

Academic Program Review BA Public Relations

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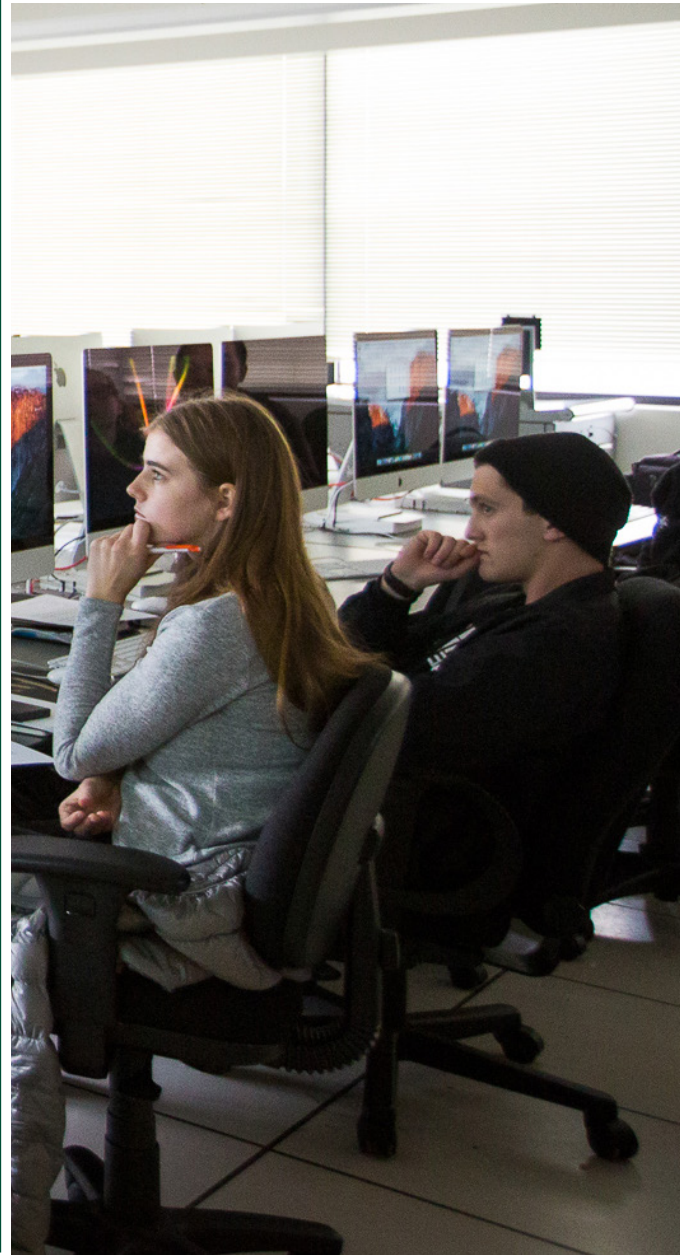
**APRC Recommendation to Faculty Senate
BA Public Relations**

The Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) affirms that the Department of Communication Studies has completed program review as per policy, including self-study, external review, internal review, and action plan submission for the BA Public Relations. APRC recommends that the next program review be scheduled for six years from Faculty Senate approval; or, should the College of Arts and Letters engage in college-wide program review, the next program review will occur at that time.

APRC Chair: Jeffrey Brodd, Professor of Humanities and Religious Studies

Department of Communication Studies

SELF-STUDY, 2022-23



SACRAMENTO STATE
Redefine the Possible

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Section 1: Mission and Context

1.1 California State University, Sacramento, Mission and Vision

Mission: As California's capital university, we transform lives by preparing students for leadership, service, and success.

Vision: Sacramento State will be a recognized leader in education, innovation, and engagement.

1.2 College of Arts & Letters Mission

The College of Arts & Letters engages faculty, staff, and students in the creation and study of what makes us human and what humans make. Our students acquire diverse, intercultural competencies and a keen awareness of the past while they pursue the promise of the future. We are a proud part of Sacramento's growing creative economy and cultural vibrancy.

The College of Arts & Letters prepares students for success in an inclusive society by empowering them to take responsibility for their educational growth, explore their own sense of purpose, and engage communities as critical and creative thinkers; by valuing student skills and competencies to bridge the gap between college and career; and by streamlining their path toward graduation.

1.3 [Communication Studies Department](#) Mission

The faculty of Communication Studies, Journalism, Film, and Public Relations are a community of professionals, educated and experienced in a diverse range of specialty areas, and united by a common body of information related to the creation, application, and understanding of messages.

The department exists to provide quality instruction that assists students in becoming intellectually aware citizens who are ethical, competent communicators. Further, the department seeks to maintain and develop the body of scholarly knowledge that unites the field.

1.4 Bachelor of Arts in [Communication Studies](#)

Communication Studies is a broad-based discipline concerned with the exchange of messages in interpersonal and mediated situations and with the impact of such exchanges on society. Courses focus on understanding the communication process and developing skills to communicate effectively. The Department offers a wide range of courses in interpersonal, group, and organizational communication, rhetorical theory and criticism, public relations, mass communication and research methodologies.

1.5 Bachelor of Arts in [Journalism](#)

The Journalism program at Sacramento State educates its students in ethical, accurate and effective communication. We employ innovative methods to prepare students, enlighten the public, and engage our communities. Our students become committed and versatile professionals with a strong background in both journalism theory and practice.

Our [40-unit program](#) includes required courses in news writing, news reporting, news editing, journalism law and ethics, data journalism and public affairs reporting. The major also requires students to either complete an internship or work on The State Hornet, the student-run news organization that covers Sacramento State.

1.6 Bachelor of Arts in [Political Science and Journalism](#)

The BA in Political Science and Journalism is a unique interdisciplinary [51-unit program](#) that leverages Sacramento's position as a hub for government and journalism. Students take 30 political science units, 18 journalism units and complete a 3-unit internship in either political science or journalism. This major is housed in

the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies but cooperatively run by our faculty and Political Science faculty.

1.7 Bachelor of Arts in [Film](#)

The Film Program offers interdisciplinary coursework in the areas of film production, history, theory, criticism, and writing. The Film major aims at developing a deeper understanding of the art and practice of film, its complex components, and the artists whose vision have inspired generations of filmmakers. All students are required to take a common core that provides a foundation for film criticism and production. After completing the core, students select either the Film Studies or Film Production track.

1.8 Bachelor of Arts in [Public Relations](#)

The Public Relations degree prepares students to assume professional entry level roles in the practice of public relations; to help students understand the integration of public relations and marketing; prepare students to compose, develop, and analyze print and broadcast messages; to help students to develop demonstrable competencies in writing, analyzing, problem-solving, and critical thinking; to provide opportunities for testing public relations theory and practice, not only in the classroom, but in the field as well; and to develop relationships with local public relations professionals as well as with community organizations.

The BA in Public Relations was established starting with Academic Year 2021-22. Previously, Public Relations was a concentration within the Communication Studies BA. Thus, Public Relations was not assessed independently for this self-study.

1.9 [Master of Arts](#) in Communication Studies

The Communication Studies Master of Arts program is a rigorous, comprehensive program designed to increase theoretical and applied understanding of human communication. Our courses are taught by award-winning faculty with expertise across Communication Studies, including mass media, organizational, international, intercultural, interpersonal, rhetorical, political, and instructional communication. The program intentionally promotes an inclusive learning environment with students and faculty from all walks of life. In particular, we welcome students of all identities and cultural backgrounds, including international and first-generation students. The 30-unit program has an excellent track record of preparing students for doctoral study as well as entering communication professions.

1.10 Minors Offered by the Department

The Department offers minors in [Communication Studies](#), [Journalism](#), [Digital Communication and Information](#), and [Film Studies](#). The Communication Studies minor requires that students take the core Survey of Communication Studies course and five electives. Film Studies minors take three core classes and 9-12 elective units. The Journalism and Digital Communication and Information minors are more prescriptive in the courses to be completed. Each minor provides an important complement to any major offered by the University.

1.11 [Transforming Outcomes Project at Sacramento State](#)

The Department is the primary contributor to the Transforming Outcomes Project at Sacramento State, in which incarcerated persons at Folsom State Prison and Mule Creek State Prison are enrolled as Communication Studies majors and take courses with our instructors. Additionally, a Department faculty member is detached for 6 weighted teaching units to serve as director of the program. Until the Spring 2023 semester, courses were taken jointly by prisoners at each facility; now, individual courses are taught at each prison.

1.12 Relationship to Other Academic Units

Courses in Communication Studies that satisfy General Education Area A1 (oral communication) are exclusively housed with the Department. Additionally, the Department offers other courses that meet General Education requirements in Areas A3, B5, D, and E. Additionally, the Department offers two courses that meet the University's Writing Intensive requirement, although these are specifically designed for the Department's majors.

1.13 Major Structural Changes Since Last Program Review

The last full program review for Communication Studies was done in 2004-05. A subsequent review was attempted for 2012-13, during which time a self-study was completed. However, the internal and external consultants never filed reports, despite numerous attempts to get them to complete those assignments. In 2018, an interim report was completed by Dr. Lindy Valdez in Kinesiology and Health Sciences. The Faculty Senate granted the Department a waiver allowing it to postpone its next full program review until the 2022-23 academic year.

The department undertook an overhaul of the Communication Studies BA that took effect during the 2014-15 academic year, after the previous completed review; however, the 2018 report by Dr. Valdez acknowledges those changes. Changes were made to the Journalism BA to streamline it and the Film Studies program expanded to a BA in Film with two concentrations. Additionally, Public Relations became its own major, separate from the Communication Studies BA, although the requirements for the PR program did not change. Changes were also made to the Graduate Program structure and curriculum—revising the core course requirements to be in line with disciplinary standards, updating course titles and descriptions, and creating new variable courses to embed more flexibility into the program. Additionally, the Graduate Program revised admissions requirements to improve access and equity, removing the Graduate Record Examination, which is known to be biased against women, people of color, and those of lower socioeconomic status. Previous program reviews took a holistic approach to the Department. Current University policy stipulates that an examination of each program be part of a unit's program review, so that is what the Department undertakes here.

Section 2: Learning

2.1.1 Communication Studies BA Learning Outcomes

Based on the feedback we received on an annual assessment report, the Department initiated a revision of the Communication Studies BA program learning outcomes. These were approved by Department in Spring 2022.

The previous stated learning outcomes for the Communication Studies BA: improve student awareness, understanding, and practice of communication in professional and social interactions; enhance the traditional citizenship role in the democratic process; and train students in communication skills in preparation for professions within the public or private sectors of the economy. The revised outcomes are more detailed and align with the baccalaureate learning outcomes:

- Identify and articulate the importance of communication expertise in professional and social interactions.
- Perform communication skills by creating written messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context in preparation for professions within the public or private sectors of the economy.
- Perform communication skills by delivering effective oral messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context in preparation for professions within the public or private sectors of the economy.
- Analyze and evaluate communication processes by identifying relevant evaluative criteria.
- Identify, evaluate, and apply communication literature and theories to engage in communication scholarship.
- Consume, evaluate, and use social scientific methods to engage in communication scholarship.
- Engage and reflect on social and civic engagement processes.
- Evaluate, critique, and produce research on a variety of communication phenomena.

The assessment plan appears in Appendix 1.

2.1.2 Communication Studies BA Assessment Data

Before the new assessment plan was finalized in Spring 2022, the Department used the American Association of Colleges and Universities' [VALUES rubrics](#) to assess students' written communication, oral communication, and critical thinking.

Here are the areas assessed dating to the 2014-15 academic year.

2021-2022: Written communication (COMS BA only)

2020-2021: Written communication (COMS BA only)

2019-2020: Oral communication (Fall only: lower division courses, including Journalism)

2018-2019: Critical thinking (including Journalism)

2017-2018: Oral communication (including Journalism)

2016-2017: Critical thinking (including Journalism)

2015-2016: Written communication (including Journalism)

2014-2015: Written communication (including Journalism)

Oral Communication

Oral communication was assessed for Fall 2019 and AY2017-2018. We expected all students to have scores of at least 3.0 in all areas of the AAC&U's VALUES oral communication skills at the time of graduation. For AY 2017-2018, most students met the goal. Most problematic are students' rating for the organization, supporting material, and central message criteria where one-fifth of our sample did not meet the 3.0 goal. Overall, in this sample, a minimum of 80% of students were rated as at least having met Milestone 3 on any of the five criteria. For AY 2019-2020, the department sampled outcomes from courses where concepts in the major are introduced. We did so to assess how well students are prepared for capstone level courses. Originally, we planned to compare the data collected from the introductory classes in Fall 2019 with the data from capstone courses that we planned to collect the data in Spring 2020. However, we could not collect data from capstone courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic

in Spring 2020. In Fall 2019, we collected data on oral communication. From these, we could tell the difference on oral communication learning outcomes between capstone courses and lower division courses.

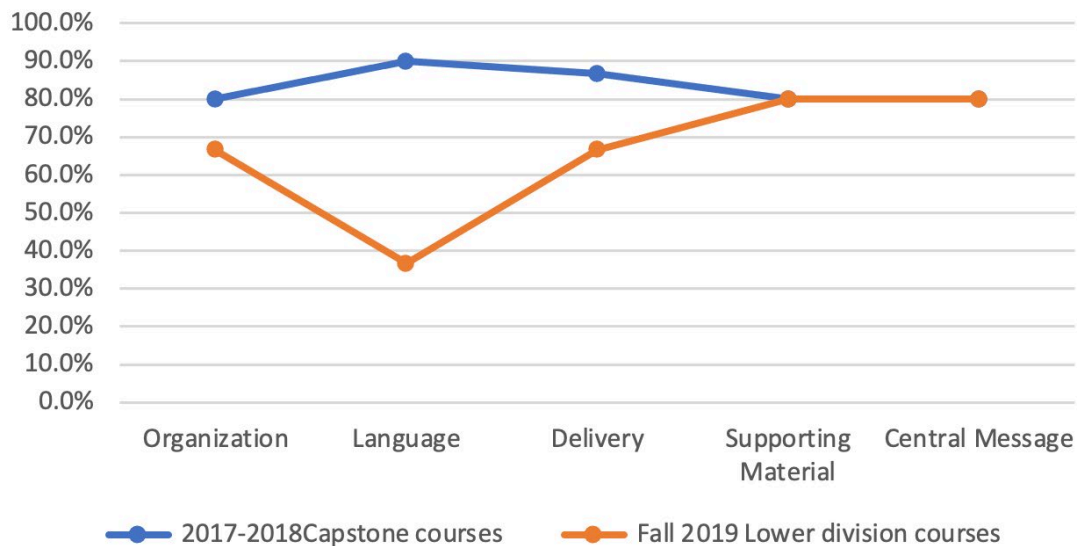
Oral Communication (2017-18)

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Organization	36.7%	43.3%	20%	0%
Language	50%	40%	10%	0%
Delivery	46.7%	40%	13.3%	0%
Supporting Material	46.7%	33.3%	16.7%	3.3%
Central Message	50%	30%	20%	0%

Oral Communication (Fall 2019)

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Organization	30%	36.7%	30%	3%
Language	13.3%	23.3%	43.3%	20%
Delivery	26.7%	40%	30%	3%
Supporting Material	36.7%	43.3%	13.3%	7%
Central Message	33.3%	46.7%	13.3%	7%

Oral Communication: Milestone 3 or more



Written Communication

Written communication was assessed for academic years 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022. We asked each instructor who is teaching the designated courses to evaluate the major writing assignment for five randomly selected students. We expect 100% of students to have scores of at least 3.0 in all areas of the AAC&U’s VALUES written communication at the time of graduation. Although we did not meet the expectation, most students met or exceeded the milestone rating across different cohorts. As seen in the line chart comparing four different years (2020-2021 and 2021-2022) show the overall percentage of students meeting the Milestone 3 or higher across different categories. One of the reasons might be the fact that we collected the data from general Communication Studies students only in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, whereas Journalism and PR were included in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

Written Communication (2014-2015)

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Context of and Purpose for Writing	51.4%	37.1%	8.6%	2.9%
Content Development	28.6%	40%	28.6%	2.9%
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	37%	45.7%	17.1%	0%
Sources of Evidence	20%	42.9%	28.6%	8.6%
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	25.7%	40%	31.4%	2.9%

Written Communication (2015-2016)

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Context of and Purpose for Writing	35%	47.5%	17.5%	0%
Content Development	27.5%	50%	20%	2.5%
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	20%	42.5%	35%	2.5%
Sources and Evidence	30%	50%	17.5%	2.5%
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	32.5%	35%	30%	2.5%

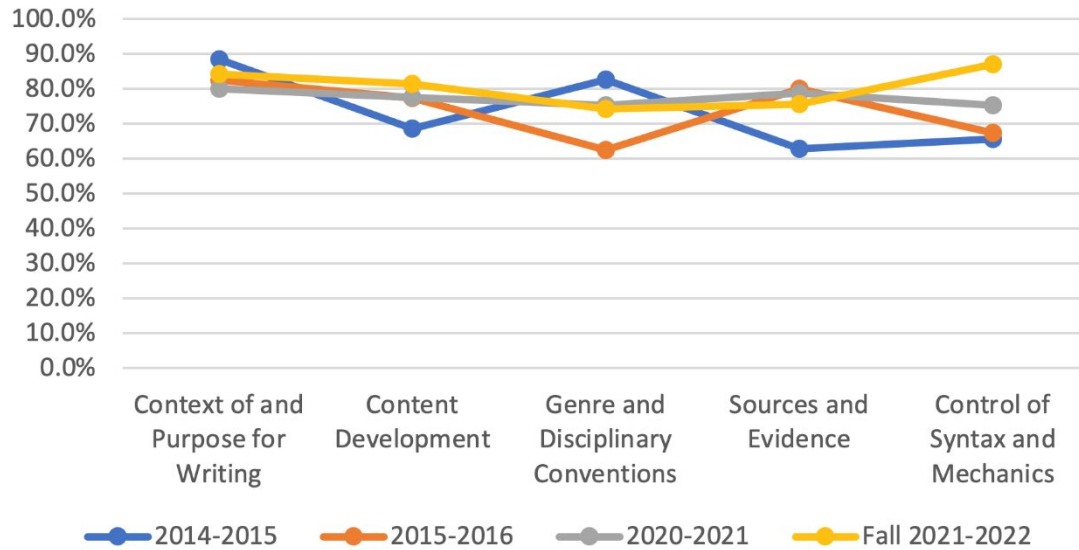
Written Communication (2020-2021)

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Context of and Purpose for Writing	34.1%	45.9%	18.8%	1.2%
Content Development	34.1%	43.5%	20%	2.4%
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	35.3%	40%	23.5%	1.2%
Sources and Evidence	32.9%	45.9%	16.5%	4.7%
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	37.7%	37.7%	17.7%	7.1%

Written Communication (2021-2022)

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Context of and Purpose for Writing	37.1%	47.1%	12.9%	3%
Content Development	22.9%	58.6%	18.6%	0%
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	27.1%	47.1%	2.7%	0%
Sources and Evidence	38.6%	37.1%	17.1%	7.1%
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	25.7%	61.4%	7.1%	5.7%

Written Communication: Milestone 3 or more



Critical Thinking

Critical thinking was assessed twice using AAC&U's VALUES rubrics (i.e., 2016-2017 & 2018-2019). The department expects all students to have scores of at least 3.0 in all areas of the AAC&U's VALUES Critical Thinking Skills at the time of graduation. Overall, a minimum of 55% of students were rated as at least having met Milestone 3 on any of the five criteria.

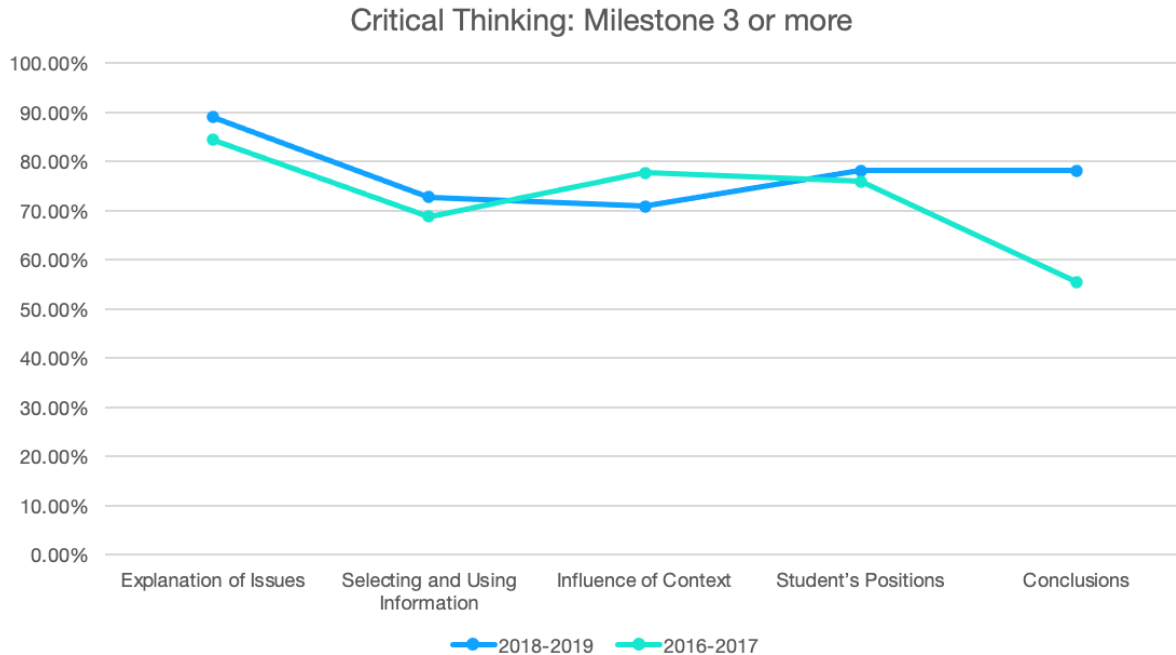
Most problematic are students' rating for the **Conclusions** and **Selecting and Using Information** criteria where almost one-third or more of our sample did not meet the 3.0 expectation.

Critical Thinking (2016-17)

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone(2)	Benchmark (1)
Explanation of Issues	42.2%	42.2%	8.8%	4.4%
Selecting and Using Information	26.6%	42.2%	22.2%	8.8%
Influence of Context	24.4%	53.3%	17.7%	4.7%
Student's Positions	33.8%	42.2%	22.2%	2.2%
Conclusions	20%	35.5%	42.2%	3.1%

Critical Thinking (2018-19)

Criterion	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Explanation of Issues	41.8%	41.8%	10.9%	5.5%
Selecting and Using Information	23.6%	41.8%	27.3%	7.3%
Influence of Context	18.2%	43.6%	29.1%	9.1%
Student's Positions	30.9%	38.2%	21.8%	9.1%
Conclusions	32.73%	32.73%	21.82%	12.73%



2.2.1 Journalism Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the degree, Journalism majors will be able to:

- Understand the role of journalism in shaping history, culture and society.
- Write clear, concise and evocative stories.
- Conduct interviews using accepted journalistic practices.
- Distinguish between what is newsworthy and what is not.
- Employ effective news gathering techniques through research and reporting.
- Analyze and visualize data in a fair and illuminating way.
- Apply journalism ethics in decision-making.
- Conceive, create and edit multiplatform stories with clarity and precision.

2.2.2 Assessment of Learning Outcomes

In the past, our program was assessed as part of the Communications Studies Department more broadly. See Section 3 for a broad overview of Journalism’s recent performance. The assessment plan for Journalism moving forward appears in Appendix 2.

2.3.1 Film Program Learning Outcomes

The Film Program prepares students to have a social impact through a creative environment that requires collaboration, adaptation, and leadership. We recognize that the world in which we live is shaped by an ever-increasing array of visual and auditory information. To prepare them for this rapidly changing media landscape, we challenge our students to be critical thinkers and explore their unique voices through creative, cinematic storytelling. Therefore, we expect students completing the Film Program at Sacramento State to meet the following goals:

1. Demonstrate a mastery of film discipline knowledge: Create film that shows mastery and understanding of contemporary practices in digital video and cinema.
2. Identify and comprehend the historic development of media and film and its evolution into digital forms.
3. Demonstrate a mastery of video communication: Develop clear video concepts, implement effective organizational strategies, use video technique effectively including; sound, cinematography and editing, use appropriate cinematic conventions to convey meaning.

4. Demonstrate proficiency in written communication: Use clear language to show context and purpose, show proficiency in using written English, genre and disciplinary conventions, use proper evidentiary material, control syntax and mechanics including proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.
5. Demonstrate ability to work collaboratively in small groups: work effectively as part of a team, make significant individual contributions to the group, foster a positive climate and respond constructively to conflict.

As stated through these Program Learning Outcomes, it is the program’s goal to provide students with the theoretical and technical knowledge to become thoughtful independent film professionals.

2.3.2 Summary of Film Learning Outcomes Data

The Film Program began formally assessing itself beginning in 2021-22, at the request of the Division of Academic Excellence. Until then, the formal assessment of the Film Program had traditionally been included within the data for the Communication Studies Department. Therefore, formal University assessment data reflects Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for the entire department with Film embedded. However, we have also informally been assessing the Film Program since 2014. The tables below show the data for each learning outcome, except for PLO #5 (collaboration), which has not been assessed since 2014.

