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July 1, 2009

The Communication Department at Millikin University is committed to providing a market-smart, challenging, and high quality major to students with a variety of professional and personal aspirations. We celebrate and inform our students about the wide variety of ways a major in communication can prepare them for a future life of meaning and value.

Communication is about the construction of meaning between people and their various audiences: friends, families, professional colleagues, communities, and more. The study of communication focuses on understanding the symbols and the processes that construct those meanings, whether the symbol is a word, a gesture, a song, a billboard, a website, or any other meaning-generating object in our world. We also examine the relationship of those symbols to the people who use them. We examine the pragmatic and ethical principles that guide people's communicative choices. We apply this learning to our personal and professional lives.

Students in the Communication major take 16-hours of foundation courses. These courses introduce students to the learning goals of the major through an introduction to theory, practice, ethics, and critical thinking skills. The core also includes a capstone internship experience and portfolio project designed to integrate these learning goals together in preparation for graduation. All majors are required to complete an internship experience that combines theory and practice in a professional environment.

All majors must complete a tool requirement consisting of an advanced writing course that is designed to build upon the freshmen writing experience. Students choose from courses in the English Department's writing program or from courses offered by the Communication Department in specific professional writing contexts such as writing for the media or speechwriting. Majors in public relations or mass media-journalism are also required to complete one additional writing course.

Students may also select communication elective courses chosen for their contribution to their personal and professional communication goals. In the Fall of 2007 the Department of Communication made professional tracks available to majors in the areas of public relations, mass media (production or journalism), and organizational communication. A fourth track in sport communication has also been added. Approximately one-half of our current and graduating students have added a track to their plan of study. These major tracks represent more in-depth study in an area of the major. They are now being identified and recognized in the graduation program for our majors. Some students will remain as a general major and select a more personalized set of courses reflecting their own communication objectives. Students are also encouraged to supplement departmental offerings with non-major courses in the Tabor Business School, the English Department, and other majors that can enhance their skills and knowledge with their unique disciplinary perspectives. All students are required to have an internship experience for professional development purposes.

Student skills and knowledge are assessed using a variety of techniques in the Department of Communication. Information is gathered through various sources and contexts: student exit interviews, internship evaluations, course evaluations, assignment evaluations, and the senior year capstone course and portfolio. Systematic acquisition and evaluation of this data is still ongoing and a learning process, but individuals in the department are using current information for curricular planning and programmatic improvements.

Students who graduate from Millikin University with a degree in Communication find success in a wide variety of professional contexts. Our students enter careers in human services, media, sales, counseling, training and development, public relations, business, publishing, radio and television broadcasting, graduate and law school, and many other areas. A strength of the communication major is its value to many different employers and businesses.

Highlights from this academic year as a department include:

- National recognition for a student radio production based on the original "War of the Worlds" broadcast by the Broadcast Education Association. Also, the debut of new children's programming created in a partnership with the Decatur School District's Pershing Early Learning Center on Saturday mornings, "The Playground."
- Student video productions for external clients including: capital campaign promotional video for the Good Samaritan Inn; accreditation video for the School of Education; and video promotional documentaries for the Center for Entrepreneurship. The creation of a weekly football coach's program.
- Participated in election year activities with the Department of Political Science including: shared media politics course and co-sponsorship of a Debate Watch program promoting public viewing and discussion of the presidential cam

3. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in communication contexts.

(University Seminar). Students are also required to take communication courses by the Tabor School of Business and for the secondary language arts degree requirements in the School of Education. Various faculty and programs often encourage students to take communication courses for enrichment or remedial purposes. In addition to courses in the major, Communication faculty have also taught IN 140 University Seminar for freshmen, IN 250 U.S. Studies, and in the PACE adult degree completion program by providing courses for the Organizational Leadership and Criminal Justice majors.

The Communication department currently occupies 5 offices on the 4th floor of Shilling Hall and shares a secretary with the Political Science department. In addition, the Communication Department has a video-editing lab in the basement of Staley Library and a radio broadcast facility in the basement of the Richards Treat University Center, including office space for a faculty member who also serves as general manager for the radio station. Equipment and software have been upgraded in the two facilities in the past three years including new automation hardware/software for the radio station in January 2009.

The Department of Communication in the Fall of 2006 completed a self-study of its current curriculum and successfully passed through University governance a new curriculum structure that went into effect in the Fall of 2007. After thorough review of existing classes and curriculum structure, three concentrations, or tracks, were created and adjustments were made in the curriculum in areas of writing and ethics. In the Spring of 2008, the department added a fourth track in sport communication to the major. These four tracks are the only formal tracks planned for the department in the near future.

In the Fall of 2007, the Millikin University faculty passed a new curricular structure

- Advising was highly praised by graduates from the major. Students felt that their departmental advisor, the department secretary, and Registrar's office were meeting their advising needs. Freshmen receive an advisor who follows them through their four years in the major. All faculty are prepared for and expected to assist students with advising issues during their time in the department. Students described the advising experience in our department much more favorably than other departments they had transferred from prior to becoming communication majors. This success has been possible despite many communication faculty advising as many as 30 or more advisees each year.
- Many students referenced at least one favorite faculty member and/or course in the department and recognized the collegiality and support Communication faculty

- Student-produced video projects were completed for multiple external clients. The Good Samaritan Inn, the School of Education, and the Center for Entrepreneurship, all benefited from student video projects that took theory and practice in communication into the community for projects that served to support fundraising, accreditation, and recruitment. A student-produced coach's show for the football program was also piloted as a way to begin developing sport communication options.

Assessment Summary: The current level of departmental assessment is considered to be yellow as a performance indicator. We are slowly expanding our assessments but must make more systematic evaluation of student learning in specific course areas and improve reporting of that data. As the track system matures, we hope to develop assessment reports for students by track area. Current data is very encouraging. The program has made some important and significant adjustments to its curriculum and goals. Student activity in the classroom and outside of courses indicates that the learning goals we have set for majors are being accomplished.

The 2009-2010 academic year promised new challenges, dangers, and opportunities for the Department of Communication. A summary of concerns and goals include:

This data will be reported on, with the red-yellow-green light scale, to the department faculty, the Dean of Arts & Sciences, and the University Assessment coordinator.