

# Communication

*Program Review, January 2026*



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WILLIAM WOODS  
UNIVERSITY

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# 2026 Program Review (2019-2023)

Communication (BS)

## Mission and Introduction

### Introduction

1. Provide an overview of the program and the context of where it's housed within the institution (what department, etc.).
2. Discuss any changes in the focus of the program over the cycle of this review.

### Narrative:

The Communication program at William Woods University provides a broad-based foundation in communication studies through the core classes, and offers concentrations targeted to specific industry sectors. The major supports general education on campus through twelve offerings that cover two Tier I requirements and all Tier II offerings. Specifically, our program prepares students for industry work, careers in higher education, and/or the nonprofit sector by emphasizing skills including: writing for multimedia; audience analysis & research; digital film, video, broadcasting; audio production; digital editing; academic writing & research; ethical decision-making; vast knowledge of news, sport, and film industries; knowledge and application of communication theory; among others.

There have been many changes to the focus of the program since our last review. The rationale for these changes is premised on the rapidly changing media and communication industry. One notable change is the addition/deletion of concentrations as described below. A second notable change is narrowing the scope of several classes, from intro level up to upper level. This change allows students to learn about the history of our discipline and field, while keeping careful focus on how that history continues to inform the convergence of media entities and industries

The Communication program is housed within the College of Art, Design, & Media that is part of the larger School of Arts & Sciences.

The concentrations during this review cycle were:

- Sports Communication
- Digital Filmmaking
- Media Journalism
- Strategic Communication (*previously Public Relations*)
- Leadership (*deleted*)

Due to low enrollment, and on the recommendation of the admissions team, new concentrations were added in AY 2425. The goal was to provide more flexibility for students and to allow for more direct recruiting and discussions of possible careers in the communication field. These new concentrations, referenced throughout this report.

- Digital Media
- Communication Studies
- Open Concentration

Currently, the program is still awaiting growth in the new concentrations.

### **Changes in the program over the course of this cycle**

Prior to 19-20, COM core classes totaled 18 credit hours; 21 concentration credit hours; 12 COM elective credit hours.

From 19-23, Core classes remained the same as did the total number of credit hours in the core. The total credit hours for the core during this time was 30 credit hours, with 10 classes at 3 credit hours per class. This change was due to declining enrollment in the program and the university as a whole. The goal was to create a direct path through the program, so students could move through as cohorts, maximizing enrollment in each course and ensuring the best experience for students. The courses selected to be added to the core all highlight introductory skills essential to the discipline.

The core of the program during this review period (19-23) included: (*\* new courses in the core*)

- COM 101 - Introduction to Speech Communication
- COM 110 - Beginning Media Writing\*
- COM 150 - Survey of Production Techniques
- COM 190 - Introduction to Mass Media
- COM 270 - Persuasion\*
- COM 231 - Commercial Video Production\*
- COM 320- Communication Theory
- COM 330 - Communication Law
- COM 337 - Interactive Web Communication\*
- COM 499 - Senior Seminar

### Renaming Certain Classes; Adding New Classes; Removing Classes; Adding/Removing/Renaming Concentrations

- COM 231 was renamed to Commercial Video Production. (19-20)
  - The changes to the name of this course, reflected a shift in the focus of the course which now highlights production skills better aligned the communication discipline.
- COM 150 was renamed to Visual Communication & Design (21-22).
  - This reflected changes in the scope of the course.
- COM 190 was renamed to Media & Mass Communication beginning in (21-22).
- COM 270: Persuasion-T was added as a new course in (20-21).
  - This was because COM 220: Logic & Persuasion was half logical reasoning and half the study of persuasion. It was decided that the program would benefit from entire class on the study of persuasion and that this would be a good GE class, as it is at other universities.
  - COM 270 was then renamed Persuasive Campaigns-T beginning in (21-22).
    - This was done to help students connect their coursework across the Communication curriculum.
  - The class has since been renamed back to Persuasion and is survey course.

- Because the class is a GE course and not all students need an entire class studying communication campaigns.
- COM 330 was renamed to Media Law and the First Amendment in 21-22.
  - In 22-23 it was renamed to Freedom of Expression. The class is not only about communication law, but rather, about more about the ways the First Amendment law communicates about freedom of expression in America.
- COM 223: Queer Theory was also added as a general education class (Cultures & Communities) and COM elective during this cycle.
- COM 301: Sports Activism was also added as a general education class (Cultures & Communities) and COM elective during this cycle.
- COM 434: Leadership Communication was removed from the curriculum
  - Due to its overlap with the BUS/LDR coursework
- The Public Relations concentration was renamed to Strategic Communication to match industry trends.
- COM 405: Strategic Communication was added, and then later deleted due to low enrollment in the course.

## **Program Mission Statement**

1. What changes has the program made to the mission statement over the course of this cycle?
2. Why were these changes made?
3. Are any revisions planned?

### **Narrative:**

No revisions to the Program Mission Statement were made during this review cycle.

### **2019 - 2023 Program Mission Statement:**

The communication program at William Woods University emphasizes a broad-based foundation in communication studies, complemented by a student-selected concentration in public relations, digital filmmaking, journalism, communication studies, or sport communication, to ensure that the students are well prepared for a career in the field of communication.

With the addition of new concentrations in AY 24-25 the mission has been updated to reflect those changes as noted below.

### **2024 - Present Program Mission Statement**

The communication program at William Woods University emphasizes a broad-based foundation in communication studies, complemented by a student-selected concentration in strategic communication, digital filmmaking, multimedia journalism, digital media, sport communication, or communication studies to ensure that the students are well prepared for a career in the field of communication.

## **Alignment to Institution Mission**

1. How does the mission of the program align with the mission of the institution?

## **Narrative:**

The communication program mission statement aligns with the mission statement of the institution by providing:

- The program offers several general education courses in both Tier I (Oral Communication and Information Literacy) and Tier II (all three areas).
- Communication courses emphasize the importance of recognizing and listening to inclusive voices from all social identities, political ideologies, marginalized, and under-represented groups. This mission is accomplished through the close reading of case studies, in-class discussions, presentations, and critical analysis assignments.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for students to engage in a variety of creative and intellectual inquiry work. Film students produce and create a variety of expressive films about social issues and political topics of interest to various audiences. Sports communication students select topics about sport that are of interest to them while analyzing them through various frameworks. Students in the communication theory and freedom of expression courses are taught and trained in research methods within the communication discipline, as well as how to apply communication theory to a variety of contexts. Media journalism students are taught AP style, audience research, and journalistic writing by completing a range of reporting assignments.
- Students are prepared to become lifelong learners and to appreciate the discovery of oneself and the world that results from adopting this practice.

### Full alignment statement to the mission of the institution:

The Communication Program at William Woods University fosters a student-centered learning environment that values inclusion, creativity, and intellectual inquiry. Grounded in a broad-based foundation in communication studies, the program asks students to explore a chosen concentration in strategic communication, digital filmmaking, journalism, communication studies, sport communication, or a personalized/open concentration. Through a professions-oriented approach, students gain the knowledge, skills, and real-world experience needed to succeed in their careers, creating a range of messages for a variety of audiences. Students learn how communication messages can solve problems, drive strategic thinking, earning potential, and enhance an organization's brand and social meaning.

## **Service to the University (Contribution to Campus Climate)**

1. What programming and organizational support are offered by the program that benefits the greater student population?
2. Does the program support on ground/OLC General Education Courses?
3. Highlight any cross listed courses with other programs
4. Highlight any interdisciplinary programming or activities
5. Identify student enrichment programming that could include volunteer opportunities, field trips, workshops... (does not have to be specific to the program, but is beneficial to students on campus)

## **Narrative:**

The communication program serves the university/campus climate in the following ways:

1. **Programming and organizational support**
  - a. Independent Lens Pop-Up PBS documentaries in partnership with KMOS.
  - b. Election LEAD events
  - c. LEAD events about sports and society
  - d. Senior Seminar LEAD events
  - e. KWWU LPFM - Campus Radio Station
2. **General education on-ground courses:**
  - a. COM 101 Introduction of Speech Communication—O; multiple sections per semester
  - b. COM 105 Voice & Diction—O; every Spring
  - c. COM 150: Visual Communication & Design--X; every Spring
  - d. COM 190: Media & Mass Communication--i; every Fall
  - e. COM 209: Argumentation & Debate--O; every Fall
  - f. COM 214: Sport Communication--Q; every Fall
  - g. COM 221 Contemporary Media Ethics—U; every Spring
  - h. COM 223: Queer Theory--U; every Spring
  - i. COM 250 Ethics in Sexuality—U; every Fall
  - j. COM 270: Persuasion--X; every Spring
  - k. COM 301: Sports Activism--U; every Spring (will change to Spring even for 25-26 AY)
3. **General education online offerings:**
  - a. COM 101: Intro to Speech Communication--O
  - b. COM 190: Media & Mass Communication--i
  - c. COM 220: Logic & Persuasion--i
4. The minor is currently being developed for online, where it can serve other online majors, including serving BA programs (PSY, LGS) and students enrolled in ASL, BUS, CMJ, EDU, FLM, and EDU programs.
5. Cross listed courses with other programs
  - a. ART 256 Introduction to Photography
  - b. BUS 321 Principles of Marketing
  - c. BUS 428 Public Relations
  - d. ENG 216 Special Topics in Film
  - e. ENG 327 Film Theory and Criticism
  - f. FLM 221 Screenwriting I
  - g. FLM 227 Cinematography I
  - h. FLM 250 Editing I
  - i. LDR 450 Ethics in Leadership
  - j. SMG 321 Sports Marketing

## **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and Curriculum**

### **Program Student Learning Outcomes and Results**

1. Describe how these Outcomes (Objectives) pertain to the program's mission. Have any changes been made to these outcomes over the course of this cycle? Why or why not?
2. Describe the extent to which students in the program have met these outcomes. Include a 5-year picture of the student outcomes with corresponding data that reflect the success or struggles in assessment.