Data of Program Learning Outcomes

* All results show benchmark at 3+

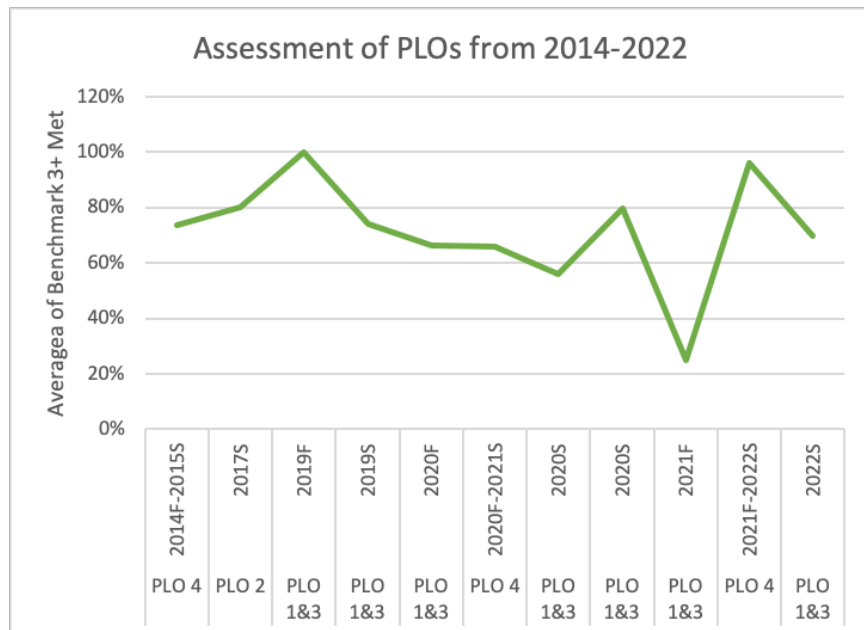
PLOS	Description/Semester	Rubrics						Course Used
		Develop clear video concepts	Communication % at Benchmark 3+	Use video technique effectively; Sound	Editing and Post	Cinematography	Use appropriate cinematic conventions to convey meaning	
PLO 1: Mastery of Film Discipline Knowledge AND PLO 3: Mastery of Video Ccommunication Maps to: PLG A: Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts AND PLG C: Students will have knowledge of discipline principles.)	PLO 1: Demonstrate a mastery of film discipline knowledge: Create film that shows mastery and understanding of contemporary practices in digital video and cinema.							
	PLO 3: Develop clear video concepts, implement effective organizational strategies, use video technique effectively including; sound, cinematography and editing, use appropriate cinematic conventions to convey meaning.							
	Spring 2019	100%	40%	80%	70%	80%	74%	FILM/COMS 185
	Fall 2019	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	FILM/COMS 185
	Spring 2020 (due to pandemic students submitted individual projects using iphones)	70%	30%	50%	50%	80%	56%	FILM/COMS 185
	Fall 2020	66%	50%	83%	50%	83%	66%	FILM/COMS 185
	Spring 2021	83%	83%	83%	83%	66%	80%	FILM/COMS 185
	Fall 2021	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	FILM/COMS 185
Spring 2022	66%	50%	100%	50%	83%	70%	FILM/COMS 185	

PLOS	Description/Semester	Rubrics						Course Used
PLO 2: Critical Thinking of Film History and Theory Maps to: PLG B. Students will think critically when constructing and consuming messages	Identify and comprehend the historic development of media and film and its evolution into digital forms.	Explanation of Issues	Evidence	Influence of Context and Assumptions	Student's position (perspective/thesis)	Conclusions and related outcomes	Average across metrics	Course Used
	Spring 2017	60%	100%	80%	100%	60%	80%	COMS 192

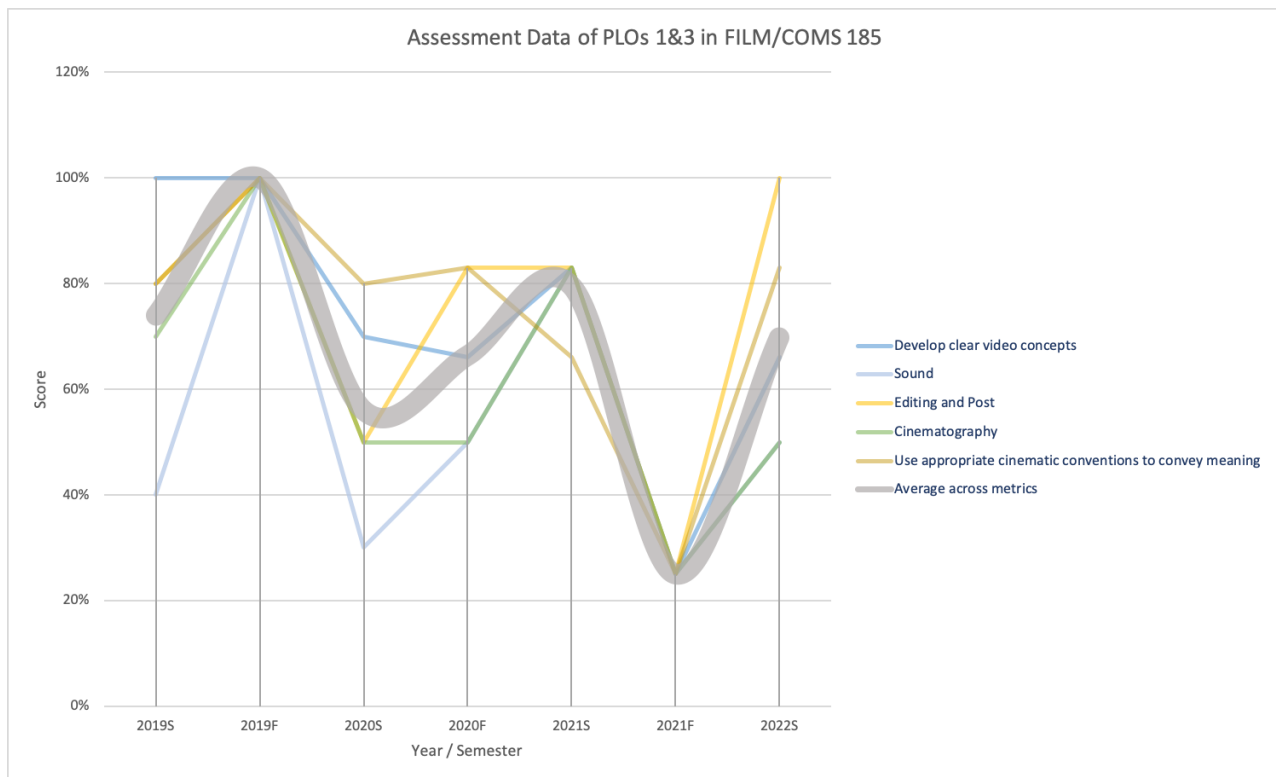
PLOS	Description/Semester	Rubrics						Course Used
PLO 4: Demonstrate proficiency in written communication Maps to PLG A: Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts	Use clear language to show context and purpose, show proficiency in using written English, genre and disciplinary conventions, use proper evidentiary material, control syntax and mechanics including proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.	Context and Purpose for Writing	Content Development	Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	Sources and Evidence	Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Average across metrics	Course Used
	Fall 2014-Spring 2015	89%	69%	83%	63%	66%	74%	COMS 142/COMS121
	Fall 2020-Spring 2021	60%	60%	90%	60%	60%	66%	COMS 142/COMS121
	Fall 2021-Spring 2022	100%	100%	87%	100%	93%	96%	COMS 121/185

2.3.3 Analysis of Film Program Learning Data

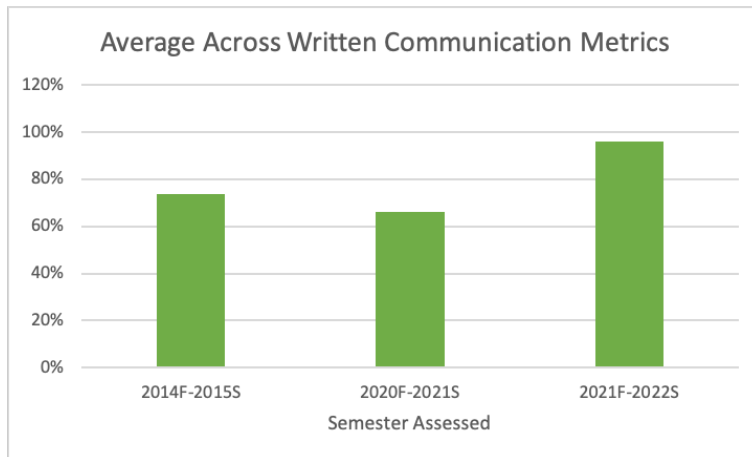
These data provide a framework to understand the relative knowledge of Film students over time and are analyzed to determine overall strengths and weaknesses in learning. The program primarily assesses the upper-division capstone courses. If we notice an area of deficit for the students, we look toward earlier courses, such as COMS/FILM 27A/B, an introductory video production course, COMS 20A/B, an introductory sound course, and COMS/FILM 128, the intermediate video production course, to enhance their skills and knowledge base, in addition to the course assessed. Assessments of all Film Program PLOS can be seen in the graph below, apart from PLO#5, which is due to be assessed in Fall 2022/Spring 2023.



In assessing the PLOs #1&3 – demonstrating a mastery of film discipline knowledge and video communication skills – the program uses a rubric for the Capstone Senior film productions in FILM/COMS 185 measuring: 1) development of clear video concepts; 2) effective use of sound; 3) editing and post-production; 4) cinematography; and 5) use of cinematic conventions to convey meaning. We have collected these data since Spring 2019, the year before the Covid-19 pandemic. The data show that beginning in Spring 2020, our senior projects were declining in quality in correlation with the pandemic beginning in March that year. At that time, all courses in the Film Program and across the university pivoted to online instruction. As can be seen in the graph, for about a year and a half after the pandemic, students were performing lower in our metrics than prior to the pandemic, with the deepest dive in Fall 2021. Aside from the well-known issues engaging students in online modes of pedagogy, teaching film production virtually presents significant challenges. During online instruction, the students’ access to equipment was greatly reduced compared to prior to the pandemic and they did not receive in-person demonstrations of equipment and film techniques. Furthermore, the J Street Film Festival of capstone projects also pivoted online. Without a live screening, there may have been less incentive for students to perform at their best. The program would expect a lag time for student performance to rise again, since the preparatory instruction for FILM 185 comes from both FILM 128 and FILM 124. The data show that by Spring 2022, student performance is again on the rise, corresponding to a shift back to in-person instruction that semester and the J Street Film Festival being in-person in May 2022. We hope this trend and in-person instruction will continue.



In order to assess written communication, we use the following metrics: 1) context and purpose for writing; 2) content development; 3) genre and disciplinary conventions; 4) sources and evidence; and 5) control of syntax and mechanics. The assessment of written communication from 2014-22 shows these skills improving over time. Although there was a slight dip during the pandemic, and there are only three total years assessed, the results do show improvement overall since 2014. This result is interesting as it demonstrates results from a PLO that does not require in-person instruction to the same extent that PLO #s 1&3 do. The lag time of improvement and the drop of performance is not as significant as PLO #s 1&3.

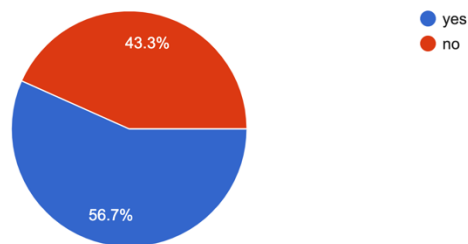


It is our conviction that four out of five of the Film Program’s PLOs require in-person instruction for success, so we therefore recommend virtual instruction be kept at an absolute minimum, barring any future natural disaster or public health emergencies.

2.3.4 Other relevant data – Film

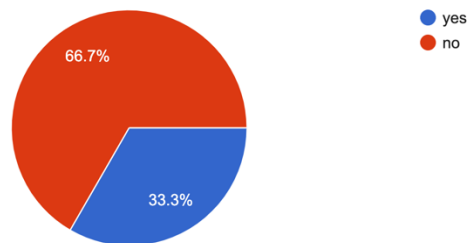
Are you working in film/television?

30 responses



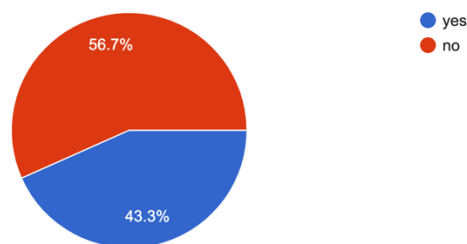
Did you attend graduate school after completing the Film program?

30 responses



Are you working in a different field, but still doing freelance or creative work in film?

30 responses



The committee recently distributed a survey to Film graduates through alumni e-mail lists and social media. Of the 30 respondents, 58.6% work in the film or television industry and 41.4% of students who work in other fields are also doing freelance or creative work in film or television.

Of respondents from the recent poll and one taken in 2014, students report working at local and national news stations, Skywalker Ranch, Industrial Light and Magic, online streaming platforms, and network and cable television. Alumni of the program have shown their films at prestigious film festivals like Sundance and Cannes, and some have attended graduate school and have gone on to teach at the college level.

Our Facebook group, Sacramento State Film Jobs, has 105 members, and several have reported finding work there. Our immediate goal is to increase membership of the group through our alumni list and connect it to other social media platforms. Our goal is to continue forming relationships with potential internships, and reach out more to alumni through social media, so as to connect them with professional opportunities. Our long-term goal is to establish a more formalized, multi-generational Sacramento State film community, providing a network of support throughout their lives. The Film program student body is more diverse than the film industry, which is typically skewed toward white males. An actively supportive and diverse alumni group will help bridge the gap between student success and career success, charting an avenue for students to break through social barriers in film. However, maintaining an alumni list has been challenging as it is not straightforward to find out who has graduated or how to contact them once they no longer use their CSUS email address. Additional support from the Alumni Association and administrative staff could be valuable in this regard.

2.3.5 Updated Comprehensive Assessment Plan, Film

The Film Program Coordinator, in conjunction with the Communication Studies Department Assessment Committee, oversees the assessment process, ensuring that data collection is completed on schedule and organizes the results for analysis and distribution to all faculty at least once every semester. Faculty teaching classes identified by the Assessment Plan are responsible for collecting assessment data. The goal of the assessment process is to improve student learning by setting high standards for learning and collecting data to determine how well student performance matches those expectations. Through this process, the Program identifies areas of strength and weakness and looks for ways to improve quality. Improvements may include curriculum modifications, changes to teaching practices and/or materials, additional resources, or the use of new technologies. Please see Appendix 3 for our complete Assessment Plan for Film.

2.4.1 MA Learning Outcomes

In 2018, the Graduate Committee, a five-faculty member committee that facilitates the graduate program and oversees admissions, used data collected from formal and informal assessment efforts to begin a curriculum revision process. The primary goals of this revision were increasing admissions and making the program more inclusive. Major changes, which were implemented in Fall 2021 after university approvals, included: changing core course requirements to better reflect disciplinary standards; updating course titles and descriptions; adding new courses that

align with growing areas in the discipline (e.g., health communication); and creating new variable content courses that enable more flexibility for students to craft and personalize their programs of study.

The changes in our curriculum required an update to our learning outcomes. In Fall 2022, the committee developed a set of working standards (see below) upon which the final revised learning goals and assessment components will be based. The committee plans to approach the task of revision inductively across several indicators of student success to collect preliminary data about how the graduate students performed before and after the Fall 2021 curriculum revision. The committee also plans to approach the task deductively by pilot testing the revised set of learning outcomes to guide our future assessment efforts. Once the Graduate Committee concludes these inductive and deductive processes, the Committee's recommendations will be forwarded to the full faculty for review. One specific result of this self-study is the noticeable need for specific, formal assessment plans based upon the revised graduate program learning outcomes. Our program learning outcomes are informally assessed in each graduate seminar (please see Appendix 1 for the curriculum map), and the culminating experience projects (individual thesis, project, and comprehensive examinations) effectively assess individual progress, but we now recognize the need to take further steps to assess on a broad, program-level basis. The Graduate Committee will take steps to develop and initiate a plan for continued formal assessment of our program learning outcomes beginning in Spring 2023.

The program's current PLO's state the students will be able to:

PLO1: Critically evaluate the array of Communication Studies topics, concepts, and theories.

PLO2: Demonstrate expertise in one or more specific areas within the Communication Studies discipline.

PLO3: Demonstrate advanced proficiency in scholarly writing for a variety of audiences.

PLO4: Critique scholarly writing from a variety of theoretical, methodological, and conceptual perspectives.

PLO5: Design and assess advanced oral communication activities in a variety of settings, including classrooms, organizations, and group problem solving and decision-making contexts.

PLO6: Construct and complete independent research projects using advanced understandings of research methodologies (quantitative, qualitative, and/or rhetorical).

PLO7: Demonstrate in-depth understanding of communication ethics and social responsibility in a variety of settings.

PLO8: Participate in local and disciplinary scholarly communities via academic activities on campus and, depending on resource availability, in regional, national, and international professional associations' conventions.

PLO9: Submit and present their work to members of scholarly communities at regional and national conferences (e.g., International Communication Association; World Communication Association; National Communication Association; Western States Communication Association; International Society for the History of Rhetoric) and for locally sponsored groups.

2.4.2 MA Outcomes Analysis

In the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years, we assessed the areas that now fall under PLO 3, PLO 5, and PLO 6.

Instructors in all the graduate courses were asked to evaluate five randomly chosen students in their courses as to their proficiency in scholarly writing (PLO 3), their command of oral communication (PLO 5), and their understanding of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (as relevant to their particular course (PLO 6)). All students evaluated were deemed to be satisfactory or exceeding expectations based on five criteria on the VALUE rubric (standardized by the AACU) for these learning outcomes. However, in the 2019-2020 assessment, there seemed to be some concern for genre and disciplinary writing conventions in one course. To address this concern,

we reinstated the Introduction to Graduate Study course in Fall 2021 as part of our core curriculum in hopes that the course would more specifically train students regarding academic writing for various contexts. In the 2020-2021 assessment, there was concern about control of syntax and mechanics in one course. To address this concern, the Graduate Committee worked to develop a writing colloquium and reminded graduate faculty to inform students of resources (such as the campus Writing Center) students may find helpful in improving this important aspect of written communication.

Additionally, as per our graduate learning goals assessment plan, student culminating experiences were evaluated, and all students who completed comprehensive exams and theses in AY 2019/2020 successfully passed and demonstrated mastery of the program's learning outcomes. To continue facilitating student success and learning in comprehensive exams, the Graduate Committee revisited our procedures and made student-centered updates to the process (some driven by pandemic virtual conditions) to make the process more streamlined and less stressful for students and faculty alike.

We also completed informal assessment of what is now PLO 8 (student participation in local and disciplinary scholarly community). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the professional development opportunities normally afforded to our students were cancelled or sparsely attended. Consequently, students did not have the same professional development or disciplinary socialization experiences. We offered several virtual professional development colloquia that were well-attended, included writing cafes, CV preparation workshops, and discussions about how to submit to academic conferences. Likewise, students were invited and encouraged to participate in virtual disciplinary conferences.

In the current academic year (2022-2023), we will continue to monitor the courses that are new to our curriculum to ensure the content continues to aid students in achieving our PLOs so that our graduate students may complete their coherent plans of study and conduct original research within the field of communication.

As we have recently onboarded five faculty members in our department and given that we continue to grow our program, we created a workshop to help our new colleagues understand the intricacies of graduate advising. Excellence in advising helps us keep attrition low so that we may properly help graduate students navigate their plans of study and culminating experiences.

2.4.3 Summary of MA Program Data

We have made conscious efforts to recruit and to promote our revamped program through our scholarly community (e.g., postings on organizational websites, recruitment emails to our seniors), classroom visits (e.g., current grads attend senior seminars for Q&A sessions), and attendance at graduate fairs (e.g., national and local communication conferences). Specifically, we emphasize the flexibility our program offers with newly added courses (i.e., modules, evening courses) and focus on our holistic admission process when recruiting new students.

Among our 42 graduates from the last five years, six are working as part-time faculty; one is tenure-track faculty at a local community college; one is an assistant professor at a CSU; five are doctoral candidates; two are in the process of applying to doctoral programs; and one is a new doctoral student. Several others are experiencing continued success in their professional activities. The Graduate Committee plans to develop a more comprehensive and formalized method of tracking the post-graduation successes of our former students.

2.4.4 Updated Comprehensive Assessment Plan

The Graduate Committee, working with a member of the Communication Studies Assessment Committee, will continue to assess the Graduate Learning Goals in our new core courses (COMS 200A, COMS 200B, COMS 201, and one of the methods courses (COMS 202, COMS 203, or COMS 204) each time each class is offered. The faculty teaching these courses will be responsible for collecting the assessment data.

The full assessment plan for the Communication Studies MA appears in Appendix 4.

Section 3: Student Success

3.1 Communication Studies BA

Student success was assessed in three elements: **admission, retention, and graduation.**

3.1.1 Admission

Between Fall 2015 and Spring 2021, the number of students admitted to the Communication Studies major fluctuated between 891 and 1,066. The number of admissions was over 1,000 after 2015-16. However, we see a huge decline in ComS majors after Spring 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic started, as seen in the below chart.

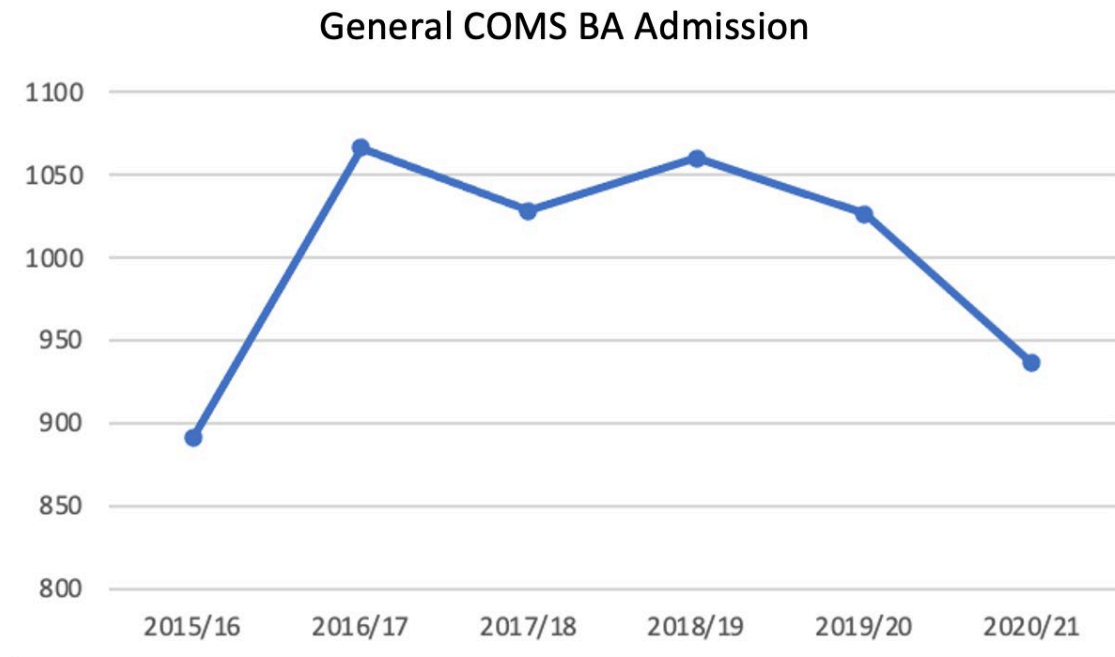
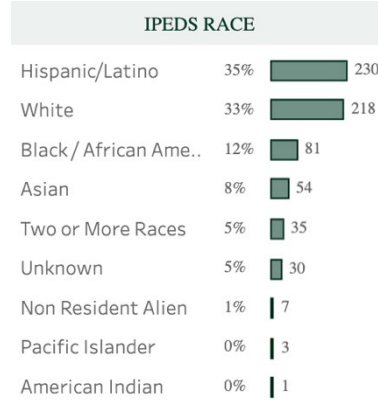
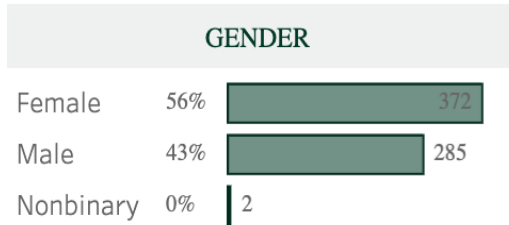


Chart: Kikuko Omori, Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Admission Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/admissions.html>)

Gender and Racial/Ethnic Diversity

As seen in the below chart, Communication Studies majors include about 56% of female students, which is equivalent to undergraduates across the university (57%). In terms of race/ethnicity, majority of our students are Hispanic/Latino (35%) or White (33%).

