

**PROGRAM REVIEW**  
**B.A. in COMMUNICATION**  
**November 2010**

**Assessment Plan:** The assessment plan for the B.A. in Communication is available on the Provost's website.

**Assessment Information Collected:** As indicated in the assessment plan, the Department continues to collect data on student performance in the form of final papers in the entry level Comm 180, Introduction to Human Communication, and in the senior level Comm 482, Capstone Seminar in Communication. We also continue to collect video recordings of student oral presentations in these two courses. These data are examined each May in a meeting of the entire faculty using a two stage process. The first stage involves studying the pre-post data for each student who graduated during the academic year, with each faculty member contributing his/her evaluation of the data at hand, together with insights as advisor and/or instructor over the time span of the individual's progress through the Program. The focus of this discussion is the individual's attainment of the intended outcomes/objectives of the Program. The second stage involves reviewing this entire set of individual student assessments for patterns indicative of strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and in instruction, apart from individual student achievements. Again, the focus is on the intended outcomes/objectives. In addition to this process of direct assessment of student learning, we have recently implemented an annual, computer based survey distributed to all majors with regard to overall perceptions of learning and instruction in the required courses, of advising and educational support, and of demand for selected courses in the major. These data have improved our awareness of student needs and directly benefited our planning.

**Summary of Student Learning Outcomes, and of Programmatic Revisions, for the Previous Three Years:** Over the past three years, the faculty consistently have found evidence that majors achieve the intended outcomes of the B.A. Program, the primary source of variation in achievement being the individual student's level of engagement in his/her own studies. With regard to *Objective One*, the requirements for presentations in courses across the Program push students to improve in their ability to speak in public situations to a level well beyond that demanded in Comm 131X or 141X. Students consistently demonstrate their understanding of the ontological and epistemological grounds of social and human science research (*Objective Two*) in the required upper division theory and research courses, these courses having special value in helping students obtain both productive employment related to the discipline, and admission to graduate study (10% of graduates since 2007 have entered Master's programs). Upper division coursework in the program continues to provide students with an understanding of and the ability to apply their knowledge of the central place of communication in the full range of contexts of human interaction from forming self-identity, through leading groups, to productive involvement in organizations and in society (*Objective Three*). Having long recognized the need to enhance this objective by introducing an internship course, we recruited a new faculty member with the required expertise and introduced such a course in fall 2009. We already find evidence both of our students' abilities to apply their knowledge productively, and of the special benefit to them of the opportunity to do so in a structured setting outside the

classroom. Interest in recruiting interns continues to be expressed by organizations in the local community.

*Objective Four* regards providing majors with knowledge and the ability to address the challenges in human communication presented by gender and other patterns of diversity. This objective is addressed in two required courses in the major, and is addressed across the curriculum, as well, because of its importance in twenty-first century society. As indicated in our 2007 Program Review, we have moved to enhance our attention to cultural diversity in all courses, and in spring 2011 we will offer a new upper division course, Comm 380, Communication and Diversity. Student attainment of this objective is clearly evident in class discussion and in papers, and in positive student survey responses. Finally, over the past two years we have drawn on the expertise of a new faculty member to reinstitute a regular offering of Comm 300X, Communicating Ethics, on the UAF campus, in support of *Objective Five*, i.e., understanding and applying knowledge of the ethical dimensions of communication. The 2007 Program Review had noted a weakness in this area because College-level restrictions on hiring adjunct teaching support had forced us to depend entirely on an off-campus, distance delivered version of this course.

Four other key aspects of student learning in the B.A. Program deserve mention. *First*, the Capstone Seminar (Comm 482) requires each student to carry out an independent empirical research project from initiation through formal presentation of results. The faculty recognized the value of and implemented this opportunity for undergraduate research in 2000, and both we, and students, continue to find the course to be an essential integrative experience. It remains our key indicator of student learning in the Program. In spring 2010, three student papers were accepted for presentation at the meeting of the Western States Communication Association. There are no plans to change this aspect of the curriculum. *Second*, careful study of student performance in the other key course in our overall assessment plan, Introduction to Human Communication (Comm 180), has resulted in shifting the course away from the former emphasis on abstract theory and toward a focus on the interrelationships of communication and the formation of self, relationships, groups, organizations, etc., or in other words, to a clearer focus on Objective Three. An additional change involved adding a group project that introduces students to the process of empirical research in the discipline. Our assessment that these changes have been highly positive is strongly supported by the student survey results. *Third*, our student learning outcomes assessment continues to identify weaknesses in student writing, which is a key skill we seek to enhance across the B.A. Program. We are determined not to lower our standards. Because we find that part of the problem is the skill level of students entering the Program, we will henceforth advise students to take Engl 213, Academic Writing about the Social and Natural Sciences, rather than Engl 211, Writing about Literature, as a Core course, and will urge them to take Engl 314, Technical Writing, as part of their B.A. degree. *Finally*, we have devoted considerable effort over the past three years to improving undergraduate advising, including better tracking of advisees and much improved electronic communication with majors and minors on all aspects of advising and relevant Program information. During spring 2011 a graduate student team directed by a faculty member will conduct a full-fledged assessment of the advising/curricular needs of our majors and minors, as the basis for faculty consideration of programmatic changes in addressing those needs.