

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

College of Arts and Letters

Spring 2005

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Communication Studies
Executive Committee, Department of Communication Studies
Tenured Faculty, Department of Communication Studies
Journalism Faculty, Department of Communication Studies
Probationary Faculty, Department of Communication Studies
Part-time Faculty, Department of Communication Studies
Undergraduate Students, Communication Studies major
Graduate Students, Communication Studies (in COMS 201)

Documents Consulted:

1999 Academic Program Review Report
Advising Documents, Department of Communication Studies
CSUS University Catalog (2004-2006)
Department of Communication Studies Course Syllabi
Department of Communication Studies Self-Study
Department of Communication Studies ARTP Policies and Procedures
Faculty Vitae
External Consultant's Report
Department of Communication Studies Webpage

STATEMENT OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations

1. The Department is to be commended for its shared vision of and strong commitment to liberal arts majors in Communication Studies and Journalism.
2. The Department faculty and staff are to be commended for offering undergraduate and graduate programs of such size and complexity.
3. The Chair, Val Smith is to be commended for providing effective leadership to a large department and its academic programs. The faculty and departmental secretaries are to be commended for providing collegial support for the chair.
4. The Department and its faculty are to be commended on their efforts to remain current in areas of curriculum. In particular this includes: development of the Digital Media Concentration and the establishment of a core curriculum in the undergraduate major.
5. The Department is to be commended for its aggressive pursuit of resources to support its media facilities.
6. The Communications Studies faculty are to be commended for their high level of service activity both within the department and across the University.
7. The senior faculty is to be commended on their strong efforts to integrate junior faculty into the Department and their willingness to accommodate their teaching preferences.
8. The Department faculty is to be commended on their emphasis on collegiality and consensus decision making in department governance.
9. The Department faculty are to be commended for their efforts to address the issues of collegiality that had been noted in the Department's previous program review.
11. The *State Hornet* is to be commended for the recent changes, personnel and otherwise, to strengthen its management.
12. Members of the Department office staff, Maggie Fuchs, Peggy Allan, Lori O'Laughlin, and their assistants, are to be commended for their efforts in providing constant support to the large faculty, large student body, and complex major that comprise the Department of Communication Studies.

Recommendations

To the Department

- The Communications Studies Department needs to put in place an acceptable academic assessment process that is in line with current University expectations.
- The Department needs to provide more guidance for junior faculty in regard to RTP expectations, particularly as this applies in the area of scholarly and creative activity.
- The Department should address the tension that exists on the part of the Journalism faculty regarding their position in the Communication Studies program; discussion should take place to identify ways of bringing about a smoother integration of the programs.
- The Department should consider the addition of both a methods course and a professional preparation class to the undergraduate curriculum.
- The Department should follow the external consultant's recommendation to make an effort to identify bottlenecks in student progress toward the degree.
- The Department should work to develop opportunities by which students in the graduate program can gain teaching experience.
- The Department should attempt to develop, with graduate students, strategies for improving the scheduling of graduate course offerings.
- The Department should work with the Dean to address (1) the issue of optimal class size and (2) the concern over perceived "size creep" in class enrollment caps.
- The Department needs to clarify faculty advising responsibilities, which currently fall disproportionately on the Chair; the Department should also seek restoration of funds for an advising coordinator.
- In the area of departmental governance, the Department needs to develop a procedure for summer-time decision-making by the departmental leadership when faculty consultation may prove difficult.
- The Department should seek to hire a faculty member in each of the areas of Public Relations and Intercultural Communication. At the same time, the Department should develop a long-range (5-7 year) hiring plan.
- It is recommended that the Department and the management of *The State Hornet* seek the resources to (1) increase the frequency of its publication and (2) convert to a "digital newsroom."

- In light of the increased need created by the introduction of the Digital Media concentration, the Department should work with the College to expand the technical support at its disposal.
- The Department should make efforts to strengthen its alumni relations.

To the College

- The Dean should allow the Department of Communication Studies to hire one new faculty member in each of the areas of Public Relations and Intercultural Communications as soon as possible.
- The Dean office and the Department should work together with Space Management to devise ways to provide the Department with more space for the main department office.
- The College should work with the Department to provide it with the additional technical support it needs to effectively support its digital media concentration.
- The College should work with the Department and the management of *The State Hornet* to identify ways to allow the newspaper to (1) increase its publication frequency and (2) begin development of a “digital newsroom.”
- The Dean and the Department need to work together to (1) clarify expectations as to the enrollment targets for classes offered by the Department and (2) resolve Departmental concerns over the perceived upward “creep” in course enrollment caps.

To the University

- The Department should be allowed to make faculty hires in the areas of Public Relations and Intercultural Communication as soon as possible.
- The College and Space Management should begin a discussion of ways to increase the space available for the Communication Studies main departmental office.
- The University should work with College and the Department to find ways of increasing *The State Hornet's* publication frequency.
- The University, specifically Academic Affairs, should work with the Department to bring its assessment plan in line with University expectations.
- If the Department fails to develop an acceptable assessment plan by the time of its next program review, Academic Affairs should advise the review team to recommend the Communication Studies Program for only provisional approval.

OVERVIEW

Communication Studies is one of the twelve academic units that make up the College of Arts and Letters and, with more than 1200 majors, constitutes one of the largest academic departments in the University. It offers 11 pathways (majors, concentrations within majors, and options within concentrations) leading to the B.A. degree along with two minors, one in Communication Studies and the other in Journalism. There is also a 30-unit graduate program leading to a Master's degree (M.A.) in Communication Studies.

Additionally, the Department houses two co-curricular activities, the Intercollegiate Forensics program (debate) and *The State Hornet*, a weekly campus newspaper operated by students under faculty supervision. Epsilon Phi, the National Communications Honors Society, is also housed within the Department.