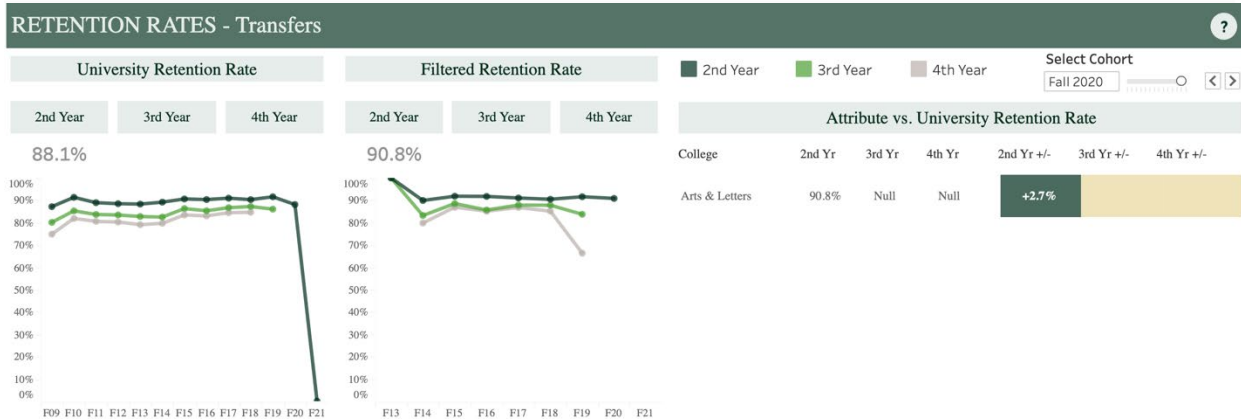
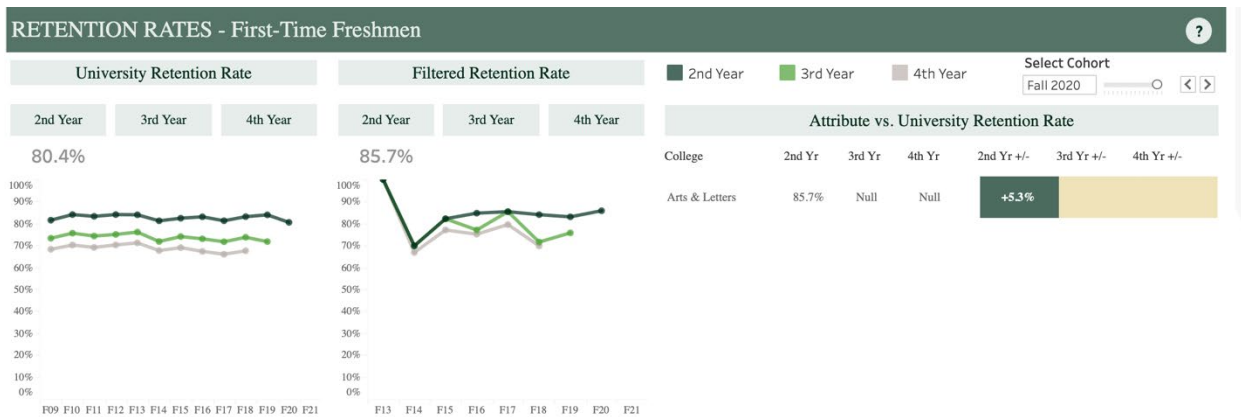
COMS BA Admission (Fall 2021)



Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Admissions Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/admissions.html>)

3.1.2 Retention

The below charts show Communication Studies major retention rates for first-year students and transfer students. For both first-time students (85.7%) and transfers (90.8%), our retention rates are above the university retention rates (first-year students, 80.4%; transfers, 88.1%). The bottom table shows that retention rates vary across cohorts. Overall, transfer students' retention rates are a little higher than the first-year students in the ComS major.



Retention Rates

	# Students		2nd Year		3rd Year		4th Year	
	First-Time Freshmen	Transfers	First-Time Freshmen	Transfers	First-Time Freshmen	Transfers	First-Time Freshmen	Transfers
Fall 2009	19	93	84.2%	88.2%	73.7%	81.7%	68.4%	71.0%
Fall 2010	20	76	80.0%	90.8%	70.0%	85.5%	65.0%	81.6%
Fall 2011	14	67	78.6%	86.6%	64.3%	82.1%		80.6%
Fall 2012	18	75	77.8%	89.3%	72.2%	85.3%	61.1%	84.0%
Fall 2013	19	100	94.7%	89.0%	84.2%	83.0%	78.9%	82.0%
Fall 2014		2		50.0%				
Fall 2019	1		100.0%		100.0%			
Spring 2010		6		66.7%		66.7%		66.7%
Spring 2011		35		88.6%		80.0%		77.1%
Spring 2012		22		90.9%		81.8%		81.8%
Spring 2013		12		100.0%		100.0%		91.7%
Spring 2014		29		86.2%		79.3%		79.3%
Spring 2022		1						

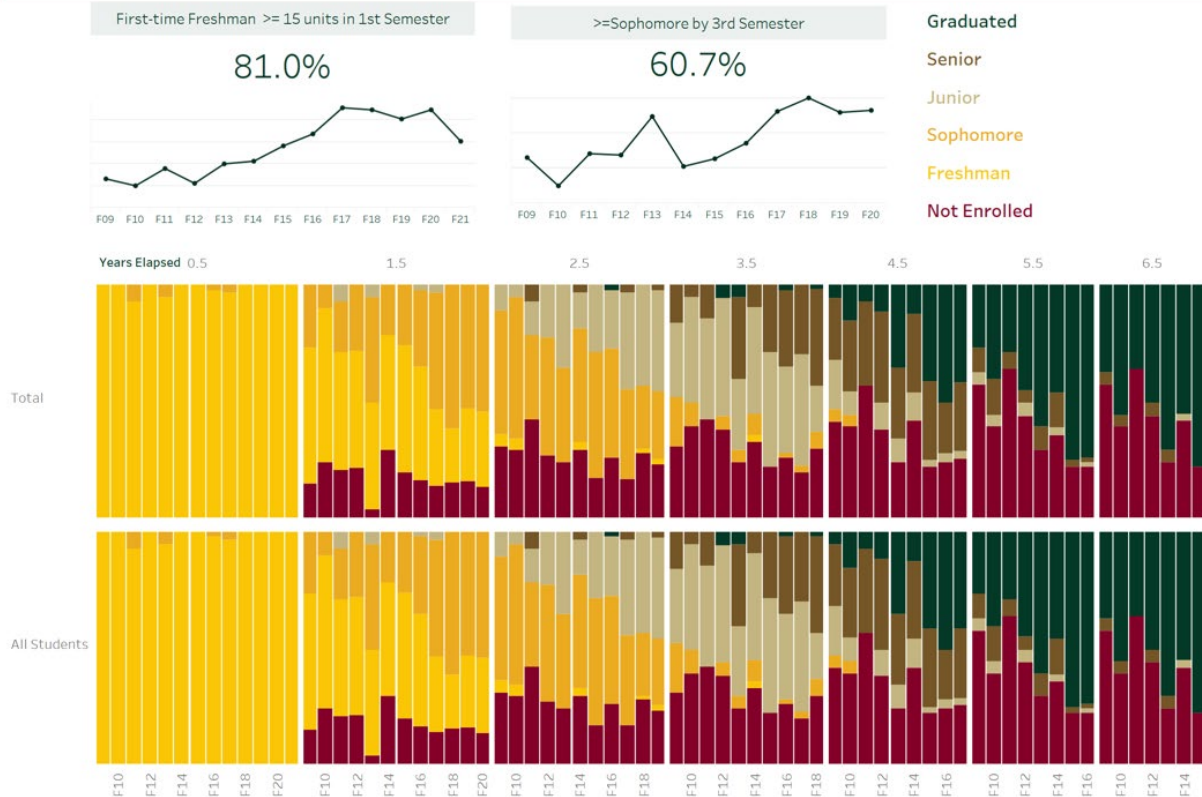
Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Student Progression & Graduation Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/admissions.html>)

The following charts show the progression of a particular cohort (F09- F19) of Communication Studies majors who enrolled with the elapsed time (e.g., 0.5, 1.5, ...6.5 years).

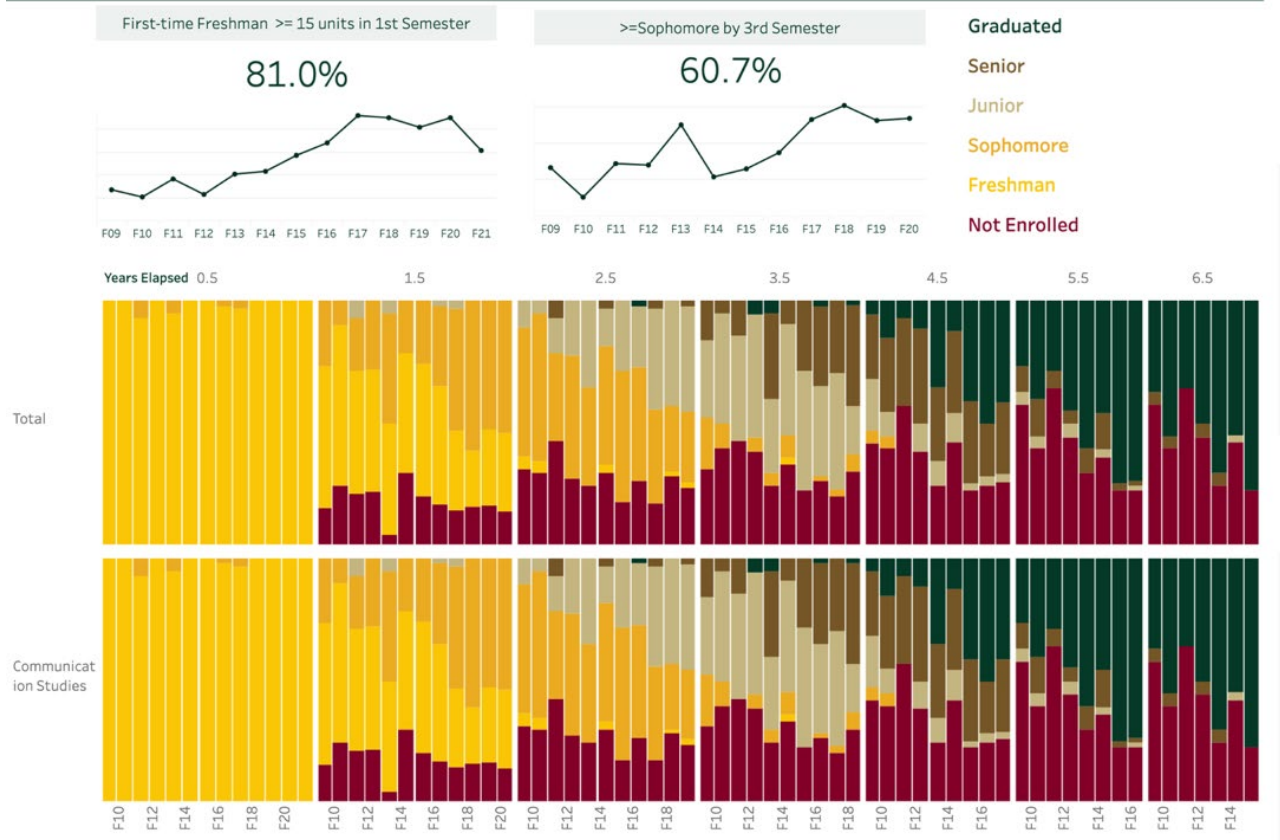
Compared with all the students on campus, the pattern of retention is similar. About 81% of Communication Studies majors stayed in the program during the first semester, and in three semesters, 60.7% of our majors became second-year students.

Attribute: All Students | First-Time Freshmen or Transfer: First-Time Freshmen | College: All | Department: All | Major: Multiple v... | Pell Eligible @ Entry: All | 1st Generation @ Entry: All | IPEDS Race: All | Gender: All

PROGRESSION - First-Time Freshmen

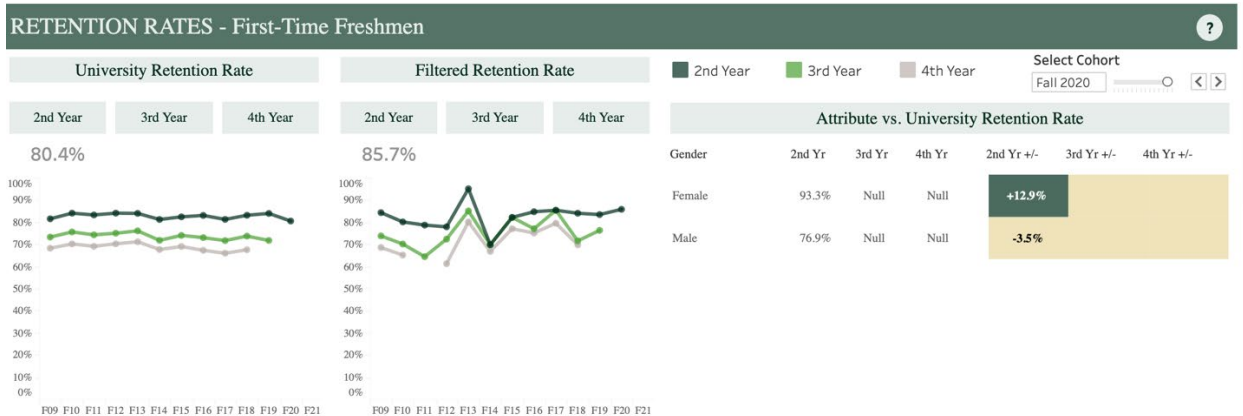


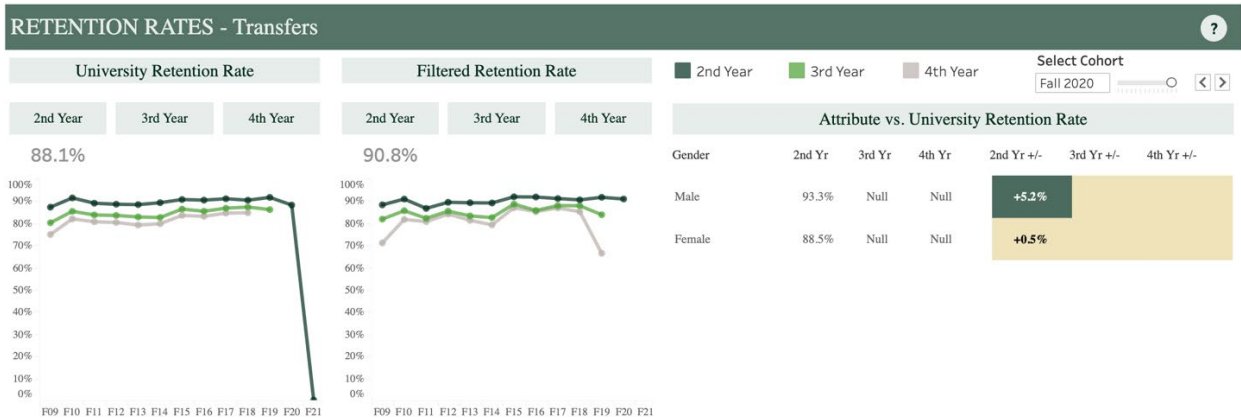
PROGRESSION - Transfers



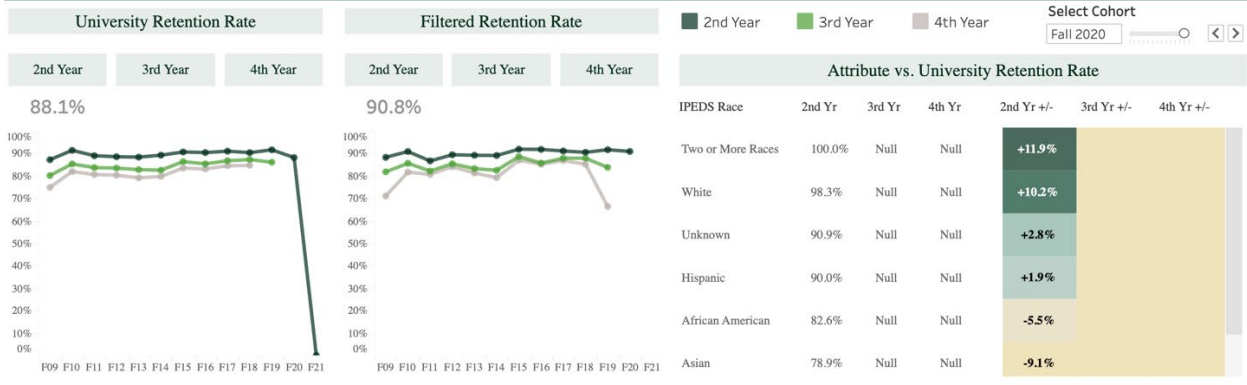
Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Student Progression & Graduation Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/admissions.html>)

The below charts display retention rates by gender. For first-year students, the female retention rate was higher (93.3%) than the male retention rate (76.9%). However, for transfers, the male retention rate (93.3%) was higher than the female retention rate (88.5%). Except for the first-year men, the retention rates for the major were higher than the university retention rate.





RETENTION RATES - Transfers

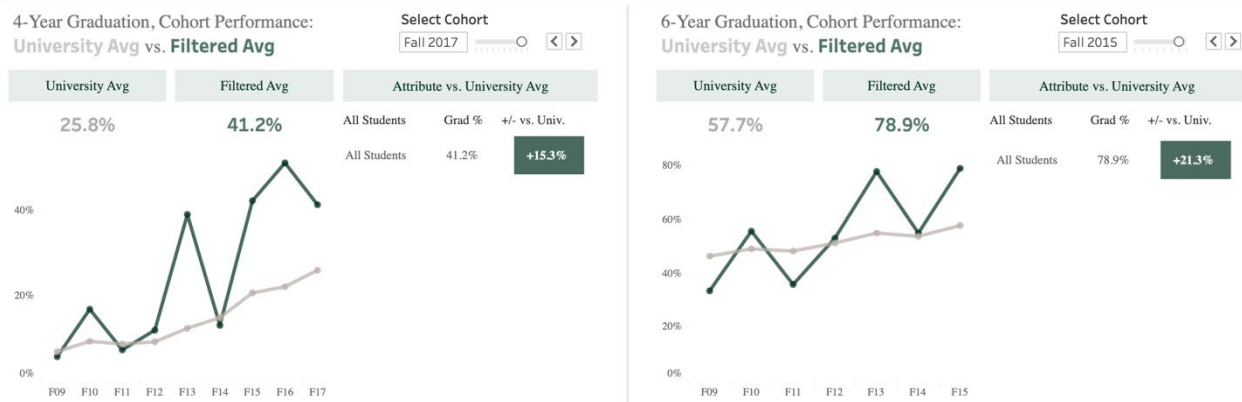


Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Student Progression & Graduation Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/student-success.html>)

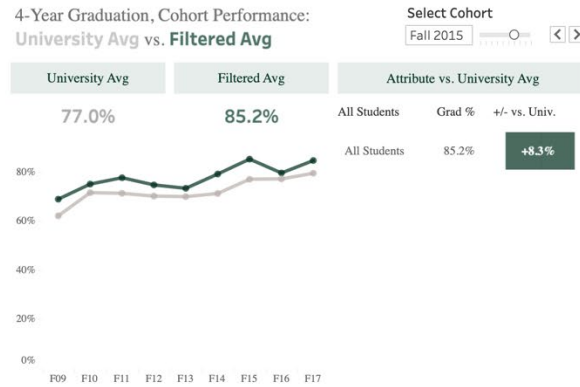
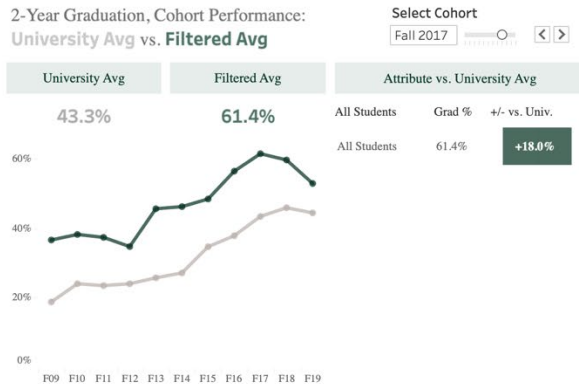
3.1.3 Graduation

The below charts show the graduation rates for Communication Studies majors. Looking at the 2009-2019 cohort, graduation rates were higher than the university average in general at both four-year and six-year marks for transfers. Within four years, 41.2% (university average = 25.8%) of first-year students and 61.4% (university average = 57.7%) of transfer students in Communication Studies graduated. Within six years, 78.9% (university average = 25.8%) of first-year students and 85.2% (university average = 77%) of transfer students graduated. The pattern of graduation rates for the major and university average for transfers are similar, and gradually increasing graduation rates at four-year and six-year marks in general. On the other hand, for the first-year students, the ComS major's graduation rate fluctuates more than the university average at four-year and six-year marks.

GRADUATION RATES - First-Time Freshmen



GRADUATION RATES - Transfers

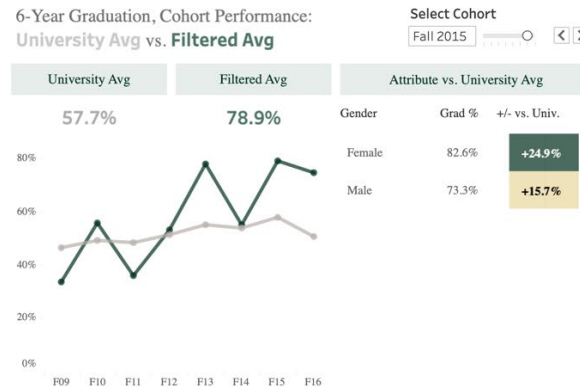
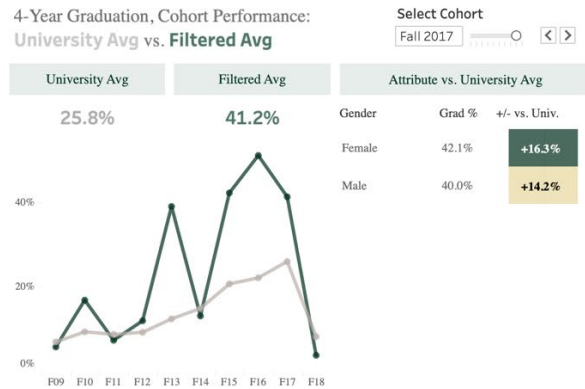


Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Student Progression & Graduation Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/student-success.html>)

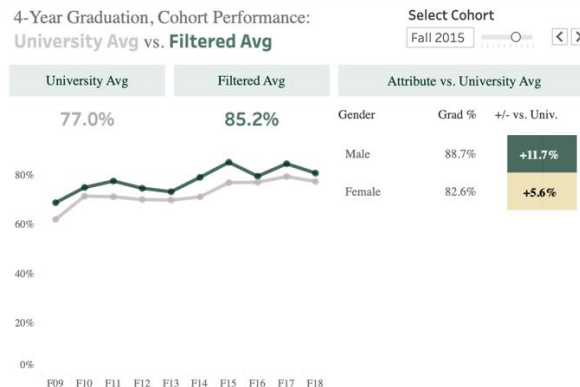
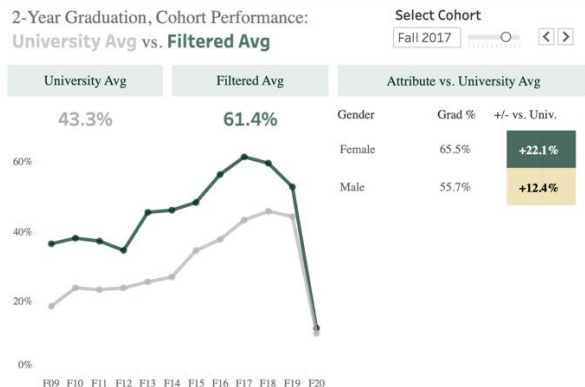
Graduation Rates by Gender

The below charts display graduation rates by gender. For the first-time freshmen, the female graduation rate was higher than the male graduation rate and the university average at both the four- and six-year marks. Within six years, 82.6% of female and 73.3% of male ComS majors graduated. Similarly, the female graduation rate was higher than the male and university average for transfers. Within four years, 88.7% of female and 82.6% of male transfer students graduated. We don't know the reasons why female student graduation rates are higher than the corresponding male students' graduation rates in our major, meriting further investigation.

GRADUATION RATES - First-Time Freshmen



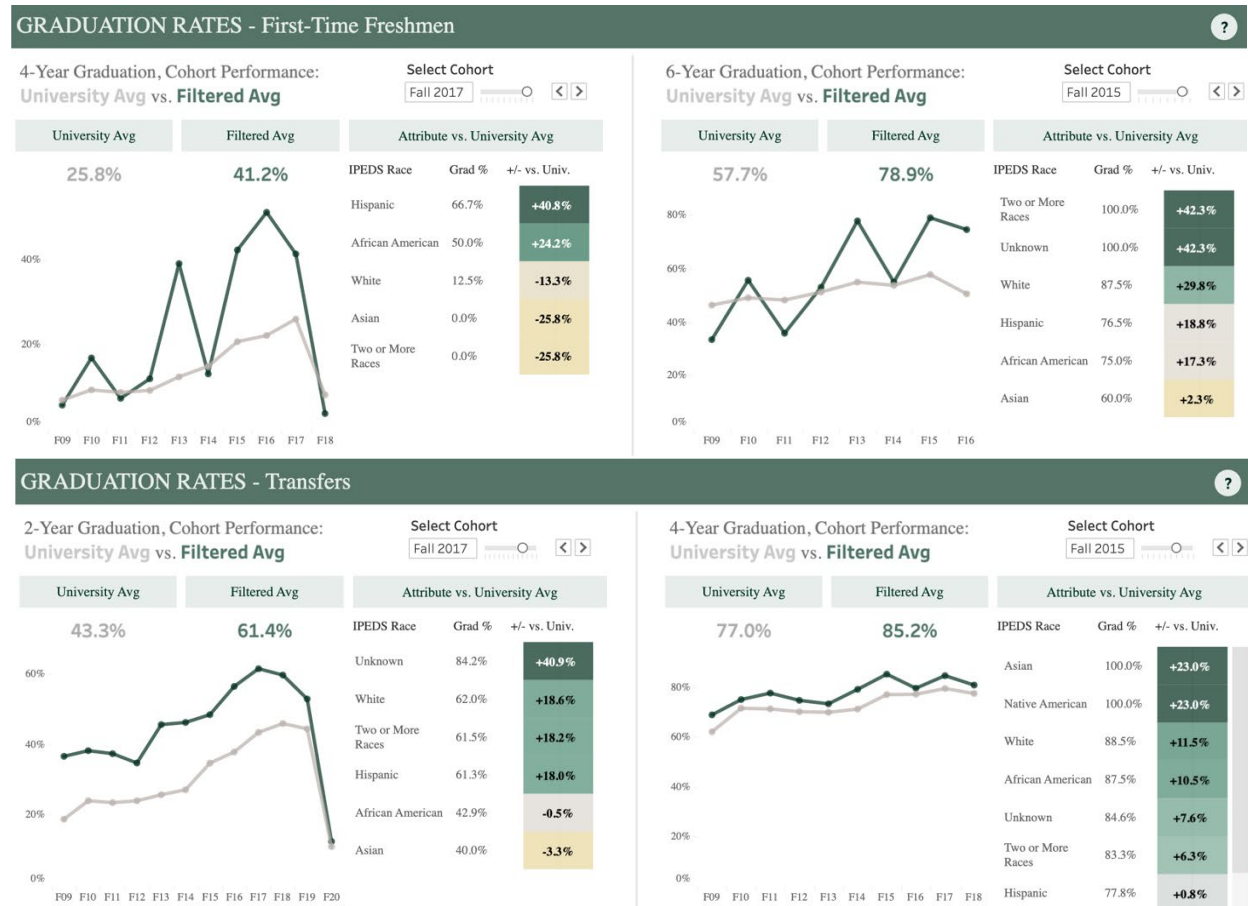
GRADUATION RATES - Transfers



Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Student Progression & Graduation Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/admissions.html>)

Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

The charts below display graduation rates by race/ethnicity. The number of some race/ethnic groups is too small to provide a useful analysis of graduation rates. Thus, only White, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Asian, and two or more races are included in this analysis. For both first-time freshmen and transfers, ComS majors' six-year graduation rates were higher than university average on all the races/ethnicities included in the data (i.e., White, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American graduation, Asian, two or more races). However, four-year graduation rates for Asian and two or more races were lower than university average for the first-time freshmen. For transfers, African American/Black and Asian's graduation rates were also lower than the university average at the four-year mark.



Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Student Progression & Graduation Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/admissions.html>)

3.1.4 Partnerships

Communications Studies faculty have served as SAGE faculty fellows, who focus on student success, since the program was inaugurated. Additionally, the department engages with the Career Center, the Arts & Letters Professional Speakers Series, the Community Engagement Center and more. The department has a dedicated internship coordinator who develops off-campus placements for students at a variety of organizations, although recent turnover in the position was a cause of concern of some faculty members. Several faculty members mentioned that internships have been handled by several different individuals, which was not ideal. The entire program was overhauled within the past few years to bring it into compliance with university requirements. Additionally, some faculty members have suggested supplemental instruction courses similar to others offered around campus to help students succeed.

3.2 Journalism

The Journalism major is housed within the Communication Studies Department. Additionally, the department is a partner with the Political Science Department in offering a dual Political Science-Journalism major. The Political Science-Journalism program officially is housed in the College of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Studies.

3.2.1 Enrollment

During the past five years, the number of journalism majors fluctuated between 130 and 160, while the number of Political Science-Journalism majors increased to 50.

Sacramento State Journalism Majors

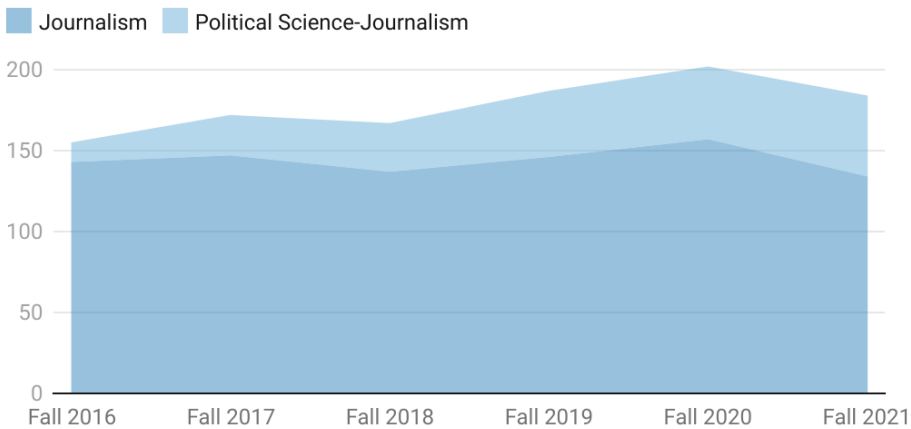


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: CSUS Institutional Research, Effectiveness and Planning

Racial/Ethnic Diversity

A plurality of Journalism and Political Science-Journalism majors in fall 2021 – 36% – identified as Hispanic. Journalism majors were more likely to identify as Black than undergraduate students university-wide but were less likely to identify as Asian/Pacific Islander than undergraduate students university-wide.

Diversity Among Journalism Students

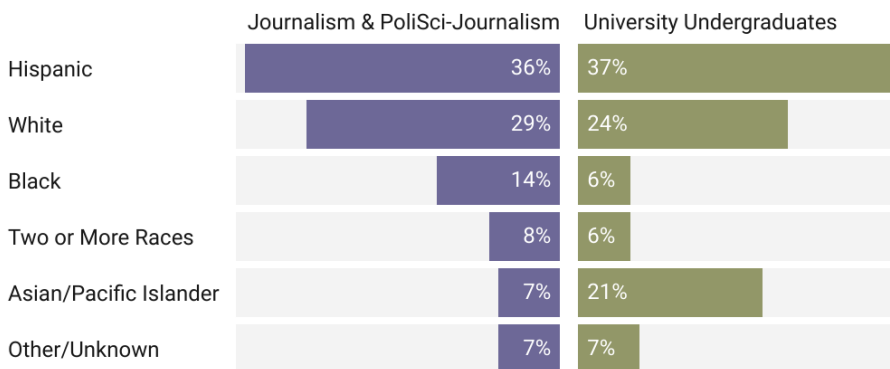


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

Age

The age breakdown of Journalism majors in fall 2021 was similar to the age breakdown of all university undergraduate students with these exceptions: The program has fewer “nontraditional” students 30 and older and more students 20 and younger.

Age Breakdown of Journalism Majors

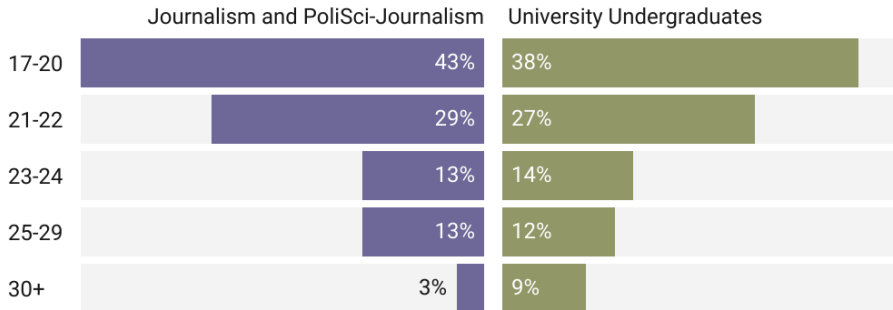


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

Other Demographics of Journalism Students

About 59% of Journalism and Political Science-Journalism majors were women in fall 2021, compared to 57% of undergraduates across the university. Additionally, about 24% of Journalism and Political Science-Journalism majors were “first generation” college students, compared to 32% percent of undergraduates across the university. About 43% went to high school in the four-county Sacramento region, compared to 55% percent of undergraduates across Sacramento State.

Applications

The number of new applications to the Journalism program fell during the last five academic years, while the number of new applications to the Political Science-Journalism program rose. The average high school GPA of applicants to the Journalism program in fall 2021 was 3.3. The average high school GPA of applicants to the Political Science-Journalism program was 3.6. For comparison, the average high school GPA of applicants across the university was 3.5.

Meanwhile, the average transfer student GPA of applicants to the Journalism program was 3.2. The average transfer student GPA of applicants to the Political Science-Journalism program was 2.9. For comparison, the average transfer student GPA of applicants across the university was 3.2.

Journalism Applications

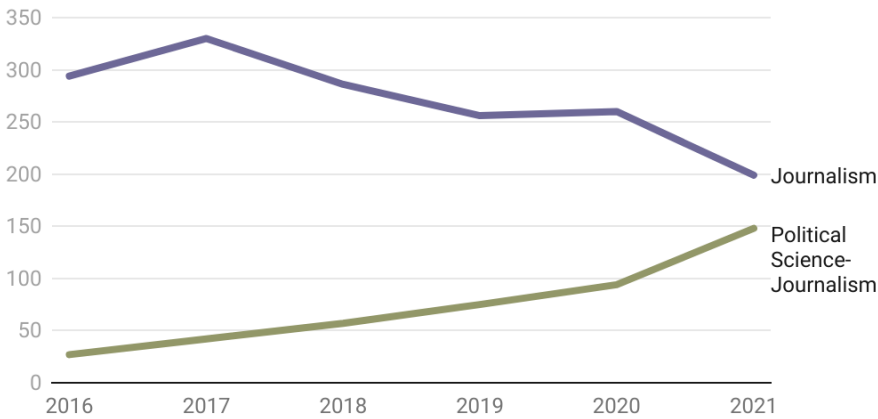


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

First-Time Students vs. Transfers

A much higher proportion of applicants to the journalism program in 2021 were transfer students when compared to the Political Science-Journalism program, as the below chart illustrates.

Journalism Applications by Cohort

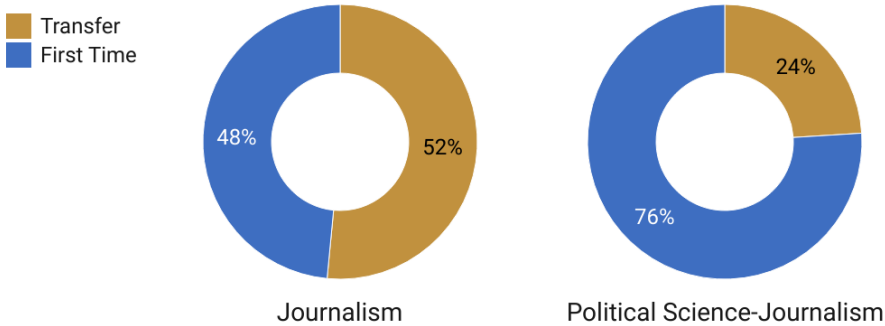


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

Admissions and Enrollment

About 93% of students who applied for admission to the Journalism major were admitted in fall 2021. Political Science-Journalism applicants were admitted at the same rate. Thirty-nine applicants enrolled in the Journalism program in 2021, a decline from previous years. The number of Political Science-Journalism majors increased modestly, as seen below.

New Freshmen and Transfer Student Enrollments

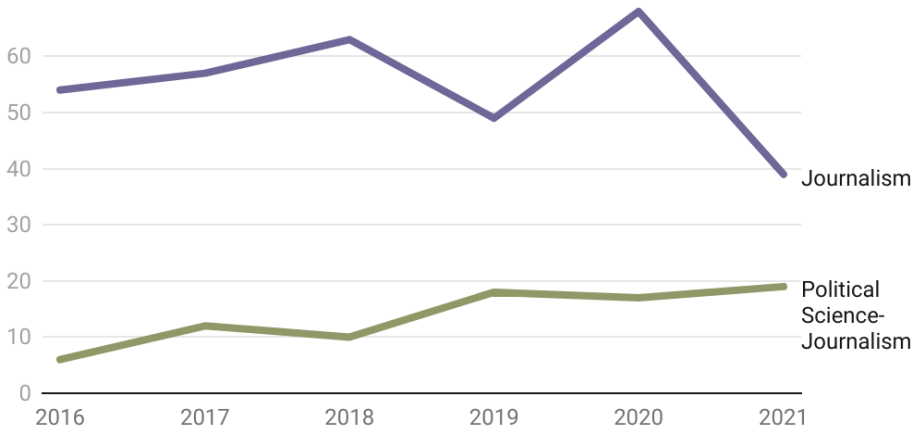


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

Grade Point Average

As the below chart shows, the average GPA of Journalism and Political Science-Journalism majors is similar to the university average. Like the university as a whole, the pandemic had an effect on Journalism GPAs.

Average Term GPA

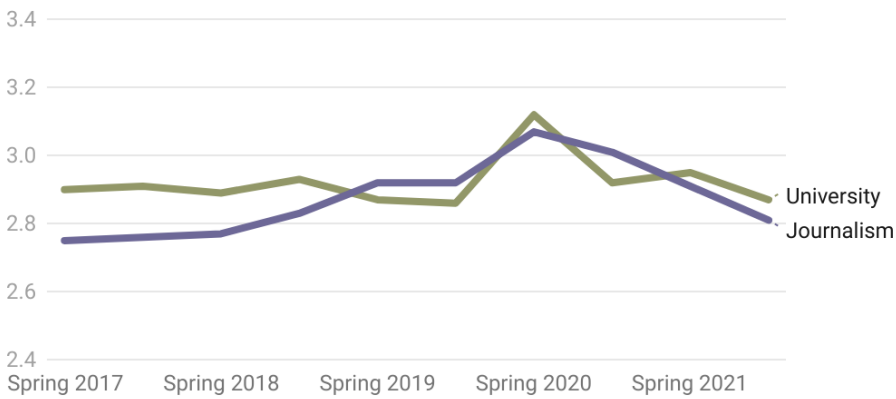


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: CSUS Institutional Research

GPA by Ethnicity

Grade point average disparities by race/ethnicity are evident in the journalism program, and across the university, as seen below.

Cumulative Grade Point Average by Race/Ethnicity

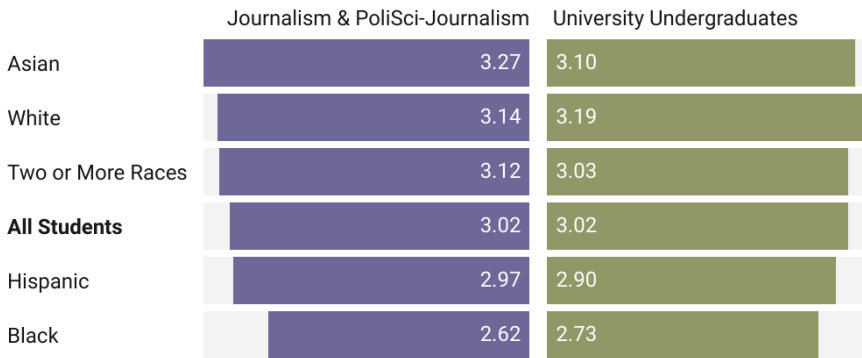


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

Access to Classes

Journalism classes are consistently full and frequently overenrolled, speaking to a need to offer more sections. For example, in spring 2022, there was capacity for 136 students in upper-division journalism classes required for the major. As of one week before the start of instruction, 138 students were enrolled in those classes, and 20 more were on a waitlist to take those classes.

Enrollment in Required Journalism Courses



Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

3.2.2 Four-Year Graduation Rates (For First-Year Students)

About 37% of first-year Journalism and Political Science-Journalism majors who started college in fall 2017 graduated in four years. That's higher than the universitywide rate of 26%. The four-year graduation rate rose from 8% among those entering college in 2012 to 37% among those entering college in 2017.

Four-Year Graduation Rates

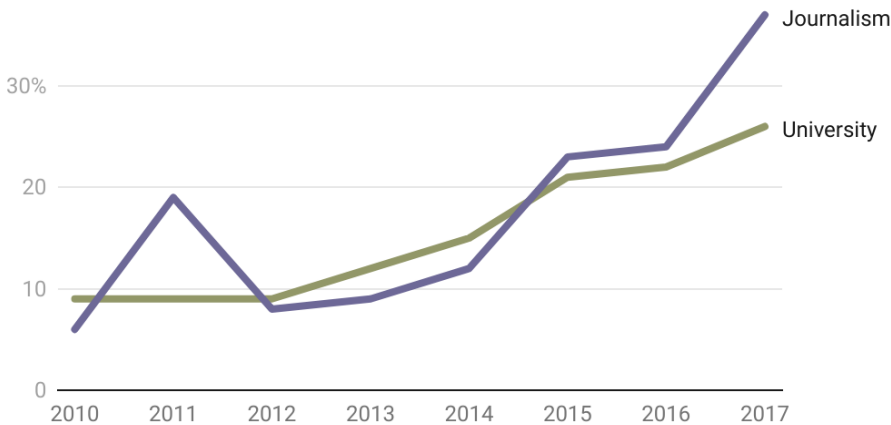


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

3.2.3 Two-Year Graduation Rates (For Transfer Students)

About 56% of Journalism and Political Science-journalism majors who transferred here in fall 2019 graduated within two years. That’s higher than the universitywide rate of 44%. The two-year graduation rate of our majors rose from 9% among those entering college in 2011 to 56% among those entering college in 2019.

Two-Year Graduation Rates

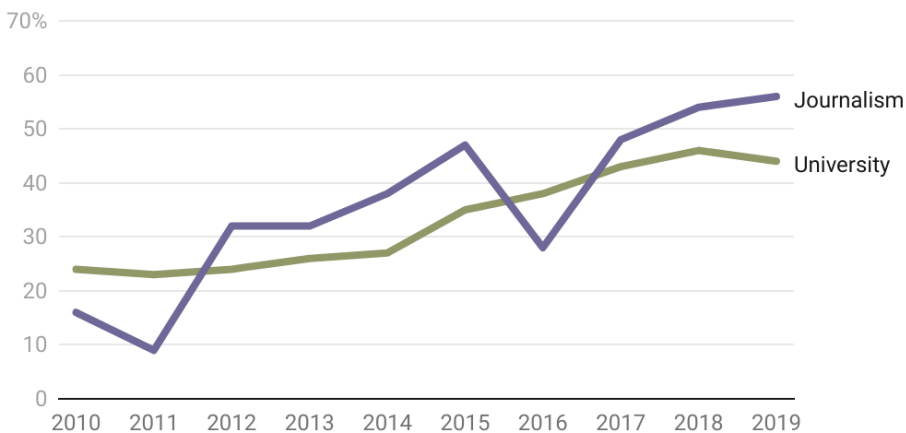


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

Graduation Rates and Diversity

Journalism and Political Science-Journalism majors consistently graduated on time more often than the university average, across all racial and ethnic identities. Disparities exist, however, with White Journalism majors graduating on time more often than students of color. It’s challenging to identify particular disparities because of the relatively small number of Journalism students who identify with some ethnic or racial groups. The below charts show timely graduation rates over the most recent three-year period. Even so, some cohorts have fewer than 10 students, meaning that a single student graduating on time – or not – can greatly affect the percentages.

On-Time Two-Year Graduation Rates by Ethnicity

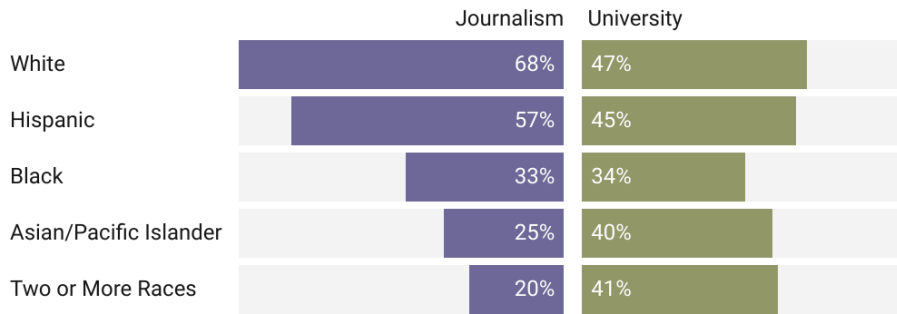


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

On-Time Four-Year Graduation Rates by Ethnicity

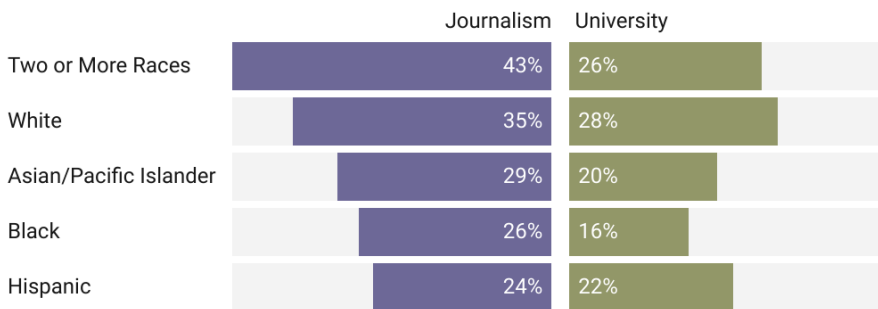


Chart: Phillip Reese • Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research

3.2.4 Alumni Success

In the past five years, our graduates have gone to work for many news outlets, including *The New York Times*, NPR, *The Tampa Bay Times*, *The Sacramento Bee*, Capital Public Radio, KCRA, *Forbes Magazine* and local community newspapers, digital media organizations and broadcast outlets. Many of our graduates find work in communication-related fields, including as public relations professionals, corporate and non-profit communication specialists or government analysts.

3.2.5 Community Partnerships

The journalism program at Sacramento State partners with multiple local and regional organizations that publish our students' classwork and provide internships and professional development. In the past five years, local news organizations have published more than 100 articles by Sacramento State journalism students. These partnerships also serve the broader community. When our students publish in local news outlets, they inform the community. Sacramento State's journalism program has also partnered with Capital Public Radio, Politico, local TV stations, state and local government agencies and representatives and nonprofits to provide students with real-world experience and serve the Sacramento region. These partnerships benefit our students. Students often have published work to include with their resumes when they apply for jobs.

3.2.6 Internships

The journalism program at Sacramento State matches students with local organizations for internships. Our students benefit from these partnerships. They gain experience that hones their skills – and helps them land their first job. The organizations also benefit – they get to draw from a diverse pool of students eager to do good work. This year,

The James B. McClatchy Foundation awarded a \$27,000 grant to fund Sacramento State student internships at *The Sacramento Bee*.

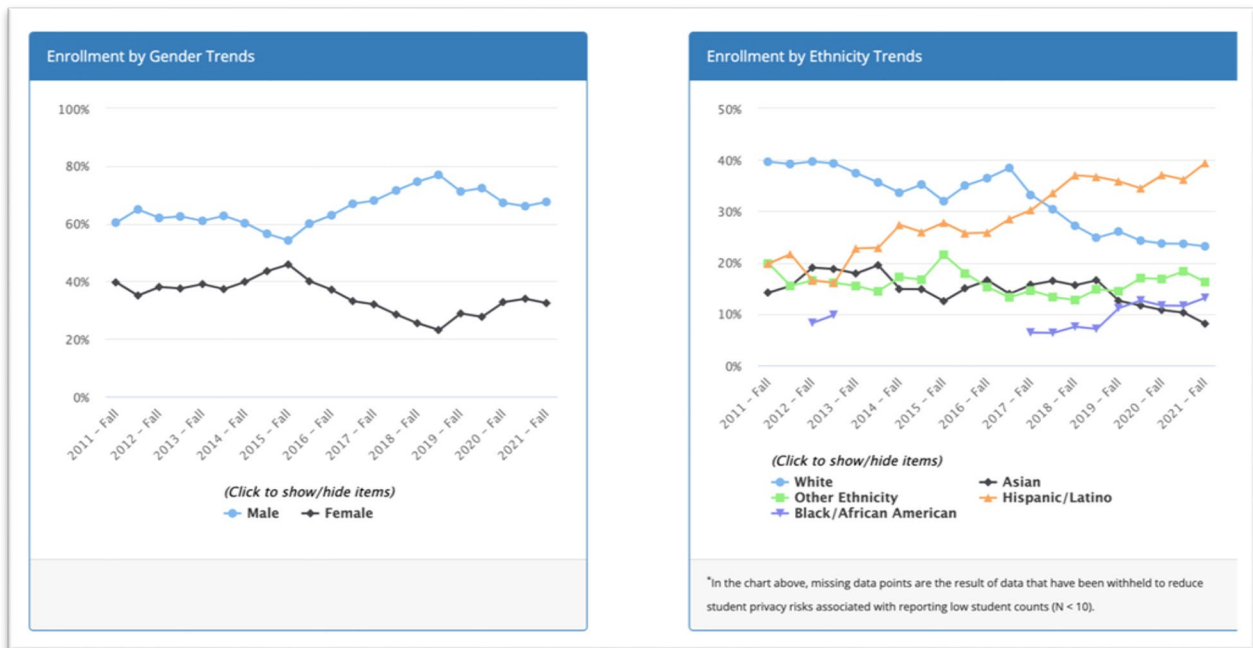
3.2.7 The State Hornet

[*The State Hornet*](#) is the student-run news organization at Sacramento State. The Hornet usually has between 40 and 60 student journalists on staff, covering news, sports, and entertainment. It also produces video broadcasts and podcasts. In 2017, 2021, and 2022, *The State Hornet* won National Pacemaker Awards, considered the “Pulitzer Prizes of Student Journalism,” from the National Scholastic Press Association. The State Hornet was a finalist for the Pacemaker Award in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

3.3 Film

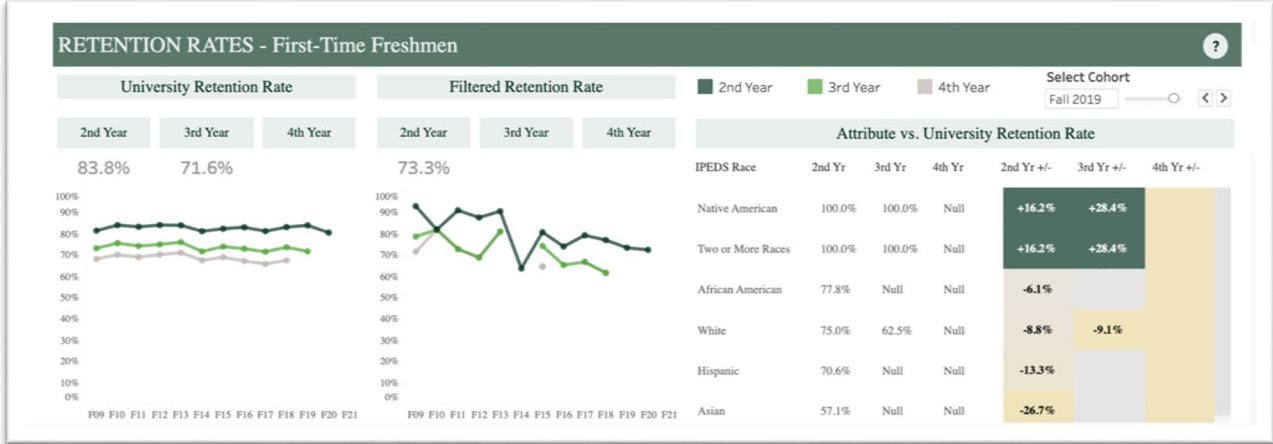
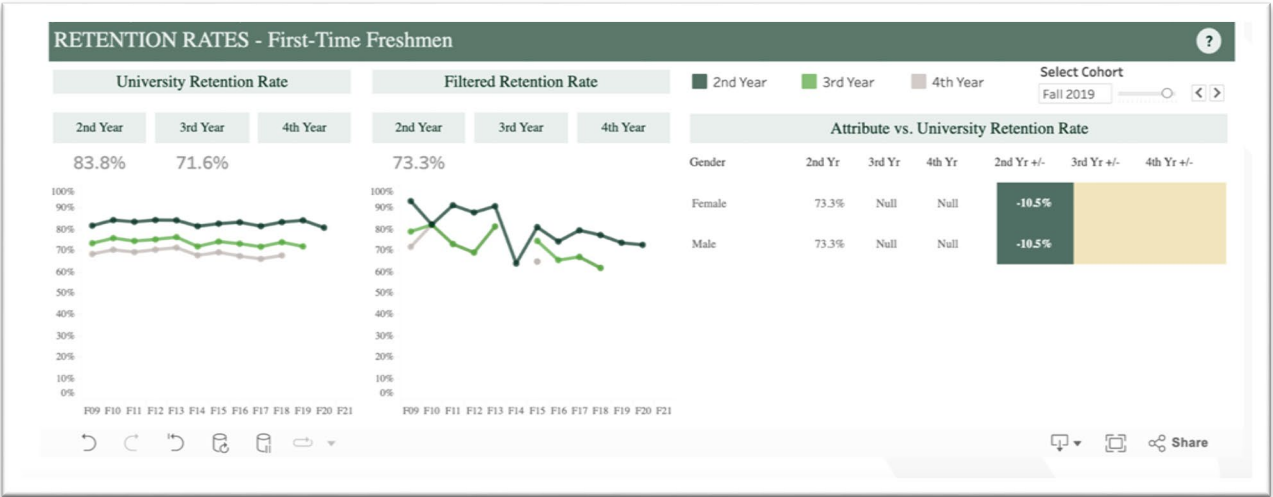
3.3.1 Demographics of Film Majors

The following graphs represent data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity for the BA in Film.