## Narrative:

1. The Outcomes (Objectives) have largely remained the same and still pertain to the program's mission. During the review period, the leadership concentration dropped after four years without students selecting the concentration.

Over the period covered in this review, the Communication program saw a decline in majors. This decline in numbers was consistent with the decrease in overall enrollment at the university. However, in the 2023-2024 academic year, there was a significant increase in the number of students declaring Communication as their major, and the program has retained most of those students, and continues to enroll new students throughout the year. However, the effects of low enrollment for a few years did not come without consequences. Because of low enrollment from 2019 to 2023, several courses were canceled due to low enrollment, and student competitiveness was softened within the program. As the program rebuilds its enrollment, we find students becoming more engaged, taking more risks, and returning to ["normal"](#).

### **Objective 1: Integrate theory into applied skills in a variety of communication settings.**

Students become well-prepared for a career in the field of communication by completing coursework that requires them to learn about communication theories while providing them with a range of assessments to gain the skills necessary to become an industry practitioner.

### **Objective 2: Identify the impact and responsibilities associated with a variety of communication behaviors.**

Students must demonstrate proficiency in ethical decision-making and responsible communication behaviors so they can effectively communicate both interpersonally, and through written and digital form.

### **Objective 3: Critically evaluate messages through analytical approaches.**

The broad-based skills that students learn in communication studies provide them with a framework for evaluating messages created through a variety of mediums (verbal; written; digital; audio; visual; etc.) that is informed by analytical approaches which continue to be researched within the discipline today.

### **Objective 4: Use knowledge and information from the communication discipline to effectively communicate a persuasive message.**

As a result of integrating theory into applied skills, identifying relevant communication behaviors for a particular occasion, and critically evaluating messages, students develop expertise in message creation that can inform, persuade, and empower audiences to think differently and act ethically.

No changes were made to these objectives over the course of the cycle, it's been decided to assess again, with increased enrollment during this cycle to gather more data regarding their effectiveness.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>
<b>Objective 1</b>	Met	Met	Met	Met	Not Met
<b>Objective 2</b>	Met	Met	Met	Not Met	Met
<b>Objective 3</b>	Met	Met	Met	Not Met	Met
<b>Objective 4</b>	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Met

## Description of Results:

- During 19-20, there is no data for second assessment measure for objective four. Thus, objective four for that year was not met.
- During 20-21, the sophomores did not meet the benchmark. Thus, objective four for this year was not met.
- During 21-22, the results for objective 1, results for the second assessment measure for objective 2, results for both assessment measures of objective 3, and results for the first assessment measure for objective 4 were missing on the annual report. The data has been recovered and results included on this graph for the following objectives:
  - Objective 1; Objective 3.1 and 3.2
- During 22-23, objective 1 data and results were not entered in the annual report, they have been recovered, updated and attached to this section of the report Also, assignments in COM 330 are used as assessment measures for objectives 2 and 3, but that class was not offered during this academic year. This was the year we began alternating years in offering COM 320 and COM 330 to help increase enrollment in each class. Thus, objectives 2 and 3 were not met. Finally, objective four has two assessment measures. One is the presentations from the Student Performance Reviews. The program did not hold the presentation during this year due to low enrollment. The other measure is the final presentation for COM 499 and only 1 senior was in that class during this year. The data and results were not entered in the annual but is entered and attached to this section.
- During AY 23-24, COM 320 was not offered, so Objective 1 was not assessed. The second assessment measure for objective 2 was missing from the annual report. Objective 2 has been updated it to "Met" with attached evidence to this section. The same evidence can be used for Objective 3.2.
- Overall, missing data on annual reports contributed to the results. This will be corrected moving forward through the utilization of the new Watermark system, which provides easier and automatic avenues for collecting data. Inconsistent enrollment also contributed to the results. It is clear from the data that students are effectively integrating theory into applied skills in different communication settings and identifying the impact and responsibilities associated with a variety of communication behaviors.

### Labor Market Overview

View the key labor market data for your region compared to national data.

**22,346**  
Jobs in 2024  
**110% Below National Average**

**0.4%**  
Change from 2024-2029  
**+3.5% National Change**

**\$26.30**  
Median Earnings per Hour  
**\$29.76/hr. National Median**

**2,199**  
Annual Openings  
**106% Below National Average**

OCCUPATION	2024 JOBS	GROWTH (2024-2029)	MEDIAN EARNINGS	ANNUAL OPENINGS
Broadcast Announcers and Radio Disc Jockeys	1,676	<b>11.40%</b>	\$17.6/hr.	193
Editors	3,052	<b>4.03%</b>	\$26.3/hr.	351

Media and Communication Workers, All Other	472	6.36%	\$26.77/hr.	51
News Analysts, Reporters, and Journalists	2,081	11.44%	\$20.36/hr.	250
Public Relations Specialists	15,065	2.89%	\$29.59/hr.	1,354

Source: Lightcast

## [Communication BS 24-25 C&A Findings](#)

### Evidence:

- [Communication \(BS\) 2024-2025 Curriculum and Assessment Findings 2024-2025](#)
- [Communication Annual Assessment 2019-2020](#)
- [Communication Annual Assessment 2020-2021](#)
- [Communication Annual Assessment 2021-2022](#)
- [Communication Annual Assessment 2022-2023](#)
- [Communication Annual Assessment 2023-2024](#)
- [Obj 1 22-23](#)
- [Obj 1 evidence 21-22](#)
- [Obj 2 evidence 21-22](#)
- [Obj 3 21-22](#)
- [Obj 3 23-24](#)
- [Obj 4 22-23](#)

### Assessment Measures

1. Discuss the measures (rubric evaluation - tool used to gather information) you've selected or developed to measure for each Outcome (Objective).
2. Why were these measures chosen?
3. Were any measures or assessment instruments changed over the course of this cycle? Why or why not?
4. Note any action items related to assessment measures that will be changed moving forward due to the review of assessment data.

### Narrative:

The program uses two measures for each Outcome (Objective) in our matrix, with the exception for program objective 1, which has one measure.

- **Objective 1: Integrate theory into applied skills in a variety of communication settings.**
  - **Theory Application Paper:** Detailed description is attached in Evidence for this section. This is a semester-long paper assigned in COM 320: Communication Theory

that requires students to select a communication theory from the course, apply it to a communication artifact (real-life relationship; advertisement; event; media coverage; tv show or film; etc.), and describe core tenets of the theory within their chosen artifact.

- **Student Performance Review:** This is the portfolio presentation students prepare and deliver to the 3 full-time faculty and outside reviewers from industry every Spring semester. Portfolios consist of relevant work to the student's concentration they have completed in courses, internships, jobs, on their own, etc. The student must provide a rationale for why they selected each artifact to display in their portfolio. Students are asked to not just apply communication theories in their portfolio, but course concepts and relevant vocabulary from our discipline and their concentration(s), in their artifacts and in their presentation to the panel. It also requires them to apply a range of audience analysis skills in both their portfolio and presentation.
  
- **Objective 2: Identify the impact and responsibilities associated with a variety of communication behaviors.**
  - **Free Speech Project:** a semester-long paper assigned in COM 330: Freedom of Expression that requires students to select a free speech that the student wants to help remedy, or solve, through the application of course concepts and material. Students are required to identify the communication problems occurring or have occurred in their topic, use course material (theories, readings, concepts, vocabulary) to remedy/solve these communication problems, and translate the academic study of free speech for public audiences, specifically people who work in or are interested in these types of topics.
  - **COM 330 Case Study:** Assigned in COM 330: Freedom of Expression. The most recent iteration of this course, taught in Fall 2023, required students to complete assigned readings and videos about Gibson v. Oberlin. Students complete the written responses, use them to work in small groups, and then engage in a full class discussion. Emphasis is placed on all legal interactions begin with social interactions, whether in-person or online or a combination of both.
  
- **Objective 3: Critically evaluate messages through analytical approaches.**
  - **Free Speech Project:** See description in Objective 2.
  - **Case Study from Performance Reviews:** Students are presented with case studies and a series of questions, of which they are provided the afternoon of the performance reviews to complete. Both the Free Speech Project and Case Studies from Performance Reviews assess the analytical skills students currently display to critically evaluate messages.
  
- **Objective 4: Use knowledge and information from the communication discipline to effectively communicate a persuasive message.**
  - **COM 499 Final Presentation:** This is assigned during the Spring semester in COM 499: Senior Seminar. Students present a 45-60 minute, interactive, multimedia-based presentation that includes their 30-minute documentary about their topic to the three full-time faculty and additional faculty and administration as applicable/relevant to the seminar project.

- **Student Performance Review:** This is the portfolio presentation students complete every Spring to the full-time COM faculty and industry professionals who serve as outside reviewers.
- Each concentration draws data from within two courses in that concentration. The following reflects the assessment methods for concentrations assessed under this review cycle.
- **Digital Filmmaking Concentration**
- Objective 1: Create emotion through the use of lighting and camera techniques, and visual and audio imagery.
  - Music Video: Video Production assigned in COM 231: Commercial Video Production
  - Silent Film: Short film assigned in COM 311: Short Form Narrative
- Objective 2: Apply aesthetic concepts of digital motion picture production to directing, editing and cinematography.
  - Final Individual Short Film: assigned in COM 432: Long Form Narrative Film Production
  - Mini Documentary: assigned in COM 332: Documentary and Experimental Film
- **Multimedia Journalism Concentration**
- Objective 1: Develop mass communicated messages with accuracy and precision.
  - Final Broadcast: assigned in COM 373: Announcing & Reporting
  - Public Figure Feature assigned in COM 110: Writing for Multimedia: (attached as evidence)
- Objective 2: Apply information gathering techniques.
  - Public Figure Feature: assigned in COM 110: Writing for Multimedia
  - Public Figure Magazine Feature Article assigned in COM 415: Feature Writing: (attached as evidence)
- **Sports Communication Concentration**
- Objective 1: Demonstrate expertise in creating a detailed sports message.
  - Sports Media Project: assigned in COM 304: Sports Media.
  - Sports Block: assigned in COM 373: Announcing & Reporting
- Objective 2: Identify the various communicative practices associated with sports.
  - Final Project assigned in COM 214: Sport Communication. (attached as evidence)
  - Sports Messaging Assignment assigned in COM 214: Sport Communication. (attached as evidence)
- **Strategic Communication Concentration**
- Objective 1: Identify the relationship between the media and the business world.
  - Major PR Project (previous assignment attached as Evidence): assigned in BUS 428: Public Relations. Requires students to apply PR writing and digital creation to an existing organization for which they are consultants.
  - Media Management Assignment: assigned in COM 337: Web & Social Media Campaigns
- Objective 2: Identify key strategies in developing and maintaining the public image of a business.

