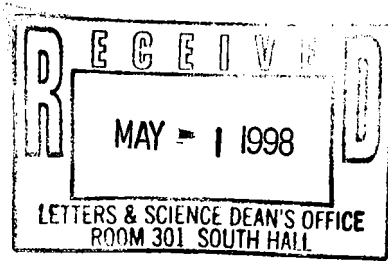


# COMMUNICATION ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



DATE: April 30, 1998

TO: Mary Anne Fitzpatrick  
Associate Dean  
L & S

FROM: Tino Balio *T.B.*  
Chair

RE: Assessment of Communication Arts Undergraduate Major

The Department conducted an assessment of its Undergraduate Major in 1997-98 and the report is enclosed. We intend to conduct an assessment of our Graduate Program by the end of 1998-99.

Vilas Hall 821 University Avenue Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1497

## Communication Arts Department

### Undergraduate Assessment Report

April 28, 1998

Our first full year of undergraduate assessment produced an overall positive result, showing many areas of strength, with some fairly predictable weaknesses in our ability to meet student needs. The assessment method consisted of five steps, four of which we accomplished this year, with the fifth to follow next year: 1) a survey of fourth year students, 2) collection of evaluations of internship performance by on-site supervisors, 3) collection and evaluation of sample student work, and 4) an assessment of student progress through the major. The fifth step, an alumni survey to be carried out through our alumni newsletter, had to be postponed because of lack of funding this year, but we have now received funding for 1998-99. The results of steps 1 to 4 showed the following:

- an overall high level of work being performed in the courses sampled, across both tracks of the major;
- a high level of satisfaction among seniors with the quality of instruction in the department;
- a successful internship program, with the vast majority of supervisors very satisfied with the students we send to them;
- some dissatisfaction with the production sequence, due to lack of classes, limited enrollment, and outdated studio production facilities;
- increasingly severe difficulties in getting into necessary entry level and intermediate courses, with students often taking them out of sequence;
- a shortage of upper-division offerings in both sequences, especially R/TV/F and Rhetoric.

With these results in mind, we are pressing to be able to hire to fill faculty vacancies, so that we can offer a sufficient number of courses to meet the demand, thus lowering class sizes, making classes easier for students to get into in a timely manner, and adding to the diversity of our offerings. As it stands, students sometimes cannot progress in a logical and timely fashion through the Rhetorical Studies and Radio/TV/Film areas, due to lack of faculty to teach classes. We intend to keep up efforts to improve production facilities and expand our offerings in that area.

>>Department or Program Name:

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>>Abstract: (This should be a brief summary of no more than 300 words  
>>that can be used in the College's report to the Provost's Office. The  
>>abstract should indicate the focus of assessment activities during the  
>>1997-98 academic year. It should indicate what actions the department  
>>or program is taking to change its program as a result of the  
>>assessment. It should indicate whether the assessment was of the  
>>Undergraduate Major, the Graduate Program, or both.)

>>

>>Assessment Tools Used: (Using the attached chart, please specify  
>>which assessment activities have taken or will take place in your  
>>department or program. Indicate also the year when these activities  
>>took place or will take place. If you used other tools, please  
>>describe them.)

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>>Direct Indicators

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>>##### Undergraduate###Graduate  
>>##### Major##### Program

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>>National Exams## \_\_\_\_\_ ## \_\_\_\_\_

>>

>>Local Exams### \_\_\_\_\_ ## \_\_\_\_\_

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>>Capstone Course(s)# \_\_\_\_\_ ## \_\_\_\_\_

>>

>>Embedded Testing## \_\_\_\_\_ ## \_\_\_\_\_

>>

>>Student Portfolios##  1998## \_\_\_\_\_

>>

>>Review theses & dissertations# \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_

>>

>>Performance Evaluations#  1997-98 \_\_\_\_\_

>>

>>Pre and Post Testing## \_\_\_\_\_ ## \_\_\_\_\_

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>>Indirect Indicators

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>>##### Undergraduate###Graduate  
>>##### Major##### Program

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>>Student Surveys##  1997-98 \_\_\_\_\_

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>>Exit Interviews## \_\_\_\_\_ ## \_\_\_\_\_

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>>Alumni Surveys##  N/A## \_\_\_\_\_

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>>Employer Surveys# \_\_\_\_\_ ## \_\_\_\_\_

>>

>>External Reviews## \_\_\_\_\_ ## \_\_\_\_\_

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>>Narrative: (This should be a report, up to two pages in length,  
>>giving the details of the assessment plan and assessment activities.)

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Narrative:

The department of Communication Arts decided to focus on undergraduate assessment first, before assessing the graduate program. Assessment was assigned to the Undergraduate Studies Committee. We came up with a plan in Spring 1997, and began to implement the first step, collection of evaluation surveys from internship supervisors, that semester.

In the fall of 1997, and again in spring 1998, we administered a Senior Survey. The first time, students attending a special advising meeting for seniors were asked to fill out a paper survey. The second time, the survey was administered by email, which produced more results.

The evaluation of progress through the major was carried out by the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Undergraduate Advisor, Mary Rossa. We examined transcripts from a representative sample of undergraduate majors, and noted their sequential progress through the major, whether classes were taken in proper sequence, whether they were able to get into required classes in a timely manner, which classes had the most serious close-out problems, etc.

In spring 1998, samples of student work from the previous semesters were collected from four faculty members in the department, from the four departmental major "tracks". The work included final projects, final papers, and film scripts.

The Assessment Committee met in April to look over these materials: the internship evaluations, the senior surveys, and the student work. In addition to those summarized on the first page, our findings are reported below.

The major area of student complaints was, unsurprisingly, production. Students felt that production courses were too few in number, too limited in subject (should include more radio production and film as well as video), the lab facilities were outdated (no offline editing, frequent equipment breakdowns), and that funding should be available to help defray costs to students of producing film and video. Some students felt strongly that more career preparation should be done in Comm Arts. Several felt that speech and rhetoric classes were too few in number, and that more should be offered. They particularly commented on the fact that no actual speech courses are required -- or available -- for the Communication Theory and Rhetorical Studies major. Others commented that the same courses were offered over and over again -- that many interesting offerings listed in the Catalogue were never scheduled.

Student surveys and the curriculum and our assessment of student progress through the major revealed another serious problem: the dramatic overload demand for our entry-level courses in the R/TV/F areas, notably CA350. Often, only 15 out of 200 spots are available for the sophomores who need it to enter the major, and the number of those turned away equals or exceeds the number of those admitted. Lack of upper division classes in both areas of the major meant that these classes were frequently overenrolled; few Comm Arts majors are able to experience a seminar-like class at any time in their career in the department. Our ability to cover our basic curriculum has been eroding over the last five years. With over 300 majors and only 16 FTE, this situation is likely to get worse unless the faculty is expanded or the number of majors

severely curtailed, possibly by raising the admissions standard.

We will continue with this plan in the Fall of 1998, adding the alumni survey to our efforts, and beginning to assess the assessment process itself, as well.