The Department's mission statement views the faculty of Communication Studies and Journalism as a community of professionals united by a common body of knowledge related to the creation, application, and understanding of messages. The Department seeks to provide a liberal arts education for its students with an emphasis on Communication Studies. According to the Self-Study, "The Department exists to provide quality instruction that assists students in becoming intellectually aware citizens who are ethical, competent communicators." In addition, the Department seeks to advance the body of scholarly knowledge central to the discipline.

Curriculum Structure

The Communication Studies major offers undergraduate students multiple course patterns by which they may attain a Bachelor's degree. Specifically, the Program offers a choice five concentrations with the Communication Studies major:

- General Communication
- Organizational Communication
- Media Communication
- Public Relations
- Digital Media

Students may also choose from among six Options across these Concentrations:

- Interpersonal-Small Group
- Intercultural
- Criticism and Public Communication
- Organizational Communication
- Mass Media Communication
- Telecommunications and New Media

Ultimately, these choices allow students the option of choosing from among eleven different paths to the B.A. and, depending on the concentration chosen, requirements will range between 39-48 units.

In addition, the Department of Communication Studies also houses the Journalism major, and helps to jointly offer the Government Journalism major. The Department also houses the Communication Studies and Journalism minors and participates in offering the Film Studies minor, an interdisciplinary offering shared among six different academic programs.

The variety of choices offers students considerable flexibility as they pursue the Communications studies degree, but there is no doubt that the simple task of outlining and explaining the possible options and their requirements is a daunting one. Given the complexity involved, the University catalog description is probably as clear as can be expected. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that, for first time readers, navigating the choices will prove a challenge.

In addition to offering both bachelors and masters degrees in Communication Studies and the bachelors degree in Journalism, the Department is also an important participant in the University's General Education program, particularly in areas A1 (Oral Communication), A3 (Critical thinking), D2 (Major Social Issues of the Contemporary Era), and E (Understanding Personal Development).

Faculty

The Department consists of 41 full-time faculty, of whom 31 were tenured at the time of the program review. Twenty-seven were male and 14 female, while eight qualify as members of minority groups. The biggest challenge in this category is the aging of the faculty; at the time of the review, the largest single decadal cohort consisted of faculty aged 50-59. To a certain degree, however, this pressure has been relieved by the large number of new faculty hires in recent years—more than 10 since 2000-2001. As has been the case with many other programs in the University, Communication Studies has been characterized by considerable faculty turn-over in recent years.

At the time of the previous program review the Department was understaffed in terms of full-time faculty. The Department had to rely excessively on part-time lecturers, and many areas of the program—most notably the new Digital Media and Public Relations concentrations, along with Journalism—suffered as a result. With the new hires of the

past several years this situation has been alleviated and the current full-time faculty are more closely aligned with programmatic needs.

Faculty take great pride in their teaching. Evaluations indicate that the overall teaching effectiveness of faculty in the Department is quite high. Students rate 84% of faculty performances as falling into the “very good” or “excellent” categories, with an additional 11% ranked as “good.” (For an overall total of 95%.) In addition, five Communications Studies faculty (Chase, LeFebvre, Kidd, Perkins, and Stoner) have received the College’s outstanding teaching award over the past 10 years.

Workload, however, is an issue of serious concern among Department faculty. When asked to indicate the most serious problem they faced, faculty identified their teaching workload more frequently than any other.

Several years ago the faculty elected to forego the possibility of accepting a reduced teaching load by increasing class size (3-3 as opposed to the current 4-4) in order to retain the smaller class sizes they felt necessary to offer a quality program. Following this decision, however, the faculty have felt themselves under pressure from the College to raise the enrollment caps on class sections and accept more students in order to help the College and University make its enrollment targets, a process they refer to as “size creep.” This has created resentment among the faculty who feel that it is a violation of the informal compact reached with the College under which they accepted a higher teaching load in exchange for small class size.

Additionally, the SFR (student-faculty ratio) for Department class sections (25.3) is significantly higher than that of either the College (22.1) or University (20.9).

It is unclear statistically if “size creep” is a serious issue. The Department’s own data suggest that average class size increased modestly between 1999 and 2003 from 28.5 to 30.3. Whether this has had an overall significant impact on class quality is debatable. It is likely to have been felt more heavily in performance courses (such as oral communication) than in lecture classes, for example. It is clear, however, that the faculty perceive this to be a significant problem that is affecting faculty morale.

The Department only has specific expectations for scholarly and creative activity in the case of faculty under consideration for retention, tenure, and promotion, in which case it counts for 25 percent of the review criteria. There are no formal expectations for tenured full professors.

The Department’s definition of scholarly and creative activity is broad, encompassing a wide range of activities in the areas of communication studies and journalism. Nonetheless, the review team found that there was significant anxiety among junior faculty as to what is expected of them in this category. This anxiety appears to be common across campus and is perhaps to be expected as the faculty culture shifts somewhat, with the arrival of new hires, from the traditional view of the University as almost exclusively a teaching institution. It may also be due to the fact that informal

expectations about scholarly and creative activity vary among faculty within the Department.

That said, faculty involvement in this area is solid, as a listing in the Self-Study of the recent activity in this area for 26 faculty members shows.

At the time of the review the Communication Studies program had a total of 1286 majors distributed as follows:

Communication Studies, undergraduate majors (B.A.):	1078
Communication Studies, graduate students (M.A.):	55
Journalism:	132
Government Journalism:	21

Demographically, these students reflect the make-up of the College and the University as a whole. Approximately 61% of the majors are female and 39% are male. Ethnically, Whites make up 53%, Asians 17%, Hispanics 13%, and African Americans 7%. (10 percent identified as Other.)

Student performance is generally in line with that of the College and the University as a whole. The Department became aware in 2002 that its grade distributions were skewed somewhat toward the high end of the scale. To address this issue the Department began to provide instructors with annual feedback on the grade distributions in their courses, which has had the effect of redressing the problem, primarily through the reduction of high-end grades, notably A's.

In general, students seem quite satisfied with the program. This is especially the case with graduate students, for whom the program has a good reputation and for whom this program is frequently their first choice.