- Buyer Persona: assigned in COM 337: Web & Social Media Campaigns.
- Major PR Project: assigned in BUS 428: Public Relations

The information pulled from courses and students' assessment presentations are intended to give a variety of data sets that can represent each concentration and the program as a whole.

### Changes Made to Assessment

- **Assessment Instrument Change:** over the course of the cycle and some of the courses that provide data were not offered due to low enrollment. The program tried a mini-senior seminar project instead of the case study in 2020 but were unsatisfied with the results and reverted back. Student assessment day was not held during the COVID-19 year.
- **Assessment Instrument Change:** Beginning in 21-22, Sport Comm used a Crisis Communication in Sport option only. Beginning 24-25, the Fan Study option was added. Sports Media Project has also evolved to allow students to track topic over the course of the semester and provided more options for final submission (blog instead of just a paper).

### Action Items

1. The program will add another measurement measure to Program Objective 1: Integrate theory into applied skills in a variety of communication settings.

### Evidence:

- [COM 214 Final Project](#)
- [COM 320 Research Paper](#)
- [COM 330 20-21 Research Paper](#)
- [COM 330 Case Study 19-20](#)
- [COM 330 Case Study 20-21](#)
- [COM 330 Direct Research Paper 19-20](#)
- [Case Studies 24-25](#)
- [Communication \(BS\) 2024-2025 Curriculum and Assessment Findings 2024-2025](#)
- [Feature Article](#)
- [MajorProject-Guidelines and Rubric\\_S24](#)
- [Portfolio Panel Eval](#)
- [Public Figure Magazine Feature Article](#)
- [Sports Media Final Project](#)
- [Sports Messaging Assignment](#)
- [Students Performance Day Assessments](#)

### Curriculum Map

1. Highlighting any key or core courses, have any changes been made to this pathway or degree requirements over the course of this cycle? (Upload Program Checklist)
2. Why or why not?

3. Explain how the program sequence of courses is designed and why it is laid out in that way? (scaffolding)

**Narrative:**

1. The communication program required fewer courses in the required core (30) and more courses in each concentration (15) and required electives (12) in Y19-20, Y20-21, Y21-22 and more courses in the required core (36) and fewer in concentrations (12) and electives (9) in Y22-23 and Y23-24. The program also changed the names of courses to reflect their content as we adjusted to the changing media landscape.
2. The changes to the Y22-23 and Y23-24 checklists were an attempt to fill the required core courses in the face of dwindling student numbers.
3. The program sequence of courses is designed so that each objective is set up to be assessed once in required coursework and once when the student completes their senior showcase. Student work is assessed in noted concentration courses as well. This allows students to be assessed as they grow in the program and their concentrations.

**Evidence:**

- [COM 19-20 Checklist](#)
- [COM Checklist 20-21](#)
- [COM Checklist 23-24](#)
- [Checklist 21-22](#)
- [Checklist 22-23](#)

**Concentrations**

1. If the program has concentrations, please upload the concentration data.
2. Speak to the enrollment distribution of students within the concentrations and any impact on course rotation.
3. Include strategies or processes for retention and recruitment within the concentration.
4. Explain the value of each concentration and how they enhance the skills students need to be successful in the field.

**Narrative:**

**Discussion of Concentrations**

**All Concentrations:**

As seen in the accompanying breakdown of students by concentration, our numbers dropped precipitously from Y19-20 to Y21-22 but rebounded in Y23-24. The low enrollment beginning in Y20-21 affected the course rotation, and courses were cancelled or course rotations altered to lengthen the time between offerings to increase the number of students who needed to take the class.

Program recruitment efforts from admissions have been limited. The faculty in the communication department has met with admissions team members several times to discuss the major and recruitment methods. A driving factor in adding more concentrations in AY 2425, was encouraged by admissions to make the "sale" of the major easier and provide students with a clear vision of what they could do with a communication major.

The following concentrations were running during this reporting cycle (2019-2023)

**Digital Filmmaking:**

The filmmaking concentration teaches students how to tell stories visually, write for various forms of digital media, create ethical content, critique content, and more. Students encounter and gain experience in all areas of filmmaking, from story conception to pre-production, production, and post-production techniques. Upon completing the Digital Filmmaking concentration, students can work across the industry in various roles. The filmmaking concentration has maintained consistent enrollment with the total number of Communication majors and university enrollment and continues to attract students. To ensure retention and encourage enrollment, the filmmaking concentration has adjusted its offerings to meet the students' needs as the years have progressed.

**Media/Multimedia Journalism:**

This concentration has worked hard to change from traditional journalism/media to adapt to the new digital media landscape. Emphasis has been on making sure students recognize traditional journalism in a world in which "media" refers to a vast environment that includes disinformation and fake news. Writing is the focus for online news, television and radio broadcasts, public relations, and social media. Enrollment in this concentration tends to fluctuate in enrollment but has been declining over recent years.

**Sport Communication:**

In this concentration students approach the Communication field through the lens of Sport. students take courses examining campaigns, messaging, ethics, and the role of sport in society and its effect on the communities connected to it. Through the understanding of sport and celebrity, students are equipped with the knowledge on how to navigate a variety of campaigns and create messaging that is effective at targeting this industry. This concentration has seen growth since its addition, increased focus on recruiting athletes at the university has further bolstered its numbers.

**Public Relations/Strategic Communication:**

Public Relations/Strategic Communication is symbiotic with journalism. The concentration has the same importance as multimedia journalism in the digital world. The program partners with the business program's public relations course to help students write well across digital media and to understand the techniques used by public relations practitioners. Once the Communication's largest concentration, it has seen a consistent decline in numbers over the years covered in during this review cycle.

**Leadership:**

The program saw a significant decline in students declaring this concentration and went several years without a student enrolled in it. This was in large part due to the duplication of the program started in BUS. Because of this, the program and faculty decided to sunset the leadership concentration.

**Evidence:**

- [Students Census Breakdown by Concentration](#)

## Course Descriptions

1. Highlight any changes to course descriptions that have occurred over the \_\_\_\_\_ identified timeframe. (upload a pdf of the course descriptions)

- **Narrative:**

- **COM 330 - Communication Law**

- Previous Description:

- This course examines the legal background of the mass media. It is focused around media law as it pertains to the First Amendment, such as libel and privacy law in the digital age. Additionally, students will learn about a variety of Supreme Court cases in mass media obscenity law, telecommunications, libel, and privacy, among other topics. Students will study a number of mass media law case studies and engage in interactive discussion about how the law is applied in the case studies. Finally, students can expect to learn about the ethical, social, and political implications mass media law has on American democracy.

- New Description - Fall 2023

- This course examines the theoretical and historical foundations of how we think about freedom of expression and its relationship to democratic culture. We will discuss landmark speech controversy cases and analyze how freedom of expression has been influenced through digital technology. We will explore the degree to which censorship has both historical and contemporary relevance within our society and consider how these systems of thought are communicated to public audiences. We will cover current freedom of expression topics including but not limited to social media, corporate power, free speech on campus, and free speech in politics.

- **COM 320 - Communication Theory**

- Previous Description

- This course examines communication theory on all levels. Students will gain an understanding of theory and how theoretical developments can be used in their academic and personal lives.

- New Description - Fall 2023

- This course will introduce students to the structure, importance, and practical use of communication theory as it relates to their personal, professional, and social lives. Students will discover how theory can help them better understand, investigate, and critically answer questions about the nature of communication in today's interconnected world. We will examine theories from a variety of communication contexts, including but not limited to intercultural, organizational, public, mass media, and interpersonal. This course is geared towards all undergraduate students who are interested in how theory and research can help them become more skilled communicators.

- **COM 270 - Persuasion**
  - Previous Description:
    - This class introduces students to theoretical and practical approaches to the study of persuasion. Students will learn how persuasion impacts their day-to-day life and how to become more attentive to the role persuasion plays in society. The course is focused on understanding persuasion as a rhetorical strategy for communicating messages through various mediums—verbal, digital, spoken, nonverbal, and visual. Specifically, students will learn about how persuasion is instrumental in communicating messages through a variety of mediums within political campaigns, advertising, activism, sports, health campaigns, and religion.
  - New Description - Fall 2023
    - This course will focus on the study of persuasion and examine how it used as an instrument of communication within the news media, social media, popular culture, health, politics, and human relationships. We will learn how persuasion can be used in both productive and unproductive ways, paying careful attention to the speaker's motivations for their message and the effect these messages have on people and society.
  
- **COM 233 Queer Theory (new course)**
  - *Queer Theory looks at issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity through historical and theoretical frameworks using literary analysis of the Harry Potter books as a lens through which to see students' experiences and the experiences of others. This is a 2022 change from the original version when it was taught as COM 400 Special Topics.*
  
- **COM 150 Visual Communication & Design**- Changed to match the broader scope of the course (previous description focused on TV and Radio)
  - Previous Description:
    - Introduction to the functions, theories, materials and techniques of writing, performing and production for radio and television. Students write, perform and produce a variety of long and short form projects for radio and television.
  - New Description- Fall 2023:
    - An introduction to the creation and design of communication materials. Students will produce a variety of digital content designed for an audience.
  