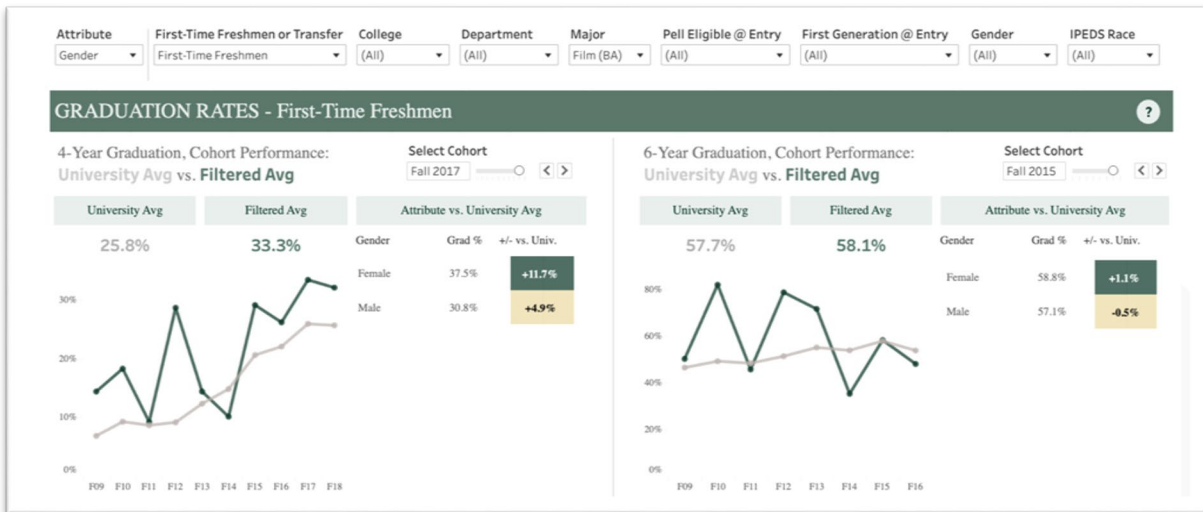
3.3.2 Retention of Film Students

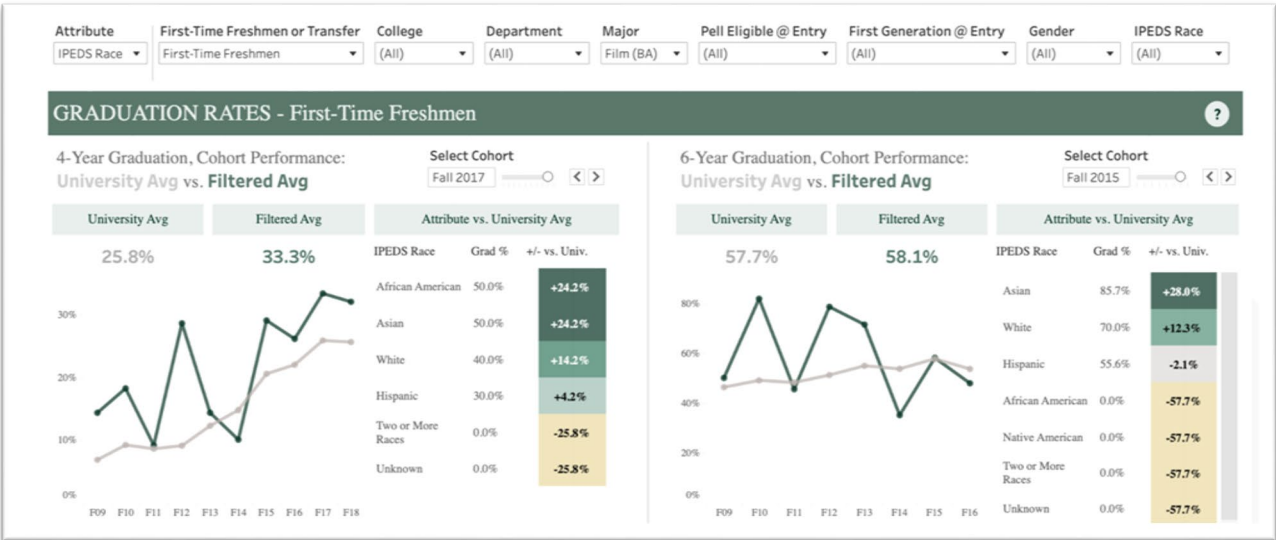
The below graphs represent retention data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity for the BA in Film.



3.3.3 Film Graduation Rates

The following are four-year and six-year graduation data for first-year students, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity for the BA in Film.





3.3.4 Analysis of Film Program Retention and Graduation

According to the Sacramento State Enrollment Dashboard, as of Spring 2022, the Film program had 252 students, versus 232 in 2020, and 215 in 2019, 173 in 2018. In the past 10 years, Film program enrollment has doubled. The average Sac State GPA has gone from 3.05 with average unit load of 12.22 to a GPA of 2.81 with a load of 12.44. As enrollment in the program expands, a major goal of the program is to improve diversity, equity and inclusion among our students. Over the past 10 years, the students in our courses have become more diverse. In 2012 none of our students was Pell-eligible, only 8% were first generation, 24% were minority-represented, and 38% identified as women. Contrast that with 2022 data suggesting that 47% are Pell-eligible, 17% are first generation, and 54% are minority-represented. The program is pleased to see an increase in enrollment of minorities, Pell-eligible, and first-generation students. The number of female-identified students has declined on average, and we plan to work to improve that margin by surveying students, advertising to all genders, and demonstrating a gender-neutral film pedagogy.

The program data have informed our strategies for online teaching modalities and the subsequent pivot back to in-person based learning. Much of the Film program requires written work, discussion of this writing, and hands-on instruction with equipment and techniques. Reviewing these data allowed us to reassess the strength of engaged in-person discussions and feedback for student learning.

As the program works to improve the diversity of our students in admissions, retention, and graduation, we recognize the need for an anti-racist pedagogy. Throughout our courses in the department, we are aligning our methods and practices so that we might excel in this area; for example, by teaching films and written materials with greater minority representation, so they might then write papers analyzing these, or scripts that reflect DEI as well. The Film Program is committed to providing a safe, creative space for a diverse array of emergent filmmakers, encouraging students to write scripts that reflect the diversity of their experiences and backgrounds and to cultivate their own voices in their analyses. The Film Program expects to hire an additional colleague this coming year. The assessment data will be useful in determining what areas the program needs to focus on to align with our PLOs and improve our goals of DEI.

3.3.5 Film Program Partnerships for Student Success

Internships. Our students can take advantage of internships through COMS 195, the internship course. Hornet Athletics and Sac State Football film internships have been quite successful for our students, as once students intern there, they are often hired by them. With this they take their experience to later work in broadcast and other media. When Creative Services was still funded by the university, students went on to intern there. The University

Communications office offers informal media internships, where students pursue employment and receive significant experience to work more broadly in the film industry. The Arts & Letters SAGE student success center is pro-actively advises students and hires student interns. The Sac City Film Commission office hires two students per semester in the film office and on film sets. There is also a PA boot camp program in development. Additional internships available to our students are found on the Communications Department Internship website with the following organizations: City of Folsom Parks & Recreation, City of Sacramento, Convention & Cultural Services, Sacramento Educational Cable Consortium Film Internship, Studio T Arts & Entertainment Film Internship, and the Save the Snakes Film & Communications Internship. For many of our students, internships provide a critical bridge between their undergraduate education and their professional career.

Advising. Although all faculty in the Communication Studies Department may advise Film students, by the time they are in their upper division coursework, they are encouraged to obtain advising from Film program faculty. This provides the most informative and streamlined approach for students seeking advice on courses and career pathways. While this is helpful for our upper-division students, we have noticed that students in general advising do not always get the most useful advice on the course sequence they should take to graduate on time. One way to mitigate this is to train general advisors in our course prerequisites and our recommendations, so the program can reduce bottlenecks. Additionally, our courses fill up quickly and since there are only three faculty members who can serve as advisors, the students often wait until they are able to meet with someone to discuss their courses. Not expecting delays, they often miss their preferred schedule to more seasoned students. The most useful solution would be to train advisors in which courses are most appropriate for our students to take in succession.

3.4.1 MA in Communication Studies Admission Data

Graduate admissions have been consistently rising over the last four years. After concerning drops in applicants during 2015-2017, the Graduate Committee started significant recruiting efforts as well as program updates to attract more students (see above). Between Fall 2017 and Spring 2022, the number of students admitted to the Communication Studies Master’s program nearly doubled, and exceeded our 10-year high. Rates of acceptance are approximately 50%.

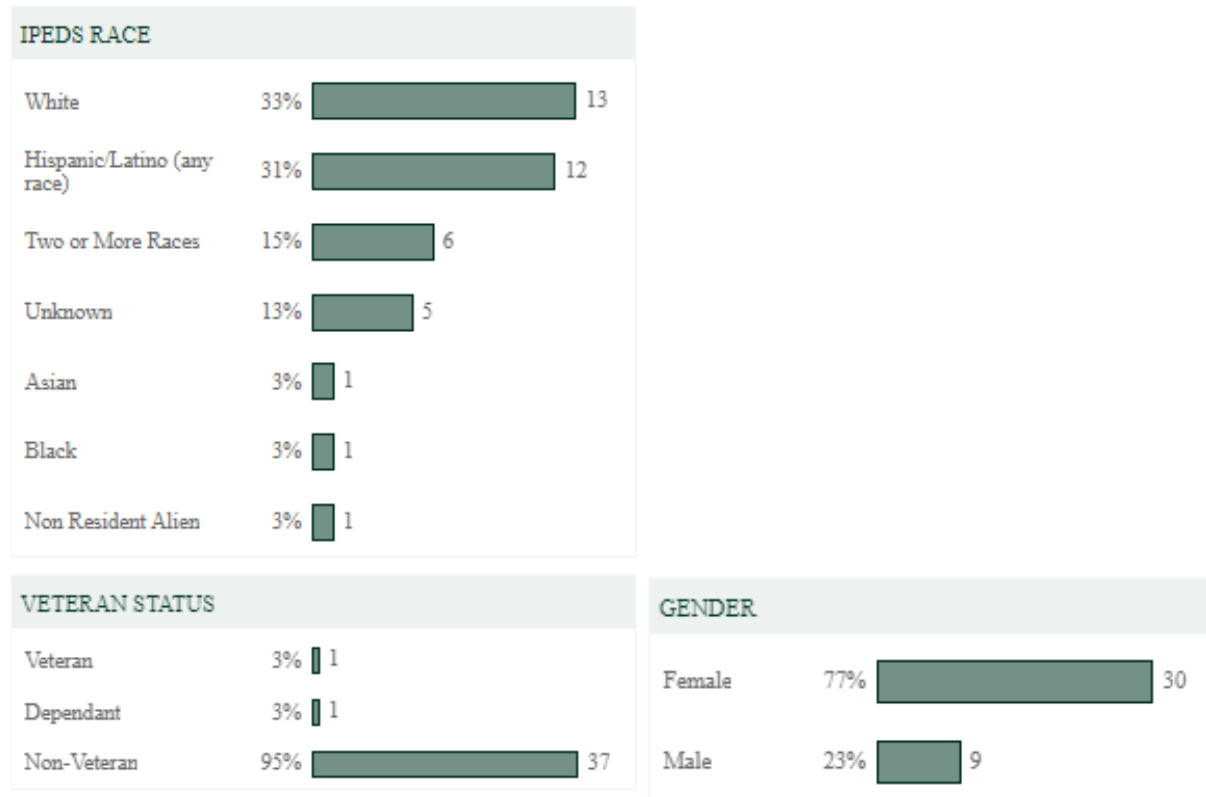
Headcount



Graduate Program Headcount 2013- Spring 2022. Chart Source: Sacramento State Institutional Research Admission Dashboard (<https://www.csus.edu/president/institutional-research-effectiveness-planning/dashboards/admissions.html>)

The Communication Studies graduate student body is very diverse. In the study population, 77% identify as female, which exceeds the rates of Sac State women undergraduates (57%). In terms of race/ethnicity, a slight majority of our students are White (33%), followed closely by Hispanic/Latino (31%), and those who identify as Two or More Races (15%), as depicted in the charts below. While not as diverse as the undergraduate population, the graduate

student population is more diverse than other graduate programs nationally, which average 56% White students, according to the [American Council on Education](#). Additionally, many of our students have other unique identity markers such as being: first generation, parents, disabled, veterans, and international students.



3.4.2 Retention and Graduation Data

The Graduate Program is structured to support and retain students as they craft personalized programs of study. Graduate students have seven years to complete their degrees and work closely with a chosen committee of 3-4 faculty members who offer support, guidance, and assistance evaluating culminating experience work. In Fall 2018, a representative semester chosen in the middle of the last five years, the cohort of current graduate students numbered 21. Of those, 81% (17) successfully completed their graduate degree. One student transferred to another graduate program, one withdrew in the first week of the semester, and two left the program for personal reasons. Throughout the last 10 years, the Graduate Program has awarded 64 Master’s degrees according to Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning.

3.4.3 Analysis Of Admission, Retention, And Graduation Data for MA

The Graduate Program experienced many of the same admission, retention, and graduation challenges as other units during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we have met those challenges, resulting in a stronger program. In the last five years, the Graduate Committee has worked to streamline our admissions process to better meet the needs of our applicants. For example, we removed the Graduate Record Examination as a requirement, noting that the GRE served as a barrier to entry for many of our students, and is known to be systematically exclusionary to people of color, women, and those from lower socioeconomic classes.

Recognizing the importance of advising to retention and graduation, the Graduate Committee developed and implemented a workshop to train our new faculty (and faculty seeking information about our revised curriculum) on effective graduate advising. We believe these efforts have been successful. Our graduate students are high

achieving, participating in campus, regional, national, and international academic conferences including the Westerns States Communication Association, National Communication Association, International Communication Association, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Popular Culture Association, and more. Not only do students participate and submit/present their work to a community of scholars, they win top paper awards regularly.

In the past 10 years, our graduates have gone on to work in industry, in instructional positions throughout Sac State and the local/regional community college system, and have attended doctoral programs. During the past 10 years, all our alumni who have applied to communication doctoral programs have been accepted to top tier programs with full funding, including University of Washington, Arizona State University, University of Memphis, and University of Louisiana. Those who have graduated have found tenure-track positions, including in the CSU system. Likewise, many of our graduates have completed the Educational Leadership doctoral program at Sacramento State and now serve in campus leadership positions including as Director of Equity and Affinity Centers, Strategic Student Support Programs, Deputy Chief of Staff, and Chief of Staff in the Office of the President. Our alumni also have critical positions in local and regional organizations including school systems, health care systems, state government, and supporting political parties.

3.4.4 Summary of Partnerships in Success Efforts, MA Program

Advising: All tenured and tenure-track faculty with terminal degrees are eligible to advise graduate students and serve on student committees. Currently 14 full time faculty are available to advise graduate students. As not all who are eligible will advise graduate students and supervise theses/projects, advising represents a significant hurdle as the program grows, particularly as graduate advising is not part of the normal workload and has not been compensated properly.

Writing Center: Several students have reported a lack of graduate-level support at the campus Writing Center. While the Graduate Committee has partially addressed this concern by instituting a writing colloquium (designed and led by one of our own graduate faculty), we would hope to see additional resources and support for graduate students at the Writing Center.

Graduate Teaching Opportunities: Our Graduate Program directly supports the Communication Studies Department goals by offering two student teaching opportunities—the Graduate Assistant program, which supports the COMS 4 Public Speaking Hybrid Courses—and the Teaching Associate program, which supports COMS 4 and COMS 5 Communication Experience. In these programs, approximately 10-12 students per year teach in various capacities, directly supporting GE requirements and improving department efficiency regarding FTEs.

Our program has an excellent local and national reputation due in large part to our teaching program, which helps fund graduate student education. Our alumni are routinely hired at Sac State and in local and regional community colleges in part and full-time tenure track positions. We have also partnered with administrators in the Los Rios Community College District to create a pipeline program that would support graduates seeking to teach at the community college level.

Teaching and Research Apprenticeship: Graduate students regularly partner with faculty members to develop skills in teaching and research. In our recent curriculum revision, we renamed COMS 295 (previously an internship independent study course) to be an apprenticeship course so that students could get course credit for teaching and research assistance. Additionally, graduate students are regularly hired to support faculty grant projects.

Section 4. Developing Resources to Ensure Sustainability

4.1 Strategic Initiatives

Although the Journalism, Film, and Public Relations programs have recently undergone program changes, it has been many years since the general Communication Studies BA program has been examined. To that end, the department will be beginning a strategic planning process starting in the Spring 2023 semester to examine what is working, what is not working, and adjustments that will best suit the program's majors as well as the department's service in General Education, particularly in Area A1. Additionally, the Department must address structural problems with its Digital Communication and Information minor, as some of the courses students needed to complete it have not been offered for several years due a lack of faculty to teach them.

The department is currently involved in several Anchor University initiatives in Public Relations and Journalism. Additionally, the Department has a robust internship program that links our students with community partners. Faculty members across the Department are engaged in various programs related to the University's DEIBJ initiative.

The Film Program is part of a Cluster Hiring initiative focused on social practice and justice in the arts. The initiative will simultaneously hire faculty across programs in Design, Film, Art, and Theater. The new professors in each cohort will lay the groundwork for a network of scholarly and creative support, mutual mentorship, and program development. By hiring in clusters, the college hopes to increase faculty diversity; foster a strong sense of community and belonging among the new colleagues; provide mentorship; and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration across departmental lines. The clusters provide an opportunity for diversifying and decolonizing curricula across disciplines, and engagement with our diverse community. The cohorts will serve as a mechanism to attract, recruit, and retain diverse faculty who share research interests but are based in distinct programs and departments. In addition to the Cluster Hire, we are focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion in hiring in our teaching assistants and lab techs. The Department and College hope that with these hiring strategies the University contribute to the University's DEIBJ initiatives.

The Graduate Committee has discussed the need to provide our graduate students with additional opportunities to present their research and socialize with other scholars in the discipline. Many of our regional and national conferences are being held in face-to-face format and in locations for which our students (and faculty) cannot receive funding, due to AB 1887 (which prohibits state-funded or state-sponsored travel to states with discriminatory laws). As such, the Graduate Committee is exploring the idea of creating a communication conference on the Sacramento State campus. A local conference would not only benefit our Communication Studies graduate students, but it would also benefit our undergraduate students (and may become a recruitment event) as well as graduate and undergraduate students throughout California. Such an event would also align nicely with the Anchor University initiative. Planning for this conference will begin in Spring 2023.

Two members of the Graduate Committee have also proposed an intensive research project focusing on surveying Communication Studies students about their experiences concerning how matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are addressed in the classroom and across campus. Graduate students will have the opportunity to participate in the study as focus group facilitators and co-authors of any papers resulting from the project. The study will be funded by a charitable contribution from the PG&E Corporation Foundation. We hope this grant marks the beginning of an ongoing relationship between the Department of Communication Studies, specifically the Graduate Program, and PG&E.

Finally, the Graduate Committee is exploring ways to increase the number of Graduate Assistant teaching opportunities, which would provide graduate students with instructional experiences and pedagogical skills different from the kind gained in the current GA model. More specific to the present concern about resources, this additional GA opportunity would also improve efficiency in the Department.

4.2 Hiring Needs

The Department annually reviews its hiring needs in anticipation of hiring calls from the dean of the College of Arts and Letters. The Department anticipates are number of retirements in the near future. Additionally, the Department

suffers from a chronic tenure density problem, requiring it to use twice as many temporary faculty as tenure line faculty in any given semester. It enrolls about 39% of the majors in Arts and Letters, for a ratio of one full-time faculty member per 60 majors, compared to one full-time faculty member per 20 majors in other departments.

The Department is engaged in searches for professors in Public Relations and Film to start in the 2023-24 academic year. The most recent request to the dean's office also included hiring in Organizational Communication and Journalism. The Department will be reviewing its hiring priorities again at the start of the Spring 2023 semester. Specific needs continue to be in Film, which is the fastest-growing program in the Department, and Journalism, which has been hit hard by reassignment and likely retirement of one of its professors.

Department members also have indicated a need to hire in the areas of organizational communication, intercultural communication, media communication, and qualitative methods. We believe that we need more full-time faculty in general because PR, rhetoric, and small group communication are also in need. The department would also benefit from a full-time academic advisor or support for advising, especially handling graduation applications.

The last five faculty hires have had immediate impact on the Graduate Program. All five hires have taught, been scheduled to teach, or have expressed interest in teaching graduate seminars, and all five have signed on as a member or a chair of one or more graduate student advisory committees. In AY 2022-2023, the Department will be hiring faculty in Public Relations and Film, areas not formally represented in the Graduate Program. However, both Public Relations and Film faculty have served on graduate student committees in the past, and we hope these two new hires will do so as well. The remaining hires in the Department's five-year plan all fall in disciplinary areas where the hire would be expected to teach graduate seminars, supervise, and advise our graduate students.

The Graduate Program has been fortunate to have a dedicated staff person who is our liaison in the Department Office. Significant personnel changes in the College of Arts and Letters have left us without a person currently holding this essential position. We hope to see this position filled before the beginning of the Spring 2023 semester.

4.3 Budget Concerns

The budgeting process could be more transparent. Each year the College of Arts & Letters provides an operating expenses budget to cover supplies, equipment purchases, utilities, and the like. Although the fiscal year begins July 1, this budget is not typically passed along to the Department until sometime in the fall. The Department did not receive an OE budget at all for the 2021-22 fiscal year. The money allocated by Academic Affairs and passed through the department is exceedingly tight. We also need a budget for a half or full-day Department retreat off-campus for team building. In addition, we need more budget for DEIBJ initiatives and social events that we can invite our students to stop our drastically dropping student enrollment.

Film is a highly technical field, where the tools of the trade are frequently changing and updating. Our cinematic systems need to be raised to contemporary standards to be competitive with other film programs and to ensure our students excel in the field. In addition, it is imperative the equipment is consistently maintained to minimize wear and tear from student use. The following are the regular funding sources which have been available to the Film program:

Student Fees: The Film Program should continue to receive regular funding via student fees (for those courses with a lab component using equipment). These fees are set aside for the maintenance and replacement of equipment.