In terms of day-to-day services, primary support for students comes from the three members of the office staff, Maggie Fuchs, Peggy Allan, and Lori O'Laughlin, who are able to provide students many of the practical answers they seek.

Institutional Support, Resources, and Governance

The Communications Studies Department considers itself "well-connected to the Library in programmatic, personnel, and material ways." For the Department, library resources changed significantly over the past decade due to two factors: first, budgetary constraints on periodical and acquisition budgets that have cut into the number and currency of relevant print holdings and, second, the rise of electronic media (holds, data bases, and use of the internet).

In terms of traditional serial holdings, the Department feels it is meeting its primary goals of (1) maintaining a collection of journals that represent the mainstream publications in

the field and (2) maintaining a collection capable of meeting student—and where possible, faculty—research needs.

The Department has also worked with the library to develop or acquire electronic indices and data bases and, where possible, to allow for the full-text retrieval of articles in digital form. In addition, the Interlibrary Loan service is an important resource for the Department.

Financial resources appear to be adequate to support the program. If one overlooks the issue of class size creep mentioned above, there is also a sense that the Department in general has been well supported by the College. Specific areas where the Department feels it has had insufficient support have been (1) its inability to fund faculty travel and sponsor department retreats and (2) resources for an advising coordinator—important for a program of 1200 majors. Donated faculty consulting fees and contributions from the Institute for the Study of Politics and the Media have provided a certain amount of support for faculty travel and retreats; funding for an advising coordinator disappeared some years ago during a time of fiscal retrenchment and has never been restored.

In terms of space, the Department is cramped (as are most other campus programs) but space generally seems adequate. The one area where space seems to be a real issue is that Department's main office. Files have been kept in the hallway in locked cabinets due to lack of space ever since the one time office store room was converted into a faculty office.

The biggest area of concern in terms of support is technical support. The need for technical support has increased considerably in recent years, particularly with the introduction of the new digital media concentration. These problems are also exacerbated by personality issues, both among technicians and between technicians and the faculty. The latter are only likely to be resolved through a turnover in the current support personnel.

In terms of governance, the Department adopts a consensus-based approach where the primary decision-making authority is vested in faculty committees and the Chair operates primarily as a facilitator and day-to-day department manager. The Department has nine faculty committees responsible for specific areas of department management and decision-making as well as a 12-member executive committee.

This approach has its obvious strengths in that the strong committee structure serves to promote faculty consensus on many issues. It also has its weaknesses in that it can be slow to operate, a problem in situations where decisions have to be made quickly, and it does not work very well during the summer months when faculty are not readily available and committees find it hard to meet. This has created difficulties for the Chair when, during the summer, he has had to act without being able to adequately consult the appropriate faculty bodies.

Other Issues

Two issues affecting the Department of Communication Studies are not addressed in the overview above, both related to the complexity and size of the programs the department offers.

First, Curricular Complexity: It cannot be denied that the undergraduate Communications Studies major, with its multiple pathways to the degree, is exceedingly complex. It has been suggested by some, including the external consultant, that the Department make an effort to reduce the number of options available in order to (1) reduce the complexity of class scheduling and (2) simplify the advising process. The Program Review Team considered making such a recommendation but ultimately decided against it on the grounds that, although complex, the present curriculum appears to be working reasonably well. Students seemed satisfied with the structure of the curriculum and seemed to have no trouble negotiating it. On the plus side, they appear to appreciate the flexibility and range of choices it offers. The Department may choose to consider simplifying the curriculum if it wishes, of course, but the Review Team sees no compelling reason to recommend it do so.

Second, Department Size: The Department of Communication Studies currently offers one of the largest and most complex programs on campus; in addition, since 1995, the Department has also housed the Journalism program, which offers its own separate major. There is a sense both inside and outside the program that its size has become an issue and that something should be done about it.

The question, of course, is what? – And here opinions differ. Some at the College and University level have suggested that the Department is too large and should be broken up into two or more smaller departments, while others within the Department have suggested that the program should form the basis of a larger entity, such as an independent college, or at least a school (analogous to the campus's School of the Arts).

After consideration, the Program Review Team recommends that Communication Studies retain its current structure, that of an academic department, and not be reorganized at this time. The reasons are as follows:

- Although the Department is large, it nonetheless is capable of offering an effective set of quality academic programs.
- Breaking up the Department into a series of smaller independent programs could not be done cleanly because of the extensive overlap of faculty and courses among concentrations and majors. Breaking up the Department would simply create the burden of setting up a complicated series of interdisciplinary working relationships among the newly independent programs. In addition, it would almost certainly lead to increased administrative costs for the programs.

- It is unclear what advantage there would be (other than, perhaps, status) to allow the Department to evolve into a School or College at this time. Any advantages are not at all clear and, again, administrative costs would likely increase.

Response to Recommendations from Last Program Review

The previous Communication Studies program review was conducted in 1999, at which time the review team made eleven recommendations to the Department that covered a range of topics including interpersonal relationships among Department faculty, relationships with the College, assessment, and a variety of issues affecting curriculum, scheduling, and internships. The Department's responses contained in its 2004 Self-Study were as follows:

- Recommendation: *That the Department bring in an external consultant to help it address the problem of internal interpersonal conflicts.*
The 1999 review identified five areas of contention within the Department and recommended bringing in an external consultant to help it resolve the issues. The Department declined to do so, electing to address the issues by a series of different approaches: the Department argued convincingly that one identified area was a resource issue and not one of interpersonal conflict, three others were resolved by votes among the faculty, and the Department addressed the fifth by developing a "statement of cooperative principles" at a Department retreat instead, fearing that introduction of an outside consultant would only serve to exacerbate the problem. The Review Team feels the response is satisfactory; while not all issues have been fully resolved, it is clear significant progress has been made.
- Recommendation: *That the Department and College engage in a dialogue to improve trust and enhance their working relationship.*
This dialogue appears to have taken place, since the working relationship seems to have improved significantly. Some frustration on both sides over issues relating to resource allocation—something not uncommon to many academic programs—remains, however.
- Recommendation: *That the College consider an independent review of the Journalism major.*
Such a review has since taken place.
- Recommendation: *That the Department consider reorganizing its graduate curriculum into a single concentration.*
The reorganization has taken place.
- Recommendation: *That the Department finalize its assessment plan.*
An assessment plan was finalized and approved although, as noted elsewhere in this report, it remains to be brought in line with recent changes in University assessment expectations.