- **COM 190 Media & Mass Communication** - Adjusted to match the scope of the course, and updated content, beyond print and "electronic" media
  - Previous Description:
    - An introductory course designed to familiarize the student with the field of mass communication, its influence, and universality. The course offers a survey of the print and electronic mass media and its impact on society.
  - New Description - Fall 2023:
    - An introduction to the field of mass communication, its influence, and its ubiquity. Students will study the industries and history of print, broadcast, and digital media.

**Evidence:**

- [COM Course Descriptions](#)

**Curriculum Delivery**

1. Does online enrollment impact enrollment in the campus enrollment?
2. If the program has an online component, explain how the program coordinates schedules and curriculum between the two modalities.

**Narrative:**

The program has not seen a large impact of online enrollment canalizing on-ground enrollment, during advising we are careful to advise our students into on-ground coursework whenever possible. Recently (AY 2425) the program has begun building out the minor online. Prior to this course offerings online were limited to a small handful of courses.

When scheduling courses online, priority rotations are given to the on-ground sections, and placement of the online courses are arranged in a way that students can pick up the course if they find themselves out of rotation, but if they are on the right track, the on-ground courses are their best option.

Curriculum online is developed by our full-time faculty and reflect their on-ground counterparts within the limitations of translating on-ground to online.

**Participation in Assessment**

1. Discuss faculty participation in program assessment
2. How involved are faculty and what is their responsibility for the assessment of the program.

**Narrative:**

All three, full-time faculty are present during student performance days. Contacting outside reviewers for this day is completed by one, two, or all three faculty, the same is true for selecting the case studies. The program has adopted a digital process for score assessment this last year, which has expedited the collection process. Each faculty member teaches at least one course in the core, and thus, has input on the assessments being used to measure the learning outcomes. Faculty collaborate and speak frequently about the assessments used throughout all communication courses.

**Action Items and Use of Results**

1. Summarize or highlight action items taken as a result of program's assessment results.
2. How have the results driven improvement over the course of this cycle?

**Narrative:**

Throughout this review cycle the program identified areas of improvement for the program and its curriculum. These included engaging students in research methods, audience identification, community outreach and planning, and identifying their own personal strengths/weaknesses.

The following changes were made to strengthen each:

- Providing an opportunity for a "mini-senior seminar" to introduce students to the concept of the project ahead of time and see how the curriculum would connect within the Senior Seminar course.
- Requiring freshman students to attend portfolio reviews. Previously, student presentations were only given to the panel, and student expectations weren't always clear. By allowing students to watch portfolio presentations and participate in the process as early as possible, we have seen their engagement and success in the reviews rise.
- Requiring students to create and maintain a LinkedIn profile and develop a portfolio website has helped students track their progress throughout the major, identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- To encourage research and audience identification the program has begun requiring more research projects centered around audiences, polls, ratings, and in the social media world - clicks. Campaign analyses have been built into several courses, and projects like the Buyer Personas in COM 337 ask students to engage with audiences and associated data.
- Senior Seminar now requires that the course partners with a local non-profit organization to better ground and connect the curriculum to real life experiences.

The program also engages in implementation of NSSE objectives as decided by the faculty at large during annual assessment meetings.

#### **Evidence:**

- [Communication \(BS\) 2024-2025 Curriculum and Assessment Findings 2024-2025](#)

#### **General Education**

1. • How does program coursework expand on the skills learned in General Education curriculum?

#### **Narrative:**

Our program coursework expands on the skills learned in the GE curriculum in the following ways:

- **Oral Communication:**
  - COM 101, COM 105, and COM 209 are all offered as GE courses for oral communication, which is part of Tier 1 GE. The 200, 300, and 400 level courses all build on foundational presentation skills such as organization, research, delivery, logical reasoning, and creative invention.
- **Written Communication:**
  - Written assignments are found throughout the curriculum in every course that the COM program offers. The program also features courses centered on writing for the

discipline including: Beginning Media Writing, Feature Writing, Public Affairs Reporting, Announcing & Reporting.

- **History:**
  - Increasingly, communication courses are including more history into their curriculum to better frame and understand the current media environment and provide context. Courses that strongly focus on historical perspective include: Media & Mass Communication, Communication Theory, and Freedom of Expression.
  
- **Information Literacy:**
  - COM 190 and COM 220 (OLC) are offered as information literacy GE classes. A lot of our 200 and 300 level courses teach students more advanced skills in information literacy, such as identifying media frames/themes, fact checking sources, learning how to identify credible online sources and summaries, how to ethically and responsibly use AI for research and creative interests, and how to read and synthesize academic research to become a more informed person.
  
- **Critical Analysis:**
  - All communication classes teach critical analysis, but in different ways. COM 320 teaches students how to learn, read, and use communication theory to a variety of contexts. COM 330 teaches students how to critically understand, and navigate, free speech and fundamentals of media law. Other classes teach students how to think critically and analytically about how sport is communicated interpersonally, in media, within organizations, and through the performance of identity. Other classes teach students the importance of understanding how gender is performed and consumed, and how to become aware of their own biases when interacting with others and digital media.
  
- **Creative Expression:**
  - Our production classes especially teach students how to craft short form video ads, films, social media content, and audio and radio programs for a variety of audiences. Other assignments teach students how to write for different audiences and to use research to add depth to their messages.
  
- **Inquiry & Analysis:**
  - Students are taught how to understand polls and to provide quantitative data for their claims. Students are also asked how to write and speak about data for general audiences.
  
- **Cultures & Communities:**
  - COM students are skilled at this by the time they get to the end of their sophomore year. Their junior and senior years are filled with many opportunities to apply their knowledge to become more global thinkers, and to stay true to who they are and to learn to take risks with knowledge.

# Faculty Qualifications, Activities and Scholarship

## Faculty Specialization

1. Discuss the scholarship and research content of the faculty in the program, being sure what their specialization brings to the program.
2. Explain the core features of the program based on the current faculty.
3. How could the program be expanded (new courses, areas of specialization, etc.)?
4. How might additional instructional members allow the program to expand and/or change the focus of the program curriculum?

### Narrative:

**Anthony Cavaiani** holds a Ph.D. in Communication from Wayne State University. His research examines the intersection of rhetoric, sport, media, and space/place. He is an active member of the International Association of Communication and Sport (IACS). Over the course of this cycle, he has published an article in the journal *Communication and Sport*, co-authored a chapter in an edited book on social justice and the modern athlete, and published several scholarly commentaries in Olympic reports that examine the Games from an academic perspective. He has also collaborated with several students on research projects, ranging from the rhetoric of the Kansas City stadium controversy to current projects about the rhetoric of sports betting. His research contributes to the COM program by remaining current in the field of communication, sport communication, critical/cultural studies, media studies, communication theory, and other subfields of our discipline. He consistently integrates his research expertise into his teaching and requires research projects in his classes. His specialization benefits the COM program and WWU through its collaborative nature and because his research is relevant to students taking his program courses and majoring in COM, as well as to general education courses.

**Tony Weed** holds an MFA in Motion Pictures and Television: Editing. He primarily teaches courses centered around digital filmmaking and digital media. In the communication field, his specialization brings forward the tools and techniques in producing a variety of audio and video content, along with introductory capabilities in print and photography. Prior to WWU he worked for a production company creating a variety of content including filming/editing advertisements, music videos, and live events. Tony is a member of the Missouri Motion Media Association and the University Film and Video Association, for which he has served as a juror for their annual film festival. Tony administers both the AVID and ASSIMILATE learning partnerships with both software companies. He has also formed a partnership with local PBS affiliate, KMOS, bringing independent film screenings and discussions to the University. He manages KWWU, the campus radio station, maintaining FCC compliance and music licensure. In his creative work during this review cycle, he served as Executive Producer on a short film. He oversees the WWU Media Corps program, serves as the lead faculty and program manager for the Digital Filmmaking program, and is the Associate Provost for the University.

**Melissa Alpers-Springer** earned a BFA in Theatre & Interpretation from Missouri State University and an MA in Theatre Theory, History, & Criticism from Northwestern University. She is also a respondent for Region 5 of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Melissa's specialization, interests, and professional development focus on journalism, interpersonal, gender, ethics, and social issues. During this cycle, she has participated in a variety of workshops and webinars focused on protest, racial equality & anti-racism, intimacy, mental health, and well-being. All of which have

informed her courses and the program. She serves as the Jesters (student organization) advisor, SAGA advisor, and THA program faculty and mainstage director.

Core features of the program based on the current faculty:

1. The concentrations in the Communication program and the courses within them reflect the interests and specialties of the full-time faculty. While each concentration draws on the expertise of several faculty members, the core of each is represented by a faculty member.
2. Sport Communication and Strategic Communication are supported by Anthony Cavaiani's expertise in the field.
3. Digital Filmmaking and Digital Media are supported by Tony Weed's expertise in the field.
4. Media Journalism and Communication Studies are supported by Melissa Alper-Springer's expertise.

The program is already quite expansive in its offerings, and its breadth is under discussion, particularly with changes in faculty load requirements for administrative appointments. Outside the years covered in this report, the faculty is looking more closely at condensing/simplifying the program rather than expanding further; there could be opportunities for change within. The program could be developed (as asked by this report) into new courses and/or areas of specialization in the following ways:

- Computational Journalism/Data Journalism
- Sports Analytics.
- Science Communication
- Crisis Communication
- Environmental Communication
- Health Communication
- Disability in Sport
- Sports Video Production

Note: Some courses would require outside faculty within any of these specializations, which could assist in any of these ideas.

Faculty in the program have discussed at length that the core of the program is students' ability to engage mass audiences as storytellers through a variety of means, as identified across the program's concentrations.

The program just added several new concentrations in 2425 and is well-positioned to maintain growth and scope; however, in the future, it will keep a keen eye on current trends in communication and media. Indeed, the implications of AI for the communication industry must be considered and could lead to new courses/concentrations.

Being a wide and varied field, additional instruction can provide more nuanced and detailed specialization within the concentrations. Current staffing is adequate to serve the program's current needs.

