

**Millikin University**  
**Student Learning in the Communication Major**  
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2010-2011

**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 audiences: 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.

The Communication Department has developed three learning goals for our students:

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 relevant communication contexts.

Students in the Communication major take 16-hours of foundation courses. These courses introduce students to the learning goals of the major through an introduction to theory, practice, ethics, and critical thinking skills. The core also includes a capstone internship experience and portfolio project designed to integrate these learning goals together in preparation for graduation. All majors are required to complete an internship experience that combines theory and practice in a professional environment.

All majors must complete a tool requirement consisting of an advanced writing course that is designed to build upon the freshmen writing experience. Students choose from courses in the English Department's writing program or from courses offered by the Communication Department in specific professional writing contexts such as writing for the media or speechwriting. Majors in public relations or mass media-journalism are also required to complete one additional writing course.

Students may also select communication elective courses chosen for their contribution to their personal and professional communication goals. In the Fall of 2007 the Department of Communication made professional tracks available to majors in the areas of public relations, mass media (production or journalism), and organizational communication. A fourth track in sport communication was added the next year. A majority of our current and graduating students have added a track to their plan of study. These major tracks represent more in-depth study in an area of the major. They are now being identified and recognized in the graduation program for our majors. Some students will remain as a general major and select a more personalized set of courses reflecting their own communication objectives. Students are also encouraged to supplement Communication Department offerings with non-major courses in the Tabor Business School, the English Department, and other departments that can enhance their skills and knowledge with their unique disciplinary perspectives. All students are required to have an internship experience for professional development purposes.

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. Systematic acquisition and evaluation of this data is still ongoing and a learning process, but individuals in the department are using current information for curricular planning and programmatic improvements.

Highlights from this academic year as a department include:

- Growth in the Sport Communication track in the Communication major. Plans to expand on the experiential side of sport communication are set to continue in 2011-12.
- Students in the Applications in Public Relations course participated in the planning and public relations efforts for the Blue Connection and the new Blue Connection location at the DMH Cancer Care Institute. Student interest and participation in entrepreneurship program has been increasing.
- Communication and Spanish major Kayla Vogel, along with Business major Evan File, won \$4,500 to develop their small business Black Sheep Cheese, in the university's Business Creation Competition.
- The department developed a Bachelor of Science option for majors. This new option will allow students to complete additional math and sciences courses for the major instead of a foreign language.
- Dr. Nancy Curtin spent the Spring semester on a Junior sabbatical. Dr. Thomas Duncanson received release time as part of the John C. Griswold Distinguished Professorship in Communication.
- Students participated in the annual Celebration of Scholarship with programs highlighting collaborative work between WJMU radio and a freshmen seminar course, the partnership between the Blue Connection and the applications in public relations course, and a gender

focused panel. Two teams of students presented research based on work from their course in Classical Rhetoric in the poster session. Additional majors presented in groups sponsored by other departments as well as Honors project presentations.

- A record number of students were initiated into our student honorary, Lambda Pi Eta. Interim President Peg Luy, was initiated into the chapter as an honorary member and former Communication major in the department.

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

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

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

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

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

**Communication Department Snapshot**

The Communication department in 2010-2011 consisted of 4 full-time faculty and 9 adjuncts that helped deliver 57 classes for the year. We ended the Spring of 2011 with approximately 112 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 have also taught IN 250 U.S. Studies, the IN 206 for the Honors Program, 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 5 offices on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Shilling Hall and shares a secretary with the Political Science 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 three years including new

automation hardware/software for the radio station in January 2009. The current video equipment is extremely limited. Currently only two cameras are available for use for a class of 15 in addition to use for other student productions. The lack of adequate camera equipment is considered a significant threat to the video production area of the major. If any breakdown occurs, failure to replace equipment will require cancellation of the courses, even mid-semester.

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 planned for the department in the near future.

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 25 sections of oral communication courses (CO 200 and CO 242) in the 2010-2011 school year. This is up from the 21 sections of the oral communication course in 2009-2010. We are monitoring the demand levels to see if it is necessary to further expand on the number of courses being offered.

