Communication Studies

Mission & Purpose

Evaluation Questions:

1. Does the purpose/mission statement clearly identify why the discipline courses exist?
   - The course names and descriptions are clear and well written and each make it clear what the purpose and goals are for the class. Our classes are designed to enhance our student’s awareness in communication as it relates to relationship-building, and much of our agenda is tied to application of terms and concepts through skill-based experiential activities and assignments.

2. What is the scope of this discipline and the therefore the course prefix? Do all courses fit within this discipline?
   - Sometime 8-10 years ago we switched our course prefix from SC (Speech Communication) to the current COM (Communication Studies) to both be clearer that the classes were focused on the broader area of communication rather than just speech, and the prefix also allows our classes to better align with those at the majority of our primary transfer institutions.

Target Audiences

Review & Documentation:

Our classes also appeal to both transfer students and/or students who are working to acquire life skills. Our classes are also a requirement for those who are pursuing programs, certifications, and associate degrees. The reason for this is that our courses all teach valuable skills that are needed by everyone in all aspects of life. Basic communication skills are valued by employers and our classes assist all students with enhancing their relationship building in both their personal and professional lives.

Our classes are also a requirement for those who are pursuing programs, certifications, and associate degrees. COM 131 (Fundamentals of Public Speaking) is required for: Architectural Technology, Chemical Technology, Electrical Controls Engineering Technology, Industrial Maintenance Technology, Juvenile Services, Law Enforcement, Plastics-Polymer Engineering Technology, Pre-Chemistry, Pre-Construction Management, Pre-Journalism, Pre-Professional Elementary Education, Pre-Professional Secondary Education, Quality Science, Surgical Technology Partnership, Technology Option, Tooling and Manufacturing Technology, Water


Evaluation Questions:

1. Have the target audiences for the courses been identified? Yes

2. If there are pre-requisites or assessments for the courses, are they appropriate and do they facilitate student success (based on your review of external data and course success data)?
   - Our grades and success rates confirm that the pre-requisite we have established for our Gender Communication classes (COM 235) make us feel comfortable with this standard. The pre-requisite for this class is that students must have first successfully completed the Interpersonal Communication class (COM 135) in order for them to have gained a basic working knowledge of communication to prepare for the advanced work in COM 235. While we don’t have pre-requisites for our other classes we do stipulate that students should be able to read and write at a college to better insure their success in the classes.

Action Needed:

Based on the documentation and evaluation in this section, please indicate if action or improvement is needed in the following areas within the department by making your responses bold:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission/Purpose</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Audience</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>
Data

Course Data

Review & Documentation:

Course Enrollment by Semester

As is the case college-wide, enrollment numbers in most of our classes is trending down over the four years covered in this report. Others may have reasons for this on a more macro level, tied to economics, financial aid, or broader trends in education, but our attendance figures are included below. When you take into consideration our low withdrawal rates and high percentage of students passing our classes, both included in additional charts below, there isn’t an obvious answer why attendance numbers would be dipping in our department. In other words, it doesn’t seem to be a performance issue or something that could be contributed to insufficient performance by faculty.

One possibility for declining enrollment college-wide might be that more and more classes have been scheduled off campus, and while that might seem like something that would accommodate the needs of students, it could also be said that enrollment numbers were better and more consistent when our classes were more consolidated to the main campus. Problems with parking and students needing to travel between the main and Devos campus may also leave a bad taste in student’s minds. Also, one must consider that the college has raised our standards somewhat in accepting and retaining students. For instance, the probation program for students not maintaining a certain grade point average certainly lowers enrollment figures, but at the same time increases the credibility of the educational institution and the perceived value of an education and degree or certificate from GRCC. So it’s a trade-off that seems to have some value.

The only two classes in Communication Studies that seemed to have stable enrollment numbers over the four years were Family Communication (COM 240)
and Organizational Communication (COM 250), but we can’t say with any degree of certainty why this was the case. Here are the numbers.