- Recommendation: *That the Department consider revising the intern evaluation form. At the time of the review, the intern process was undergoing revision and two internship coordinators were assigned, beginning Fall 2004.*
- Recommendation: *That the Department consider employing course evaluation instruments other than the one currently in use.*
The Department discussed this briefly at one faculty meeting but no action has yet been taken.
- Recommendation: *That the Department consider how it obtains information from students on which to base course planning decisions. That the Department also consider establishing a regular meeting time with students and provide for students to serve as voting members of standing committees..*
Although the Department assessment plan includes a senior survey that addresses these questions, no formal feedback process has been established. The Department also questions the desirability of adding students to standing committees.
- Recommendation: *That the Department develop a formal plan to strengthen alumni relations.*
The Department had taken no action on this at the time of the review.
- Recommendation: *That the Department develop a collaborative relationship with both Computer Science and Theatre Arts to share media and equipment resources.*
The Department assessed the desirability of taking such a step but has declined to do so in the belief that the Department would lose more than it would gain in such a pooling effort.
- Recommendation: *That a part-time coordinator be instituted for Journalism internships.*
The Journalism internship program is no longer free-standing but has been folded into the Department's overall internship program.

In general the responses of the Department of Communication Studies to responses to these recommendations (found in its 2004 Self-Study) are satisfactory. The current chair and faculty seem content with the present allocation of chair responsibilities, and the Department now posts a 2-year schedule on the web. Most of the curricular concerns raised in 1998 also have been addressed or are currently under consideration, much of this having taken place as a natural consequence of the large influx of junior faculty since the last program review.

The Department acknowledges, however, that it has yet to act on recommendations in two key areas: development of a methods course for its majors and strengthening career advising. These points will be addressed in the set of recommendations that follow.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon its review of the Communication Studies program, the Program Review Team makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations to the Department

- Recommendation: *The Department of Communications needs to put in place an acceptable academic assessment process that is in line with current University expectations*

The Department of Communication Studies currently has a portfolio-based assessment process in place for the eleven basic concentrations, areas, and options that comprise the major. The portfolios are reviewed by the assessment committee with an eye toward where they exceeded, equaled, or fell short of the desired outcomes. The results of the portfolio assessment then serve as the basis for suggested changes in program curricula, teaching practices, or resource allocation. In addition, a nine-question survey is also conducted of graduating seniors.

While the assessment plan described in the Department of Communication Studies Self-Study is undoubtedly useful in a number of ways, it fails to satisfy the objectives of an acceptable academic assessment plan, as defined by the University. Specifically, an assessment plan should contain three elements: (1) a set of clearly defined and measurable learning outcomes that are linked to programmatic goals/learning objectives, (2) a set of specific strategies/methods the program will use to assess whether students have achieved the identified learning outcomes, and (3) a process for incorporating the assessment results into curricular planning. The existing assessment process fails to do this.

Assistance in the development and implementation of an acceptable assessment process can be obtained from the Office of Academic Affairs. The review team recommends to the University that if the Department does not have a full assessment process in place by the time of its next program review, it receive only conditional approval for its programs.

To this end it should be noted that, while general program goals are not specifically stated in the Self-Study, as such, three core learning objectives are identified for all Communication Studies majors. Graduates from the program should be able to:

1. Construct well-reasoned arguments, avoiding fallacious reasoning
2. Demonstrate the ability to competently evaluate communications research
3. Design and present effective messages

The courses by which these objectives are met are identified for each of the six concentrations within the major. It is now a matter of devising a workable plan for assessing achievement of these goals.

The Department should note that it is the working policy of the Program Review Oversight Committee to recommend that, should the Department not address this matter by the time of the next program review, the Department be recommended for only a provisional approval at that time. (See Recommendation #5 to the University below.)

- Recommendation: *The Department needs to provide more guidance for junior faculty in regard to RTP expectations, particularly as this applies in the area of scholarly and creative activity.*

As noted above there is a certain amount of anxiety among junior faculty as to what is expected of them, particularly in the area of scholarly and creative activity for retention, tenure, and promotion. To a certain degree, this anxiety is common to many departments on campus. Nonetheless, the Department should hold periodic meetings with junior faculty for the purposes of clarifying expectations.

- Recommendation: *The Department should address the tension that exists on the part of the Journalism faculty regarding their position in the Department of Communication Studies; discussion should take place to identify ways of bringing about a smoother integration of the programs.*

In discussion with both the review team and the external consultant, some members of the Journalism faculty indicated that they did not feel fully a part of the Department of Communication Studies. There existed a sense that the merging of Journalism with Communication Studies in the mid-1990s was something forced upon the program and that Journalism is merely administered by Communication Studies. While these feelings were alleviated somewhat by a recent faculty hire in Journalism, there was still a sense that Journalism faculty were not fully part of the Department of Communication Studies. The Communication Studies and Journalism faculty should continue to discuss ways on how the Journalism program (and the Journalism faculty) may be more fully integrated into the Communication Studies curriculum.

- Recommendation: *The Department should consider the addition of both a methods course and a professional preparation class to the undergraduate curriculum.*

The addition of a methods course to the undergraduate major was a recommendation of the previous program review upon which the Department has yet to act. The current review repeats this recommendation. It is also recommended that the Department consider adding a professional preparation class to the undergraduate curriculum as a way of strengthening employment prospects for its majors.

