



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Memorandum of Understanding
Department of Communication Studies,
College of Liberal Arts
June 2021

This Memorandum of Understanding outlines the consensus reached by the Department of Communication Studies, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Division of Academic Affairs, based on the recently conducted program review (Self-study in October 2019, external review site visit in November 2019, and UPRC report in September 2020). It describes the goals to be achieved, and the actions to be undertaken by all parties to this MOU to achieve these goals, during the next program review cycle. Progress toward goals is to be addressed in an annual report.

The Department offers a BA degree in Communication Studies with 2 additional options 1) Communication, Culture, and Public Affairs, and 2) Interpersonal and Organizational Communications. They also offer an MA degree in Communication Studies and a minor. In their last MOU in 2014 the Department was asked to: 1) create a multi-year hiring plan to significantly increase tenure density and improve the balance of instruction between full-time and part-time faculty; 2) evaluate the capacity of the MA program, consider expanding admissions, and discuss the appropriate mix of thesis and comprehensive examination to meet the goals of master's students. The department will encourage and provide opportunities for more tenured/tenure-track faculty to offer graduate level instruction and participate in theses. The department will maintain and continue to implement its comprehensive assessment plan that evaluates attainment of graduate level outcomes and uses findings for program improvement; 3) The college and Academic Affairs will make every effort to secure appropriate space for the department's Forensics Program and InterACT Performance Troupe to prepare, practice, and rehearse. It appears that the first goal has not been met. It is not clear from the self-study or the UPRC report what progress was made toward the second and third goals.

A number of strengths were identified in the reports.

- Comparatively shorter time to degree for first-year and transfer students, and high transfer student and graduate student graduation rates.
- High FTES for both the major and GE within the Department, although applications to the major have recently declined.
- The Communications Tutoring Center, Hauth Center, Forensics Team, and InterACT program continue to practice, receive feedback, and provide application opportunities for students to build strength in their communication skills.
- The external review team noted the success of the Communication Studies program in creating an environment both conducive to and supportive of a diverse student body.

Areas of Concern and Opportunities for Development were noted in the reports.

- The Communication Studies Department does not currently list a mission statement on the Department website. Further, the external reviewers note that the website could be developed as a recruitment tool to attract potential students.
- A majority of the students chose the general Communication Studies degree, with less than 6% of students choosing to enter the options for the degree. The department is considering discontinuing the options, but would like to keep the academic plan codes open for these options.
- Recruiting of graduate students to the option has been difficult, leading to small admission cohorts. The Department opened a spring admission cycle, which has helped increase the number of students in the program. However, the lower graduate student FTES has led to a lower number of students enrolled in classes. The College has continued to allow the Department to offer 5 graduate courses for students to take, even with lower enrollment numbers. In return, graduate students are valued teaching assistants for undergraduate courses. It appears that capacity of the MA program and the appropriate mix of thesis and comprehensive examination to meet the goals of master's students has not been addressed from the previous MOU. Based on the external review, it appears that faculty engagement in the graduate program continues to be of concern.
- The Program Learning outcomes for the Master's degree has very "low level" outcomes, and they are written in terms of teaching outcomes, and not learning outcomes (i.e., Introduce students to..., Provide in-depth instruction..., Develop students' understanding...). It is also noted that assessment of graduate level outcomes was a deficient area in the previous MOU that has not been resolved.
- The previous MOU listed the need to consider more tenure track faculty members. Since the last program review, Communication Studies lost 9 tenured faculty members (4 retirements, 4 FERP, and 1 promotion to administration) while hiring 7 tenure-track faculty members for a total (at the time of the self-study of 14 full professors, 9 associate professors, 4 assistant professors, and 40 lecturer faculty).
- The Department has two undergraduate advisors who provide academic guidance and professional mentorship to majors and minors. During their visit, the external reviewers noticed negative perception of and dissatisfaction with academic advising warrant attention from students. The Department, however, expresses long-standing student satisfaction with advising, and describes undergraduate advising as a "model of excellence". No assessment was conducted on the effectiveness of advising structure and processes.

It is therefore agreed that the Department will:

1. provide an annual assessment report (due June 1) including progress made towards the actions agreed to in this MOU to the CLA dean, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, and the Coordinator of Program Review and Assessment. The review cycle will be from 2019-2026. A comprehensive self-study will be due June 2026 for 2026-2027 Academic Year program review process.
2. ensure that the department mission statement is clearly posted on the department website and explore the development of the website as a recruitment tool.

3. analyze declining numbers in the major in relation to FTES.
4. evaluate the effectiveness of undergraduate advising both at the department level and with centralized advising to ensure students receive appropriate and relevant guidance.
5. consider suspending the BA Options in Communication, Culture, and Public Affairs and Interpersonal and Organizational Communications in order to determine if future discontinuation of these options would be appropriate. This will be important especially if the Department is still considering developing a proposal for an Option in Intercultural Communication that would include classes from Communication Studies and classes from African Studies, Chicano Latino Studies, and Asian Asian-American Studies.
6. consider recruiting strategies to increase graduate student applications and a more aggressive graduate recruitment internally (from within the undergraduate major). Also consider. Additionally, consider opportunities for expanding the thesis option to allow for a practicum project, developing a graduate course on communication pedagogy specifically for students interested in teaching, and non-sequential courses for graduate student cohorts to allow courses to be offered less frequently.
7. develop learning outcomes for the Master's program that reflect the higher order of learning expected from a graduate program. Assess and report on these outcomes regularly.
8. work with the college to seek and secure institutional support for the forensics and mediation programs as resources allow.
9. work with the College, as resources permit, to provide support to hire tenure-track faculty and support staff to meet program needs according to the strategic vision of the department. Also consider an Associate Chair position to improve administrative support in staffing and course scheduling.

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Journalism and Public Relations Department Chair:  Date: 9/24/21
 Jennifer Asenas

College of Liberal Arts Dean:  Date: 9/25/21
 David Wallace

Vice Provost Academic Programs:  Date: 9/25/21
 Jody Cormack