**COM 131:** 1866 (2010-11), 1821 (2011-12), 1695 (2012-13), 1594 (2013-14)

**COM 135:** 2223 (2010-11), 2112 (2011-12), 2088 (2012-13), 1857 (2013-14)


**COM 236:** 74 (2010-11), 74 (2011-12), 69 (2012-13), 42 (2013-14)

**COM 240:** 50 (2010-11), 47 (2011-12), 50 (2012-13), 49 (2013-14)

**COM 250:** 48 (2010-11), 50 (2011-12), 51 (2012-13), 49 (2013-14)

When reviewing the data table on percentages of student withdrawals we noted that the college averages were 13% for 2010-11, 12% in 2011-12, 11% in 2012-13, and 8% in 2013-14. That trend is encouraging and suggests a trend we’ve also been experiencing in our Communication Studies classes, although pretty much across the board our percentages for withdrawals is better than the college-wide percentages. This is reflected below.

**COM 131:** 10% (2010-11), 10% (2011-12), 9% (2012-13), 7% (2013-14)

**COM 135:** 9% (2010-11), 8% (2011-12), 7% (2012-13), 7% (2013-14)

**COM 232:** 6% (2010-11), 11% (2011-12), 9% (2012-13), Class didn’t meet in 2013-14.

**COM 235:** 5% (2010-11), 8% (2011-12), 4% (2012-13), 4% (2013-14)

**COM 236:** 1% (2010-11), 5% (2011-12), 0% (2012-13), 2% (2013-14)

**COM 240:** 6% (2010-11), 6% (2011-12), 2% (2012-13), 8% (2013-14)

**COM 250:** 13% (2010-11), 12% (2011-12), 11% (2012-13), 8% (2013-14)

While the numbers for COM 250 are higher than others in the department they are trending down in a similar fashion to the direction the college-wide numbers are heading. This class tends to fill a little more slowly than the others and that may mean it fills with students who are simply taking a class because it’s available. Interestingly, perhaps because of the withdrawal rates, the grades in COM 250 wind up being higher than other classes in the department as the numbers below indicate.

**Course Success Rates**
Our percentages are higher than the college-wide numbers in the data packet for students successfully completing our classes with a grade of A through C-. The college-wide percentages for the four academic years range from 72% to 74%. The percentages for Communication Studies classes are included below.

COM 131: 77% (2010-11), 79% (2011-12), 80% (2012-13), 80% (2013-14)
COM 135: 78% (2010-11), 79% (2011-12), 81% (2012-13), 78% (2013-14)
COM 232: 94% (2010-11), 89% (2011-12), 87% (2012-13), Class didn’t meet in 2013-14.
COM 235: 81% (2010-11), 86% (2011-12), 89% (2012-13), 87% (2013-14)
COM 236: 82% (2010-11), 85% (2011-12), 97% (2012-13), 76% (2013-14)
COM 240: 90% (2010-11), 87% (2011-12), 98% (2012-13), 86% (2013-14)
COM 250: 96% (2010-11), 88% (2011-12), 86% (2012-13), 94% (2013-14)

We feel the data for both percentages of withdrawals and students achieving passing grades confirms the excellent work being done in the Communication Studies department by both full-time and adjunct instructors.

**Evaluation Questions:**

1. What does the course enrollment by semester data tell you?
   We are positioned well and it says good things about our department and faculty. Our withdrawal rates and success rates tied to passing grades are stable and exceed those of the college-wide numbers. In the last couple of years with enrollment down overall at the college we’ve needed to reduce the number of sections in both COM 131 and COM 135, but that has served to stabilize the remaining courses. We’re taking a wait and see attitude for future terms/years, but remain flexible to adapt to enrollment numbers, whether they continue to decline or perhaps surge. Part of this depends on whether GRCC decides to match the MTA guidelines and make Communication Studies classes an alternative to EN 102, which would increase our numbers. We have representation on the Graduation Requirement committee to make our case regarding this issue.

2. Are students passing courses at the appropriate rates? If not, which courses are of concern and what should be done about this?
   As included in the comments and data above we are pleased to see students passing courses at a very high level across the board, and at a much higher rate than the college-wide numbers.

3. Are the Course Success Rates the same for the various sub-group populations? If not, where are the areas of concern and what should be done about this?
We’re aware of the college-wide lower grades for male African-American students at the college, and have witnessed some of that in our classes, but we’re encouraged with programs at the college to address these issues and are pleased to see the recent success in improved performance by this group campus-wide.