Departmental Budget: Our department and hence the Film Program relies on the College to provide a budget each year. The money allocated is insufficient to meet the program's needs. *Facilities Budget:* Our program is fortunate to have a large studio space and computer labs for teaching and student use; however, we do not have a facilities budget to accommodate this. The studio is a complex, highly valuable space requiring maintenance and facility upgrades. To stay competitive with other film programs, it needs to be modernized with upgraded lights like energy efficient LED fixtures, network servers with large scale file storage space, 4k projection, and 5.1 surround sound.

Personnel: Our equipment manager and student assistants are essential for helping with equipment requirements for courses, as the labor involved with checking in and out equipment, repairing gear, organizing the studio and lab spaces, and providing technical support is a valuable part of our program. It simply wouldn't operate without this assistance. It is imperative that maintain this aspect of our budget and as our program grows, that we grow our personnel as well.

The Journalism program also lacks modern equipment that would allow our students to establish technical skills related to video, photography and audio broadcasting. Some source of funding for this would be appropriate.

4.4 Revenue Opportunities

Communication Studies faculty actively seek grants to support their research and teaching. For example, Film Professor Kathryn Kasic has been a lead investigator on National Science Foundation projects in Antarctica and Greenland. The Department recently received a grant from the James B. McClatchy Foundation to support Journalism interns working at *The Sacramento Bee* and a \$10,000 grant from Pacific Gas and Electric to support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Department faculty are also frequent recipients of grants to support curriculum redesign, scholarly and creative activity, and competency in online instruction. The Public Relations program is active in working with various community partners who provide our students with real-world experience. The Department also actively works with University Advancement is seeking other funding opportunities from community donors. The Department's alumni remain an untapped resource that should be pursued.

The Rick Carroll fund supports Film students by providing funds for equipment and materials in connection to projects in the Senior Practicum course. Students apply for the fund, budgeting up to \$6,000 for equipment for the film program and \$500 for their film project support. Additionally, Mark Drobny generously provides support for the bi-annual J Street Film Fest, allowing for rental of the Crest Theatre in downtown Sacramento in the Fall and for an outdoor film festival in the Spring.

The Graduate Program will continue to seek out revenue opportunities that benefit our students, our program, our home department, and our campus.

Section 5. Planning to Maintain Success and Engage in Continuous Improvement

5.1 Faculty Hiring

The Department, like many across the University, suffers from a tenure density problem that needs be addressed. Too many of our upper division courses are taught by temporary faculty.

5.2 Advising

The advising structure of the department needs attention. Given the size of the Department and the diversity of its offerings, students are not assigned advisors but rather told that they can seek out any full-time faculty to plan their progress to their degrees. Some students muddle through a useful but imperfect online guide, but most don't and that can cost time, money, and frustration when they do not take courses in the proper sequence or plan to take a course that is not being offered, or wait until their last semesters to take courses that should have been taken earlier in their programs. Other academic programs have staff members dedicated to academic advising, and the Department would benefit from such. At a minimum, the Department should develop a method for assigning advisors to students and require an advising meeting at various points of a student's career.

5.3 Enrollment

While the Film program is growing and the Journalism program is holding steady enrollment, the Department has seen dramatic drops in the number of ComS BA and PR majors. A number of explanations are possible, including a shift in demographics, seen recently in community college enrollment, that is catching up with us. Secondly, personnel issues in the PR program have hampered recruiting new students for that program. The Department should develop a more formal recruiting program to help address this problem.

A separate area of concern is the dip in enrollment in the course connected to the Department's Debate program, making it costly for the Department and College to maintain. A recruiting strategy needs to be developed, and the WTU assigned to program needs closer examination.

5.4 ComS BA Curriculum

During the Spring 2023 semester, the Department will begin reviewing the ComS BA curriculum, which has not been updated for more than a decade. Among the issues that merit attention:

ComS 100A/100B/100C: These courses represent the core of the program's requirements. Students need better advising so that they take these courses earlier in the programs of study rather than as seniors. An additional required course in research writing might help students learn how to write about research or scholarly ideas, or disciplinary specific writing. The Department is already working on ways to create more consistency across COMS100C course; some of our other courses would benefit from such an approach as well.

Theory and Senior Seminar Pairing: ComS BA major are required to take a theory and senior seminar pairing that explores a particular facet of communication in more depth. Due to retirements since this was implemented, the Department has some gaps in faculty expertise needed to teach these courses, particularly the seminars. The Department needs to consider what or whether adjustments should be made to better address the needs of our students. One suggestion has been to transition back to more specific majors, perhaps interdisciplinary to better use our faculty expertise (for example, an organization/interpersonal track, an organizational/group track, a media/digital information track, and an interpersonal/intercultural track).

5.5 Information Literacy

Information and communication technology literacy has become increasingly important. This literacy addresses the ongoing changes society is going through with the ubiquity of computers and their use for all sorts of

communications. The Department offers a minor in this area, though finding faculty to teach its various requirements has been a challenge. Changes need to be implemented to make this more viable for students across the university.

5.6 E-Learning

One of the takeaways from the Covid-19 pandemic is that online instruction can be an effective way to educate students. The Department's E-learning policy, developed before the pandemic, is now wholly inadequate to address this new reality. At a minimum, the Department needs to develop a process for evaluating whether it's pedagogically appropriate to offer a course online and, if so, whether an individual faculty member is qualified to teach it that way. Some faculty in the Department favor making a big push toward more online offerings; however, the Department is constrained by institutional rules about how far this can go.

5.7 Social Media

Many of the Department's majors seem unaware of the various tracks and are unsure of which faculty are full-time. Additionally, the Department lacks effective recruiting tools. A social media team (graduate students or undergraduate students) could assist the Department staff person tasked with maintaining our social media presence. This team could be responsible for curating faculty pictures and bios, creating visually appealing track documents, advertising the courses we are offering each semester, and in general, promoting our department. Not only would this be an amazing opportunity for students, but it would also facilitate growth in our department and make our department more relevant to current and future students.

5.8 Equipment Needs

As the Film program grows, it puts stresses on the equipment that students use. A lab fee provides a fund for equipment purchases and replacement; however, the amount of additional money available from the Department's operating expenses budget has constricted over the past few years. The Department needs to address the continuing sustainability of this approach. Additionally, the Journalism program sorely needs to upgrade its available equipment and technology in order to remain relevant to current industry needs.

5.9 TOPSS

The goals of the University's prison education program are laudable. However, it has put stresses on both the Department and the College of Arts & Letters. The courses offered in the prisons carry lower enrollments than the traditional ones, which makes them more expensive to run. Additionally, full- and part-time faculty who are assigned to teach courses in the prisons are unavailable to teach for us on campus. This has been exacerbated by the need to now offer courses in each prison rather than have one course shared between the two. The University's approach to staffing and funding TOPSS need to be addressed.

Appendix 1. ComS BA Assessment Plan

<i>ILOs</i>	<i>PLOs</i>	<i>SLOs</i>	<i>Course where each SLO is assessed</i>	<i>Assessment activity/ assignment used to measure each SLO</i>	<i>Assessment tool used to measure outcome success</i>	<i>Assessment schedule – how often SLOs will be assessed</i>	<i>How data/ findings will be quantitatively or qualitatively reported</i>	<i>Designated personnel to collect, analyze, and interpret student learning outcome data</i>	<i>Program data/ findings dissemination schedule</i>	<i>Closing the loop strategies</i>
Competence in the Disciplines and Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World	Identify and articulate the importance of communication expertise in professional and social interactions	Identify and articulate the importance of communication expertise in professional and social interactions	COMS 2	Essay on an aspect of Communication Studies role in shaping history, culture and society.	Rubric that scores performance on stated criteria of SLO.	PLOs will be evaluated on a 6-year schedule.	Findings will include descriptive and comparative analysis of data as well as evaluation of weaknesses, including possible corrections.	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment. Departmental Assessment Committee will analyze results.	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis.	Results will be analyzed by program faculty to develop strategies to adjust curriculum; address time to degree issues; craft budget proposals; plan for facilities; and work pertinent information into other program, school, and campus planning conversations.
Competence in the Disciplines and Intellectual and Practical Skills: Written communication	Perform communication skills by creating written messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context in preparation for professions within the public or private sectors of the economy	Perform communication skills by creating written messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context in preparation for professions within the public or private sectors of the economy	COMS 100B	Analytical paper on communication issues.	Written Communication VALUERubric	PLOs will be evaluated on a 6-year schedule.	Findings will include descriptive and comparative analysis of data as well as evaluation of weaknesses, including possible corrections.	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment. Departmental Assessment Committee will analyze results.	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis.	Results will be analyzed by program faculty to develop strategies to adjust curriculum; address time to degree issues; craft budget proposals; plan for facilities; and work pertinent information into other program, school, and campus planning conversations.

Competence in the Disciplines and Intellectual and Practical Skills: Oral Communication	Perform communication skills by delivering effective oral messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context in preparation for professions within the public or private sectors of the economy	Perform communication skills by delivering effective oral messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context in preparation for professions within the public or private sectors of the economy	COMS4	Presentations on various communication issues.	Oral Communication VALUERubric	PLOs will be evaluated on a 6-year schedule.	Findings will include descriptive and comparative analysis of data as well as evaluation of weaknesses, including possible corrections.	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment. Departmental Assessment Committee will analyze results.	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis.	Results will be analyzed by program faculty to develop strategies to adjust curriculum; address time to degree issues; craft budget proposals; plan for facilities; and work pertinent information into other program, school, and campus planning conversations.
Competence in the Disciplines and Intellectual and Practical Skills: Critical Thinking	Analyze and evaluate communication processes by identifying relevant evaluative criteria	Analyze and evaluate communication processes by identifying relevant evaluative criteria	COMS188/182/192/183/191/180/169/181 (All of the above are seminar classes. Our students select one course from the list of the courses)	Analytical paper on communication issues.	Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric	PLOs will be evaluated on a 6-year schedule.	Findings will include descriptive and comparative analysis of data as well as evaluation of weaknesses, including possible corrections.	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment. Departmental Assessment Committee will analyze results.	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis.	Results will be analyzed by program faculty to develop strategies to adjust curriculum; address time to degree issues; craft budget proposals; plan for facilities; and work pertinent information into other program, school, and campus planning conversations.
Competence in the Disciplines and Intellectual and Practical Skills: Information Literacy	Identify, evaluate, and apply communication literature and theories to engage in communication scholarship	Identify, evaluate, and apply communication literature and theories to engage in communication scholarship	COMS188/182/192/183/191/180/169/181(All of the above are seminar classes. Our students	Analytical paper on communication issues.	Information Literacy Rubric	PLOs will be evaluated on a 6-year schedule.	Findings will include descriptive and comparative analysis of data as well as evaluation of weaknesses, including	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment. Departmental Assessment Committee will analyze results.	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis.	Results will be analyzed by program faculty to develop strategies to adjust curriculum; address time to degree issues; craft budget

			select one course from the list of the courses)				possible corrections.			proposals; plan for facilities; and work pertinent information into other program, school, and campus planning conversations.
Competence in the Disciplines and Intellectual and Practical Skills: Quantitative Literacy	Consume, evaluate, and use social scientific methods to engage in communication scholarship	Consume, evaluate, and use social scientific methods to engage in communication scholarship	COMS 100C	Examination of quantitative research method in communication studies.	Rubric that scores performance on stated criteria of SLO.	PLOs will be evaluated on a 6-year schedule.	Findings will include descriptive and comparative analysis of data as well as evaluation of weaknesses, including possible corrections.	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment. Departmental Assessment Committee will analyze results.	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis.	Results will be analyzed by program faculty to develop strategies to adjust curriculum; address time to degree issues; craft budget proposals; plan for facilities; and work pertinent information into other program, school, and campus planning conversations.
Competence in the Disciplines and Personal and Social Responsibility	Engage and reflect on social and civic engagement processes.	Engage and reflect on social and civic engagement processes.	COMS 4	Essay on social issues and communication studies.	Rubric that scores performance on stated criteria of SLO.	PLOs will be evaluated on a 6-year schedule.	Findings will include descriptive and comparative analysis of data as well as evaluation of weaknesses, including possible corrections.	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment. Departmental Assessment Committee will analyze results.	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis.	Results will be analyzed by program faculty to develop strategies to adjust curriculum; address time to degree issues; craft budget proposals; plan for facilities; and work pertinent information into other program, school, and campus planning conversations.

Competence in the Disciplines and integrative Learning	Evaluate, critique, and produce research on a variety of communication phenomena	Evaluate, critique, and produce research on a variety of communication phenomena	COMS188/182/192/183/191/180/169/181 (Seminar classes. Students select one course from the list of the courses)	Analytical paper on communication issues.	Integrative and Applied Learning Value Rubric	PLOs will be evaluated on a 6-year schedule.	Findings will include descriptive and comparative analysis of data as well as evaluation of weaknesses, including possible corrections.	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment. Departmental Assessment Committee will analyze results.	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis.	Results will be analyzed by program faculty to develop strategies to adjust curriculum; address time to degree issues; craft budget proposals; plan for facilities; and work pertinent information into other program, school, and campus planning conversations.
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Appendix 2. Journalism Assessment Plan

<i>BLGs</i>	<i>PLOs</i>	<i>Courses where each PLO is assessed</i>	<i>Assessment activity/ assignment used to measure each PLO</i>	<i>Assessment tool used to measure outcome success</i>	<i>Assessment schedule – how often PLOs will be assessed</i>	<i>How data/ findings will be quantitatively or qualitatively reported</i>	<i>Designated personnel to collect, analyze, and interpret student learning outcome data</i>	<i>Program data/ findings dissemination schedule</i>	<i>Closing the loop strategies</i>
Competence in the Discipline Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World	Articulate the role of journalism in shaping history, culture and society	JOUR 120/134/175/193	Essay on an aspect of journalism's role in shaping history, culture, and society.	Rubric	Material that can be used for assessment will be collected each semester. We will assess at least one PLO each year.	80% of students score a three or higher on a four-point rubric.	Course faculty/Department Assessment Committee	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis	We use the results to adjust curriculum, ensure students are moving efficiently toward a degree, to craft hiring priorities and to inspire collaborations with other parts of the community and university.
Competence in the Discipline Intellectual and Practical Skills: Written communication	Write clear, concise and evocative stories	JOUR 135	Public affairs news article.	Rubric	Material that can be used for assessment will be collected each semester. We will assess at least one PLO each year.	80% of students score a three or higher on a four-point rubric.	Course faculty/Department Assessment Committee	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis	We use the results to adjust curriculum, ensure students are moving efficiently toward a degree, to craft hiring priorities and to inspire collaborations with other parts of the community and university.
Competence in the Discipline Intellectual and Practical Skills: Oral Communication	Conduct interviews using accepted journalistic practices	JOUR 130A/130B	Local government news article.	Rubric	Material that can be used for assessment will be collected each semester. We will assess at least one PLO each year.	80% of students score a three or higher on a four-point rubric.	Course faculty/Department Assessment Committee	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis	We use the results to adjust curriculum, ensure students are moving efficiently toward a degree, to craft hiring priorities and to inspire collaborations with other parts of the community and university.
Competence in the Discipline Intellectual and Practical Skills: Critical Thinking	Distinguish between what is newsworthy and what is not	JOUR 130A/130B	Local government news article.	Rubric	Material that can be used for assessment will be collected each semester. We will assess at least one PLO each year.	80% of students score a three or higher on a four-point rubric.	Course faculty/Department Assessment Committee	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis	We use the results to adjust curriculum, ensure students are moving efficiently toward a degree, to craft hiring priorities and to inspire collaborations with other parts of the community and university.

Competence in the Discipline Intellectual and Practical Skills: Information Literacy	Employ effective news gathering techniques through research and reporting	JOUR 135	Public affairs news article with supporting multimedia elements.	Rubric	Material that can be used for assessment will be collected each semester. We will assess at least one PLO each year.	80% of students score a three or higher on a four-point rubric.	Course faculty/Department Assessment Committee	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis	We use the results to adjust curriculum, ensure students are moving efficiently toward a degree, to craft hiring priorities and to inspire collaborations with other parts of the community and university.
Competence in the Discipline Intellectual and Practical Skills: Quantitative Literacy	Analyze and visualize data in a fair and illuminating way.	JOUR 131	Data journalism article.	Rubric	Material that can be used for assessment will be collected each semester. We will assess at least one PLO each year.	80% of students score a three or higher on a four-point rubric.	Course faculty/Department Assessment Committee	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis	We use the results to adjust curriculum, ensure students are moving efficiently toward a degree, to craft hiring priorities and to inspire collaborations with other parts of the community and university.
Competence in the Discipline Personal and Social Responsibility	Apply journalism ethics in decision-making	JOUR 153	Essay on journalism ethics.	Rubric	Material that can be used for assessment will be collected each semester. We will assess at least one PLO each year.	80% of students score a three or higher on a four-point rubric.	Course faculty/Department Assessment Committee	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis	We use the results to adjust curriculum, ensure students are moving efficiently toward a degree, to craft hiring priorities and to inspire collaborations with other parts of the community and university.
Competence in the Discipline Integrative Learning:	Conceive, create and edit multiplatform stories with clarity and precision.	JOUR 135	Public affairs news article with supporting multimedia elements.	Rubric	Material that can be used for assessment will be collected each semester. We will assess at least one PLO each year.	80% of students score a three or higher on a four-point rubric.	Course faculty/Department Assessment Committee	All findings will be shared with relevant faculty on an annual basis	We use the results to adjust curriculum, ensure students are moving efficiently toward a degree, to craft hiring priorities and to inspire collaborations with other parts of the community and university.

Appendix 3. Film Assessment Plan

FILM PLO	DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES	COMMUNICATION STUDIES PROGRAM LEARNING GOALS
1	Demonstrate a mastery of film discipline knowledge: Create film that shows mastery and understanding of contemporary practices in digital video and cinema.	<p>PLG A: Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts</p> <p>PLG C: Students will have knowledge of discipline principles.</p>
2	Identify and comprehend the historic development of media and film and its evolution into digital forms.	PLG B. Students will think critically when constructing and consuming messages
3	Demonstrate a mastery of video communication: Develop clear video concepts, implement effective organizational strategies, use video technique effectively including; sound, cinematography and editing, use appropriate cinematic conventions to convey meaning.	PLG A: Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts
4	Demonstrate proficiency in written communication: Use clear language to show context and purpose, show proficiency in using written English, genre and disciplinary conventions, use proper evidentiary material, control syntax and mechanics including proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.	PLG A: Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts
5	Demonstrate ability to work collaboratively in small groups: work effectively as part of a team, make significant individual contributions to the group, foster a positive climate and respond constructively to conflict.	PLG A: Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts

Overarching Program Learning Outcomes (may also be known as Program Goals)	Corresponding Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). (Each must directly relate to one or more Program Learning Outcomes/goals)	Course(s) Where Student Learning Outcomes are Assessed	How often will the SLO be assessed?	*What types of assessment activities will be used?	**What type of tool will be used to score/evaluate the activity?	***How will assessment data (both aggregated and disaggregated) be reported?	Who will administer the assessment and who will analyze the data?	How will collected data be used? By whom?	How will data be reported? By whom?
A. Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts	<i>Demonstrate a mastery of video communication</i>	Capstone Course: ComS 185 Senior Video Practicum	Each semester	6 Capstone Video Projects	A rubric that is constructed, vetted and approved by faculty	The rubric is comprised of 5 dimensions: Each dimension is scored on a 5-point scale that ranges from a value of "0," indicating that it does not meet the benchmark to "4," indicating capstone or	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment and the Film Committee will analyze the data.	Used by the program to determine how well student performance matches programmatic expectations.	The data will be reported by the Film Committee. Each area will be reported as percentages: To meet the benchmark for each skill 70% of students must score a three or higher.
	<i>Demonstrate proficiency in written communication</i>	ComS 121 Media Aesthetics ComS 192 Senior Seminar in Film Studies	Each year	Random sampling of 8 Papers	AAC&U's VALUE S Written Communication rubric AAC&U's Critical Thinking Rubric	The rubric is comprised of five dimensions: Each dimension is scored on a 5- point scale that ranges from "0," indicating that it does not meet the benchmark to a "4," indicating complete	Faculty teaching the course will administer the assessment and the Film Committee will analyze the data.	Used by the program to determine how well student performance matches programmatic expectations.	The data will be reported by the Film Committee. Each area will be reported as percentages: To meet the benchmark for each skill 70% of students must score a three or higher.

Appendix 4. Communication Studies MA assessment plan

Institutional Graduate Learning Goal	Program Learning Outcome (PLO)	Communication Studies Graduate Program Assessment Plan			Action Plan
		Lines of Evidence			
		Direct	Indirect	Evaluation Parameters	
<i>Disciplinary Knowledge</i>	PLO1 Students critically evaluate the array of communication topics, concepts, and theories and choose to become expert in one or more specific areas within the Communication discipline.	Assignments in core courses	Post-course assessments Annual assessment	Ongoing	Evaluation of assignments will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan
<i>Communication</i>	PLO2 Students participate in our local and disciplinary scholarly community by participating in academic activities on campus and, depending on resource availability, in regional and national professional associations' conventions or projects.	Assignments in core and elective courses	Post-course assessments Annual assessment	Ongoing	Evaluation of assignments will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning. Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan
	PLO3-Students demonstrate advanced proficiency in scholarly writing for a variety of audiences	Assignments in core and elective courses; Culminating Experience	Annual assessment	Admission/Exit	Evaluation of assignments and CE will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning. Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan
	PLO4-Students design, facilitate, and assess advanced oral communication activities in a variety of settings, including classrooms, organizational	Assignments in core and elective courses	Annual assessment	Ongoing	Evaluation of assignments will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning.

	<p>training sessions, and group problem solving and decision-making contexts.</p> <p>PLO5-Students routinely collaborate with peers and mentors in scholarly activities.</p>	<p>Assignments in core and elective courses</p>	<p>Annual assessment</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan</p> <p>Evaluation of assignments will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning. Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan</p>
<p><i>Critical Thinking / Analysis</i></p>	<p>PLO6-Students demonstrate advanced understanding of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and apply those methods in the design and execution of appropriate research to study communication phenomena of interest.</p>	<p>Final projects in core and elective courses; Culminating experience</p>	<p>Annual assessment</p>	<p>Ongoing Qualification for Culminating Experience</p>	<p>Evaluation of projects and CE will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning.</p> <p>Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan</p>
<p><i>Information Literacy</i></p>	<p>PLO7-Students critically read and understand scholarly writing from a variety of theoretical, methodological, and conceptual perspectives.</p>	<p>Final projects in core and elective courses; Culminating experience</p>	<p>Annual assessment</p>	<p>Ongoing Qualification for Culminating Experience</p>	<p>Evaluation of projects and CE will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning.</p> <p>Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan</p>
<p><i>Professionalism</i></p>	<p>PLO8-Students demonstrate in-depth understanding of communication ethics and social responsibility in a variety of settings.</p>	<p>Assignments in core and elective courses</p>	<p>Program exit interview</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Evaluation of assignments will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning</p>

					Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan
<i>Intercultural / Global Perspectives</i>	PLO9-Students submit and present their work to members of scholarly communities at regional and national conferences (e.g., International Communication Association; World Communication Association; National Communication Association; Western States Communication Association; International Society for the History of Rhetoric) and for locally sponsored groups.	Final projects in core and elective courses	Annual review of conference presentations	Ongoing	<p>Evaluation of assignments will be done annually and incorporated into Graduate Committee and department-wide planning.</p> <p>Annual summary presented to the Graduate Committee and department for review. Feedback will be incorporated into following academic year assessment plan</p>

Appendix 5. Communication Studies MA curriculum map

Communication Studies Graduate Program Curriculum Map									
Coursework	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	PLO 5	PLO 6	PLO 7	PLO 8	PLO 9
COMS 200 A & B Intro to Grad Studies (core course; 1 unit each)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COMS 201 Communication Theory (core course; WI)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COMS 202 Quantitative Methods (core course option 1)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COMS 203 Qualitative Methods (core course option 2)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COMS 204 Rhetorical Methods (core course option 3)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COMS 206 Organizational Communication (elective)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 207 Relational Communication (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 208 International Communication (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 209 Social Movements (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 210 Media Effects (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 211 Media and Culture (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 212 Communication and Leadership (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 213 Rhetorical Theory (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 214 Health Communication (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 215 Political Communication (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 216 Intercultural Communication (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 217 Applied Organizational Comm (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 219 Conflict Management (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 221 Instructional Communication Theory (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 222 Instructional Comm Practicum (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 228 Comm & Corporate Advocacy (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X

COMS 230 Computer Mediated Communication (elective)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 285 Colloquium for Teaching Comm (elective; 1 unit)	X		X	X	X	X	X		
COMS 295 Apprenticeship in Comm Studies (elective; 1 unit)	X				X				
COMS 296A Comm Research Methods (elective; 1 unit)	X		X	X	X	X	X		
COMS 296B Comm Topics (elective; 1 unit)	X		X	X	X	X	X		
COMS 298 Colloquium in Communication (elective; 3 units)			X	X	X	X	X		
COMS 299 Independent Study (elective; 3 units)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
COMS 297 Directed Study/Comp Exams (Culminating Experience)	X		X	X		X	X		
COMS 500 Thesis/Project (Culminating Experience)	X		X	X		X	X		

External Review

Department of Communication Studies
Sacramento State University
June 7, 2023

J. Kevin Barge
Texas A&M University

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University of Nevada, Reno

Introduction

The Department of Communication Studies hosted us virtually for a site visit on February 9-10, 2023. We were provided the department's Self Study prior to the virtual visit. We met with Sacramento State administrators, departmental leadership, departmental faculty members and students, as well as alumni from the program. We also collected additional documents such as the department's ARTP Policies and Procedures document. We were impressed with the spirit and grit of the faculty and their commitment to the department and to their undergraduate and graduate students. Our External Review begins with a summary of the department's strengths and assets followed by a discussion of the five themes that emerged during our visit: (1) Faculty Cohesion, Workload, and Tenure Density; (2) Curriculum Development; (3) Advising, (4) Budget and Staffing; and (5) Intellectual Community. We provide a summary of the strengths and areas for improvement for each theme as well as highlight recommendations that build on existing strengths and address challenges for each theme.