- Recommendation: *The Department should follow the external consultant's recommendation to make an effort to identify bottlenecks in student progress toward the degree.*

The external consultant notes that given the complexity of the Communications Studies major with its multiple pathways to an undergraduate degree, scheduling inefficiencies and bottlenecks are likely to occur. The Review Team agrees with the external consultant that the Department should continue to examine both its curriculum and its scheduling practices to identify and alleviate any such bottlenecks that may impede student progress toward the degree.

- Recommendation: *The Department should work to develop opportunities by which students in the graduate program can gain teaching experience.*

There appears to be a high level of interest among many graduate students in eventually teaching, particularly at the community college level. At the same time, the opportunities for graduate teaching assistantships appear to be limited within the Department. Given this, the Department should work to develop and expand opportunities for graduate students to gain teaching experience while in the program. It could be on a volunteer basis and possibly in an adjunct capacity. (The History Department's efforts along this line using the HIST 400 course offering might serve as a model.) In addition, the Department might work with the Center for Teaching and Learning to see if graduate students could attend workshops on pedagogy, teaching technology, etc. to give them an advantage when seeking teaching positions.

- Recommendation: *The Department should develop, in consultation with its graduate students, strategies for improving the scheduling of graduate course offerings.*

There is a feeling among graduate students that desired courses are not offered regularly enough and that, frequently, independent study must be substituted for graduate courses in order for students to complete their program in a timely manner. It is recommended that the Department consult with graduate students to identify their concerns in this regard and then (1) assess the degree to which this is an actual problem and (2) if so, attempt to find ways of relieving it.

- Recommendation: *The Department needs to work with the Dean to address (1) the issue of optimal class size and (2) the Department's concern over perceived "size creep" in class enrollment caps.*

This is a significant morale issue among Communications Studies faculty, who identify the College as the culprit in allowing it to occur (see above). A dialog needs to take place between Department and College to (1) clear the air and reduce the tension between the two parties over this issue (2) identify what the appropriate class sizes should be, particularly those considered "performance Classes" and (3) attempt to arrive at a mutually acceptable strategy for maintaining class sizes at those sizes.

- Recommendation: *The Department should develop a comprehensive advising plan that identifies faculty advising responsibilities, which currently fall disproportionately on the Chair; the Department should also seek restoration of funds for an advising coordinator.*

With its multiple pathways toward the undergraduate degree, the major requirements for the Communications Studies major can be a challenge for students. With this in mind, the department needs to reconsider its advising procedures.

Currently students are provided with a handout upon entering the major listing areas of faculty advising expertise and urging faculty to hold regular office hours for this purpose. In addition, all majors are required to see an advisor at the beginning of their second semester before registering. Although advising is supposedly decentralized in the Department, in reality much of the responsibility still falls on the Chair. The Department needs to re-examine its advising system with an eye to easing the burden on the chair and spreading the responsibilities more broadly among the faculty.

While, in general, students seem generally satisfied with the advising they receive and their access to the faculty, strong concern was voiced by students over the need for some sort of readily available academic advising during the summer months. The Department needs to develop a mechanism for offering summer academic advising.

Note: At the time of the report, summer was the time of fall semester enrollment for most students. Beginning Spring 2007, however, fall enrollment will now take place during the preceding spring semester, which may make this less of an issue for undergraduate majors. The need still remains for incoming graduate students, who expressed to the review team a strong desire for access to summer advising.

- Recommendation: *In the area of Department governance, the Department needs to develop a procedure for summer-time decision-making by the Department leadership when faculty consultation may prove difficult.*

The Department's current governance structure, with its emphasis on consultative decision-making, is effective in producing consensus among faculty, but is frequently slow and inefficient. This is particularly so during the summer when the Chair is sometimes forced to act without adequate opportunity to consult with the appropriate faculty committees. On past occasions the Chair has been criticized for actions taken under these circumstances. Given that, increasingly, colleges and departments are operating on a twelve-month schedule, with many decisions made during the summer months, it is important that the Department develop a decision-making procedure for the summer months when full faculty consultation can prove difficult.

- Recommendation: *The Department should seek to hire a faculty member in each of the areas of Public Relations and Intercultural Communication. At the same time, the Department should develop a long-range (5-7 year) hiring plan.*

Both the Department and the external consultant have identified Public Relations and Intercultural Communication as key areas of faculty need as a result of recent faculty turnover. The Department should seek permission to hire in these areas; the College

should support the Department in these requests. At the same time, the Department needs to develop a long-range (5+ yrs) hiring plan in anticipation of future hiring needs.

- Recommendation: *It is recommended that the Department and the management of The State Hornet seek the resources to (1) increase the frequency of its publication and (2) convert to a “digital newsroom.”*

The external consultant notes that the current once-a-week publication frequency of *The State Hornet* is well below what is commonly found for campus newspapers at a university of this size. The Department and the College should jointly investigate ways of financing a more frequent publication schedule. Simultaneously, they should seek resources to develop the *Hornet*'s facilities into a “digital” newsroom to bring the campus newspaper more in line with developments in professional journalism.

- Recommendation: *In light of the increased need created by the introduction of the Digital Media concentration, the Department should work with the College to expand the technical support at its disposal.*

The Department and the College need to assess the technical support required for the current Communication Studies program and seek to identify ways in which this support can be provided. In making this recommendation, the Review Team recognizes that there are also personality issues (see above) that need to be taken into account in any such discussion.

- Recommendation: *The Department should make efforts to strengthen its alumni relations.*

This recommendation that remains unaddressed from the previous program review. It should be done both as a way of building alumni support for the Department and its programs and as a way (through periodic alumni surveys, for example) as a way of assessing the effectiveness of the program in preparing students for employment upon graduation.

Recommendations to the College and Dean

- Recommendation: *The Dean should allow the Department of Communication Studies to hire one new faculty member in each of the areas of Public Relations and Intercultural Communications as soon as possible.*

See Recommendation #11 to the Department above.