In the Spring of 2011 the Communication department added a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) option to the Communication major. This is designed to expand on the major's flexibility and availability for students. The first Communication major with a B.S. degree graduated in May 2011. This option was identified as a valuable addition to our program during annual exit interviews of majors and the department's assessment of its program and student interests.

### **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. 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 2010-2011 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 editing, 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 will also help to recruit new students.

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 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 faculty advisors evaluate the intern’s performance. These evaluations will provide us with data from several different perspectives about the students’ professional competence and their ability to apply coursework in the professional arena. The internship advisor also collects informal data as she places student interns and checks in with employers.
- **Assignment Evaluations:** Assessment of particular assignments to track implementation of learning goals is planned. Each year, a select set of courses and assignments will be evaluated for their contribution to the major and to student learning.
- **Student Activities/Experiences:** Assessment of experiential activities will also take place at regular intervals to assess the contributions of departmental opportunities outside of the traditional classroom. The student radio station provides on-campus media experience to students, both majors and non-majors. Lambda Pi Eta provides students with professional exposure and networking opportunities.
- **Capstone Project/Course:** All graduating seniors are to prepare a portfolio of their work at Millikin with a focus on their major. The department plans to assess these portfolios as an individual assignment and as a measure of meeting the goals of the department. Additional assignments in the capstone course may also be assessed.

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

<b>Core Courses</b>	<b>Learning Goal #1</b> Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	<b>Learning Goal #2</b> Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	<b>Learning Goal #3</b> Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts.
CO 101 Introduction to Communication Theory		x	

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

<b>Elective Courses</b>	<b>Learning Goal #1</b> Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate in personal, scholarly, and/or professional contexts through appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and mediated formats.	<b>Learning Goal #2</b> Students will distinguish the theories pertinent to communication studies and demonstrate the skills needed to create, present, analyze, and evaluate messages in relevant contexts	<b>Learning Goal #3</b> Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts.
CO 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
CO 225 Issues in Mass Media		x	x
CO 242 Business and Professional Communication	x	x	

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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
CO 332 Gendered Communication	x	x	x
CO 341 Organizational Culture	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 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, however, are extremely limited.

Progress is being made on assessment of our delivery of the oral communication requirement and that process will aid in the development of additional assessment processes for the department major. Current assessments are based on limited information that identifies a department with strong student support and many positive points of evaluation. Some negative assessments by students of the program are beyond departmental control and reflect resource limitations imposed on the department by the University, for example in the areas of video production resources. No member of the department has release time to perform assessment responsibilities. The small size and limited faculty size makes assessment difficult. For example, in the last three 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 of 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 too limited. Results of current assessment efforts include:

Student Exit Interviews: The chair of the department conducted interviews with 33 students enrolled in the capstone course and planning to graduate from the department in December 2010, May 2011, or anticipating graduation in August or December 2011. Many of the interviews continue to reiterate the students' perceptions of the department's strengths and weaknesses. Some of the more frequent and valuable comments are summarized below:

- Advising was highly praised by graduates from the major. Students were especially 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. 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.
- 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. 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. Media production is limited to a reliance on instruction with an adjunct teacher. That position has been held by three different adjuncts in the last three semesters, 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 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.
- 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.
- Students would like to see more activities outside of the classroom beyond the radio station. This is an area our department believes it needs to work on more actively. Our student honorary, Lambda Pi Eta, needs to become more active. The leadership has upped their involvement level this past Spring, and we hope to see it grow next year. A significant number of students were initiated into the honorary this spring. The option for a Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter is still being investigated and pursued. 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.
- Despite our active efforts to promote preparation for graduation and looking for employment, most of those interviewed were still in the early stages of planning for life after college. A few in the May group had a job in hand, and a few were very successful by mid-June in finding work or selecting graduate school options. The portfolio pieces showed better understanding of their potentials as graduates but limited active effort to pursue new jobs.
- 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.

Senior Year Capstone Portfolio Assessment: Each graduating senior must complete a portfolio project that is to provide opportunities for reflection, assessment, and preparation for application of the Millikin experience to their professional aspirations.