Program Outcomes

Review & Documentation:

Program Outcomes
[List Program Outcomes]

-This section is not applicable to the Communication Studies department

[Describe finding for Program Outcomes]

-See above.

Evaluation Questions:

1. Are these Program Outcomes appropriate given the target audience and intent for the program? If not, please list what the new Program Outcomes should be.

   Considering our classes are geared to a wide and diverse population we feel comfortable that our outcomes are appropriate and current in view of the skills we teach and what students need as they approach the relationships and challenges in their personal and professional lives.

2. What does the data trend for the Program Outcomes tell you? What are the implications for these data?

   -Again, we’ve been told Program Outcomes are not applicable to the Communication Studies department in this report.

Action Needed:

Based on the documentation and evaluation in this section, please indicate if action or improvement is needed in the following areas within the department by making your response bold:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course enrollment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Success Rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Outcomes</td>
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Curriculum

History

Review & Documentation:

Department/Discipline Curriculum History (last eight years)

With student enrollment numbers dipping in recent years we’ve had to examine either elimination or movement of classes. Each year we assess the schedule to maintain the necessary mix on the Schedule of Classes based on days, times, and locations. There has been a move by the college to place more classes in satellite locations and while this is good to extend our reach and accommodate students these are some of the classes that fill more slowly than on-campus days and times. We need to examine if we are really meeting student needs when we schedule a class off-campus that doesn’t fill when that same class offered on-campus might fill more easily. So far the only classes we’re offering off-campus are our two primary classes, COM 131 and COM 135, but we’ll examine other options in the future based on interest and need. By examining enrollment trends it seems students have reverted to wanting classes in the 9:30-3:00 Monday-Thursday range more than in the past. Evening classes and especially Friday and Saturday classes are filling more slowly, if at all, so that’s something we have to consider in working collaboratively with the Assistant Dean’s office. We have also created some online sections of our COM 135 class and are assessing how that is going. The classes are well structured and received, and filling quickly, but we’re trying to also make sure we don’t extend them to such a point where they are negatively impacting enrollment for in-person COM 135 classes. We’re pleased to be able to offer students the option of some online classes in the department, both to accommodate student needs and the college’s interest in this area, but we still feel the ideal vehicle for teaching Interpersonal Communication and our other classes is through in-person classes.

In the pasts eight years we have added a number of classes to add to the depth of the department, thus creating more options for our students, especially those with possible interest in degrees in Communication. While we’ve explored the possibility of a Communication pre-Major we don’t think that is appropriate or necessary at this time. The courses we’ve added are Intercultural Communication (COM 236), Organizational Communication (COM 250), and have expanded the number of classes in Gender
Communication (COM 235). While it’s technically not in our department we have also added a class in the Journalism department, Fundamentals of Public Relations (JR 266).

Today we have four full-time faculty members in the Communication Studies department, and one of those is retiring in Spring 2016. At that same time another full-time member of the Language & Thought department from the small German department is also retiring. With Communication Studies accounting for 44% of the classes in the Language & Thought department we’re hoping one of those positions results in a full-time tenured position in the Communication Studies department to assist in handling the work load of a large department with 20-plus adjuncts. Our department accounts for 64 sections and 192 contact hours each academic year.

External recommendations that influenced curriculum the changes we’ve made have been related to internal versus external recommendations and need, either from faculty or students at GRCC, but we are sensitive to how our classes fit into the bigger context of our four-year transfer institutions.

Advisory Board Contributions

-Not applicable

Transferability & External Standards

Review & Documentation:

External Standards

This is all quite new for now, but we’re trying to educate ourselves on the impact and implications of both MTA and Gen. Ed. issues. Our biggest concern is the impact it will have on our enrollment numbers. Short-term we’re hoping we’re fine because of the number of programs and departments that are requiring their students to take at least one communication class, and we’re still listed as a Humanities option under the MACRAO agreement for the current academic year. It appears now that we won’t satisfy Gen. Ed. status under the Humanities or Social Sciences section of the MTA, but we’re hopeful the college will fully align with the MTA in
regards to allowing students the option of a communication class instead of taking EN 102 which would either protect our current enrollment numbers, or perhaps even expand them. This is something we as a department need to continue to pay close attention to. If necessary it may even mean the addition of new classes. As it stands now our Communication Studies classes transfer as either general elective or Communication elective credit at transfer institutions.