## Faculty Awards and Honors

1. Discuss and highlight awards and honors received by faculty over the course of the cycle.

### Narrative:

N/A

## Faculty Workload

1. Summarize the workload and responsibilities of faculty.
2. What actions are you taking to avoid faculty overload?
3. % of course load is taught by program faculty vs adjunct
4. % of courses covered by full time faculty
5. % of courses covered through faculty overload

### Narrative:

1. Anthony's workload includes the following:
  - Teach a 3/3 load
  - Responsibilities include:
    - Serve as Faculty Athletics Representative (One Course release)
    - Advising between 10-20 students
2. Melissa's workload includes the following:
  - Teach a 4/4 load
  - Advise 10-20 students
  - Direct Mainstage Productions
3. Tony's workload includes the following
  - Teach a 4/4 load (2019-2023), 2/2 load (23-24), 1/1 load (24-25)
    - Serve as Dean School of Social Sciences(23-24) - Two course release
    - Serve as Executive Dean - School of Arts & Sciences (2024) - Three course release
    - Serve as Associate Provost (2025) - Three course release
  - 4. Advise 10-20 students
  - 5. Program Manager for FLM Program
  - 6. Station Manager for KWWU
  - 7. Director of Media Corps (2025)

FUL	Total Course Sections	% Taught by Full-Time COM Faculty
19-20	38	82%
20-21	30	87%
21-22	29	90%
22-23	23	91%

23 -24	28	86%
OLC		
19-20	5	60%
20-21	5	60%
21-22	5	60%
22-23	7	71%
23 -24	18	22%

Faculty often teach overloads to meet demand, or for the opportunity for extra pay. When looking at workloads over this cycle it was frequent, due to low enrollment, that faculty would teach several courses as "tutorials" to make load. This did mean that a faculty might teach 5-6 courses to meet contract obligations.

During this cycle (19-23), COM rarely had adjuncts. Melissa, Anthony, and Tony were always teaching speech in addition to their other classes. As enrollment has increased, the need for adjuncts has increased. Typically, as of the now (25-26) 7 traditional sections of COM 101, adjunct faculty teach 3 sections. Online adjuncts typically teach at least 50% (3-5 sections) of any given semesters online COM courses. Full-time faculty teach online every semester as well.

## Program Data: Student Experience

### Enrollment and Recruitment

1. What are the trends with enrollment in this program over the course of the review cycle?
2. How does this compare to institutional trends or similar programs on campus?
3. Describe recruitment efforts or goals such as increased enrollment.
4. Have these initiatives been successful?

#### Narrative:

1. Over the course of this review cycle, the program has seen enrollment decline at a rate that mirrors the university's decline in overall enrollment. However, beginning the 2324 Academic year, the program has seen some recovery of the lost numbers.
2. The program hopes to gather more evidence about how our enrollment and recruitment efforts compare to similar schools with this review and in the upcoming years.
3. In AY 22-23, in collaboration with admissions representatives, the WWU Media Corps was developed as a co-curricular activity to bring communication and art students to the university. And the program did see a slight boost in the number of students owing to Media Corps (3 students). However, the goal of the Media Corps program was to bring in 10 students each year. Media Corps fell short of this goal due to the requirements associated with Media Corps, and the programs to be boosted by its addition to the university were removed from the scholarship

program. Recruitment efforts shifted to recruiting for Media Corps regardless of major, to bolster media services for Athletics, and away from building the Communication and Art programs at the university. In the Spring of 2025, Media Corps ownership was moved to faculty in the Communication department, and we are encouraged that this will bring the focus of this particular admissions goal back to Communication and Art. Continued discussions around recruitment for the program are ongoing. With new admissions staffing starting in the summer of 2025, the program is hopeful that program recruitment talks can resume and bear positive results.

4. Due to increased enrollment following these efforts the program believes these initiatives are beginning to show results and are working.

**Evidence:**

- [Communication Program Activity Sheet](#)

**Retention**

1. Has student retention remained in an acceptable range over the course of the review cycle?
2. What strategies are program faculty using to raise retention rates within the program?

**Narrative:**

1. Retention has remained in an acceptable range. WWU has faced challenges with retention, and the COM program is not immune. However, COM faculty take a very active role in engaging students both inside and outside the classroom. The addition of Media Corps, and now with Communication faculty overseeing that, will have a positive impact on our retention. When discussing with students why they are withdrawing students often cite reasons surrounding their athletics, or a desire to attend a larger school.

2. Strategies:

- A. Revising Student Performance Day for all students to watch each other. This helps build community and team building.
- B. In the future the program would like to hold a field trip in coordination with current COM majors.
- C. Including more major meetups throughout the academic year.
- D. Include more programming with speakers and social get-togethers that are focused around COM-specific topics.

**Curriculum/Course Retention and Success**

1. Describe enrollment trends in the courses within the program. (upload course enrollment spreadsheet)
2. Reflect on the success of the students within the courses over the designated time frame.
  - Highlight some completion or withdrawal and failure rates in the core courses.
  - Were these in line with expectations? (we will need to provide this data)

3. For programs with dual modalities, reflect on the success of students within the courses over the designated time frame.

- Highlight some completion or withdrawal and failure rates in the core courses.
- Were these in line with expectations? (we will need to provide this data)

**Narrative:**

As discussed throughout the report, the Communication program experienced significant enrollment decline throughout the years covered by this review cycle. This decline was in-line with the overall trend at the university. Beginning with the final year of this cycle (23-24) the program has seen its numbers rebound and continue to grow.

Student success during this time had some mixed results. With smaller class sizes, tutorials and independent studies dominating the curriculum, students received a great deal of attention, and we saw fewer F grades in the program's courses. Making room for individualized attention and opportunities was easier with smaller class sizes. However, low enrollment also led to less competition between the students, smaller discussions, and experiences that were typically shared were more isolated or contained to a small group, the program believes that this may have contributed to withdrawal rates as well.

With these considerations in mind the following DFW rates are in line with expectations during the period covered in this review cycle.

FUL	N=	A	B	C	D	F	W	Total Course Sections
19-20	319	161	92	40	2	1	14	38
20-21	232	117	69	23	12	5	6	30
21-22	199	67	52	40	18	11	10	29
22-23	204	84	54	37	9	14	6	23
23 -24	360	140	102	55	24	27	12	28
<b>OLC</b>								
19-20	80	29	25	13	2	2	8	5
20-21	95	41	28	7	1	7	11	5
21-22	85	28	20	10	5	8	14	5
22-23	78	21	23	7	2	13	12	7
23 -24	261	97	57	24	9	34	40	18

**Evidence:**

- [Communication Enrollment 2019-2024](#)

## Completion

1. How many students are graduating from the program?  
Have the completion rates been in line with expectations?

2. Describe findings resulting from exit surveys or program alumni surveys that were conducted over the course of the cycle. (programs will need to do annual exit surveys to capture this data)

### Narrative:

1. Graduates in AY 19-20: 4
2. Graduates in AY 20-21: 8
3. Graduates in AY 21-22: 1
4. Graduates in AY 22-23: 2
5. Graduates in AY 23-24: 1

As noted above, program enrollment decline has led to small graduating classes. Completion rates have been in line with expectations; it is unfortunate that through the review cycle numbers were low. Since the years covered in this report, there have been significant gains in enrollment.

The program did not issue exit surveys or alumni surveys over the course of this cycle.

### Evidence:

- [COM majors and minors](#)

## Course Evaluation Data

1. What were some positive and negative feedback received from students who completed the courses?

2. Highlight any trends or insights that came from course evaluations over the course of the cycle. (data will have to be available)

### Narrative:

Overall, on-ground course evaluation data follows the University average closely. Trends show that students would like feedback and grading returned earlier and students are looking for a bit more challenge in their coursework. Students find that their faculty are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the content.

Online does perform lower than the university average across the board, and online experiences have been minimal across the period of this report, with lower response rates and enrollment in the courses. Since the collection of data for this report online courses have been revised and brought closer in line with on-ground courses to hopefully capture a similar experience. However, it is difficult to replicate in-person communication courses online, and the experience will be limited.

### Evidence:

- [Communications](#)

## **Student Advising**

1. Describe the advising process for your program?
2. What strategies and structures are in place to facilitate a successful advising period?
3. What is the optimal ratio of advisees to adviser for the program?
4. Explain any other processes to increase the effectiveness of the current advising procedure.

### **Narrative:**

Students are assigned to each of the full-time faculty based on their primary interest (concentration) upon enrollment at the university. Each faculty member carries a load of 10-20 students. Because of low enrollment during this time period COM faculty trained in advising for PSY, BUS, and SMG to aid those areas in advising.

Faculty in the COM program ask that student schedule an appointment and come prepared to their advising meeting with a planned list of courses. During the advising meeting faculty compare the course needs of the student along with the student's selected plan and make alignments/changes as necessary. Faculty also discuss life inside/outside the classroom, post-graduation aspirations, graduate school, internships, job opportunities, and the goals of the student during their advising meetings.

In recent years the COM faculty has begun scheduling regular major meetups with students, where things like advising, the major, and course requirements are discussed. Along with building a stronger relationship with the students, these meet-ups have encouraged a sense of community among the students as the program recovers growth. Moving forward, the faculty would like to increase the number of the meetups and provide additional opportunities in the form of field trips or other activities.

## **Student Awards and Achievements**

1. Highlight the accomplishments and external honors received by students in the program over the course of this cycle.

### **Narrative:**

### **Festivals, Showcases, Presentations**

- Film Student Film Fest Nominations:
  - Faultline Film Festival: Best Alternative
  - Faultline Film Festival: Best of Festival
- **Internships**
  - Jefferson City Renegades
  - WWU Strategic Communication & Marketing Team (3)
  - Pinto House Company Videographer & Social Media Manager

- ESPN Sports Journalist
- NYC Independent Film Studio
- Polish Advertising Agency
- **Notable Employment:**
  - Business Reporter for the Kyiv Post
  - FONIA International in Chicago
  - Podcast Host “Car Mom”
  - Marketing & Communications Director at Heart of Missouri United Way
  - Manager of Home Fund
- **Acceptance to Graduate School:**
  - Clemson University MA and PhD Program
  - University of Missouri PhD program in Communication
  - University of Missouri master’s in educational leadership
  - University of Missouri Journalism graduate school
  - Southern Illinois Carbondale Film graduate school
  - Staffordshire University sports journalism graduate school

## Clubs and Co-Curricular

1. Does your program support any clubs and co-curricular activities that contribute to positive student experiences?
2. How does this contribute to the program?
3. To the campus experience of students?