Our recommendations include a mixture of no cost, low cost, and high cost suggestions. As Department Heads of large programs, we recognize that funding and resources vary from institution to institution, college to college, and department to department. Therefore, some of what we are suggesting may not be feasible given the current resource climate of Sacramento State. At the same time, we would suggest that the issues we raise should help focus important strategic conversations that need to occur within the department and between the department and the College of Arts and Letters. Having these conversations will help shape the department's vision and what it might look like in 5-6 years.

Strengths and Assets

The departmental Self-Study and our meetings with administrators, faculty, students and alumni revealed several strengths and assets that can be built on for the future. These strengths and assets include:

- **Dedicated and passionate faculty and leadership.** Every faculty member we talked with spoke positively of the departmental mission and were concerned with creating strategies that allow them to better meet the needs of their students and external

constituencies through community engagement. This level of passion is rather remarkable given the common challenges many departments face across the country including loss of tenure-track faculty and budgetary constraints. When combined with strong leadership, this creates an important resource for creating new initiatives to develop the department.

- **Commitment to student mentoring.** Students frequently mentioned the support and mentoring they received from faculty. This took the form of individual mentoring by faculty as well as the creation of networks and communities such as the Film Facebook group.
- **Strong number of undergraduate majors.** The department currently has 1,481 total undergraduate majors including 833 Communication Studies majors, 299 Film majors, 165 Public Relations majors, and 130 Journalism majors (excluding political journalism program). This is not surprising as many communication programs across the country have large undergraduate programs are typically one of the largest programs in their respective colleges. This is the case at Sacramento State given the large number of majors and semester credits hours the department generates.
- **Strong alumni interest.** There is interest by alumni to give back to the department. In our meetings with alumni and faculty, we were impressed with the willingness of alumni to return to the department and share their experience of how the major benefitted them professionally.
- **Signature programs.** The department has several signature programs that provide students learning labs for professional development and substantive opportunities for community engagement. This includes *The State Hornet*, J-Street Film Festival, and Transforming Outcomes Project (TOPS) in partnership with local prisons.

Themes and Recommendations

Five thematic clusters emerged from our interviews and conversations with individuals and groups at Sacramento State University.

Theme #1: Faculty Cohesion, Workload, and Tenure Density

The department has over 25 full-time faculty and 53 part-time faculty (including graduate teaching associates) listed on its website representing a mix of T-TT faculty, full-time lecturers, and part-time lecturers. We heard a strong pride and commitment to the department. One of the recurring stories that we heard was about the grit of the department which reflected a commitment by the faculty to persevere against a variety of challenges such as being short staffed, losing tenure-track faculty, and carrying a heavy load as a service department within the College of Arts and Letters. Concerns with faculty cohesion, workload and tenure density include: (1) tenure density, (2) leadership development, (3) service load, and (4) disciplinary and university literacy.

Concern #1: Tenure Density

The Department, like many across the University, suffers from a tenure density problem that needs to be addressed. The tenure density problem is reflected in the heavy use of temporary faculty where roughly twice as many temporary faculty as tenure line faculty in any given semester are used to cover courses. The department enrolls about 39% of the majors in Arts and Letters, for a ratio of one full-time faculty member per 60 majors, compared to one full-time faculty member per 20 majors in other departments. As a result, many upper-division courses are taught by temporary faculty as opposed to T-TT faculty.

Concern #2: Leadership Development and Coordination

The current leadership structure includes: (1) Department Head, (2) Associate Head, (3) Graduate Coordinator, and (4) a Film Coordinator and Acting Director for TOPS. There are not area coordinators for Communication Studies and Public Relations nor is there an Undergraduate Coordinator. In a follow-up email to Dr. Ludwig, we also learned that the leadership team does not meet on a regular basis to coordinate its activities. The lack of an Undergraduate Coordinator and regular leadership team meetings may make it difficult to coordinate and think innovatively about strategic initiatives. For example, digital production is emphasized in film, but is equally relevant in other areas such as public relations, journalism, and communication studies. The ability to coordinate digital production courses across the curriculum would be enhanced by an Undergraduate Coordinator who would be tasked for looking for synergies across curriculum and degrees.

Concern #3: Service Load

Tenured/tenure-track departmental faculty carry a high service load as well as a heavy teaching and research load. The typical service load is one departmental committee, and the department has made significant commitments to supporting community engagement projects such as the TOPS Prison Program. Teaching excellence, scholarship, and service are heavily weighted in the performance evaluation system:

- Teaching excellence (55%)
- Scholarly/creative (25%)
- Service to Institution (15%)
- Community (5%)

The teaching load is a 4-4, but T-TT faculty are expected to be active researchers and carry a substantive service load. The tenure density problem exacerbates the service load problem as some committees have to be comprised of full-time professors (e.g., tenure-track search committees and graduate committees). As a result, the typical service load of one departmental committee may be exceeded. There seems to be some confusion for faculty on the procedures and criteria for adjusting one's teaching load from a 4-4 to a 3-3.

Concern #4: Disciplinary and University Literacy

One of the striking features of our interaction with the faculty was a feeling that they were not clear on the way operating procedures guided departmental and college activity and confusion regarding departmental and college priorities. Two specific areas emerged in our conversations with faculty. One area regarded how faculty could or should make choices regarding ways to balance their teaching, research, and service to institution and community in ways that can lead to successful promotion and tenure cases. Given that time is precious, such information is important in order for faculty to make wise choices regarding their activity. Some faculty expressed concern over the clarity of the Tenure and Promotion Documents. We were provided the most recent version of The Department of Communication Studies College of Arts and Letters that was approved in Fall 2021 and we also reviewed The University Appointment, Retention, Tenure and Promotion Policy as well as a online tenure and promotion workshop provided by the College of Arts and Letters (<https://www.csus.edu/college/arts-letters/internal/internal/documents/9.9.2022-rtp-workshop-for-2022-2023-cycle.pdf>). The policies read like many policies that are standard across universities, with the exception that the departmental document tended to be more of a process document as opposed to identifying standards for what counts as a successful case for promotion and tenure. While the process may be clear, it would appear that the norms regarding what counts as a successful promotion case or a strong teaching, research, and service profile is not. This is more of a normative issue than a process issue and faculty members need a better sense of the community norms so they can make wise choices as what activities or project they should prioritize.

A second area, mentioned previously, is that faculty are unclear regarding the process and justification for moving from a 4-4 teaching load to a 3-3 teaching load. In talking with administrators, there does appear to be a process for making such shifts and what kinds of justifications are required for making these shifts. Similarly, faculty articulated a concern with how the number of majors and generated semester credit hours is linked to staffing. It typical for funding to follow certain metrics such as number of majors and generated semester credit hours. However, there was a general feeling by faculty that the department substantively contributed to the college's metrics in terms of number of majors and semester credit hours, but were unsure how this translated into concrete resources for the department.

Recommendations

We would offer the following recommendations for addressing issues regarding faculty cohesion, workload, and tenure density.

1. **Create a hiring plan to meet departmental strategic needs.** The Department annually reviews its hiring needs in anticipation of hiring calls from the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters. The Department also anticipates that there will be a number of retirements in the near future. We would suggest the department develop a strategic hiring plan for both T-TT and part-time or temporary faculty. Such a plan needs to

account for the unique needs across content areas as well as common needs. For example, with the emergence of big data and analytics, would a strategic hire in this area facilitate growth in multiple areas including journalism, public relations, and communication studies? We would also encourage the department to think strategically about the kinds of part-time or temporary hires that are needed as we anticipate that part-time or temporary faculty will deliver a significant portion of the undergraduate curriculum.

2. **Develop a leadership structure to enhance coordination of departmental activities and strategic initiatives.** We would suggest the leadership team meet regularly to share information and coordinate the department's activities. We would also suggest the creation of Undergraduate Coordinator position that parallels the Graduate Coordinator position. The size and complexity of the undergraduate program requires an individual who focuses on the coordination of curriculum and activities across the different units.
3. **Clarify service expectations within and outside the department.** It is difficult to quantify the number and type of service activities that are expected to be performed by faculty members. At the same time, the department can have conversations regarding what an appropriate service profile looks like. For example, some faculty were not sure what it meant to have 5% community service load. Similarly, the department needs to work with the college to determine departmental service responsibilities. For example, the CDCR initiative has traditionally been operated out of the good will of the department. With recent funding changes, there is a need to revisit the way the department supports the CDCR so that the department is adequately compensated for its service.
4. **Enhance faculty members departmental and university policy literacy.** On one hand, the department and university have clear ARTP documents; yet on the other hand, faculty voice concern they are not sure as to "what counts." Similarly, there does seem to be a policy or set of guidelines for course reductions. It may well be that the processes are clearly laid out in these documents, but the norms regarding a successful tenure and promotion case or solid justification for course reductions are unclear. We would suggest that the department have a series of meetings where these issues are discussed and deliberated. We could envision a result of such sessions being the revision of local departmental documents.

Theme #2: Curriculum development

There are several strengths that we noted regarding the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. At the undergraduate level, we observed that the curriculum is very rigorous and broad offering 5 B.A. degrees in Communication Studies, Journalism, Political Science and Journalism, Film, and Public Relations. Moreover, the curriculum facilitates the development of marketable skills through engaged learning. For example, The State Hornet provides an opportunity for students to develop their professional journalism skills. The J-Street Film Festival allows students to present their work and receive feedback. Alumni spoke to the program providing them the needed experiences to compete on the job market. Moreover, in our conversations with faculty and leadership, we were impressed with the departments

forward-looking approach to curriculum development including a new emphasis in data journalism.

The graduate curriculum is flexible to meet a diverse set of graduate interests and needs. For example, the Master's program has historically served as a "feeder" school into doctoral program and continues to be. At the same time, many of its students are practicing professionals and the program provides good training to enhance their career development. The graduate program is also innovative in its curriculum offering 5-week graduate classes which permit a focused study of a particular area.

We do observe three important areas that warrant attention. First, there needs to be a reassessment between program staffing and curricular fragility. For example, the Digital Communication and Information minor has not had certain course taught for years, making this minor unavailable to undergraduate students. Similarly, there is a question of whether there are sufficient T-TT faculty that teach coursework in the five B.A. programs to offer such a full-range of courses. For example, our understanding is that Public Relations has two T-TT faculty associated with the program. While this can be offset by nontenure track lecturers or part-time faculty, an important question is what is the critical mass of T-TT faculty needed to sustain a specific degree. Second, there is a tension between area interests as represented by degree versus departmental interests in regarding to curriculum and hiring. With five B.A.s, there is a need to have a specialized curriculum for each area. At the same time, resources are limited in terms of the number of faculty lines. The important question is how to sustain a degree with limited numbers of T-TT faculty. Is the answer to set a minimum number of T-TT faculty for each area? Is the answer to develop a menu of courses that cut across individual degrees to allow more interchange of curriculum among degrees? Is the answer to determine the appropriate blend of T-TT and nontenure track faculty by degree? Curricular and hiring decisions are always local, so we do not have strong opinion on what strategy is pursued, but wish to highlight this a potential challenged that needs to be engaged. Third, the Film program has space needs in terms of studio/lab space needs for its program.

Recommendations

We would offer the following suggestions as they related to curricular development:

1. **Build stronger alumni connections.** The alumni are a valuable resource for students, particularly undergraduate students. We would suggest continuing building stronger alumni connections by establishing an Alumni Association Board. Such a board could serve a variety of purposes such as providing guest speakers, supporting fund raising, supplying feedback on curriculum development, and expanding internship possibilities. Alternatively, other kinds of network building activities such as establishing Film's Facebook page for other areas or the department as a whole might be created.
2. **Develop research colloquia series.** One possibility for enhancing the undergraduate and graduate experience may be to develop a research colloquia series that brings in scholars from other institutions to discuss their research. Such a series can highlight the

relevance of research for student's personal and professional lives and reinforce the connection between research and practice.

3. **Assess hiring needs in light of curricular fragility.** Echoing the recommendation in Theme #1, a hiring plan needs to be developed in light of curricular needs and the ability to offer the multiple majors and minors. Determining the right mix of T-TT and nontenure track faculty for particular B.A. degrees and minors is critical if they are to be sustained.
4. **Conduct a space audit.** An audit of the existing lab space, particularly for the Film program, needs to be conducted.

Theme #3: Advising

Advising occurs at both the undergraduate and graduate level within the Department of Communication Studies.

Undergraduate Advising and Course Accessibility

Given that there are 5 B.A.'s (Communication Studies, Journalism, Political Science and Journalism, Film, Public Relations) and four minors (Communication Studies, Journalism, Digital Communication and Information, Film Studies), the undergraduate program is complex. There are two levels to undergraduate advising: (1) faculty advising, and (2) college level advising through the Student Success Center (SAGE) using a mix of full-time advisors and faculty fellows. SAGE was established as part of a larger graduation initiative with some departments having embedded advisors. EAB helps track advising and faculty are supposed to be trained in EAB.

The advising challenge is twofold as: (1) advisors must be knowledgeable about multiple degrees and minors, and (2) the size of the undergraduate program may put a strain on advising resources thus making it difficult for students to receive advice in a timely or efficient manner. Take the following example from the Film area that was contained in the department's Self Study (p. 34):

Although all faculty in the Communication Studies Department may advise Film students, by the time they are in their upper division coursework, they are encouraged to obtain advising from Film program faculty. This provides the most informative and streamlined approach for students seeking advice on courses and career pathways. While this is helpful for our upper-division students, we have noticed that students in general advising do not always get the most useful advice on the course sequence they should take to graduate on time. One way to mitigate this is to train general advisors in our course prerequisites and our recommendations, so the program can reduce bottlenecks. Additionally, our courses fill up quickly and since there are only three faculty members who can serve as advisors, the students often wait until they are able to meet with someone to discuss their courses. Not expecting delays, they often miss their preferred schedule to more seasoned students. The most useful solution would be

to train advisors in which courses are most appropriate for our students to take in succession.

These kinds of concerns that are voiced by Film faculty also surfaced in our conversations with undergraduate students and faculty. First, faculty knowledge about the curriculum is uneven. Given the size of the Department and the diversity of its offerings, students are not assigned advisors but rather told that they can seek out any full-time faculty to plan their progress to their degrees. Some students muddle through a useful but imperfect online guide, but most don't and that can cost time, money, and frustration when they do not take courses in the proper sequence or plan to take a course that is not being offered, or wait until their last semesters to take courses that should have been taken earlier in their programs. The quality of the advice they receive is advisor dependent.

Second, undergraduate students feel there is difficulty with gaining access to advisors and difficulty with scheduling appointments. Undergraduates recognize that professors try to be helpful in advising but find it difficult to schedule an appointment. This may be due to a heavy teaching, research, and service load making it difficult to set aside large blocks of time for advising. Similarly, undergraduate voices difficulty in receiving their 90-hour degree checks which, according to one student, "may take months." We cannot determine the accuracy of these comments or how widespread they are, but there does seem to be a general perception that this is the case.

Third, there is a lack of accessibility to required classes. Several students highlighted that there are required classes that they are not able to schedule or are not offered. The department's Self Study acknowledge this problem (p. 40):

Coordination of ComS 100A/100B/100C: These courses represent the core of the program's requirements. Students need better advising so that they take these courses earlier in the programs of study rather than as seniors. An additional required course in research writing might help students learn how to write about research or scholarly ideas, or disciplinary specific writing. The Department is already working on ways to create more consistency across COMS100C course; some of our other courses would benefit from such an approach as well.

The department is currently working on strategies for making these courses more consistently available. In a different vein, some students noted that classes for some minors were not being offered on a regular basis.

Fourth, the transfer experience appears inconsistent. Some transfer students indicated that they had difficulty enrolling in classes when they transferred to Sacramento State. Other indicated that since they were scheduled to register later than other students, they had difficulty enrolling in classes. Again, this may be an artifact due to a limited number of students, but if accurate, may suggest that some seats in classes need to be reserved for transfer students and additional advising time and energy spent on ensuring a smooth transition to

Sacramento State. This may already be done, but a reexamination of current advising practices for transfer students may be warranted.

Graduate Advising

The Graduate Program consists of approximately 48 Masters students with 20 faculty serving on graduate faculty including 7 emeritus faculty. The graduate students we met spoke favorably of the graduate experience generally and advising specifically. It is rather remarkable to have such a large number of graduate students given that teaching assistants are typically not given tuition remission. The primary challenge in the graduate program is that graduate advising typically is conducted by a small number of faculty. This may cause a stress on the workload of those five faculty members.

Recommendations

The graduate advising processes seems to be working well; however, given the size of the program, it would be worthwhile to find ways to expand the number of faculty advisors for the graduate program to distribute workload. To help with issues of course accessibility at the undergraduate level, we encourage the department to continue its review of course offerings and sequences (e.g., required courses) to develop more consistency in offering required courses. In terms of the undergraduate advising, at a minimum, the Department should develop a method for assigning advisors to students and require an advising meeting at various points of a student's career. We would suggest the department consider the one or more of the following recommendations for enhancing the undergraduate advising experience:

1. **Embed SAGE Faculty Fellows within the department.** Our understanding is that SAGE Faculty Fellows are embedded at college advising. Funding and supporting 1-2 SAGE Faculty Fellows with reduced teaching to provide advising to the department may be one strategy for reducing advising bottlenecks.
2. **Create group and pop-up advising opportunities in classes and department.** It may be possible to build in "mini-advising" session in classes or host separate group advising sessions to provide students advice. This could be used either as a kind of "pre-advising" session so when students meet with advisors they are better prepared or could be part of regular advising.
3. **Develop student navigators to assist advising.** The department may also explore peer mentoring opportunities. Having students share their knowledge about the degree program(s) may help other students better navigate course scheduling and enhance time to degree completion. One could make this more of a "prestige position" where student volunteers receive internship credit and complete a training program to become a student navigator or are hired part-time to serve as a student navigator.
4. **Request a dedicated advising staff member for the department.** Other academic programs have staff members dedicated to academic advising, and the Department would benefit from such.

Theme #4: Budget and Staffing

Three issues surfaced regarding budgeting and staffing. First, there was a lack of clarity regarding the budgeting process by faculty. In some ways this is to be expected as administrators are more prone to pay attention to budget than faculty. However, there was a concern by faculty that they did not have basic knowledge of how budgets were set, what priorities were important when setting the budget, how additional faculty lines were secured etc. While one would not expect faculty to be familiar with budgeting intricacies, they should have a general understanding of basic budgeting processes. Second, at the time of our visit, only one administrative staff member was currently in place as opposed to three budget lines. Third, there appears to be a lack of timely response to departmental budget requests by the college. Some of this is to be expected as state funding may influence when budgets are set. However, the lack of timely responses makes it difficult for the department to be agile and respond to emerging challenges.

Recommendations

We would suggest two actions aimed at increasing budget transparency and staffing.

1. **Educate faculty about the budget process.** It may be helpful to have a workshop or faculty meeting regarding budgeting processes. Such a workshop or faculty meeting cannot only make faculty more aware of budgeting constraints and opportunities, it may position them to allies or thought partners for the leadership team when determining departmental budget priorities.
2. **Assess staffing needs and bring staff up to full strength.** Given the size of the program and number of faculty three staff members seems reasonable. However, programs of similar size often have four staff members serving support functions. It may be worthwhile to review the job duties of the specific staff members and determine what is the appropriate level of staffing for the department to function. At a minimum, the existing number of budgeted lines should be filled.

Theme #5: Beyond Collegiality, Building Intellectual Community

Emphasis has been given on building relationships among students and alumni. For example, students appear to have some sense of community through the film alumni network and a Facebook group. The Facebook group, Sacramento State Film Jobs, has 105 members, and several have reported finding work there. Our immediate goal is to increase membership of the group through our alumni list and connect it to other social media platforms. In the past five years, graduates have gone to work for many news outlets, including *The New York Times*, NPR, *The Tampa Bay Times*, *The Sacramento Bee*, Capital Public Radio, KCRA, *Forbes Magazine* and local community newspapers, digital media organizations and broadcast outlets.

There has also been a strong focus on creating events that bring students together and showcase their work through ongoing activities or special events. The former is illustrated by

the learning laboratory by the student newspaper, *The State Hornet*, and the latter is represented by the J-Street Festival which is senior showcase of films

One area that we thought warranted further development was developing a stronger intellectual climate among faculty. We perceived that there was a strong collegial culture within the department and that faculty were open to collaborating with one another. At the same time, we were curious about how a strong intellectual community that engaged particular pedagogical or research problems could be constructed that would bring faculty together. There are many challenges to building intellectual community given the structure of the department. One challenge is the divide between full-time and part-time faculty which makes it difficult to meet. Even though digital conferencing technologies such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, determining a time that all could be is challenging. A second challenge regards the interests between tenure-track faculty versus non-tenure track lecturers which highlights potential differences in events and workshops focusing on research and others on pedagogy. A third challenge is that there are several subdisciplinary areas within the department that make identifying common ground more difficult.

Recommendations

We would encourage the department to maintain expand its current efforts regarding community building with current and former students. When possible, it may be that other areas such as communication studies determine build out their initiatives to bring students together to share their work and build relationships between current and former students. For example, the department may consider hosting an undergraduate research conference or poster session where student research projects could be shared in a public forum.

We would encourage the department to consider how to create intellectual community among the faculty. The primary goal for such community building should be: (1) exploring interconnections among disciplinary areas, and (2) creating common ground regarding scholarship and pedagogy. Some possibilities for creating intellectual community among faculty might include:

1. **Schedule a non-compete time for faculty meetings, research colloquia, pedagogical workshops, and other events.** Having a non-compete time establishes a ritualized time to meet making it easier for faculty to keep their schedule clear. The non-compete time should be announced at the beginning of each semester or academic year. Meetings could be face-to-face or more likely hybrid given people's teaching schedules and the number of part-time faculty.
2. **Schedule a pedagogical workshops for faculty on a recurring basis.** While faculty responsibilities may vary given particular tracks (e.g., tenure-track versus nontenure track), all faculty share a responsibility and commitment to teaching. Pedagogical workshops could be provided by university, college, or departmental personnel or bringing in a guest speaker.

3. **Create and/or expand existing research colloquia.** Having research colloquia on a regular basis can help connect faculty and create a sense of common ground regarding across diverse areas. Given people's familiarity with Zoom and Microsoft Teams, colloquia could be offered online and recorded, permitting ongoing access by faculty and students.

External Review Report
Department of Communication Studies
Sacramento State University
May 23, 2023

Jimmie Manning
University of Nevada, Reno

In February 2023 I conducted a virtual visit with students, faculty, and administrators from Sacramento State University with the goal of learning more about the department in order to make an external assessment. In addition to these meetings, this report is informed by the *Department of Communication Studies Self-Study, 2022-2023* report and guided, in part, by the External Review Report template that has been completed and included with this report.

For this report, I begin by listing what I identified as key strengths in the department. I then move into and discuss five themes that were identified by me and the other external reviewer. The goal is to help the department identify ways it might move forward as it continues to carry out its mission.

Strengths and Assets

1. **The department has dedicated and talented faculty along with strong leadership.** During the discussion sessions, faculty were energetic, optimistic, and generally spoke highly of their programs and of the department as a whole. Based on their feedback, it appears as if there is a general culture of collegiality and support. The faculty also spoke highly of the department chair, noting his strong work ethic as well as his attention to securing resources for the department. In programs with weaker department cultures, external reviews can sometimes become a complaint session. The faculty in Communication Studies had concerns, but they were expressed in a manner that indicated care and respect for the department.
2. **The number of undergraduate majors remains high.** As the review materials indicate, the department has 1,481 total majors with 833 in Communication Studies, 299 in Film, 165 in Public Relations, 130 in Journalism (excluding the political journalism program), and 32 graduate students. This number of majors is well above expectations for comparable schools with Communication Studies departments, with the number of majors in Communication Studies and Film being exceedingly strong.
3. **Student mentoring is strong in the department.** Student feedback about faculty was exemplary, with students frequently mentioning faculty by name and the kinds of mentoring received from those faculty. Students generally referred to faculty as caring and intelligent; noted that faculty appeared to put a lot of time and effort into grading, providing informal feedback, and supporting students outside of the classroom; and alumni referred to their faculty mentors by name and with great affection.
4. **Alumni are committed to the department.** Thanks to savvy use of social media and strong faculty-student mentor bonds, alumni are remaining connected to the department and serving as a source of recruitment and support. It is highly unusual to

have so many alumni show up to an external review feedback section. They came to praise the faculty and the programs, with one alum indicating, "I was promoted very quickly [in my job], and I credit a lot of that to the leadership skills I got from Communication Studies." Another alum said, "We learned the value of networking, and that's how I got my current job, from networking with another graduate from the program. I'm happy to help recruit, too, to get our students out into good jobs."

5. **Signature programs.** The department has several signature programs, including the award-winning *The State Hornet*, the J-Street Film Festival, and the TOPS Prison Program. Such excellence across multiple programs is indicative of both faculty talents and the students who are being recruited to the program. They also help to establish a sense of community.