-No Challenge Exams exist for our courses.

Curriculum Crosswalk
[discuss the findings of the Curriculum Crosswalk]

-We’ve been told this is not applicable to the Communication Studies department.

Equivalent Courses- Transfer Institutions

-All our current courses transfer as either general elective credit or Communication elective credit at our transfer institutions. (Details below)

Evaluation Questions:

1. To what extent is the course curriculum aligned with the K-12 standards? Are the current courses well aligned with the K-12 expectations? Are textbooks and student materials in the initial coursework at the appropriate level given their high school preparation? If there is not alignment, identify the gaps. If there is duplication, secondary to postsecondary, identify the opportunity for articulated credits.

-Our students are expected to be prepared for college-level work. Our choices in textbooks take into consideration the readability of material by our students. One challenge we experience is the preparedness of students in basic writing skills for college-level work. Some of the remedial classes GRCC has implemented have helped, but a great deal of the issue with lack of preparation appears to be deficiencies in instruction at the K-12 level.

2. To what extent are the existing courses aligned with the equivalent courses offered at transfer institutions? Which courses need to be updated to ensure alignment and transferability?

-We have not experienced problems with transferability of our classes at our transfer institutions. Below are examples of how our classes transfer at some of our primary transfer colleges.

-COM 131: (CMU) -COM 357, (FSU) -COM 201, (GVSU) -COM 1040
-COM 135: (CMU) -COM 101, (FSU) -COM 301, (GVSU) -COM 1700 or 2040
-COM 235: (CMU) -COM credit, (FSU) -COM 100, (GVSU) -COM 4700
-COM 236: (CMU) -COM 195, (FSU) -COM 380, (GVSU) -COM 4740
-COM 240: (CMU) -CTAC 373, (FSU) -COM 380, (GVSU) -COM 4750
-COM 250: (CMU) -CTAC 354, (FSU) -COM 380, (GVSU) -COM 2800

Program Learning Outcomes

Review & Documentation:

Evaluation Questions:

1. Do the Discipline Learning Outcomes reflect the demonstrable skills, knowledge, and attitudes expected of students in each course within this discipline? Are they aligned with the standards identified in previous work? Are they clearly stated and measurable? If not, what changes are suggested? Document the revised Discipline Learning Outcomes here.

-Included here are the Learning Outcomes for our two primary courses (COM 135 and COM 131) as they are reflected in our CARP documents. These will transfer over to the Curriculog system this year, with changes made if needed. Many of the other courses use the outcomes from COM 135 as the basis for their course outcomes.

-COM 135:

-Apply effective listening and empathy skills to enhance relationships.
-Apply perspective-taking strategies to understand others’ perspectives.
-Be aware of how one’s self-concept develops and impacts relationships.
-Choose and apply appropriate conflict management strategies.
-Demonstrate an awareness of theories of interpersonal communication.
-Develop an awareness of how to create and maintain healthy relationships.
-Develop an understanding of diverse lifestyles and perspectives.
-Recognize the impact of both verbal and nonverbal messages.

-COM 131:
-Select appropriate speech topics and purpose.
-Develop a thesis statement, main points and supporting materials for speeches.
-Organize and develop speeches into introduction, body and conclusion.
-Compose clear, well developed outlines for speeches.
-Demonstrate effective research, citing sources and work cited for speeches.
-Prepare and use appropriate and effective presentation aids.
-Demonstrate appropriate use of voice and nonverbals while presenting speeches.
-Develop and deliver well prepared informative, persuasive and special occasion speeches.
-Evaluate own and peers’ speeches for content, organization and delivery.

Curriculum Delivery

Review & Documentation:

Courses Approved for Online Delivery

- We offer sections of Interpersonal Communication (COM 135).

