

**Department of Communication
Assessment of COMMBA Report
2018**

The undergraduate curriculum in communication is in a transitional period. Over the past three years, the department has been looking closely at its curricula. In 2015 (when we created the new administration position of Undergraduate Director) we began tracking our departmental undergraduate enrollment as well as university student enrollment in communication core classes. We focused particular attention on our graduation rate. We discovered that Communication is by far the fastest growing department in the college, posting 66% growth in majors since 2011 (our duplicated major growth shows a 75% increase in the same period.) Because increasing our graduation rate was our priority, we developed predictive models that would allow us to forecast future enrollment needs to serve our majors. Our predictive models indicated that we should adjust our enrollment caps, especially in our senior writing requirement courses, and place freshman into introductory communication courses to allow them to make early progress toward graduation. These changes resulted in an increased graduation rate from 57% to 75% in two years.

The next stage of our process was to rethink departmental learning objectives, updating them and bringing them in line with the university objectives. We accomplished that task in 2016 and, with those in mind, began revising the undergraduate curriculum in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 to bring them in line with our renovated objectives and to continue our focus on graduation rates. We met to map our curriculum in Fall 2017 and approved our plan in Spring 2018. Having completed a similar process for our graduate program, the faculty felt confident we can complete this in one year, although those changes will obviously need to move through the catalog approval process. Once those changes are in place, we will begin assessing our new curriculum.

Our initial changes to the department’s B.A. program and its curriculum have met with success. Adjusting our enrollment caps, especially in senior writing requirement courses, and our attention to freshman introductory communication courses allowed students to enter the major sooner and make earlier progress toward graduation. We believe these changes resulted in an increased graduation rate from 57% to 75% in two years. We will continue these processes in accordance with predictive models that forecast our future enrollment cap needs.

We have instituted a Direct Assessment Exit Survey. We have pilot tested this in spring 2018 with a brief series of questions sent to all graduating seniors in the department. While limited in scope with a response rate only slightly above 50%, these results indicate that students approve of our older curriculum model. We hope the new renovation will incite even more enthusiasm from our graduating undergraduates.

2018 Department Exit Survey

Question	Mean Response
Quality of teaching in the department is excellent	4.13*
Faculty members in the department are supportive	4.36
Faculty members are committed to academic excellence.	4.5
Faculty members are available for consultation.	4.59
Faculty members are concerned about my success.	4.41
The Department offers an appropriate variety of courses	4.41
Staff in the Department of helpful.	4.10
I am very satisfied with my educational experience in the Department.	4.60

* Response Scale—5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strong Disagree

Additionally, we have implemented a new Undergraduate Program Committee review process to evaluate new classes before they enter the catalog. This process is detailed in part VI. Curriculum (below). Briefly, the process asks faculty to teach a proposed course first as a COMM 3983: Special Topics class and then submit the course to the committee, which then reviews the syllabus, making suggestions that bring it in line with other courses at the proposed

level. By involving the Undergraduate Committee in the development, application and review of new catalog classes, we hope to better assess whether the seven core learning objectives are reflected throughout the curriculum. Several classes have begun this process, but none have completed the full cycle of this assessment process and been entered in the catalog. We will continue to adjust our processes based on the initial course assessments.

The department also uses the Senior Writing Requirement as a form of assessment. The Requirement for Communication majors includes the following conditions: 1) Students must write their paper in an upper-level COMM course, 2) the course must be numbered 3000 or above, 3) the paper must be researched from materials outside the required course readings, 4) the paper should be ten pages or more and 5) the paper must score a “C” or higher. The department has designated upper-level, small-enrollment courses (those with an enrollment cap of 35 students or less) for this requirement and requested that faculty either assign a paper that meets the department’s conditions or make such a paper an optional assignment. At the completion of each semester, course instructors submit a list of students who fulfilled the requirement in their courses to the Undergraduate Director.