### Narrative:

The WWU Film Club ran in coordination with Dr. Smith in the English Department, this organization provides opportunities for students interested in film to engage with the campus community, and prior to COVID, host an annual film festival. During this review cycle, the club hosted a series of LEAD events on campus.

## Program Analysis

### SWOT Analysis

1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

### Narrative:

#### Strengths

- Faculty are engaged and passionate about the program and the areas that they teach within.
- Student/Faculty relationships are healthy.

- The program is flexible to revision and updating - It is dynamic enough to change with industry demands.
- In a widely varied area, the program has multiple pathways that students can explore to find the best fit.

### **Weaknesses**

- A period of low enrollment slowed growth and will take years to recover from
- Curriculum spread has led to a further thinning of group size in courses.

### **Opportunities**

- As the program rebuilds, change is possible while the program is still small.
- New Media Corps requirements could provide enrollment boosts.
- Growth at the university, along with a new enrollment team can open new doors for recruiting students.
- Technology is becoming increasingly accessible to students, opening opportunities in film, video, and digital media.

### **Threats**

- Local competition from other programs.
- WWU owned equipment and technology falling behind, and out of date.
- Culturally, increasing distrust of journalists and associated careers.

### **Campus Facility and Resources**

1. Provide an analysis on how adequate the spaces that are most used by the program on campus (laboratories, office space, classrooms/LMS, etc.).
2. Please discuss any updates or modifications to the facility or resources available to the program that have impacted student learning.
3. Recommendations to Improve Facilities and Resources

### **Narrative:**

The program hosts a majority of its courses within the Kemper Art Center and the building and spaces are largely adequate, although in need of some general maintenance. In particular the program makes heavy use of KAC 206, 112, 148, and 216. Classroom technology is largely maintained by UIT.

Software is made free and available to students through UIT (Adobe) or partnerships formed by faculty (AVID, ASSIMILATE). Keeping the software licensees free and easy to access for students has boosted satisfaction in courses requiring specialty software.

### **Specialty Spaces:**

#### **KAC 216: Video Lab**

This lab is maintained by Tony Weed, and the computers within are regularly updated according to the UIT schedule. While the student workstations work well - the screen at the front of the room is far too

small and is difficult for students to see.

### **Radio Station:**

Located in the Kemper Art Center the radio station saw a significant upgrade of the course of this report due to a lightning strike. The station received a new transmitter along with associated equipment, a new broadcast board and now runs fiber-optic instead of copper to prevent future strikes.

### **TV / Podcast Studio (KAC 151)**

This space is host to the TV set - built by faculty. The equipment contained is mixed in age. The teleprompter system is close to 20 years old, however, with funds available a new switcher was able to purchase, and faculty were able to convert the old system to be compatible with HD broadcast. The TV studio does need new cameras, 10+ year old camcorders are currently being employed. A podcast studio was able to be constructed utilizing leftover parts from the radio lightning strike and budgeted department funds. The podcast studio can host up to 5 participants.

### **Equipment**

The program has not received enough of a budget for new audio/video equipment since 2013. Budgets do allow for some small replacement/repairs to keep the equipment up and running. The production courses would benefit from any upgrade.

## **Library Report**

\* Upload the Library report provided by the University Library

1. Please describe the usage of library resources.
2. How do faculty and students feel the library meets the program's needs?

### **Narrative:**

- The communication program makes use of library resources regularly. One Search is helpful to find what we have about any given topic. COM Abstracts helps us identify any research within the communication discipline. WWU may have access to these articles and if not, ILL requests are submitted. The library staff is responsive and provide articles quickly and it is much appreciated. The program also uses a variety of journals and eBooks. Our library staff and the resources they provide is excellent. The Communication faculty would be less effective educators without the library staff and all they provide.
- Students and faculty feel the library adequately meets our needs. It would be nice to have a full access to Communication & Mass Media Complete, but COM Abstracts is great and ILL requests are fulfilled quickly.

### **Evidence:**

- [Library Collection Analysis -- Communication 2025](#)

## Cost Analysis

1. What was the annual budget for the program for the past 5 years?
2. How was the budget spent? (breakdown of budget expenses)

### Narrative:

Annual budgets:

19-20: \$2,100

20-21: \$1,000

21-22: \$2,000

22-23: \$1,500

23-24: \$1,600

Expenses in the COM department largely center around the following: Printing/Duplication, radio music and broadcast licensing, and purchasing equipment for production coursework -- Over the past 5 years equipment purchases have been focused around replacing broken or severely outdated equipment and meeting the needs of students in the major. The department typically stays within or under budget.

## Specialty Accreditation

Does the program hold specialty accreditation?

If yes, please include the name of the accrediting body and upload the most recent accreditation letter. (description of the data points – describe the accreditation cycle– identify any points of concern noted on the most recent accreditation)

### Narrative:

Not applicable

## Industry and Program Trends

### Analysis of the Discipline

1. Provide context for the status of the discipline today.
2. What are some emerging trends in this discipline across the country?
3. What is happening in the industries related to this discipline?

### Narrative:

The communication discipline has become more relevant and important than ever as digitization has made mass communication accessible and ubiquitous. The field has grown beyond speaking through news releases, advertising and journalism, and has moved to directly communicating with audiences through the web and social media. Students and professionals alike are being asked to be able to produce content and speak through a variety of technologies rather than what may have been more individualized in the past. In the program we emphasize that it moved away from the "newspaper business" or "broadcast news" and is simply "news". This is true across the communication field and demands that students are capable. Clicks, views, and impressions are increasingly becoming the goal in a way that they haven't been in the past.

Certainly, as with other industries, AI is a concern, writing and generating content to be published and to collect clicks and views. Our students will need to learn how to navigate the professional world being able to discern AI from human, and to be able to demonstrate a greater value to their employers. Students will also need to be able to make use of tools, including AI, to be able to keep up with the demand for immediate, and plentiful output.

The affordability of digital tools and platforms, along with the clear need for a communication skillset, does expand the marketplace for students looking to pursue a career in communication. Increasingly we see content publishing coming from in-house departments. The expectation has shift to seeing students employed across a variety of businesses/institutions, where in the past we may have expected to see students land at newspapers/magazines, marketing/PR agencies, broadcast stations, or production studios.

## **Comparison to Similar Programs at Peer Institutions**

1. Identify and discuss how similar programs compare to your program in terms of size, curriculum and any relevant attributes.

**Narrative:**

## **Senior Exit Surveys**

1. What were some positive and negative feedback received from students as they complete their degrees?

2. Highlight any trends or insights that came from exit surveys over the course of the cycle.

**Narrative:**

The program did not conducted senior exit surveys during this review cycle. One action item is to begin conducting them during the 25-26 AY.

## **Graduate/Alumni Feedback on the Program**

1. What were some positive and negative feedback received from alumni?

2. Highlight any trends or insights that came from alumni feedback over the course of the cycle.

## **Narrative:**

### **Recommendations from Previous Program Reviews**

1. Summarize recommendations from previous PRs, describe how those recommendations were applied throughout this cycle.

## **Narrative:**

Recommendations from the previous program review (Submitted Spring 2019) asked for more regular assessment of program objectives, from multiple sources per objective. Since that review, and over the course of this review cycle, the program has ensured that all program objectives, and concentration objectives are assessed at least twice, from different sources. The program also incorporated Student Performance Reviews into the assessment process to ensure annual assessment of core objectives in the case a course is canceled or offered on every-other-year.

### **Industry Relevance and Employment**

1. How do your student learning outcomes align with industry needs?

## **Narrative:**

Students in the communication program at WWU engage with a multitude of industry standard tools within the communication programs coursework, and faculty are constantly revising courses to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of media. Students analyze trends, audiences, and examine campaigns through several different lenses to stay up-to-date with current communication methods. Students also learn the history of communication; the theories associated and are encouraged to understand how media has shaped itself and predict how it may shape itself in the future.

When building the core objectives for the major (repeated below) careful consideration was made in developing objectives that would set up students for success within the industry.

#### **Objective 1: Integrate theory into applied skills in a variety of communication settings.**

Students work across a variety of media including print, web, social, broadcast, and film.

#### **Objective 2: Identify the impact and responsibilities associated with a variety of communication behaviors.**

Students learn to understand the impact of their messages and how to tailor those messages for audiences.

#### **Objective 3: Critically evaluate messages through analytical approaches.**

Students can also analyze incoming messages from audiences or other constituents and learn how to respond to those communications.

#### **Objective 4: Use knowledge and information from the communication discipline to effectively communicate a persuasive message.**

Industry demands that students and communication professionals are able to leverage their skill sets to aid in persuading audiences towards a variety of goals, including economic, political, informational and educational.

## Employment Outlook

1. Describe employment outlook for the degree.
2. What types of employment would constitute working "in the field?"
3. Are there changes to program offerings and activities that would improve the employment outlook for graduates?

### Narrative:

The employment outlook for the discipline is strong. Any organization with internal/external communication has need for employees with our student's skillset. Students can go on to work in careers across: Public relations, strategic communication, marketing, social media, journalism, broadcast, streaming, news, sports, film, tv, radio and media communication.

Faculty in the program have been discussing additional courses specific to audience data collection and analysis that could be used to strengthen the research component within the program. An "emerging technology" course or section within current coursework could also be explored to incorporate various technologies (AI) as they evolve.