Honors Courses

- We experimented with sections of Interpersonal Communication (COM 135) in 2013 and 2014, but determined the class should not be continued. Many of the students enrolled in the Honors class we found would have benefitted more in our traditional COM 135 classes and did not demonstrate Honors-worthy communication skills.

Study Away Courses

- We don’t currently offer any Study Away Courses in the Communication Studies department.
Evaluation Questions:

1. Is experiential learning, including internships and academic service learning, systematically embedded into the courses? Are the current experiential learning opportunities sufficient? Please explain.

- We don’t currently offer formal internships or academic service learning programs, but in most of our classes, including COM 135, 235, 236, 240 and 250 we feature a heavy dose of experiential exercises and activities as these courses are both skill-based and geared to help students actively apply terms and concepts from the class and textbooks. Students interested in internships in the broadcasting or media field regularly work with one of our full-time instructors, Dennis Sutton, based on his previous career experience in the media.

2. Are the online offerings (courses & number of sections) sufficient to meet student and programmatic needs?

- At the moment we feel our available online classes (5) in COM 135 are sufficient to provide flexibility and access to our student population.

3. Are the honors and study away offering sufficient for the program?

- We don’t have either at the moment, but will re-evaluate this as we determine it is appropriate in the future.

Action Needed

Based on the documentation and evaluation in this section, please indicate if action or improvement is needed in the following areas within the department by making your response bold:

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<th>Area</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum alignment with external professional standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge Exams</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum Crosswalk</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honors Program</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study Away Program</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Service Learning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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Online Course Offerings

Yes

No
Assessment of Student Learning
Assessment of Student Learning

|-------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| -Demonstrate an awareness of theories of interpersonal communication.  
-Develop an awareness of how to create and maintain healthy relationships | -Communication Skills | -Our goal is to determine how well our students in COM 135 and 235 classes not only learn terms and concepts, but can successfully apply them to better understand important relationships in their lives. This is done through the analysis of journals and research papers. | -We’ve been engaged in an ongoing assessment program within the department since Fall 2012 with the goal of determining how well our students are not only learning terms and concepts, but are also able to incorporate them into research papers and journals in analyzing the health of their relationships. Detailed reports can be found in FPE documentation for each Fall and Winter term, but overall we’re pleased with the performance and progress of most of our goals. | -We’re in the process of completing the third year of our department-wide assessment project, which involves both full-time and adjunct faculty in the department. |

We’re including our two most recent summary reports for our ongoing Communication Studies assessment of learning project, the first from Winter term 2014 and the second from Fall 2014 that show both our findings and then what we’re learning from the data gathered. The report for Winter 2015 isn’t completed at the time we’re submitting this program review.
Communication Studies Assessment Project Report (May 2, 2014)

This wraps the second year of our ongoing Communication Studies assessment project. Depending on our results we plan to either do one more year (2014-15), or may extend the project if results dictate that. The first year only full-time faculty members participated in the project, to establish some baseline data, and then adjuncts in the department were added for the just completed 2013-14 phase. For the just completed Winter 2014 term I gathered assessment sheets from 18 instructors who taught Interpersonal Communication (COM 135). The goal was to determine how well students used, understood, and applied terms and concepts from the classes in end-of-the term research papers or essays. We also asked for input on things like proper grammar and MLA/APA style in the research papers. The assessment sheet also sought suggestions on how to better achieve our course goals in the future around the concepts of comprehension and application of terms, with the goal of improving communication while maintaining healthy relationships.

This term Tamara Scott and Mary Lucas began a supplemental portion of the plan by gathering and analyzing papers from the department’s Gender Communication classes (COM 235) to help us analyze how those classes compare with our COM 135 data. That portion will be developed in the coming year(s) once we’ve gathered some baseline data.

Results

Here are the results from the assessment of COM 135 classes from the Winter 2014 term.

1. How many terms, concepts, or theories did the student incorporate into their essay or research paper?
   
   None: 0%    Below expectations: 15%    Met expectations: 42%    Exceeded expectations: 21%

2. How well did the student demonstrate the proper use of the terms, concepts, or theories, suggesting they understood the proper definition and use of the example?
- Didn’t seem to have a grasp of the correct meaning of any of them. 1%
- Showed an understanding of some, but not of others. 9%
- Showed a moderate understanding of all the terms used in the paper. 37%
- Developed their thoughts well to show a full and accurate grasp of all the terms incorporated into the paper. 53%

3. How would you rate this paper on things like grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and if you require it, MLA/APA style?