This year, an effort was made to assess the effectiveness of these capstone projects to demonstrate student learning based on the learning goals for the department. The portfolios were evaluated on the basis of how well students identified, demonstrated, and reflected on these goals in their paper, informational interviews, resume, and exit interviews.

The learning goals they were to discuss included:

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 relevant communication contexts.

Of the 32 portfolio projects submitted for 2010-11, 14 were randomly selected for this assessment evaluation. The scoring of the 3 learning goals were based on a 5-point scale: 4=Exemplary, 3=Advanced, 2=Competent, 1=Basic, 0=Deficient. This scale was utilized to remain consistent with the oral communication requirement scoring system employed for that assessment project. For this initial assessment the learning goals for the major were selected as the rubric items for assessment. With this report, a future effort will be made to establish rubric questions to assess the accomplishment of the individual learning goals. Since the capstone assignment is a global evaluation of the student's learning in the major, a preliminary use of just the three learning goals seemed sufficient.

Each of the learning goal assessments will be discussed along with their average scores. Some elements of the portfolios will be discussed as they contributed to the demonstration of the learning goals.

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. **2.8**

When demonstrating the accomplishment of this learning goal, students discussed and reflected in a number of instances where their communication skills had been enhanced by the major. For example: Both the basic public speaking course and the

departmental writing requirements were an influence in the student's explanation of how their communication skills had been strengthened. The writing requirement made students feel better prepared and knowledgeable. In-class performance activities, internship opportunities to produce messages, and leadership experiences with campus organizations were also common places where students identified growth in their communication abilities in a variety of ways. Greater variety and scope in the range of contexts and messages in the portfolio projects would have grown this score and assessment of learning goal 1.

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. **2.4**

There was evidence of the tensions between theory and practice in student reflection over their academic experience. Students really like the many hands-on experiences they have in the major. They want more experiential learning and less of the theory driven focus. Both are necessary for a well-prepared major. It was encouraging to read example by students where the theories learned in an argument, gender, or ethics course, for example; helped the student in the construction of a message or assignment. Students did see the relationship between the two areas but were not equally enthusiastic about the importance of the theory driven course. They did understand the value of some of the specific course areas and core competencies in the major and their contribution to their professional preparation. Greater emphasis and explanation of the theory-practice process is worth reinforcing in both the core and specialty courses.

3. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in relevant communication contexts. **2.5**

The strategic value and role of communication was discussed by students and they described themselves as better prepared to evaluate and create successful messages in a variety of contexts. Some commented on their improved writing and editing skills, video editing and production experience, or their internship experiences as proof of their ability to choose and to carry out a communication task. The overall assessment of this learning goal would be higher if student's could comment more extensively on specific projects and choices they have made as communicators.

Overall, the assessment of the capstone projects showed that students had internalized the learning goals of the department and could articulate that major experience through the reflection assignment and during oral exit interviews. The level of performance in these areas could be higher and may be improved through a combination of assignment development and curricular reform/emphasis by the Communication Department faculty. A new document explaining the capstone reflection assignment and its components will be developed for the Fall 2011 capstone course and these changes should improve our assessment of the program. Communication faculty will also meet in the Fall and Spring semesters to review and develop techniques for strengthening the meeting of the department's learning goals in the major.

Students also were required to work with the Career Center on resumes and to interview professionals about their experiences and recommendations. The resumes have been improving but need additional work and effort. According to Pam Folger, Director of the Career Center: "The quality of the resumes vary much like the students. Some are very interested in having the best possible resume, but some never follow through on our advice. But, that said, overall Communication majors have some of the best resumes on campus because they are more likely to use our office regularly, and faculty work so closely with them as well. A good number of them are very career-minded and do a good job of planning ahead for a career after graduation."

The networking interviews were in some cases exceptional, but overall, this assignment also needed more detail and follow through by students. The assignment needed to be done earlier and tied into the reflection assignment more fully. An earlier deadline for this portion of the portfolio might insure that it is integrated into the final project.