## External Review

### Executive Summary

General observations and comments are provided as to how the program aligns with and supports the University mission and curriculum, the quality of student learning and the achievement of student learning outcomes, the qualifications and achievements of faculty, the student experience, the state of facilities, the value of online resources and supports (if relevant), on-campus resources, financial resources, and how the program is responding to trends within the larger perspective of the program field.

### Narrative:

## Communication Program External Review

### William Woods University

**External Reviewer-** Dr. Nicole Freeman, Professor of Communication Studies & Basic Course Director at The University of Central Missouri

**Date of Review-** October 23, 2025

### Executive Summary

## **Program Alignment with University Mission and Curriculum**

The communication program at William Woods is extremely aligned with the overall University mission. The communication program supports the mission and curriculum in two ways. First, several general education courses are housed within and taught by the communication program faculty. Many of these general education programs advance critical thinking, intellectual inquiry and a greater understanding of, and respect for inclusion and diverse voices, which supports the University mission statement exceptionally well. Secondly, the communication program promotes lifelong learning, creativity and professions-oriented success within the discipline-related pedagogy and practices that are utilized in their major classes. The communication program exemplifies alignment with the University mission in theory and practicality.

## **Student Learning**

Student learning is the focus of the communication program and instructing faculty. The current program mission statement reads, “The communication program at William Woods University emphasizes a broad-based foundation in communication studies, complemented by a student-selected concentration in strategic communication, digital filmmaking, multimedia journalism, digital media, sport communication, or communication studies to ensure that the students are well prepared for a career in the field of communication.” The classes within the major blend theory with application and practice across the various concentrations, teaching students both how to create and interpret messages, but also why we create and interpret messages the way we do.

Pedagogically, the faculty regularly implement class discussions and practical, professional opportunities, which the students enjoy very much. The students reported feeling extremely supported by their faculty on both an interpersonal and intellectual level. The students enjoy the hands-on approach to learning that is utilized in the majority of their classes and value the practice, as well as the small class sizes and one-on-one attention.

The communication program also advances student learning and success through the instruction of their various general education courses. Due to their teaching and genuine care of and connection with students, they regularly recruit majors, or at the very least, repeat students, from the general education courses.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

The four student learning outcomes provide a strong blend of theory, practice and social responsibility across various communication settings. The first objective, to integrate theory into applied skills in a variety of communication settings, is met in their pedagogical approach to course instruction and coursework. The second objective is more interpersonal in nature, as it focuses on the identification and impact of a variety of communication behaviors. The program’s focus on critical inquiry, as well as the inclusion of diverse voices exemplifies this objective. There is extensive coursework in ethics and diversity/inclusivity. The third learning objective regards the evaluation of messages, which is also fully supported by the program. The vast number of concentration areas allows for students to experience message creation and evaluation in various interpersonal, verbal, written, and digital formats. Additionally, the faculty regularly engage in scholarship and research projects with the students, allowing for advanced analytical thinking. Finally, the fourth learning objective is exemplified in numerous courses in the program but is especially showcased in the portfolio and senior seminar, which are practical and professional-based experiences.

The faculty regularly gather and assess data to ensure the program is meeting the objectives. Based on the data collected, as well as current trends within the discipline and market, the faculty edit and

update the SLOs accordingly to remain current.

### **Qualifications and Achievements of Faculty**

The communication program has three full-time faculty and between one and three adjuncts (this varies depending on course load and program needs). Dr. Tony Weed, one of the three full-time faculty has recently been appointed to serve as Associate Provost, which reduces his course load to one course (3 credit hours) per semester. However, he is currently teaching roughly 10 credit hours. His specialty area is in film and digital media/technology, which align with his education and background. Dr. Anthony Cavaiani teaches a 4/4 course load, but also serves as the Faculty Athletics Liaison, which technically, grants him a course release (which he doesn't typically take). His focus and interest area resides mainly in sports communication, which is a growing emphasis area within the communication program at William Woods. The final full-time faculty is Professor Melissa Alpers-Springer. She used to teach a combination of communication and theater classes but now teaches more communication classes. While her education and background is more rooted in theater, she has attended extensive training and professional development courses in the communication discipline. She teaches a wide variety of courses within the program, ranging from Small Group, Queer Theory, Interpersonal, Gender, and even more media-related courses such as Mass Communication and Podcasting.

Due to the amount of emphasis areas within the program, the three full-time faculty members are quite accustomed to teaching a variety of courses on top of regularly reviewing and updating their courses and program to stay current with program needs, student interests and market trends. The three full-time faculty members also continuously work with students on research projects.

### **Student Experience**

The communication program creates a student-centered experience for all majors and students within their courses. Students are supported as individuals and intellectuals, are given opportunities to practice their craft, and are challenged to think more critically and broadly about the discipline and the world. The current communication majors felt very positively about their student experience, sharing comments such as "our faculty really care about us" and "our faculty support us, challenge us and help us become professionals." The faculty regularly create new classes to further support student learning and to better prepare them for the professional world. The students have access to labs and equipment to hone their skills. Overall, the students responded very positively to their experience with the Communication Program faculty, courses, and overall program experience.

### **The State of Facilities & On-Campus Resources**

The facilities utilized by the communication program are suitable for their current numbers and program emphasis areas. Alongside the traditional classrooms, the program has designated spaces for the following: a radio station, a podcast recording station, a television/film room equipped with cameras, teleprompters, lights, etc. In addition, there is an equipment check out space where students can check out cameras, light boxes, etc. This will be addressed in more detail in the following two sections.

### **Financial Resources**

At this time, the University has access to their specific program budgets but is under a spending freeze of monies outside of said program budgets. The communication program has an extremely supportive Associate Dean, Dean and Provost who do accommodate when monies are available and purchases align with student success and program growth. However, there is not an excess of resources available currently. Requests that were submitted early (prior to the start of the fall

semester) were granted and supported, but overall, the larger University is somewhat restricted regarding the availability of financial resources.

### **Program Responses to the Field & Market Trends**

The communication program has been extremely responsive to student needs and interests, as well as trends within the discipline and market. One of the most visible changes has occurred within the addition of concentration areas. Since their last review, Digital Media, Communication Studies, and the Open concentration area have all been added to the program. While other concentration areas were updated and adapted to better reflect current trends. Significant change has occurred in the digital film and media concentration areas. Courses are regularly updated to reflect trends regarding message creation and dissemination within the digital space.

The program has also been extremely responsive to needs across campus, and regularly classes to accommodate interdisciplinary learning, especially within the digital and mass communication areas and general education offerings.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Nicole Freeman  
Professor of Communication Studies  
Basic Course Director  
University of Central Missouri

### **Commentary**

Reviewers provide comments about the program strengths and challenges.

### **Narrative:**

#### **Program Strengths**

There are many notable strengths to be found within the communication program and faculty. Particular strengths reside within three key areas: the student experience provided, faculty buy-in/level of dedication and programmatic decision making.

First, the student experience provided is exceptional both interpersonally and intellectually. The interpersonal interactions between the faculty and student body is remarkable. When meeting with the students, the first comment made was “our faculty truly care about us”. For the duration of the discussion, numerous comments were made sharing similar sentiments; that the faculty were the heart of the program. Many students said that their interactions with the faculty are what brought them into the communication program to begin with. Two students even said that the interactions with the faculty are what kept them enrolled at William Woods rather than transferring to a larger school. The faculty are extremely compassionate and committed to student learning and success. They are empathetic and caring, and have created a learning environment that is inclusive, welcoming and supportive. The student experience spans beyond positive interactions with the faculty, however. Due to the small class sizes, as well as the program blending theory and practice together in each course, students felt more connected to their fellow majors and invested in their own learning. Students love the foundation on which the program stands- intellectual inquiry, meaningful

discussion and practical application.

The second key strength of the program is somewhat related, as it does directly involve the faculty again. The willingness and dedication of the faculty members have allowed the program to make extensive improvements to the program curriculum. Each of the three faculty members is truly invested in the betterment of the program and student experience. As such, they regularly update and add courses to better prepare their students for a successful transition into the professional ranks. They listen to the needs of the students, the greater campus community and the professional world, and they adapt accordingly. A direct example of this can be found in the Media Corp. This is an excellent opportunity for students to practice their craft by engaging in the practical application of coursework in various media-based settings.

James McCroskey's Source Credibility Scale (1999) is often used to measure perceptions and expectations of teacher effectiveness (see attached). There are three categories measured in the assessment: competency, caring/warmth and character. The communication program faculty exemplify each of these three dimensions. They are extremely knowledgeable in their field, and they take actions to remain current and up to date with emerging technologies, research and areas of study. They exhibit a tremendous amount of interpersonal warmth and cultivate strong relationships with their students by creating a learning environment built on exploration and inquiry, empathy and professionalism. The faculty have created a program and environment where students thrive.

While there are several other notable strengths of the program, one in particular is worth noting. Programmatic decisions are driven by data and greater need. The communication program has added numerous courses that are beneficial to the greater William Woods community. Many of these courses are included as general education offerings and are pivotal in advancing the University's mission. Other courses are uniquely designed and tailored for specific majors outside of the program. Additionally, the Media Corps provides service-learning experience to the students by providing service to the institution through their strong partnership with athletics. Overall, the communication program serves far beyond majors by supporting the larger William Woods community in a variety of ways. Many of these programmatic decisions are also driven by data and research. Programmatic edits are regularly made to better reflect market trends and developments within the field. The communication program remains current and relevant in an ever-changing world.

## **Program Challenges**

While there are many strengths within the current program, there are a few areas that present challenges and impact program success.

First, the willingness and dedication of the faculty is both a blessing and a curse. This has resulted in the faculty being severely overextended. Specifically, this can be seen in their course load requirements versus the load they are actually carrying each semester, and the amount of extra duties and responsibilities each one carries. All three of the faculty are currently teaching a significant overload, largely to accommodate students who are placed in "tutorials" and to offer the courses needed to continue student matriculation. These tutorials often consist of very few students, but require time, effort and resources. Additionally, the faculty are required to advise students of all majors, and often find themselves filling other roles, such as the liaison to the athletic department, or supervisor of the Media Corps. While all of these experiences and roles are crucial and are of great importance, they add a considerable amount of workload. Continuing at this pace could lead to

faculty indifference, impacting the intimate nature of the department, or worse yet, burnout.

