2014. While the curriculum review is still in progress as of the writing of this report, the department plans to propose a revised curriculum in Fall 2014; these proposals will then undergo the requisite curriculum review process through University governance. Plans are to have the curriculum completely implemented in January 2015.

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.

The Department offered 21 sections of oral communication courses (CO 200 and CO 242) in the 2013-2014 school year between the traditional program and PACE. Part-time, adjunct teachers taught all sections, with the exception of one section, of the oral communication requirement. The number of sections decreased from the previous year, reflecting lower enrollment numbers at the university. Employing part-time faculty allowed the department to quickly and easily

contract the number of sections, which enabled flexibility in the number of sections delivered. 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 full-time faculty to help teach this general education requirement does not demonstrate strong commitment to this general education requirement. In comparison, full-time, tenure line or tenured faculty teach a majority of all other general education courses. A review of the assessment reports by the other general education areas will confirm this observation.

The current full time faculty cannot contribute significantly to the oral communication requirement teaching load without further eroding the access students in the major have to terminal degreed faculty. For 2013-2014, part-time adjunct faculty members also taught 4 major specific courses, excluding the PACE program. The department is simply understaffed for the FTE it generates. Adjunct faculty are currently teaching the equivalent of five additional full time faculty for the department. A department of this size and with this level of contribution should not have one half of its coursework taught by adjunct faculty.

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 2013-2014 (summer and fall 2013; spring 2014), students generated 130 credit hours for internships. This requirement is unique on this campus and it has been an asset for students seeking employment after graduation.

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 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, relational communication, 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 in 2013-2014 consists of a minimum of 34 credit hours, consisting of 16 hours in the foundation and 18 hours of Communication electives, 9 of which should be numbered 300 or above. 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. Our curriculum uses a non-hierarchical organization schema that allows for maximal flexibility in designing individualized plans of study. There are a few courses that do build onto each other in stages, for example: multiple 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. 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.

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.

In the Fall of 2006, the department revised its curriculum in light of data and experience through the QPC project, self-evaluation, student feedback, and industry and disciplinary trends. The new curriculum structure offers clear concentrations or tracks in four areas of the major, it expands its emphasis on written communication skills in two of those areas (public relations and journalism), requires an internship experience for the professional development of all majors, and integrates ethical reasoning into the department's core course requirements. Our track 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 tracks have aided in the process of advising majors.
- The tracks have directed students to take more advanced coursework in their areas instead of a general set of choices.
- The tracks also help to recruit new students. Many of our applicants identify a specific track in their admissions profile.

The four tracks are designed to help students find greater meaning and interconnectedness in their curricular choices. Any students, for whom these tracks do not fully meet their requirements, may choose another combination of courses with the consent of their advisor and the department chair. The tracks 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.
- **Mass Media:** The mass media track includes concentrations in media or journalism. Media students focus on radio and/or television production in addition to theory and professional practice in the media environment. Students interested in journalism focus on writing, media law and policy, along with practical journalism experiences. Many media majors are involved with the student-run radio station, WJMU or the campus

newspaper, *The Decaturian*. Both concentrations offer students experiences with professional media outlets through internships.

- **Organizational Communication:** Students in the organizational communication track develop communications skills vital for the professional workplace. Coursework in leadership, conflict management, organizational culture and small group communication prepare students for a wide range of careers. Courses in management, advertising, and other areas from the University may be incorporated into this major track.
- **Sport Communication:** Like the mass media track, this one offers two concentrations, public relations or media. This track is for students interested in sport communication in areas such as publicity, event planning, marketing, broadcasting, editing, sales, etc. Students will be encouraged to take additional coursework from the English Department, Exercise Science Department, and the Tabor Business School as needed to supplement their program of study.

Throughout these tracks 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 tracks 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.

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.

