

Millikin University
Student Learning in the Communication Major

By

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Executive Summary

The Communication Department 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 has also been added. Approximately one-half 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 departmental offerings with non-major courses in the Tabor Business School, the English Department, and other majors 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.

Students who graduate from Millikin University with a degree in Communication find success in a wide variety of professional contexts. Our students enter careers in human services, media, sales, counseling, training and development, public relations, business, publishing, radio and television broadcasting, graduate and law school, and many other areas. A strength of the communication major is its value to many different employers and businesses.

Highlights from this academic year as a department include:

- Two national awards for a student radio production created in a partnership with the Decatur School District's Pershing Early Learning Center on Saturday mornings. "The Playground," a weekly children's program placed first in the "Best Feature" category at the College Broadcaster's Inc. (CBI) National Student Media Conference in Austin Texas in Fall of 2009. The program beat finalist entries from Columbia College and Ithaca College to receive first place. Later, in Spring of 2010, the program received a third-place Broadcast Education Association (BEA) award at the 2010 BEA Festival of Media Arts in Las Vegas, Nev. This is the third national award that the radio station has received in recent years.
- Student video productions were created for the Center for Entrepreneurship, Department of Communication, and the National Bird Feeding Society.
- Students participated in the annual Celebration of Scholarship with programs highlighting student media productions and creative course projects for the new Sports Communication course.
- Continued growth in the number of majors and a record number of majors as a percentage of the graduating class for 2010.

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 community, 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 onto careers in the 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 campaign, 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 2009-2010 consisted of 4 full-time faculty and 7 adjuncts that helped deliver 55 classes per year. We ended the Spring of 2010 with

approximately 141 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 140 University Seminar for freshmen, IN 250 U.S. Studies, the IN 206 for the Honors Program, 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 4th 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 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 21 sections of the oral communication course in 2009-2010. We are monitoring the demand levels to see if it is necessary to expand on the number of courses being offered.

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 2009-2010 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, 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. We possess traditions, where necessary interdisciplinary ties, in every one of these areas.

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 specifically 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
- 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.

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

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 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 Society		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 to red on the Red-Yellow-Green scale being used to evaluate assessment efforts. We believe we have a strong grasp of our program's strengths and weaknesses. Our assessment resources and experience, however, are extremely limited. Current assessments are based on anecdotal and trend information that identifies a department with strong student support and many positive points of evaluation. Most negative assessments by students of the program are beyond departmental control and reflect resources limitations imposed on the department by the University. There are no specific resources available to the department for assessment purposes. No member of the department has training or release to perform assessment responsibilities. The oral communication requirement for general education is largely adjunct taught and is still early in development. 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. Opportunities for assessment is too limited. Results of current assessment efforts include:

Student Exit Interviews: The chair of the department conducted interviews with 45 of 51 students enrolled in the capstone course and planning to graduate from the department in December 2009, May 2010, or anticipating graduation in December 2010. 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 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. All 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 serves, study abroad, graduate school, and with other academic and personal challenges. This success has been possible despite many communication faculty advising as many as 30 or more advisees each year.
- 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. Students in the major usually have at the minimum three of our faculty in their 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. In particular, more course work in media production areas and advanced public relations topics. Media production is limited by adjunct reliance in video production and therefore prevents access to independent projects and studies from being developed. 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.
- 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, was not very active this year. The leadership has upped their involvement level this past Spring, and we hope to see it grow next year. 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 traditional participated effectively in student organizations and have held positions of leadership in many of them.

- Many soon-to-be graduates were still up in the air about their next step and had not made detailed plans for their immediate future. Informally, more were more actively considering graduate school as a bridge to their job search and thinking about more short term jobs until better opportunities opened up. Part of this is due to the economic crisis at hand.

Senior Year Capstone Portfolio: 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.

- In review of the portfolios, the reflection pieces were some of the most useful documents and showed some real effort to tie together their experiences in the major and at the University. The compilation of papers and projects was less satisfactory and meaningful. Insufficient review of past work occurred and students did not seem to process the past work into a more meaningful evaluation.

- Student resume's and application materials were better than the past year. Students were required to use the services of the Career Center for feedback. Students also used the networking assignment to help interview professionals and to learn for other's experiences. Resumes were clearer and more specifically directed toward student career aspirations. Students also are improving in their capacity to explain and to even demonstrate their capacity to contribute to a work environment.