Internship Evaluations: The departmental requirement for student internships has been a successful one. Approximately 43 internships were completed in 2010-2011. 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 this success include: Jennifer Hood was able to intern very autonomously for Red Carpet Productions promoting a music artist. Red Carpet Productions is owned and operated by Jody Cox, Millikin '06. Internship supervisor comments were extremely positive. Jonathan Sao was referred to as "the best intern they have ever had." Many students commented the internships helped them gain valuable real-life work experience. Michelle Patrick's internship led to a part-time job where she was given greater responsibility including the launch for Love Gear at Petco. They also indicated that internships allowed them to make decisions about paths to follow after graduation. WAND suggested in their comments that we offer more TV production classes. Most supervisor comments felt that the Communication Department prepares interns well for an internship experience. Several interns had unique experiences. Alex Baird created photos and promotions for local bands. Courtney Bromrosz was able to intern in a library and is now pursuing a Master's degree in library science. Kayla Vogel's internship at ADM led to a full-time position after graduation. Katrina Marmor was able to work on several events for Macon Resources including Woofstock. Jeffone Smith was able to experience the planning side of weddings.

The Department continues to have an internship advisor who has been instrumental at getting students meaningful and interesting learning positions. 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: The department reviewed its curriculum and made changes in the Fall of 2006. For 2010-2011, the numbers of majors participating in the advanced courses necessary for the tracks are up. For example, CO 343 Conflict, CO 351 Writing for Communication Professions, CO 425 Media Law and Policy, CO 456 Applications in Public Relations, show growing or higher enrollments than before the new changes. Media production courses are also up but uneven. The video area is taught by an adjunct that makes it difficult to build up a demand for advanced course work. The adjunct position has also turned over frequently,

making the task of building an audience for the course more difficult. A new course, CO 342 Applications in Organizational Communication, was added to the curriculum in 2009. It was piloted as CO 360 in Spring 2009 with 23 students and in Spring 2010 with 21. It will also be added to the analysis next year with continued assessment of Organizational Communication majors taking the advanced course a part of their requirements. This course did not exist prior to the development of the course tracks. The faculty member for the course was on a junior sabbatical in Spring 2011. It will be picked back up in Spring 2012.

<b>Course</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>
CO 314 Advanced Audio Production	Cancelled low enrollment	7	19, 15	21	11	Not taught
CO 324 Advanced Video Production	8	10	13	14	10	6
CO 343 Conflict	4 Immersion	7	17	15, 8	15, 15	24 Immersions
CO 344 Leadership	Not taught	Cancelled low enrollment	16	Not taught	Not taught	23
CO 351 Writing for Communication Professions	16, CO 360 equivalent	Not taught	19, 16	15, 14	20	25,20,22
CO 425 Media Law and Policy	14	Not taught, every other year	14, will need to be taught annually	20	17	17
CO 456 Applications in Public Relations	19	11	20	20	26	24

This year the CO 200 Public Speaking and CO 242 Business and Professional Communication courses along with the Capstone course CO 480 received the focus of our individual course assessments. The oral communication requirement was due for its first evaluation now that it is established in the general education curriculum. Our individual course assessment plan includes core courses and radio courses for 2011-2012. We will be assessing the CO 204 Investigative Methods in Communication course, a required course for all majors. We will also evaluate the CO 110 Introduction to the Radio Industry course and the CO 220 Introduction to Video Production courses, these serve as the entry courses into the media track for the major.

Based on student interview recommendations, our review of student strengths and weaknesses, along with our analysis of our incoming student pool for the major, we have added a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) option to our major. We hope this will be useful for students interested in graduate school, a more quantitative Social Science approach to the major, and to transfer students from other B.S. anchored programs in and outside of Millikin University to complete a Communication degree in a timely manner. A number of students have already signed up for this option and it should help a select few improve upon their experience here.

Student Scholarship: In the Spring of 2011, the department had student majors deliver presentations at the Celebrations of Scholarship research day on campus. Students from the radio station partnered with an IN 140 University Seminar course to present a panel on their

use of the station to produce environmental messages for children and adult audiences. This collaboration was a success and demonstrated another external experience that WJMU provides that has a practical element yet ties into curriculum for the University. An additional collaborative effort was also presented by the CO 456 Applications in Public Relations course. This class partnered with the Blue Connection on a grand opening project for the new Blue Connection location at the Cancer Care Clinic. This also demonstrated the theory-practice quality of the public relations track for students in the major. Students in our Gender course also presented research. Four students from the Classical Rhetoric course also presented posters about their research papers. Additionally, Communication majors made Long-Vandenberg presentations, Senior JMS presentations, and participated in presentation in other departments. The overall participation by majors is slowly growing and the variety of elements of our major being highlighted is also expanding.

