

**Utah System of Higher
Education Follow-up
Reports
Cover/Signature Page - Abbreviated
Template**

Institution Submitting Report: Utah State University

Program Title: Master of Communication Studies

Sponsoring School, College, or Division: College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Sponsoring Academic Department(s) or Unit(s): Communication Studies and Philosophy

	Original	New (if applicable)
Classification of Instructional Program Code¹ :	09.0100	n/a

**Board of Regents' Original Approval Date for
program: May 22, 2018**

**Institutional Board of Trustees' Approval Date for *this*
report:**

Award Type: MS

Program First Offered: MS Communication Studies

Report Type:

Chief Academic Officer (or Designee) Signature:

I, the Chief Academic Officer or Designee, certify that all required institutional approvals have been obtained prior to submitting this request to the Office of the Commissioner.

Please type your first and last name Date:

I understand that checking this box constitutes my legal signature.

¹ For CIP code classifications, please see <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/Default.aspx?y=55>.

Follow-up Report - Abbreviated

Template Section I: The

Request

null submits a for the following K-12 School Personnel Program degree: null. This program was originally approved by the Board of Regents on and the first students were able to declare or be admitted to the program in null null.

Section II: Program Report

Program Description

Present a brief program description. Indicate why the program was initiated. State how the institution and the USHE have benefited by offering the program.

Description

The Masters' degree in Communication Studies is a face-to-face program focused on understanding how communication in human interaction can build relationships that enact positive interpersonal, organizational, and social change. Graduates of this program are applying their skills and disseminating their knowledge in ways that enable greater collaboration and cooperation in a variety of contexts.

The Master's degree in Communication Studies has a two-fold purpose. First, the degree enhances students' personal career objectives by preparing them to advance in careers that highly value communication skills in managing conflict, building cooperative relationships and teams, and facilitating positive change. This training is important as students either enter the workforce or begin a doctoral program. The analytical research skills and in-depth immersion into the dynamics of specific communication contexts help graduates better understand their own experiences, make purposeful choices in their interactions with others, and prepare them to improve the settings in which they work.

Second, the degree also trains students to impart the knowledge they gain to others. One of the key benefits of this program is that it is designed to instruct students to teach, train and write with the goal of sending out Master's students who can help improve others' relationships and work/community environments. Whether the new graduates share their knowledge through continuing to research and teach in this area or by working in their local communities and organizations to train and inform others, the goal of learning how to effectively communicate knowledge to others is one of the primary purposes of this program.

Learning Outcomes:

- • Students are able to assess and research interpersonal, organizational, and societal situations from many points of view.
- • Students are able to facilitate new and dynamic perspectives for others through work that translates research findings in communication studies into practical knowledge and skills.
- • Students are able to create new communication strategies, messages, interventions, and/or training programs to facilitate positive change.

Why the Program was Initiated

The decision to propose a Master's program in Communication Studies was a collaborative process involving faculty, students, and many administrative levels. Communication skills are noted in every list of top skills employers are looking for from college graduates. However, the need for communication skills and competence goes well beyond the workplace. In every community and in every relationship communication is at the heart of whether or not people are able to accomplish their goals. Undergraduates in communication studies also recognize the applicability of and great need for the development and practice of communication competence in today's society, especially for many of the most pressing and complex challenges in society.

This is one of the consistent themes in the exit interviews with students in the undergraduate Communication Studies program at USU. Many also express a desire to continue their studies in a Master's program here at Utah State University. This graduate program will allow us to continue to serve students' needs and the communities of Utah in ways that make a positive difference in the workplace, in families, and in a variety of other relationships. And as communication-focused masters programs at others institutions (e.g., Utah, Weber State, Southern Utah) have overwhelming demand and other state institutions do not have communication graduate studies (e.g., Dixie State, Utah Valley), this program will fill a need for students at other state institutions as well.

One of the biggest benefits of the proposed program is that it not only helps the students within the program to develop their knowledge and abilities in this area, but it teaches them how to effectively spread these skills and information to others, greatly expanding the impact of the program. Indeed, many of the students in the program will have the opportunity to be a graduate instructor. Given the large undergraduate demand for Communication Studies courses at USU, the graduate instructors will have excellent opportunities to teach. This will be a positive outcome for both the undergraduate and graduate students in the Communication Studies program.

Benefits to the Institution and USHE

The Master's program has several benefits. The program provides another communication-related graduate program within the state that complements the other programs in the USHE system and provides an increased capacity for developing advanced expertise in communication for the students seeking higher education in the state of Utah. This program has also increased the undergraduate teaching capacity of the Communication Studies program at USU, helping alleviate significant student demand and providing important teaching and professional development opportunities for the graduate students. Finally, the graduate students have provided synergy and support for existing faculty research programs, particularly for those faculty members seeking external research funding.

In addition, the Communication Studies graduate program has increased the visibility and positive reputation of Utah State University, a benefit to both the institution and USHE. Our graduates have been accepted to top-tier PhD programs in Communication Studies including Colorado State University, the University of Iowa, the University of Georgia, and the University of Maryland. Our students have also won awards at academic conferences (e.g., a Top Student Paper award at the National Communication Association and a Top Paper award at the Northwest Communication Association). Graduates who have not pursued PhDs are gainfully employed in positions such as: Lecturer at Utah Valley University, Debate Coach at Utah State University, and Custom Trainer at Lucid. The graduate program has also bolstered the undergraduate program, allowing Communication Studies to fill the needs of more undergraduate students than we were able to before the graduate program.

Enrollment and Revenue Data

See Appendix A: Program Participation and Finance

Institutional Analysis of Program to Date

Provide a statement that summarizes the institution's current analysis of the program's strengths and weaknesses relative to enrollments, staffing, and funding. Describe any actions the institution has taken or will take to respond to any issues with the program.

The programs key strengths are our graduate rate (100% to date) and graduate placement (see below). We have observed two key challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic (which affected students' physical and mental health) and recruitment. Our first round of applications was relatively small, and most applicants earned their undergraduates at Utah State. We have bolstered recruitment efforts by advertising the program at local, regional, and national conferences and by reaching out to faculty at other institutions with information about our program. We have already seen the benefits of these efforts: our most recent pool (for Fall 2022) included over 20 applicants, and we have had graduate students come to our program from institutions including Stephen F. Austin State University, Utah Valley University, and BYU Idaho.

Employment Information

Provide employment information on graduates of the program.

Appropriation			
Special Legislative Appropriation			
Grants and Contracts			
Special Fees			
Tuition			
Differential Tuition (requires Regents approval)			
Other:			
TOTAL FUNDING	\$0	\$0	