Internship Evaluations: The departmental requirement for student internships has been a successful one. Approximately 70 internships were completed in 2009-2010. Students have completed internship experiences in Decatur, other major cities, and even abroad. Students have completed multiple internships to help prepare themselves. Student success in acquiring internships in other major cities and during the London Semester have provided them with vital work experience and networking opportunities. The Department continues to have an internship advisor who has been instrumental at getting students meaningful and interesting learning positions.

Curriculum Evaluation: The department reviewed its curriculum and made changes in the Fall of 2006. The new curriculum structure must be evaluated as it matures and the changes are expected to improve the department in a variety of ways in recruitment, advising, and graduation requirements. It is too early to assess the tracks and our curricular structure in detail at this point. For 2009-2010, the numbers of majors participating in some of 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 adjunct that makes it difficult to build up a demand for advanced course work.

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

Student Scholarship: In the Spring of 2010, the department had student majors deliver presentations at the Celebrations of Scholarship research day on campus. An applied sport communication panel featuring majors discussed the creation and development of a basketball league. Student Jeff Bruninga gave two presentation over his independent video projects. Communication majors made Long-Vandenberg presentations. Majors also presented for other departments and courses including Traugher in behavioral sciences.

Well attended and engaging, student projects and research were effectively presented and demonstrate another goal of the Communication Department, to more actively engage others with student projects that go beyond the classroom assignment. Departmental participation has grown in this area and will continue to be encouraged.

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

- Eight of the 24 students graduating in May of 2009 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 2009 the department also had two students graduate with double majors one in Theatre and the other in English. Double majors are challenging programs of learning for students. An additional 10 students graduated in December of 2008.

- During the April 2009 Honors Convocation Awards ceremony, communication majors were well represented. Six communication majors shared recognition for the Dr. Everett J. Brown and Dr. and Mrs. W.J. Darby Prizes traditional given to communication majors. In addition, our students were recognized outside of the department. Brynn E. Traugher received the Henry F. Gromoll Service Award in

behavior sciences. Michelle R. Bester received the Helen Moffett Russell Community Service Award. Alex H. Berry received the first Jan Devore Award for Excellence in Contributions to Campus Life. Alex also completed his service as Student Body President. Allison A. Lackey was recognized with a Dr. J. Roger Miller Leadership Award. She served as the elected student representative to the Board of Trustees for 2008-2009. To have the top two student leadership positions held by communication majors is an important accomplishment.

- The radio station was recognized at the 2009 Broadcast Education Association convention with First Place recognition in the Comedy or Drama Category for their 70th Anniversary remake of *The War of the Worlds*. They have also begun a new children's radio show, *The Playground*, at 10:00 am on Saturday mornings. This show is being produced in a partnership with the Decatur School District's Pershing Early Learning Center.
- Student-produced video projects were completed for multiple external clients. The Good Samaritan Inn, the School of Education, and the Center for Entrepreneurship, all benefited from student video projects that took theory and practice in communication into the community for projects that served to support fundraising, accreditation, and recruitment. A student-produced coach's show for the football program was also piloted as a way to begin developing sport communication options.

Assessment Summary: The current level of departmental assessment is considered to be yellow as a performance indicator. We are slowly expanding our assessments but must make more systematic evaluation of student learning in specific course areas and improve reporting of that data. As the track system matures, we hope to develop assessment reports for students by track area. 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 2009-2010 academic year promised new challenges, dangers, and opportunities for the Department of Communication. A summary of concerns and goals include:

- Adequate staffing for the department is in danger. The loss of our media production faculty member, Todd Hauser, 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 endanger our ability to fill this needed area of the major. At the very time when this program has grown and found its greatest success, the loss of faculty is a step backwards. With only 4 full-time faculty with more than 120 majors and general education commitments, our department is too small to provide the level of

curriculum necessary to meet the need. The major continues to grow and deserves resources commensurate with its contribution to enrollments and graduation rates.

- Proper development of the new public speaking requirement is also limited due to resource restrictions. Instruction for the public speaking courses will need to be almost entirely limited to adjunct instructors for the near term. 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.
- Assessment goals for the department include developing tools for assessment of track programs, a plan for individual course assessments, and public speaking assessments. We also would like to begin tracking and gathering information from recent graduates about the strengths and weaknesses of our new curriculum and to gather additional data on professional expectations and trends students are facing. This data will be reported on, with the red-yellow-green light scale, to the department faculty, the Dean of Arts & Sciences, and the University Assessment coordinator.