<p>Core Courses</p>	<p>Learning Goal #1 Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional</p>	<p>Learning Goal #2 Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills</p>	<p>Learning Goal #3 Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages</p>
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	contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	in relevant communication contexts.
CO 101 Introduction to Communication Theory		x	
CO 104 Argument and Social Issues	x		x
CO 200 Public Speaking	x	x	
CO 204 Investigative Methods in Communication		x	x
CO 308 Communication Ethics & Freedom of Expression		x	x
CO 47x Communication Internship	x	x	x
CO 480 Capstone Experiential Learning Seminar (1 credit)	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 100 Interpersonal Communication	x	x	
CO 110 Introduction to Radio Industry	x		x
CO 120 Media Aesthetics		x	x
CO 181-5 Communication Practicum	x		
CO 220 Introduction to Video Production	x	x	x

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CO 225 Issues in Mass Media		x	x
CO 242 Business and Professional Communication	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 310 Small Group Communication	x	x	
CO 314 Advanced Radio Production and Performance	x		x
CO 324 Advanced Video Production	x		
CO 331 Relational 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 Gendered Communication	x	x	x
CO 341 Organizational Culture	x	x	
CO 342 Applications in Organizational Comm	x	x	x
CO 343 Communication and Conflict	x		x
CO 344 Leadership	x	x	
CO 351 Topics in Writing for Communication Professions	x	x	x
CO 360 Seminar in Communication		x	x
CO 371-4 Communication Internship	x		x
CO 391-4 Independent Study		x	x
CO 401 Topics in Persuasion		x	x
CO 425 Media Law and Policy		x	x
CO 432 Intercultural Communication	x	x	x
CO 456 Applications in Public Relations	x	x	x

Based on current levels of assessment, we have compiled the following results concerning our majors. Our assessment efforts rate a yellow on the Red-Yellow-Green scale being used to evaluate assessment efforts. We have a strong grasp of our program's strengths and

weaknesses. Our assessment resources and experience are limited. Progress has been made on assessment of our delivery of the oral communication requirement. We have three years of more developed assessment and the results from that assessment are encouraging. 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 program's quality is the absence of full-time faculty teaching including assessment experience 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 if it is beyond the control of the department and reflect shortfalls of administrated support in the areas of faculty and equipment. One example would be video equipment. For four-five years requests have been made to upgrade and develop these resources and those requests have been denied. Another example, no member of the department has release time to perform assessment responsibilities. The small size and limited faculty size makes assessment difficult. The department size has also been further reduced many years for a variety of reasons, for example, in the last four of five years, the Department has had one faculty member teaching for Millikin University in London or on a sabbatical leave for a semester. New teaching and advising duties were the priority for the department during these short-handed periods. In the Spring of 2010, both senior faculty members taught a fifth course in response to the University's financial crisis concerning instructional resources. Faculty are advising 30-40 students each and spend significant time helping to advise and mentor student majors. Time, resources, and opportunities for assessment are limited. Results of current assessment efforts include:

Student Exit Interviews: The chair of the department conducted interviews with 25 students enrolled in the capstone course and planning to graduate from the department in December 2013, May 2014, or anticipating graduation in August or December 2014. Students were generally positive about their overall experience with the University and the Department of Communication. These interviews have been valuable sources of information on our students. Many of the changes made over the years in the department have started with student recommendations that occurred with the capstone interview or reflection paper. This process has resulted in almost every student being interviewed prior to graduation. Some of the more frequent and valuable comments are summarized below:

- 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 30 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, CO 107 Argument and Social Issues, and CO 204 Investigative Methods in Communication. Popular elective courses included: CO 306 Documentary Film, CO 432 Intercultural Communication, CO 332 Gendered Communication, and CO 343 Communication and Conflict.
- Students who have selected a track in their major were generally pleased with that option and outcome. Most would like even more upper-level coursework in their individual track 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 two limited use cameras for a class of 10-15 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. Further information is later in this report as we assess the potential and practice of student learning in this area of our curriculum.
- 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.

• When asked about improvements to be made to the major, many of the interviews reiterated the same few issues in a variety of ways:

- Better resources for video production and hands-on media work.
- More advanced courses with a focus on applied and real world experiences.
- Better quality classroom experiences with fewer underprepared or unmotivated students. Students have advocated for either a selective admission into some advanced courses or a GPA requirement for majors. Both options are being investigated for the future. Students would like more hands on courses and better quality of overall participation by those enrolled. This is an ongoing discussion topic with our faculty.

Internship Evaluations: Consistent with the mission of the university for performance learning, 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.

Curriculum Evaluation: As stated earlier, the department is conducting a curriculum review. Identifying the needs of current and future students in preparing them for life after Millikin University is a focus of the curriculum. Furthermore, for multiple reasons, it is imperative the Communication Department define its identity and focus—who it is, who it is not, what it can be and what it cannot be. Stated simply, the Communication Department cannot be all things to all people. For that reason, the curriculum review process will define and identify a focused curriculum that is feasible, strong, and transformative for students and for faculty to deliver to prepare students.

