Department: Communication

Assessment Coordinator: Anna Eblen/Michael Karlberg

Departmental Mission: In support of the mission of Western Washington University and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, we teach communication studies that nurture inclusive civil discourse, critical thinking, and cooperative solutions in a diverse global community. We offer opportunities to develop strong communication skills within a challenging liberal arts program.

Department Student Learning Outcomes: Upon graduation, (Department or Program) majors will be able to:

1. Speech: Students are able to speak proficiently in context
2. Writing: Students are able to write proficiently at college level
3. Concepts: Students are able to apply communication concepts
4. Methodology: Students are able to understand methods for generating knowledge
5. Critical Thinking: Students are able to employ critical thinking skills
6. Team Work: Students are able to work cooperatively in small groups
7. Ethics: Students are able to reflect on the ethical dimensions of actions

GUR (liberal arts & sciences) Learning Outcomes

8. __________
9. __________
Communication (cont.)

Student Learning Outcomes (Departmental and GUR) Assessed This Year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Measures</th>
<th>SLOs Assessed</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tr>
<td>After we re-envisioned and added one credit to our 498 capstone course, we piloted a senior exit portfolio in the course this academic year.</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>In fall and winter faculty meetings, Comm 498 faculty gave several short reports about their pilot study of speaking and writing requirements for exit portfolios. In our annual spring quarter assessment meeting we discussed an overview of speaking and writing in the exit portfolio.</td>
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<td>OSR Senior exit survey</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>Chair continued monitoring exit survey of Comm students’ “importance of” and “satisfaction with Western’s contribution to” their writing skills. 21 respondents rated those measures 4.5 and 4.0 respectively. Their satisfaction had fallen compared to last year’s sample and compared to the CHSS overall. This year I also monitored oral communication skills, and the 21 respondents rated 4.8 for importance of the skills, and 4.6 for their satisfaction with Western’s contribution to their skills development. This is the highest in the college, compared to 4.4 for both CHSS and WWU responses to “importance.” 4.0 was the average for CHSS and 4.1 was the average for WWU in responses to “WWU contributions to skill development.”</td>
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<td>Examination of program completion and bottleneck data to minimize scheduling conflicts and provide better course planning (sequencing and access)</td>
<td>All SLOs</td>
<td>We have been concerned about when students should be able to declare the Communication major so that they receive timely instruction in our student learning objectives. Last year, we debated the number of credits students should have before they submit their portfolio application to the major. Our major required that students complete 90 credits before declaration. We wanted to facilitate student learning, involvement, and access to the major courses at the appropriate level of their academic career. We agreed that students did not benefit by waiting.</td>
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Communication (cont.)

Changes based on assessment findings:

- We will soon add an exit portfolio requirement to the major. Planning is underway through a pilot study in Comm 498, Student Learning Objectives 1 & 2, and discussion of steps to manage this undertaking.
- For Student Learning Outcome 1, speaking skills, we expect to have a requirement that the exit portfolios include a digital recording of speeches. Soon we will propose a change in the major to require students to maintain digital copies of their speeches for their exit portfolios. In the meantime, we have agreed to have course syllabi require that students maintain digital copies of their speeches.
- For Student learning outcome 2, writing skills, we believe that writing proficiency courses taken in other disciplines are not enough to promote the general and discipline-specific writing skills that our students desire and need. Therefore, we plan to propose a change in the major to require that 3 WP points are taken in the Communication Department. Currently only 1 WP point is required in the department before students take a Comm 498 (also WP1).
- We are exploring ways to make our exit portfolio a digital portfolio.
- We are developing new rating tools for these portfolios.
- Regarding the optimal time for declaration of the major, we decided to change the number of credits students must have completed before submitting their declaration portfolio. We sent this request to change the major Fall quarter, 2011, and it was approved. Now students may apply to become Communication majors by submitting their portfolios when they have completed 60 credits.