- Very low 6%
- Moderately low 46%
- Relatively high 30%
- Very high 18%

4. How well did the student tie-in personal examples and personal relationships to support their understanding of course terms, concepts, and theories?

- Examples were either not present, or did not connect to course terms. 1%
- Examples were used, but weak connection to course terms. 9%
- Examples were used, with a moderately effective connection to terms. 38%
- Examples were used, with a well developed connection to course terms. 52%

5. Did the paper suggest or conclude the student had personally grown or benefited from both the assignment and the course?

- No mention of growth 6%
- One passing mention about it 10%
- A couple of mentions, suggesting a moderate degree of growth 37%
- A clear and strong sense of growth, with supporting examples 47%

6. Question #6 - What is one thing you think was most lacking this term in all of the essays/journals you read from students?
(Below is a sampling of the responses from faculty for the Fall 2013 phase of the study.)

- Not specific enough to the objective of the assignment
- More details and examples needed
- This is an exceptional paper
- Many students don’t know how to cite sources correctly
- This one was great
- Students didn’t push themselves beyond the basics of the assignment
- Poor writing and grammar skills
- Need to work on proofreading

Question #7 - What one thing do you think Communication Studies classes at GRCC could do to help students learn to more effectively apply terms, concepts, and theories shared in class to their personal lives and relationships?
(Below is a sampling of the responses from faculty for the Fall 2013 phase of the study.)

- Interactive classes help create personal growth
- Need tests and classroom activities that help lead to examples of application of concepts
- Language barriers hurt, especially with ESL students
- Emphasize at the start of the class that the goal is to apply, not just memorize and regurgitate
- Students need to come to our classes with better writing and grammar skills
- Regularly give real world examples, both from students and the instructor

**Analysis**

Several of the results stood out. On question #1, the percentage of students who were judged to have “met expectations” dropped from 35% to 21% compared to last term. For question #3, tied to grammar and MLA/APA style, the percentage for those who scored moderately low increased from 35% to 46%, which is troubling. For that same question the percentage of those who scored “relatively high” went from 46% down to 30%. Many of the other responses to questions were similar to last term, but for those that went in the wrong direction it makes us wonder if this data is being analyzed not just by our department but on a macro level by the college. We’re expected to report what we’ve learned and plan to do about it, but where is that sense of accountability and action by the college as a whole? Issues of grammar and writing preparedness go beyond the scope of our communication classes and even bring into question how well our K-12 educational system is preparing our students.

We liked that the percentage of those that showed a clear, strong sense of personal growth for question #5 rose from under 40% to 47%. It’s encouraging that students are applying things from the course and using it to enhance their relationships. We’d like that to continue. As we go forward, one of the things we’re going to encourage both full-time and adjunct faculty to do is provide sample papers or rubrics of excellent papers. That should help with things like grammar and style, but also show examples of how students use terms and concepts effectively. We’ll also encourage instructors to drive home the importance of application of terms and concepts from the very start of the class so the expectation is planted early on with the students.
Communication Studies Assessment Project Report (Fall 2014)

The report covers the 2014 Fall term and begins the third year of what we expect will be a four year assessment project in the Communication Studies department. This assessment covers both full-time and adjunct faculty teaching sections of Interpersonal Communication (COM 135). Our primary focus is to determine how well students in these classes both understand and can apply concepts and terms from the course in analyzing personal relationships. Also included later in the report is the summary sheet sent to faculty on the scope of the project, as well as the assessment sheets needed to gather data. Instructors randomly selected every fifth paper from their classes for use in the analysis of student work. Tamara Scott and Mary Lucas are also doing an independent analysis and report of Gender Communication classes (COM 235) with a similar type of analysis which may extend beyond the 2015/2016 academic year.