Assessment of Student Success: Majors in communication have also been recognized for their success by other measures that demonstrate a growing level of quality in the major. Some examples of student excellence:

- Eight of the 24 students graduating in May of 2011 did so with academic honors including 2 summa cum laude, 4 magna cum laude, and 2 cum laude. This is the same number and a similar distribution of students graduating with honors in May of 2010. Eight of the 39 students graduating in May of 2010 did so with academic honors including 3 summa cum laude, 4 magna cum laude, and 1 cum laude. This is in comparison to the May 2008 graduates, where 6 finished with academic honors including 1 summa cum laude, 3 magna cum laude, and 2 cum laude. In 2011 the department also had 6 students graduate with double majors in the following areas: Spanish, English, Political Science, and Theatre. The double major as well as a minor is becoming a popular option for students in a number of other programs. In comparison, only two students graduated in 2009 with double majors one in Theatre and the other in English. Double majors are challenging programs of learning for students. The department also had an increase in students graduating in December. In 2010 there were 8 December graduates in comparison to 2 for the 2009 December group.

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. 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 accomplished.

### **Improvement Plan for the Department of Communication**

The 2011-2012 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, three years ago, threatens to limit our ability to grow and develop that portion of the major. This is an area where adjunct faculty is not recommended and finding qualified faculty with a master's degree for part-time work is proving nearly impossible. Current budget and enrollment failures threaten our ability to fill this needed area of the major. At the

very time when this program has grown and found success, the loss of faculty is a step backwards. With only 4 full-time faculty and more than 110 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.

For example, in the past four semesters, the video production course has been taught by three different adjunct instructors. Additional offerings in media production and theory courses have been limited and put off due to the absence of qualified faculty. The media area along with the Sport Communication track, which also has a media focus, are not being adequately covered. The lack of stability and the benefits in advising and mentoring of a full-time faculty member are not being realized. Other majors in this University are not so poorly staffed and supported.

Overall, less than one-half of the courses delivered by the department are being taught by full-time faculty. In Fall 2010, 41% of the teaching was completed with full-time faculty. In the Spring 2011, 39% of the teaching was completed with full-time faculty. And 100% of the oral communication requirement is being covered by adjunct faculty. No other general education requirement in this University is so dependent on adjunct faculty teaching than this one.

The University succeeds when both admissions and graduation numbers (retention) are sufficient. At the May graduation ceremony, there were 24 Communication majors receiving degrees, 15 Nursing majors, and 25 B.A. degrees for the rest of Arts & Sciences, including English, History, Philosophy, Mathematics, Human Services, Spanish, Political Science, Social Science Education, and English Education. With only four full-time faculty members, the Communication department graduates more students than departments or units of the College of Arts & Sciences that are four or more times larger in faculty support. There are many ways to measure productivity of departmental units, but any measurement would suggest this department has proven the need for more staffing. Without it, new limits must be placed on the number of majors and students in the program.

- 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. 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 learning is difficult to accomplish when the department's resources include only 2 cameras for a 15-student 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.

- Primary goals for the department with regards to assessment and student learning for 2011-12 include:
  - Expand and enhance oral communication course assessment and continue to evaluate the effective meeting of its learning goals.
  - Evaluate current departmental curriculum to assess it from a market-smart, mission-driven perspective. Use student feedback and evaluations to evaluate course content and current requirements. Explore areas recommended by student feedback and current assessment data, including: technology coverage; additional or revised upper level track courses; activities, organizations and programming for majors beyond the classroom; and a GPA requirement for the major and/or upper-level track courses in major.
  - Continue the process of course assessments on a multi-year plan.
  - Begin process of external evaluation of student learning in the major through alumni and internship supervisor feedback.

The 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.