

Communication Studies

Data-Based Decisions

2021 Report on Changes and Decisions within the Communication Studies Program over the Past Three Years.

There have been many changes over the last four years. Below is a list of some of the most significant that input for our assessment process has influenced.

1. Based on repeated feedback from our annual alumni survey and a special survey we sent out to students who had expressed an interest in graduate work, we decided it was wise to pursue a Master's program in Communication Studies. That has become official now. It is a two year program and our first cohort of six students should be graduating this year (2021). Based on the feedback we received, we are keeping our cohorts in the 5-7 student range. Also, one of the areas our assessment process has indicated is a strength is in facilitating change in a variety of settings and we have used the theme of facilitating change as an underlying foundation for the new program.
2. The feedback generated in our assessments has been consistently positive and helps to explain why the communication program has consistently had over the last five years the most students on upper-division waitlists of any program in the whole university. We have used this feedback to help argue for additional lines and support. Thus in the last three years we have been able to make a number of new hires in targeted areas, including Sydney O'Shay Wallace (Health Communication), Mollie Murphy (Environmental Communication and Gender Studies), Nicole Allen (Culture / Rhetoric and Communication), Sidi Meyara (International/Intercultural Communication), Kaitlin Phillips (Interpersonal / Family Communication).
3. In part due to the positive feedback we have received on our assessments and in part based on feedback that highlighted areas of potential growth, we have recently (within the last year) completely redesigned our undergraduate major. We added a diversity requirement that also responds to needs in society in general. We created a discovery requirement that gets our students more heavily involved in research (an area on assessment that was strong, but not as strong as our other areas) and helps them to understand how they could use this information in a variety of careers. We have used the themes of "Connect/Collaborate" and "Challenge/Change" to build on areas of current strength. We also designed ten possible areas of emphasis (identifying the corresponding classes for each emphasis area), including areas like Advocacy & Social Justice, Conflict Management, Leadership, Human Relationships, and Organizational Communication. These areas of emphasis are designed to help students give greater focus to their studies and to better map out their future after graduating.

Staying in touch with the needs of our students through our assessment process, capstone class, and our alumni surveys is an important part of decision-making for the program.