Data Summary

1. How many terms, concepts, or theories did the student incorporate into their essay or research paper?

   - None 2% (Similar to previous years, with 0% in both 2013 and Winter 2014 term)
   - Below expectation 13% (Similar, with 11% in 2013, and 15% Winter 2014 term)
   - Met expectation 59% (81% in 2013, so unusually high, and 42% Winter 2014 term)
   - Exceeded expectation 26% (8% in 2013, so far too low, and 21% Winter 2014 term)

2. How well did the student demonstrate the proper use of the terms, concepts, or theories, suggesting they understood the proper definition and use of the example?

   - Didn’t seem to have a grasp of the correct meaning of any of them. 3%
     (Similar to previous years, with 0% in 2013, and 1% Winter 2014 term)
- Showed an understanding of some, but not of others 14%
  (Similar to previous reports, with 11% in 2013, and 9% Winter 2014 term)
- Showed a moderate understanding of all the terms used in the paper 34%
  (Similar to previous reports, with 30% in 2013, and 37% Winter 2014 term)
- Developed their thoughts well to show a full and accurate grasp of all the
terms incorporated into
  the paper. 49% (Showed a balance between 39% in 2013 and 53% Winter 2014
term)
3. How would you rate this paper on things like grammar, sentence structure,
spelling, and if you require it, MLA/APA style?

- Very low 3% (Similar to previous reports, with 2% in 2013, and 6% Winter 2014
term)
- Moderately low 25% (Lower than the 29% in 2013, and very high 46% Winter
  2014 term)
- Relatively high 52% (Nice improvement over 44% in 3013, and 30% Winter 2014
term)
- Very high 20% (A balance between 25% in 2013, and 18% Winter 2014 term)
4. How well did the student tie-in personal examples and personal relationships to
  support their understanding of course terms, concepts, and theories?

- Examples were either not present or did not connect to course terms. 6%
  (Higher than both 0% in 2013, and 1% Winter 2014 term)
- Examples used, but weak connection to course terms 15%
  (A balance between 20% in 2013, and 9% Winter 2014 term)
- Examples used, with a moderately effective connection to terms 30%
  (Lower than both 47% in 2013, and 38% Winter 2014 term)
- Examples used, with a well developed connection to course terms 49%
  (Showed a balance between 33% in 2013, and 52% Winter 2014 term)
5. Did the paper suggest or conclude the student had personally grown or benefited
  from both the assignment and the course?
- No mention of growth 7% (Slightly higher than 0% in 2013, and 6% Winter 2014 term)
- One passing mention about it 7% (Lower than 19% in 2013, and 10% Winter 2014 term)
- A couple of mentions, suggesting a moderate degree of growth 36%
  (Showed within the range of 53% in 2013, and 37% Winter 2014 term)
- A clear and strong sense of growth, with supporting examples 50%
  (Improvement over 28% in 2013, and 47% Winter 2014 term)

6. What is the one thing you think was most lacking this term in all of the essays/journals you read from students? (This is a question directed at the instructors, and what follows are some of their comments.)

   - I sense top students are focused more on grades than pushing themselves to full potential.
   - I’m seeing an inability to understand another’s point of view and to be empathetic.
   - Poor listening skills hurt the performance on assignments like this, especially the details.
   - I was actually pleased with the class, but they had a hard time following a specific format.
   - Some misunderstood the assignment and demonstrated poor writing skills, but most were O-K.
   - Students need help overall with punctuation and transitions in their papers.
   - Some students are not properly prepared for college-level work.

7. What one thing do you think Communication Studies classes at GRCC could do to help students learn to more effectively apply terms, concepts, and theories shared in class to their personal lives and relationships? (Again, from the instructors, here’s a sampling of their suggestions.)
- Bring in topics like sports, current films, and current events to connect with students.
- Have students do experiential exercises w/family & friends outside of class, and not just during class time.
- Use audio/video in class, including TED Talks, followed by analysis of behaviors and relationships, because students are very visual learners.
- Encourage continuous application of terms and concepts throughout the semester.
- One thing I’ve experimented with this semester with great results is verbal response. Students are applying what they are learning much better.
- Use more hands-on applications or modeling of concepts throughout the term.
- Give small assignments, both in class and outside of class that apply terms and concepts, as well as writing assignments that require critical thinking skills.