Growth Theme #1: Faculty Cohesion, Workload, and Tenure Density

1. **Unbalanced mix of tenure-track, tenured, and part-time faculty.** As is outlined in the department's self-study, tenure density is an issue in the department. Too many upper-level courses are being taught by temporary/part-time faculty. The shortage of full-time faculty is hurting some programs, including the Public Relations major. Even some minors are suffering because of tenure density issues. If not tended to, these faculty issues could have serious impacts on program maintenance and development, retaining students, faculty morale, and developing leadership in the department.
2. **Hiring priorities.** Administration should work with the department to develop a 5-year strategic hiring plan. Such a plan should go beyond simply worrying about what cannot currently be taught, as the department finds itself in that position now and it is not helpful to allow for innovations in curriculum or other department matters. Given that budget issues are often mentioned as the primary reason for not hiring new faculty, the 5-year hiring plan should also be strategic in how part-time faculty will be a part of the department's programs and overall culture.
3. **Perception of unique needs across units.** In developing a hiring plan, it might be especially beneficial to consider what needs across units/majors are truly unique and what needs are similar to those in other units/majors. Given that the Communication Studies B.A. is overdue for a revision, and that enrollments for that program are dropping (but still relatively strong), it might be that classes included as part of that revised curriculum could draw from other areas of the department or that new courses could be developed for the Communication Studies B.A. that would translate well for the curricula of other majors (e.g., courses in communication ethics, information gathering and use, aesthetics, etc.).
4. **Leadership development.** As mentioned earlier in this section, the tenure density issues could lead to a lack of leadership in the future. Faculty are generally happy with and supportive of the current chair, but few faculty could identify the path he took to get to his current leadership position. Those who did gave answers such as, "There really wasn't anyone else to do it" or "I think he did it to keep us going, to be nice." These answers suggest that more attention should be given to who is leading the department, how they are doing so, and what can be done to prepare faculty for taking over the chair role when the next chair is needed.

5. **Service load.** The service loads of the faculty are quite high. Many faculty noted this during discussions, and those who did not talk about their service loads often nodded in agreement. When asking follow-up questions, many faculty felt it was the advising they did that often made the service expectations difficult. Some faculty on the tenure track gently indicated that the high service expectations combined with a 4-4 teaching load made it tough to meet the rigorous standards for tenure and promotion at the university. When asked if mentoring was provided from senior faculty to navigate workload management, they indicated that there was nothing formal set up but that some senior faculty were helpful while others never contributed mentoring to junior faculty. The second reviewer and I discussed the service expectations of the faculty, and we both concur with the general faculty assessment that service loads are too high. We fear that, even though the faculty appear to have good morale at this point, that an ongoing high service load, especially with the advising that they are expected to do, could eventually harm departmental culture. The faculty, based on our interactions with them, appear to be collegial, talented, and dedicated. The university must consider how they can maintain this excellent department culture and positive workplace morale.
6. **Disciplinary and university literacy.** This issue is more minor in nature, but it was apparent that some faculty members did not have a good sense of standards or expectations on a disciplinary level. To keep faculty on the forefront of knowledge, it is important that they stay current in their areas of the field. Largely, though, faculty had a good sense of disciplinary conversations and newer developments in their areas of scholarship, creativity, and pedagogy. More concerning was that some faculty were not aware of the contents of the bylaws, with mixed expectations about what is required for promotion and/or tenure in some of the conversations we had with faculty. Mentoring and/or information sessions for new faculty could be helpful to giving those on the tenure track a good sense of the targets they need to hit in order to be tenured and/or promoted and provide a good sense of how the department operates. It could also be a way to spark interest in leadership and governance of the department at an early stage.

Growth Theme #2: Curriculum Development

1. **Forward-thinking curricular development.** Across all areas of the department continued consideration of curriculum development would be beneficial. To be clear, a lot of forward-thinking curricular development is in place. For example, the exploration of data journalism, many of the film projects we were able to observe, and some of the ways scheduling occurs (e.g., 5-week graduate courses) display the innovation of the faculty and how they are preparing students for the contemporary world. That being stated, it also was apparent that some faculty or entire units/majors felt somewhat trapped in their curriculum or as if it were long out of date; and, moreover, these faculty felt as if they did not have the space to think through what was needed in terms of curricular change. As the university supports the department in its ongoing curricular changes and developments, it is important that the rigor of the undergraduate curriculum be kept intact; that the flexible curriculum of the graduate program be allowed to make that program the benefit it is to many students; and that, in order to

continue meeting its mission and vision as well as the values listed by alumni, the department consider how they can offer marketable skills via engaged learning.

2. **Space needs.** Some faculty worried that the spaces they had for teaching did not offer the best possible education. The space needs expressed by the Film faculty seemed especially worthy of consideration.
3. **Guest speakers and alumni connections.** A common refrain across the many conversations is that the department rarely invites guest speakers to encourage learning, innovation, and/or community connections. Bringing in guest speakers from across the discipline can help to encourage innovation while simultaneously getting the word out to members of other campuses about all the excellent things happening in Communication Studies. Inviting alumni to speak can help students to envision their futures and make professional connections. Creating events that showcase community speakers can help with professional connections, expand care dimensions for students and faculty, and display the department. The creation of and support for such endeavors are strongly encouraged.
4. **Territoriality.** Some faculty indicated that they felt as if they were in competition with other programs or as if some programs/majors were favored over others. Faculty members would often point to specific instances where resources were denied or offenses carried out and use that as evidence for why they were frustrated with how their area/program/major/minor was being treated. The second reviewer and I discussed this, and we did not believe this talk to be toxic or problematic. It is, however, an important point for administration, including the Department Chair, to consider. The faculty overall seem collegial and supportive of each other, but if shortages in faculty and resources as well as declining enrollments continue then this kind of talk might increase, and issues related to morale, collegiality, and territoriality could develop.

Growth Theme #3: Advising

1. **Heavy faculty advising workload.** The faculty have indicated that they spend a lot of time advising students. When asked follow-up questions about the nature of the advising, it was pointed out that oftentimes it is not substantive advising on matters such as career choices, differences in the content of classes, and the like; but, instead, faculty were being asked questions regarding whether or not students were taking the right class to fulfill a requirement or other non-departmental questions such as what classes transfer, general education requirements, and the like. Advising is important, but it takes up a lot of faculty time and takes away from other areas of work. I strongly suggest that support be given to the department in terms of advising. Several budget-neutral options exist, including group advising sessions, developing videos or brief information sheets, or other options that could help students not to lean so heavily on faculty for advising.
2. **Student concerns with access to advisors.** A number of transfer students indicated it was hard to learn the advising system and to get the classes they needed. Other students indicated that some faculty were better at advising than others, and that waiting in line for the “good advisors” or being able to find them in the office could be a challenge. In general, students indicated that they were satisfied with faculty advising

but felt that a better system could be put into place where there was less precarity about whether they could find an advisor they wanted.

Growth Theme #4: Budget and Staffing

1. **Budgeting transparency.** Members of the department indicated that the Department Chair was willing to share any information he had about the budget, but that beyond his transparency they did not feel as if they knew much about how funds were allocated and how much. One faculty member indicated, and the department self-study also states, that there have been years when the departmental budget was not revealed in a timely manner. Clear communication of the budget and other financial matters would allow the Department Chair and the department as a whole to plan better and with more confidence. The faculty might also feel better about budget issues if they were clearly and openly explained to them.
2. **Timely response to requests.** The faculty also indicated that they did not feel requests made to administrators were answered quickly, if at all. Responses to requests are another matter of transparency, and clear communication could help to ensure department morale stays strong.
3. **Administrative staff.** The faculty feel the pressure that the one administrative staff member is under and expressed resentment that they do not have the staff support they need. The other reviewer and I discussed this in length, as neither of us could do our jobs properly if we did not have the appropriate staff support. Restoring the full staff for the department should be a priority.

Growth Theme #5: Beyond Collegiality, Building Intellectual Community

1. **Seeing interconnections among disciplinary areas.** As has been noted in this report, this is a strong faculty that has a lot of overlapping interests. In the current time of decreasing enrollments and limited resources for the department, it would be beneficial for faculty to think about how classes, faculty, and resources could be shared across curricula and research areas. The faculty appear to like each other and have respect for what others are doing; moving that in the direction of shared curriculum and resources could boost innovation, enhance pedagogy, and allow for new research and/or artistic collaborations.
2. **Creating common intellectual and pedagogical events.** The faculty and students also indicate they want more opportunities to commune, especially around intellectual and/or artistic pursuits. Providing faculty and students space to do this would likely help to boost morale, provide educational value, and spark research ideas and/or collaborations.

Internal Review Report

Internal Review Report: BA Public Relations

Department of Communication Studies

College of Arts & Letters

Internal Reviewers: Jeffrey Brodd, Department of Humanities and Religious Studies, College of A&L
Julie Fogarty, Department of Civil Engineering, College of ECS

Date Submitted: June 25, 2023

I. Self-Study:

The Department of Communication Studies submitted its Self-Study in advance of the External Review visit in February, 2023. It consists of 41 pages of main text accompanied by 13 pages of appendices. It is structured per the five subject areas and their sub-topics specified by the *Academic Program Review Guide's* Self-Study Sample Template, with sequential sections for each area devoted to each of the Department's degree programs, although, as noted in item 1.8 on p. 2, because the Public Relations program was only just established as a BA degree in 2021-2022, it was not considered in the Self-Study alongside the other four degree programs. The Self-Study begins by clearly setting forth the mission statements of the University, the College of Arts & Letters, and the Department, followed by summary descriptions of the degree programs (including Public Relations) and the Department's four minors. (This opening section also includes summary of a sixth degree program, BA Political Science and Journalism, but because this is housed in the College of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Studies it is not elsewhere covered in the Self-Study.) The Self-Study concludes with nine items in the section: Planning to Maintain Success and Engage in Continuous Improvement. These items helpfully summarize concerns and have provided a sound partial basis for this Internal Review Report's recommendations. In between these opening and concluding sections are lengthy sections on Student Learning and Student Success. The Self-Study makes clear the complexity of this Department's structure relative to most departments in the College and in the University at large, first and foremost simply through its presentation of information pertinent to each of the four degree programs separately for each. There is no information in either the Student Learning section nor the Student Success section directly pertaining to the Public Relations BA. Still, the Self-Study, along with the External Review Report, should prove to be beneficial in developing the Action Plan, as these documents help describe the circumstances and perceived needs of the Department at large. It is also to be noted that the Self-Study's item 5.3 (p. 40), Enrollment, specifically addresses the problem of declining enrollments in Public Relations, stating that "personnel issues in the PR program have hampered recruiting new students for that program."

II. External Review:

The external reviewers were Dr. Jimmie Manning, Professor and Chair of Communication Studies, University of Nevada, Reno, and Dr. Kevin Barge, Professor and Head of Communication, Texas A&M University. It would seem that they were appropriate choices, especially given that both universities offer both the BA and MA in Communication (Studies); Texas A&M also offers a doctorate in Communication and an interdisciplinary BA in Journalism. They conducted a virtual visit on February 9 and 10, 2023, which included meetings with Communication Studies Department Chair Mark Ludwig, Associate Vice President for Academic Excellence Amy Wallace, College of A&L Dean Sheree Meyer, Dean of Undergraduate Studies James German, and Dave Zuckerman, director of TOPSS, along with

faculty and students in the various undergraduate degree programs, and the Graduate Coordinator and students in the MA program. The External Review Report was completed on May 23, but Dr. Barge failed to carry through with assisting in its completion, a problem that likely contributed to the delayed completion (per our campus policy, these reports are due one month after the visit). Much to Dr. Manning's credit, he included in the report some perspectives offered by Dr. Barge in conversations, presumably near the time of the visit, and managed to finish a substantive report on his own. Dr. Manning also completed and submitted the External Review Report Sample Template (or Rubric), and based his ER Report in part on its outline of items for inquiry. The Report's failure to disaggregate comments and recommendations per each of the five degree programs is a shortcoming, given that our program review process is supposed to be degree-specific. The report also fails to consider the nature of specific courses and barely addresses overall curricular design. That said, the report is quite substantive and helpfully incorporates perspectives of students, alumni, and faculty that tend not to have been included in the Self-Study. Along with its various recommendations, several of which are noted below, the ER Report summarizes five "Strengths and Assets." The authors of this Internal Review Report concur and wish to preface the following set of recommendations with our own affirmation of the Department's many strengths, including its demonstrable commitment to ongoing improvement.

III. Internal Review Recommendations:

Based on the Self-Study and External Review Report the internal reviewers offer the following seven recommendations for consideration when drafting the Action Plan.

1. Develop and implement an assessment plan for the Public Relations BA.

The Self-Study (p.2, 1.8) explains that the Public Relations BA was established as a standalone degree program in AY 2021-2022, but it does not mention the status with regard to development and implementation of an assessment plan. The Department should be able draw on its good work with regard to other degree programs to accomplish this.

2. Work with the Department at large to orchestrate a cautious approach to developing e-learning process and policy, drawing on evidence derived from assessment.

The Self-Study item 5.6, E-Learning (p. 41), sets forth a sensible approach to online offering of curriculum. The fact that the opening statement of 5.6, that the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated "that online instruction can be an effective way to educate students," seems to be contradicted by the experience of the Film program as discussed in 2.3.3 (pp. 10-12), indicates the complex and still nascent nature of online learning. Caution needs to be the byword, regardless of university regulations. Sound assessment of student learning via online delivery seems an essential step toward developing an effective approach.

3. Coordinate with the Department at large to improve approach to advising.

The Self-Study section 5.2 (Advising) makes clear the frustration felt regarding the typically challenging task of advising, and the ER Report (Theme #3, 1, Heavy faculty workload, p. 4) and the ER Rubric Element Three (Comments and Recommendations) make clear that students are also frustrated. The Self-Study (p. 34, 3.3.5) suggests that the Film program has managed some success. Seeking out examples of best practices elsewhere in the College and across campus would likely provide viable options for consideration. Using the Department of Civil Engineering as an example (and who will gladly

share their resources as a starting point), the SAGE Faculty Fellow, in collaboration with the SAGE staff and the departmental chair, could focus on revising the advising protocol for the Department to delegate the responsibilities to different advisors (SAGE, Lassen Hall, faculty) based on student progress to degree. Additionally, an undergraduate student resources Canvas page developed and maintained by the SAGE faculty fellow could be a consistent means of providing advising information without overburdening the faculty with the mundane advising requests outlined in the Self-Study and ER Report.

4. Coordinate with the Department at large to ensure that responsibilities for extracurricular activities are shared fairly and that expectations are clear.

The Self-Study and the ER Report make clear the admirable extent of extracurricular activities orchestrated by the Department, many providing direct opportunities for student participation. The Self-Study (5.9, p. 41) also expresses concern over the demands brought on by TOPSS, albeit a “laudable” program. In general, the Department should ensure that this robust engagement with such activities squares with needs to cover curriculum and to maintain positive morale. Steps might include taking care to distribute tasks equally and providing clarity regarding expectations (e.g., with regard to RTP).

5. Coordinate with the Department at large to strategize effective means of enhancing a sense of community by hosting events for students involving students from other institutions and bringing guest speakers to campus.

The Self-Study discusses “exploring the idea of creating a communication conference on the Sacramento State campus” (p. 37, 4.1). The ER Report (Theme #2, 3, Guest speakers and alumni connections, p. 4) and Rubric (Recommendations on Element Four) address means of developing an “intellectual community” through hosting speakers. These are similar endeavors with a shared purpose, worthwhile to pursue. As with advising, the Department might benefit from looking elsewhere in the College or across campus to find examples of best practices in terms of logistics to launch these ideas. Some examples to explore include the 3-day ASCE Mid-Pacific Student Symposium organized by a student organization every year on a rotating basis between 12 regional universities, or the more recent half-day annual SIRIUS STEM Conference run by the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics which showcases the undergraduate research projects from students at Sacramento State and the Los Rios Community Colleges.

6. In coordination with the Department at large, work with the College of Arts & Letters to implement a sound five-year hiring plan. The Self-Study item 5.1, Faculty Hiring (p. 40), calls for addressing the tenure density problem. Section 4.2, Hiring Needs (pp. 37-8), provides details, noting the need currently “to use twice as many temporary faculty as tenure line faculty in any given semester.” To the Department’s credit, 5.1 acknowledges that “many [academic units] across the University” suffer from the same problem. The ER Report directly addresses tenure density and hiring needs and concurs with the Self-Study (Theme #1, 1, Unbalanced mix of tenure-track, tenured, and part-time faculty, p. 2). So too does the ER Rubric: the Element Five inquiry item, “Does the academic unit have a strategic plan, and other long term plans (5-year hiring, facilities, etc.)?,” is deemed to be only at the Emerging stage (only three of the 29 inquiry items in the Rubric are deemed to be only Emerging, with the other 26 deemed Developed or Highly Developed). And so, there is strong consensus that this problem does indeed need to be addressed, which should be done through an evidence-based approach that makes a case that the situation in Communication Studies is dire relative to other academic units who share the same allocation of resources.

7. In coordination with the Department at large, work with the College of Arts & Letters to alleviate concerns regarding budget.

The Self-Study section 4.3, Budget Concerns, expresses general concerns over both the size of the budget (“exceedingly tight”) and, apparently more so, the timing and degree of transparency of the budgeting process. The ER Report seems to concur with the Self-Study, although it is vague with regard to who or what along with the departmental chair is responsible for remedying the situation. This section of the Self-Study for some reason shifts to focus only on the Film program, along with brief attention to Journalism. If indeed these concerns over budget affect the entire Department, part of the preparation for producing the Action Plan should include making this broader case. In general, the Department should clarify its concerns regarding budget and then proceed to work with the College on alleviating them.



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September 15, 2023

TO: Amy Wallace, Associate Vice President
Academic Excellence

RE: Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations action plan

Below please find the department's action plan for the BA in Public Relations that was informed by the self-study and external and internal reports to complete our program review.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark D. Ludwig'.

Mark D. Ludwig, Ph.D, chair

09/15/2023

Date

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sheree Meyer'.

Sheree Meyer, Ph.D., Dean, College of Arts & Letters

09/15/2023

Date

Degree: BA in Public Relations

Academic unit: Communication Studies

College: Arts & Letters

Date: 9/15/2023

Program review finding	2 years - list goals, success indicators, responsible parties, and resource implications	4 years - List goals, success indicators, responsible parties, and resource implications	6 years - List goals, success indicators, responsible parties, resource implications

To Maintain Success

In coordination with the Department at large, work with the College of Arts & Letters to implement a sound five-year hiring plan.	Goal: examination of anticipated curricular needs to be carried out by the Curriculum Committee. Grow PR majors to show the needs for additional hiring. Success indicators: Provost approval to hire additional faculty. Hire another instructor as professional in residence. Working with PRSSA and making our curriculum applicable. Resource implications: salary and benefit costs of additional tenure line faculty	Goal: examination of anticipated curricular needs to be carried out by the Curriculum Committee. Grow PR majors to show the needs for additional hiring. Success indicators: Provost approval to hire additional faculty. Hire another instructor as professional in residence. Working with PRSSA and making our curriculum applicable. Resource implications: salary and benefit costs of additional tenure line faculty	Goal: examination of anticipated curricular needs to be carried out by the Curriculum Committee. Grow PR majors to show the needs for additional hiring. Success indicators: Provost approval to hire additional faculty. Hire another instructor as professional in residence. Working with PRSSA and making our curriculum applicable. Resource implications: salary and benefit costs of additional tenure line faculty
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To Improve Student Learning			
<p>Work with the Department at large to orchestrate a cautious approach to developing e-learning process and policy, drawing on evidence derived from assessment</p>	<p>Goal: Develop an eLearning policy that considers both pedagogical appropriateness and faculty qualification/certification for online teaching. Broaden the reach of the program, enabling guest speakers/lecturers to join online. Responsible: department curriculum committee. Success indicator: Implementaion of a policy for the 2024-25 AY. Resource implications: none</p>	<p>Goal: Assess student success in courses with some online modality. Adjust policies and approach as indicated Responsible: department assessment committee. Success indicator: Low DFW rates.</p>	<p>Goal: Assess student success in courses with some online modality. Adjust policies and approach as indicated Responsible: department assessment committee. Success indicator: Low DFW rates.</p>
<p>Coordinate with the Department at large to ensure that responsibilities for extracurricular activities are shared fairly and that expectations are clear.</p>	<p>Goal: Review co-curricular and extracurricular activities associated with the department's programs. Explore possibilities for expansion of these activities. Grow the department's internship program. Incorporate PRSA connections to department internship pool. Success indicator: Student participation in these activities. Responsible: Department Executive Committee.</p>	<p>Goal: Subsequent review of co-curricular and extracurricular activities associated with department's programs. Continue expansion of these activities if appropriate. Assess the department's internship program. Incorporate PRSA connections to department internship pool. Success indicator: Student participation in these activities. Responsible: Department Executive Committee.</p>	<p>Goal: Continuous review of co-curricular and extracurricular activities associated with department's programs. Continue expansion of these activities if appropriate. Assess the department's internship program. Incorporate PRSA connections to department internship pool. Success indicator: Student participation in these activities. Responsible: Department Executive Committee.</p>

<p>Develop and implement an assessment plan for the Public Relations BA</p>	<p>An assessment plan is already in place First implementation was in '22-23</p>	<p>Continue assessments using the plan in place for continuous improvement. Consideration of data's implications. Success indicator: Completion of annual plans. Responsible: Assessment Committee</p>	<p>Continue assessments using the plan in place for continuous improvement. Consideration of data's implications. Success indicator: Completion of annual plans. Responsible: Assessment Committee</p>
<p>Develop and align curriculum with the public relation industry</p>	<p>Goal: Identify and implement/incorporate certificates from public relations industry into classroom; connect students with professionals through class activities, guest speakers, and PRSSA. Success indicator: number of students who are certified with industry certification and connections that are built with professionals through classes and PRSSA. Responsible: faculty members</p>	<p>Goal: Identify and implement/incorporate certificates from public relations industry into classroom; connect students with professionals through class activities, guest speakers, and PRSSA. Success indicator: number of students who are certified with industry certification and connections that are built with professionals through classes and PRSSA Responsible: faculty members</p>	<p>Goal: Identify and implement/incorporate certificates from public relations industry into classroom; connect students with professionals through class activities, guest speakers, and PRSSA Success indicator: number of students who are certified with industry certification and connections that are built with professionals through classes and PRSSA Responsible: faculty members</p>

To Improve Student Success			
<p>Coordinate with the Department at large to improve approach to advising</p>	<p>Goal: Examine ways to more equitably distribute the academic advising load of faculty. Explore feasibility of staff position to assist with academic advising. Hold training session about advising among new faculty and make sure faculty can all advise across majors. Success indicator: implementation of a more systematic academic advising plan. Responsible: department chair or designee</p>	<p>Goal: Assess distribution the academic advising load of faculty. Request staff academic advising position. Hold training session about advising among new faculty and make sure faculty can all advise across majors. Success indicator: implementation of a more systematic academic advising plan. Responsible: department chair or designee</p>	<p>Goal: Monitor distribution the academic advising load of faculty. Request staff academic advising position if not filled. Hold training session about advising among new faculty and make sure faculty can all advise across majors. Success indicator: implementation of a more systematic academic advising plan. Responsible: department chair or designee</p>

To Build Partnerships and Resource Development to Enhance the Student Experience

Coordinate with the Department at large to strategize effective means of enhancing a sense of community by hosting events for students involving students from other institutions and bringing guest community by hosting events for students involving students from other institutions and bringing guest speakers to campus

Goal: Consider establishment of a working group or committee to recommend events that draw high school and community college students to campus. Reaching out to part-time faculty who also teach in community colleges. Open some PR classes for these community college students to visit. Establish better communication with the department about guest speakers on campus. Success indicator: An event or two each semester. Responsible: department chair or designee

Goal: Evaluate programs that draw high school and community college students to campus. Establish several new events. Reaching out to part-time faculty who also teach in community colleges. Open some PR classes for these community college students to visit. Evaluate communication with the department about guest speakers on campus. Success indicator: Two to three events per semester. Responsible: department chair or designee

Goal: Continue to evaluate programs that draw high school and community college students to campus. Reaching out to part-time faculty who also teach in community colleges. Open some PR classes for these community college students to visit. Establish new events as needed. Success indicator: Two to three events per semester. Responsible: department chair or designee

<p>Develop and maintain active collaborations with local community partners such as PRSA, local agencies, etc.</p>	<p>Goal: Develop and maintain long-lasting relationship with local community partners via service-learning projects in class, internship, etc. Success indicator: relationships developed and collaborations that are established with local community partners, Responsible: PR faculty, internship coordinator</p>	<p>Goal: Develop and maintain long-lasting relationship with local community partners via service-learning projects in class, internship, etc. Success indicator: relationships developed and collaborations that are established with local community partners Responsible: PR faculty, internship coordinator</p>	<p>Goal: Develop and maintain long-lasting relationship with local community partners via service-learning projects in class, internship, etc.; Success indicator: relationships developed and collaborations that are established with local community partners Responsible: PR faculty, internship coordinator</p>
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To Improve Strategic and Budget Planning and Operational Effectiveness to Ensure Sustainability

<p>In coordination with the Department at large, work with the College of Arts & Letters to alleviate concerns regarding budget.</p>	<p>Goal: Periodically share with full department the status of allocations from the dean's office and the plans for spending it. Consider establishing a budget committee or assigning budget oversight to the department Executive Committee. Establish grants and funds for PR students to achieve professional certificates. Success indicator: documentation of such presentations. Responsible: department chair</p>	<p>Goal: Continue to share with full department the status of allocations from the dean's office and the plans for spending it. Review department's participation in setting budget goals. Establish grants and funds for PR students to achieve professional certificates. Success indicator: documentation of such presentations. Responsible: department chair</p>	<p>Goal: Continue to share with full department the status of allocations from the dean's office and the plans for spending it. Review department's participation in setting budget goals. Establish grants and funds for PR students to achieve professional certificates. Success indicator: documentation of such presentations. Responsible: department chair</p>
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