- Recommendation: *The Dean's office and the Department should work together with Space Management to devise ways to provide the Department with more space for the main Department office.*

Like most academic departments on campus, space is at a premium. In the case of the Department of Communication Studies, however, the need is particularly acute with respect to the main departmental office as a result of the need to cover the former office storeroom into faculty office space. The Department is now forced to store many of its records in the corridor outside the main office. The College and Space Management need to work with the Department to find ways of expanding its main office space and, in particular, find a secure location in which it can house its records.

- Recommendation: *The College should work with the Department to provide it with the additional technical support it needs to effectively support its digital media concentration.*
- Recommendation: *The College should work with the Department and the management of The State Hornet to identify ways to allow the newspaper to (1) increase its publication frequency and (2) begin development of a “digital newsroom.”*

See Recommendation #12 to the Department above.

- Recommendation: *The Dean and the Department need to work together to (1) clarify expectations as to the enrollment targets for classes offered by the Department and (2) resolve Departmental concerns over the perceived upward “creep” in course enrollment caps.*

See Recommendation #9 to the Department above. As noted elsewhere, this is important not only because of pedagogical concerns but also because of the impact it has on faculty morale and on the department’s perception of its relationship with the Dean and College.

Recommendations to the University

- Recommendation: *The Department should be allowed to make faculty hires in the areas of Public relations and Intercultural Communication as soon as possible.*

See Recommendation #11 to the Department above.

- Recommendation: *The College and Space Management should begin a discussion of ways to increase the space available for the Communication Studies main departmental office.*

See Recommendation #2 to the College above.

- Recommendation: *The University should work with College and the Department to find ways of increasing The State Hornet’s publication frequency.*

See Recommendation #12 to the Department and Recommendation #4 to the College above.

- Recommendation: *The University, specifically Academic Affairs, should work with the Department to bring its assessment plan in line with University expectations.*

See Recommendation #1 to the Department above.

- Recommendation: *If the Department fails to develop an acceptable assessment plan by the time of its next program review, Academic Affairs should advise the review team to recommend the Department of Communication Studies for only provisional approval.*

See Recommendation #1 to the Department above.

Recommendations to the Faculty Senate

- Recommendation: *That the Bachelor's degree (B.A.) programs in Communication Studies and Journalism be approved for a period of six years from the time of the Senate adoption of this recommendation.*
- Recommendation: *That the Master's degree (M.A.) in Communication Studies be approved for six years from the time of the Senate adoption of this recommendation.*

Departmental Response to Program Review Communication Studies Department

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Preface

This response is late—terribly, inexplicably late. Our original Program Review took place in the Spring semester of 2005. For whatever reason, the actual final report of the Program Review, though dated 2005, was not completed and transmitted to the department until October 2007. At that point the department was mired in issues related to budget cuts and a possible conversion to four unit classes—an initiative we ultimately rejected. Excuses aside, I want to assure you that I have discussed the review with Dean Mason of the College of Arts and Letters and with our faculty in a department meeting. We, of course, thank the Program Review Team for their commendations. This response will focus on the Recommendations to the Department. The department's responses appear in bold following each of the recommendations.

Nick Burnett, Chair, Department of Communication Studies

Recommendations

To the Department

1. The Communications Studies Department needs to put in place an acceptable academic assessment process that is in line with current University expectations.

Response: The department has made good progress in this area. In the last two assessment cycles, the department has worked to provide its assessment report on time and with meaningful evidence. The department's slow start and frankly hostile response to calls for assessment in the early part of this decade have been replaced by at least grudging respect and a greater understanding of the place and importance of assessment in the academy.

The department's initial response to assessment was to develop a requirement that seniors assemble a portfolio of their work for submission prior to graduation. The policy was, to say the least, misguided. Portfolios were incomplete, created storage problems, and inappropriately seemed to put the onus of responsibility on students. □ e compounded that mistake by making submission of a portfolio a graduation requirement.

As the □niversity learned more about best assessment practices and that information trickled down to departments, the portfolio strategy was discarded and a more appropriate rolling assessment of our various concentrations using capstone courses and faculty review of student work was put in place. □ e have taken advantage of the skills of faculty methodologists to institute a senior survey that will be completed each year. For □□□□, the department has decided to focus on the substantial increase in the use of hybrid podcasting

in our classes [over 1,000 seats] both quantitative and qualitative measures will be used to examine student learning and student satisfaction in hybrid podcasting classes.

The Department's Assessment Committee now oversees efforts in this area and we are confident that future assessment cycles will exceed current university requirement both in their reach and in their creative design.

2. The Department needs to provide more guidance for junior faculty in regard to RTP expectations, particularly as this applies in the area of scholarly and creative activity.

Response: The department recognizes its responsibility in this area although even in a perfect information environment, junior faculty apprehensions may not be entirely eliminated. Since the review, the department has reviewed and recommitted to a number of strategies designed to improve information availability in the area of retention, tenure, and promotion. The department chair reviews RTP standards with all interviewed candidates. New faculty are encouraged/required to attend the Dean's review of Arts and Letters requirements in this area. The Department's Faculty Evaluation Committee, charged with overseeing RTP issues, maintains a high degree of interaction with faculty members still in the promotion cycle, including the use of peer evaluations of faculty teaching.

Finally, the department is in the process of conducting a top-to-bottom review of its RTP policies and expects to use the Fall 2014 semester to review changes with a deadline for submission to the University ARTP Committee in early 2015.

3. The Department should address the tension that exists on the part of the Journalism faculty regarding their position in the Communication Studies program; discussion should take place to identify ways of bringing about a smoother integration of the programs.

Response: When the Department of Communication Studies absorbed the former Journalism Department, tensions were running high and there was a moderate level of distrust between the two groups. Communication Studies faculty felt they had been pressured by an administration eager to solve a problem and Journalism faculty felt they were handed a fait d'accompli of merge or be dissolved.