Video Production Program Review: Each year we attempt to assess the status of one of our areas of the major and potential courses in that area. In 2012-13 we had concerns about the video production sequence in the major and its effectiveness in our curriculum; those concerns continued in 2013-2014. Through student feedback, enrollment and registration patterns, faculty and equipment assessment, and student project evaluation, we have concluded that the video production area is not meeting the departmental learning goals nor the expectations for a Millikin academic experience.

This area of the curriculum has been forced to utilize adjunct faculty for about 10 of the last 12 years. The understaffing of the program has led to poor instructor leadership in this area. Video production is an area that does not require an advanced degree to practice, only to teach. As a result, there are limited potential adjunct faculty out there. Thus, we are proposing that we hire professionally-qualified instructor, even if that entails a bachelor's degree, to teach video production. This proposal is being considered as of the time of this report writing.

One accompanying challenge is the equipment options for the program. The department has two aging cameras with some broken parts. It is impossible to hold a class that only is meeting once a week with two cameras and expect students to get a thorough enough education in their use. They are not High Definition capable that means students cannot get experience in the editing and production of high definition video. Multiple request each year for the past 4-5 years have been made to supplement our equipment. The Dean of A&S claims he has made requests for these materials and they have been denied. At this level of technology the courses cannot be offered. We have consulted with alumni and local video professionals who have offered suggestions on the technology we should invest in and without those resources, the video production area is in limbo.

Student feedback in the video production area indicates that they are dissatisfied with the equipment and instruction. Capstone and interviews and talks with students in the classes indicate that they are not happy with content, equipment, or teaching. The department as actually had students leave the University due to insufficient resources in the media area of the major. Student projects at the end of the semester in Fall 2012 were not well or completely executed and so the general evaluations of the program in seen in the assessment of student performance in the course indicate poor performance.

After this assessment of the video program, the department has taken the following actions. First, plans are underway as of the writing of this report to hire an adjunct for the interim to teach a 200-level course in spring 2015. Second, the media track and core courses in the major have been adjusted for the future. The core for the major has added a course, CO 225 Issues in Mass Media, that will insure that all majors have a better understanding of media and society. This improves all majors and opens the media track to other elective hours. The Issues in Mass Media course will also incorporate more media law content. The CO 425 Media Law and Policy course will no longer be required for Media Track majors. Although we have an adjunct very qualified to teach it, current students required to take it are lower; therefore the class had to be cancelled for fall 2014 because of low enrollment. As stated earlier, the department curriculum review and revision will encompass changes to the mass media track. Thus, change in this track is forthcoming.

Assessment Summary: The current level of departmental assessment is considered to be yellow as a performance indicator. We are expanding and improving on the range and quality of assessment and have plans to continue improvements. Current data is very encouraging for continued growth and potential for the department. The program has made some important and significant adjustments to its curriculum and goals. Student activity in the classroom and outside of courses indicates that the learning goals we have set for majors are being pursued and accomplished.

Improvement Plan for the Department of Communication

The 2014-2015 academic year promises new challenges, dangers, and opportunities for the Department of Communication. A summary of concerns and goals include:

- Adequate staffing for the department continues to be a danger. The loss of our media production faculty member, four years ago, threatens to limit our ability to grow and develop that portion of the major. In the short-term, we plan to hire a video production adjunct instructor. Further evaluation of staffing needs will occur with the curriculum revisions. With only 4 full-time faculty and consistently more than 100 majors and general education commitments, our department is too small to provide the level of curriculum necessary to meet the need. The major deserves resources commensurate with its contribution to enrollments and University graduation rates.
- 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 experiences that are appealing to students at Millikin University.

Highlights from this academic year as a department include:

- WJMU, the student-run campus radio station, was busy with software upgrades to both production and on-air automation computers, as well as hardware upgrades to the studio console and the installation of updated studio monitors. This improved the station's audio quality and the functionality of the studio space.
- WJMU nominated as two finalists at the annual Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Awards in New York for the following: the 75th Anniversary *War of the Worlds* remake and a spot news segment.
- WJMU received its license renewal from the FCC.
- 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.
- The Communication Department continues to collaborate with Tabor School of Business on creating, modifying and cross-listing courses that serve both constituencies. Furthermore, some of communication courses are required and recommended for the new Integrated Marketing Communication minor, offered through Tabor School of Business' Marketing Department.
- A curriculum review process started in January 2014 with projected implementation in January 2015.