**Project Analysis**

We’re pleased overall with the progress toward our goals, but to continue to improve even more we’ll provide some specific suggestions when the assessment documents are distributed at the end of the Winter 2015 term, and heading into the final year of the COM 135 assessment project. We’ll encourage instructors to emphasize at the start of their classes that the goal is for students not to just learn terms, but to both understand them and be able to apply them in analyzing the relationships in their lives. With that seed planted, and then reinforced throughout the term, we hope to see even more encouraging numbers. We’ll also encourage instructors to be specific in giving instructions for the end-of-term writing assignment. Finally, we’ll encourage instructors to save the best two or three papers from the Winter 2015 term to have available for students to review to see what a good paper looks like, both in structure and content. This may require eliminating specific names and content to protect the identity of the students who wrote the excellent papers.

As far as an analysis of the data in this term’s report, here are some observations. For item #1 on the assessment, the results were not as strong as 2013, but showed a
nice improvement over the Winter 2014 term. Part of that was the possibly oddly high 81% in 2013 for who met expectation for the assignment. The results for items 2, 4, and 5 were reasonably consistent with both the 2013 and Winter 2014 term results. The numbers for item #3 were encouraging, showing better execution of things like grammar and MLA style in the papers. Overall, it’s encouraging that a large percentage of the papers showed what we would consider to be either acceptable or exceptional performance. This includes 85% for item #1, 83% for item #2, 72% for item #3, 79% for item #4, and a strong 86% for item #5.
Preparing for the future

Peer Institutions

Review & Documentation:

Evaluation Questions:

1. Are peer institutions offering this program at the same level (certificate, associate's degree)? Is the program offered at a bachelor's degree? If so, could a pre-major program be created?

-All other Michigan Community Colleges offer a range of Communication classes, but most don’t have the number or depth of classes in GRCC’s Communication Studies department. The majority of Community colleges do not have Associate degrees in the discipline. All of our transfer institutions have some type of bachelor’s degree in Communication or a closely related field. There is a possibility of developing a pre-major in Communication, but it would present a struggle with having as few full-time faculty members as we currently have in our large department. The other potential issue is that most transfer institutions want students to take most of their communication classes at the transfer institution where they’ll receive their degree, and they more typically accept our classes as general elective or Communication elective credit to support their programs.

2. Are there any institutions with whom GRCC could explore articulation agreements?

-Grand Valley State or Ferris State would appear to be the most likely candidates, but we have not pursued that to date.

Facilities & Equipment/Resources

Review & Documentation:

Facilities & Equipment/Resources

Evaluation Questions:

1. Are the resources sufficient to meet identified needs and goals for the next four years? Please explain.

-We continue to be frustrated with the room accommodations available to us for our Communication Studies classes. It seems more and more that the college is presenting a one size fits all approach to classroom accommodations. For our skill-based classes we’ve requested individual desks to allow our students to interact and move around the room more easily for experiential learning exercises and activities, but the standard approach is longer two-person tables. Our request of one-person tables could easily accommodate other classes that like the two-person tables by simply pushing
the two one-person tables together, but we continue to be denied something we think is a big part of pedagogical preferences and we think this negatively impacts student learning in our classrooms. Otherwise, the basic technology in the classrooms fits our needs quite well, including computers, projectors, lecterns, etc. One of the budget impacting suggestions mentioned by the Ad-Hoc Budget Committee was the possibility of increasing class size. We’re too tight already in many of our classes, in part because of the one size fits all approach to furniture, and we feel larger class sizes in Communication Studies classes would have a dramatically negative impact on student interaction and learning. In COM 131 public speaking class specifically we have a hard time fitting all the speeches for 25 students into the schedule as it is.

2. Are the facilities and equipment adequate to facilitate teaching and learning? Please explain.
(See #1 above)

**Action Needed**

Based on the documentation and evaluation in this section, please indicate if action or improvement is needed in the following areas within the department by making your response bold:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Opportunities with Peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Securing resources for course development/administration</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Facilities/equipment upgrades</td>
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**Work Products**

Curriculum Crosswalk

-Again, this section is not applicable to the Communication Studies department.