Time, proximity, and frankly a few retirements have improved this area. The former Journalism faculty are now routinely elected to department standing committees. Cross listing of many Journalism courses with communication classes has led to faculty collaboration and discussions. Importantly, both programs have benefitted from a collaboration between new media/multimedia and the trend toward digital Journalism. The Department developed and now offers a Digital Media Minor, uniquely designed to allow enrollment of any non-digital media concentration students. This has proved to be a boon to Journalism students looking to improve their employability with the new skills required for the digital newsroom.

4. The Department should consider the addition of both a methods course and a professional preparation class to the undergraduate curriculum.

Response: The department was confused by the first suggestion in this recommendation. Almost all of the department's concentrations require two introductory methodology courses, one in qualitative and one in quantitative methods. Those students are then required to take one additional advanced methods course with a choice given to the student of advanced qualitative or advanced quantitative methods.

The department considered and has so far resisted the second suggestion embedded in this recommendation, a professional preparation class. The two concentrations which are most obviously pre-professional—journalism and public relations—use senior level classes to meet this concern. Given that our latest senior survey did identify job preparation as one area that students would like additional attention, it is likely that the department will reconsider its position on this item. The department does have a very active internship program, with as many as ninety students doing internships with local agencies, companies, and media outlets each semester. The Career Center has also offered additional opportunities for our students to improve skills and address professional preparation concerns.

5. The Department should follow the external consultant's recommendation to make an effort to identify bottlenecks in student progress toward the degree.

Response: The department has made substantial progress in this area. We have expanded the number of courses which meet the advanced research methods requirement in most concentrations. Additionally, we have eliminated some pre-requisites and worked harder in advising sessions to inform students of more rational roadmaps to successful and timely degree completion. The department has also been able to offer a limited number of courses during the summer session to help students keep on track for their degrees. To some extent, the concerns addressed in this recommendation are connected with the department advising efforts and those have been upgraded since this last program review.

6. The Department should work to develop opportunities by which students in the graduate program can gain teaching experience.

Response: The department was perplexed by this recommendation. We already offer a rich variety of teaching experience for our graduate students including assisting with large lecture classes, running lab sections in which they grade and respond to student work (often speeches), and, for the most proficient, teaching associate positions in which second year graduate students stand as the instructors of record for introductory classes. Our MA students successfully compete for community college teaching positions and for assistantships in high profile doctoral programs based on their participation as graduate assistants or teaching associates.

Graduate assistants and teaching associates are closely monitored and mentored in their teaching assignments and they receive both teaching evaluations from students and feedback from their faculty mentors. The department has struggled to retain our supervision of graduate students in the face cuts to assigned time. That cut has made it difficult to offer the same breadth of experiences for our teaching associates, but we are convinced that our graduate program offers excellent opportunities for our students. The department and the Graduate Committee will continue to review our program, work vigilantly to maintain opportunities, and provide careful and close oversight of graduate student teaching positions.

7. The Department should attempt to develop, with graduate students, strategies for improving the scheduling of graduate course offerings.

Response: The Department's Graduate Committee has resolved this issue to the satisfaction of both graduate students and faculty. The department has a rolling three year schedule for offering individual graduate classes. This allows students to more appropriately plan their schedules and allows faculty members to prepare for offering classes that are clearly more challenging than undergraduate classes. An additional, though unstated, concern in this area was the last minute cancellation of graduate seminars for low enrollment, usually at the behest of the Dean's Office. Since the Program Review, improved planning at the department level has significantly decreased this problem and the department has not had to cancel a graduate seminar due to low enrollment for nearly three years. We believe that this concern has been resolved.

8. The Department should to work with the Dean to address (1) the issue of optimal class size and (2) the concern over perceived "size creep" is class enrollment caps.

Response: To be perfectly clear, "size creep" has been transformed into straightforward expectations for larger classes and higher enrollment caps. Since this review, a new Dean in Arts and Letters has worked with chairs in the college to lead an effort to deal with budget cuts and pressures to still meet FTE goals. While those strategies, and their attendant demands for "serving more with less," are not welcome, they are at least discussed in public with each department getting full information about how other departments in the college are meeting the same kinds of demands.

Faculty workload remains a serious problem, though that problem is unlikely to be significantly ameliorated at the department, college or even the university level. Unless there is a resolution of this issue at the system level through collective bargaining, it seems likely that faculty workloads will remain an unresolved issue. The most that we can do is ensure that the burdens fall equally and that decisions be made transparently.

9. The Department needs to clarify faculty advising responsibilities, which currently fall disproportionately on the Chair; the Department should also seek restoration of funds for an advising coordinator.

Response: The likelihood of non-FTE generating assignment seems even less likely in the Spring of 2020 than it might have in 2019 or 2021. While it would be welcomed to have a structural resolution to this issue, progress has been made in improving student access to advising. The department maintains a policy that all full time faculty serve as advisors for their particular academic sub-discipline during office hours and additional times scheduled to coincide with time periods of high traffic (registering for classes or having graduation petitions signed).

The heavy advising load on the department chair is not surprising given the number of majors which fluctuates between 1000 and 1200 and university requirements of signatures on documents such as change of major forms and graduation petitions with substitutions. The present chair, who has served for four years, does not regard this as a serious issue and our assessment efforts have revealed satisfaction with departmental advising in the latest exit survey.

10. In the area of departmental governance, the Department needs to develop a procedure for summer-time decision-making by the departmental leadership when faculty consultation may prove difficult.

Response: The Department maintains an Executive Committee, comprised of chairs of the various standing committees in the department and one additional at-large member of the faculty. The Executive Committee advises the chair and serves as a proxy for the faculty regarding matters that might arise during the times that faculty are absent from campus. In addition, the chair seeks to routinely consult with faculty via email should important matters develop during the summer. This will remain a priority for the chair going forward.

11. The Department should seek to hire a faculty member in each of the areas of Public Relations and Intercultural Communication. At the same time, the Department should develop a long-range (5-7 year) hiring plan.