One of the issues that has stemmed from this, is the development of a program that has become so broad, that it may have lost focus and specificity. One particular sentiment shared was “is the program trying to be too many things for too many people?” Based on the current available concentration options, it does seem that the true identity of the communication program has become somewhat skewed. This becomes even more problematic when the overall number of majors is quite low. Without student numbers to fill concentration areas and courses, the faculty are left accommodating students, making programmatic substitutions and teaching more tutorials.

The small enrollment of current program majors and minors is another challenge/concern. Overall numbers have decreased post-COVID. While they are slowly beginning to rise, it is difficult for the program to advocate for more resources and support with such small enrollment. Part of this stems from the current enrollment shelf that all institutions of higher education are facing due to lower birth rate and fewer students choosing to attend four-year institutions. Previous recruitment strategies at the admissions level have been somewhat neglectful of the program, which likely also has contributed to the issue. Regardless, the low program enrollment is a significant challenge and issue to be addressed.

The final area of largest concern is the availability of funding. While this is more of an overall University issue, it is impacting the communication program directly in numerous ways, namely in the equipment available. A large population of current majors is directly tied to the technology-dependent concentration areas, such as film and media. The program does have sufficient spaces available in which students can practice their craft, however, much of the equipment is limited, outdated or even broken/unusable. Students explained that some of the pieces of equipment that are available for checkout do not work. Others shared that if there is equipment available, it is quite limited. For example, there is only one area in which to practice podcasting. It was even shared that the faculty members themselves bring in their own equipment to use in the classroom, so students have more access. In a concentration and profession that is ever-evolving and highly reliant on equipment-related skills, students must have more opportunity for hands-on practice and experience. A great strength of the program is that students will have more opportunities for such experiences due to the smaller class sizes. However, if there is no equipment available, that is not a true statement that can be used to leverage the program or recruit students.

#### **Evidence:**

- [McCroskey- Source Credibility Measurement](#)

#### **Recommendations**

Comments provide future direction for the faculty to use to improve student learning. Evaluative feedback is offered, as well as suggestions to improve any aspect of the program. Recommendations that require no new resource as well as those that do are welcome, alongside identifying areas for program development based on market/industry demands not yet identified by the university or program faculty. The report may include recommendations that have been shown to be effective elsewhere.

## **Narrative:**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The university is of course not obligated to implement all or even any of the following suggestions. Some of these initiatives lie within the authority of the faculty to implement; others require authorization from the Dean or even higher-level authority. The reviewer suggest that all concerned parties consider the following recommendations:

1. Streamline the program. Currently, the program has seven concentration areas for roughly 20 majors. While trying to offer a variety of concentrations casts a larger net for prospective majors, it also leads to significant modifications, substitutions and overburdened faculty.
  - a. Consider combining some of the concentrations together and focus on the strengths of the faculty, market trends and available resources to make guiding decisions. Concentration examples may include: Sports Communication, Digital Film Making, Mediated Communication (combining Media Journalism and Digital Media), and Communication Studies (combining Strategic Comm, CS and the Open option).
  - b. In addition to streamlining the concentrations, consider streamlining some of the courses. Look for areas where the learning objectives can focus on advancing skill sets in or across multiple areas. Rather than creating an entirely new class focused on addressing student deficiencies or what is trending in the market/discipline, identify where those elements can be integrated into already existing courses. Additionally, continue to identify partnerships/collaborations with other programs on campus who offer complementary courses, further reducing the course load burden on the Communication faculty.
  - c. Update the curriculum map and create -OR- options within the program. In some of the concentration areas, utilizing the -OR- option in a student's plan of study will reduce the amount of tutorials needed, and will allow students to complete their degree without a great deal of substitutions. This would also bring more student choice and interest into the concentration areas without needing so many defined concentrations. For example, in the Communication Studies concentration, perhaps students have the choice to take Gender Comm -OR- Ethics in Sexuality, or Business Communication -OR- Sports Communication.
  - d. Revisit the format and objectives for the Senior Capstone class. Perhaps it would be better suited as a required internship (which was suggested and supported by students). If it were an online, self-guided experience affiliated with an internship, it may also free up a small amount of faculty time (face-to-face).
2. Explore options for financial support. While this may be an area that requires discussion and decision making across the University, there are some worthy conversations to be had regarding funding and/or available monies.
  - a. Identify where the course fee money is allocated across campus; see if there can be a more direct line to receiving the course fee kickback for the more equipment-based courses in the program.
  - b. Foster stronger relationships with the local high schools to bolster dual credit offerings. This may also help with recruitment of undergraduate students and graduate students (dual credit instructors need coursework at the master's level).
  - c. One concern brought up by students was how many film classes and experiences were in an online format. Consider exploring an Artist-in-Residence to assist with film classes and/or split that position with another program in the college.

- d. Explore opportunities for the Media Corps to receive payment for their services to the University. They are currently providing a great service to the institution. While this is a good learning experience, this also creates wear and tear of equipment, etc. This could be a nice way for the program to receive a kick back for the services they offer to the greater William Woods community. A strong example of this partnership can be found at the University of Central Missouri. I would encourage you to speak with Dr. Joe Moore or Mr. Darin Plummer about this.
  - e. Continue to work closely with admissions on a more targeted recruitment strategy for the program.
3. Explore other ways for the faculty to be less overextended.
    - a. Open a discussion about advising. Is it possible to only advise students who are communication majors? I know it is a small school, but advising students who are majors in other programs seems potentially problematic and/or time consuming. How many extra steps occur when having to make and approve substitutions, for example?

## **Program Response to External Review**

### **Program Response**

After the External Report is submitted, the Program faculty will respond to any comments where the reviewer has noted need of improvement or where additional explanation is needed. The faculty response will also include a response to the recommendations of the reviewer and their action plan to move forward with recommendations, or what is needed for the program to move forward with a recommendation. This response is added to the report and submitted to Academic Council for final review.

### **Narrative:**

Dr. Freeman's review is helpful for our program. We appreciate the time and care she put into the process. Our response to the program challenges and recommendations are below.

Addressing the COM faculty being overextended is a symptom of the other challenges she mentioned, in addition to the recommendations she offered. We believe we must begin by evaluating how each individual course contributes to the overall program goals and objectives and then move into the specific concentrations. Once we address these concerns, we do not believe all three of us will be as overextended as we are currently. The second challenge about the program as too broad in nature, and thus, losing focus and specificity is valid. After this review, we will diligently work to address that challenge. The most likely way to address this is to streamline the program. Her recommendation about having four concentrations—Digital Filmmaking; Mediated Communication; Sports Communication; and Communication Studies—is a good recommendation. The COM faculty will collaborate and decide on appropriate naming/language/wording of these concentrations and which courses would fit within each concentration. Her suggestion about offering two or more options where students select from among several courses for part of their coursework is also a great idea. These are all ideas the COM faculty will consider once the program review process is completed.

Our program can also streamline learning objectives into existing courses rather than adding new ones. We can also discuss whether the senior seminar class should be replaced with an internship option, which would also free up faculty course load. There are benefits to the senior seminar class but the benefit to the student may now be best served through required internship experience.

Students involved in Media Corps are compensated for their work through scholarship funds ranging from \$1,000 - \$5,000 annually. The budgeting process has been changed and is now based on projected spending and done in coordination with the Dean of the school ahead of the next fiscal year. With this new budgeting process in place, the program intends to engage fully and is confident its needs can be met. The previous budgeting process allocated funds based on previous year spending, and as a result, made it difficult for the program to make requests. Course fees are in place and cover day-to-day expenses within the courses. Camera kits have been developed for students to purchase at heavily discounted rates through the university. To date, students have opted to use either the equipment available in checkout or their current personal equipment.

Note: Required Film (FLM) courses within the COM concentration (3 total classes) have been brought on ground as needed when a critical mass of students is achieved. The FLM program is an online-only program which is why a majority of FLM courses are online.

## **Academic Council Review**

### **Academic Council Response**

Academic Council will review the report in its entirety and come together to discuss any remaining questions or concerns. The council will highlight noted areas of improvement for program focus. Issues of resources are discussed if additional resources are needed to implement improvements noted by the Reviewer, the faculty or Academic Council.

#### **Narrative:**

##### Strengths

- Alignment to the mission is well-developed and clear.
- Substantial changes to course descriptions, etc., are well documented in the report.
- Faculty involvement in retention of students; Implementation of plans to address enrollment decline in major; honest explanation of the assessment program (weaknesses and strengths); revelation of the mission occurred; renewed commitment to collecting data in Watermark.
- Did a great job mapping the changes that have taken place in the program and also in describing how the mission aligns with the institutional mission.
- Thorough explanation of course description and title changes during the reporting cycle.

##### Challenges

- Missing assessment data (as acknowledged in the report).
- The frequency in which courses changed names - which can/does create cascading negative effects for advisors, students, the Registrar, etc. I would recommend having set

courses for the major that parallel programs offered at other institutions in comparison to faculty interests.

- The area supports general education action but also other majors and concentrations.
- The program has been negatively affected by being so responsive to outside forces, especially admissions and media corps and maybe the Leadership concentration as well; it makes the program rather broad and unfocused for its size relative to the faculty or majors.

Action Items:

- The program is conceptually strong and has solid objectives. Maybe refocus the concentrations and course offerings-- including paring back GE offerings-- to better suit the teaching loads of faculty and to better give students a deeper understanding of the field.
- Continued work on turning around the overall enrollment decline.
- It is a positive strategy to make the minor available online. Continue to find programming ideas that will draw in students and increase retention.
- The program creating avenues for out of class engagement are very positive and should be pursued: meetups, speakers, get togethers, field trip.
- It seems that they have already made a number of adjustments that speak to the reviewer comments and review analysis which is a step in the right direction.