Response: The Department has been fortunate to make hires in both of these areas and despite a challenging budget environment for future hires, has in place clear hiring priorities that take into account curricular trends, participants in the Faculty Early Retirement Program, and those completing that program. Our current highest priority is a hire in Journalism with a subspecialty in online Journalism.

12. It is recommended that the Department and the management of *The State Hornet* seek the resources to (1) increase the frequency of its publication and (2) convert to a “digital newsroom.”

Response: *The State Hornet* has taken huge strides forward in this area since [redacted]. One of the first developments was a change in the management model for the paper. The General [redacted]anager was replaced by a Professional [redacted]ournalist in Residence who has guided the paper from five figure deficits based on poor debt collection practices to stable financial ground. *The State Hornet*, with most of its funding coming from the sale of advertising and a student fee, has moved to a weekly hard copy format with web presence that is updated daily and now resembles a modern news operation. The online version of the *State Hornet* was honored in [redacted] with a Pacemaker Award from the Associated Collegiate Press, the highest honor for online collegiate [redacted]ournalism. It has been nominated again for its work in [redacted]. *State Hornet* students now routinely receive training in the latest digital [redacted]ournalism practices.

The *State Hornet* now annually publishes a rolling five year plan authored by its Publication [redacted]oard and reviewed for commentary by the President’s Office.

13. In light of the increased need created by the introduction of the Digital Media concentration, the Department should work with the College to expand the technical support at its disposal.

Response: Technical support remains a challenge for the department, but indications are that this area has improved in recent years. An improved relationship has been forged by working with the Dean’s Office, having meetings with the ITC supervisor, and setting clear expectations for what kind of service should be expected. Additionally, all three of the department’s disciplinary labs have been refreshed in the last three years resulting in a decrease in the need for significant IT interventions.

14. The Department should make efforts to strengthen its alumni relations.

Response: This remains a challenge for the department, even after two years. Previous attempts to launch a department[redacted]based alumni chapter which would actively sponsor events have been attempted and ultimately proved unsustainable. Individual association members from our department lost interest or moved from the area. A few charismatic individuals were doing the lion’s share of the work. Finding the energy necessary to keep this enterprise running can be challenging.

Nonetheless, the department has moved forward on two fronts. Rather than attempt a broad based alumni chapter, the department has focused on its two most popular undergraduate student groups—The Sacramento State Debate Team and the *State Hornet*, the student newspaper. Since this program review, the [redacted]ornet has hosted an event celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the newspaper, reconnecting with many e[redacted]ornet staffers and making valuable connections with those now working professionally as [redacted]ournalists. The Debate Team has assembled a mailing list of over [redacted] former members of

the team in anticipation of sending out a newsletter to re-connect with those who debated for Sacramento State.

A Final Thought

This report was delayed for nearly two years before it was delivered to the department. That delay does not excuse our tardiness in completing this response, but it does impact, at some level the recommendation for the timeline for our next program review. At the time of the transmittal of the report [October 2000], we were assured by Academic Affairs that the delay would not work against us in shortening our horizon for a subsequent review. We recognize that the recommendation actually rests with your committee and the Faculty Senate. We would be happy to meet with either body to discuss the hoped for approval of this response and the subsequent recommendation for the timeline of our next program review.

November 19, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jeffrey Brodd, Chair
Program Review Oversight Committee

FROM: Jeffrey D. Mason, Dean
College of Arts & Letters

SUBJECT: Communication Studies Program Review

notes on program review report for the Department of Communication Studies (JDM 2007.11.16)

1. It's already over two years old, so we should keep an eye on what's changed since spring, 2005. This report is, in some respects, more historical than current.
2. The list of twelve commendations seems to cover the obvious (shared vision, effective leadership, collegial support, etc.) with the possible exception of the changes in the *State Hornet*.
3. Does the department feel that junior faculty need more guidance regarding scholarly activity? Do the newer junior faculty feel this way?
4. How are we doing with the tension related to journalism?
5. We should understand recommendation #8 in the context of the university's ongoing financial difficulties; there's no point in pursuing concern over class size without keeping an eye on what's possible.
6. Regarding recommendation #9, I am moving away from line-item appropriations, so funding for an advising coordinator becomes a department-level question.
7. How do the chair and the faculty feel about faculty advising responsibilities (recommendation #9)?
8. Why is the review committee offering an opinion on converting to a "digital newsroom" (recommendation #12)?
9. Regarding recommendation #2 to the college, this is the first I've heard that the department needs more office space. How does the department feel about that?

10. Regarding the various recommendations regarding the digital media concentration, I am looking at the prospect of limiting growth in areas with relatively high costs and low enrollments, so we should evaluate digital media in that context.
11. Note that film studies has evolved since this document was written.
12. The tallies of faculty are out of date.
13. I agree with the concern over “size creep,” and I am moving the college toward making choices about where to convert to large classes rather than add a few more students to every section of every course.
14. I’m not aware of an informal compact between COMS and the college regarding “higher” teaching load “in exchange for small class size.” If anyone believes there is such a compact, we should disabuse them.
15. Citing SFR out of context verges on being irresponsible. SFR ranges widely on this campus; during 2006-07, average section size just in Arts and Letters ranged from 21.9 in photography to 41.5 in history, while elsewhere on campus, we ranged from 15.5 in electrical engineering to 57.7 in MIS. What conclusions can we draw from such simple numbers?
16. How do the department faculty feel about reducing the complexity of the COMS major requirements?
17. I agree that we should not transform the department into a school or a college.
18. I’m pleased that the department was able to resolve past interpersonal conflicts—congratulations!
19. Especially given that the next program review will list each recommendation and explain subsequent action, I hope someone can revise and refine the current list of recommendations. I find it confusing to have two versions of the lists of recommendations: one near the beginning of the document and one at the end.
20. Are we still experiencing a “bottleneck” problem in required courses?

c. Nick Burnett, Chair, Communication Studies