DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies Handbook*

MA in Communication – Strategic Communication Management
(Coursework in this track can be completed fully online)

MA in Communication – Creatives Services Management
(Most coursework can be completed online)

*This handbook is for students in the MA in Communication program offered by the Department of Communication. For additional resources regarding all graduate programs offered by Columbus State University, as well as rules and regulations relating to registration, tuition and fees, financial aid, academic regulations, bylaws, etc., please follow this link: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/

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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the MA in Communication Program at Columbus State University!
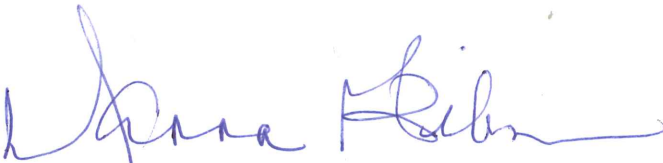
This handbook, we hope, is a one-stop resource guide that provides all the information that students need about the program, and the resources and support offered for successful completion of the program.

The MA in Communication includes two tracks:
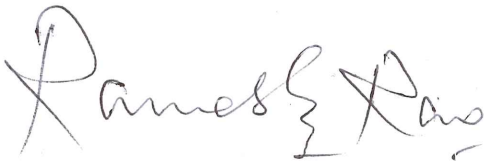
1. Strategic Communication Management (SCM)
2. Creative Services Management (CSM)

Our program is new, but we are excited about how much attention it has attracted and how many students we have admitted over these past two years since we started offering courses in the spring of 2022. That we were able to successfully graduate our first student this past summer (2023) makes us proud of the quality of students we have attracted to the program, the quality and design of the program we are offering, as well as the dedication and commitment of our faculty in ensuring that the program is rigorous, professional, and relevant.

We trust this handbook will be a trusted resource to you all. Please let us know if you notice any errors or incomplete information.

Danna Gibson, PhD
Professor and Chair
Department of Communication

Ramesh N Rao, PhD
Professor and Graduate Studies Coordinator
Department of Communication

Part 1: General Information

1.1 About the MA in Communication Program

With the rapid progression of technology, communication may have become easier and more convenient, but the complexity of the field has grown as well. Columbus State University's Master of Arts in Communication will prepare students to strategically craft messages through different mediums, communicate with clientele in a variety of settings, produce creative content, and manage communication campaigns.

Offering two tracks, Strategic Communication Management and Creative Services Management, the master's program allows students to immerse themselves in both theory and practice, learn how to apply communication constructs in the "real world," build relationships, and prepare themselves for the many career opportunities waiting for them.

1.2 Degree Requirements

1.2a

Strategic Communication Management (100 percent online): In the Strategic Communication Management track, students will learn the theory and principles of engaging in advertising, public relations, and organizational communication. This track will equip students to leverage traditional communication and innovative digital media while using a strategic managerial mindset to address diverse groups, organizations, and clients.

Program of Study: 30 Credits

    Program Core: 15 Credits

    COMM 6116 – Communication Ethics (3 Cr)
    COMM 6156 – Communication Theory (3 Cr)
    COMM 6157 – Communication Research (3 Cr)
    COMM 6765 – Graduate Proseminar (1 Cr)

    Select five credit hours from the following courses:

    COMM 6965 (Graduate Thesis Research – 5 Cr) OR COMM 6966 (Graduate Professional Project – 5 Cr)
    COMM 6967 – Thesis or Professional Project Defense (0 Cr)

Program Track: 12 Credits

COMM 5165G – Media Management and Economics (3 Cr)
COMM 6275 – Strategic Social Media and Data Analytics (3 Cr)
COMM 6135 – Strategic Crisis Management (3 Cr)
COMM 6145 – Strategic Communication Campaign Management (3 Cr)

Electives – Select one course from below: 3 Credits

COMM 6235 – Client Relations (3 Cr)
COMM 6237 – Persuasive Content Production (3 Cr)
COMM 6257 – Persuasive Content Campaigns (3 Cr)
COMM 5555G – Special Topics (3 Cr)

1.2b

Creative Services Management (Most coursework can be completed online): The Creative Services Management track is flexibly designed to allow students to focus on media production. This track will enhance skill sets in creative services that support corporate entities, news organizations, or public relations and advertising firms.

Program of Study: 30 Credits

Program Core: 15 Credits

COMM 6116 – Communication Ethics (3 Cr)
COMM 6156 – Communication Theory (3 Cr)
COMM 6157 – Communication Research (3 Cr)
COMM 6765 – Graduate Proseminar (1 Cr)

Select five credit hours from the following courses:

COMM 6965 (Graduate Thesis Research – 5 Cr) OR COMM 6966 (Graduate Professional Project – 5 Cr)
COMM 6967 – Thesis or Professional Project Defense (0 Cr)

Program Track: 12 Credits

COMM 6235 – Client Relations (3 Cr)
COMM 6237 – Persuasive Content Production (3 Cr)
COMM 6257 – Persuasive Content Campaigns (3 Cr)
COMM 6275 – Strategic Social Media and Data Analytics (3 Cr)

Electives – Select one course from below: 3 Credits

COMM 5165G – Media Management and Economics (3 Cr)
COMM 5555G – Special Topics (3 Cr)
COMM 6135 – Strategic Crisis Management (3 Cr)
COMM 6145 – Strategic Communication Campaign Management (3 Cr)
COMM 6258 – Advanced Production 1 (3 Cr)
COMM 6259 – Advanced Production 2 (3 Cr)

1.3 Program Admission Requirements

- Minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on all undergraduate work from an accredited institution or program in fulfillment of the requirements for a baccalaureate degree in a related field.
- [Brief department application (PDF)](#)

If an applicant does not meet the required overall 3.0 GPA, the applicant may choose to strengthen their application by submitting one or more of the following:

- A one-page statement of purpose for entering the master's program
- A current resume or CV
- 1-3 [letters of recommendation (PDF)](#) (academic or professional, no personal recommendations)
- Writing sample or work portfolio (academic or professional)

Keeping in line with current trends in the discipline, we do NOT require the GRE or other standardized tests for admission to the program.

All departmental/supplemental materials can be added to the Graduate School's application for admission by emailing items to data_entry@columbusstate.edu.

1.4 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

a. What is the deadline for applying to the MA Program?
Ans: It varies from term to term. Look at the [university's current calendar](#) for the dates for each semester.

Application Deadlines:

- Spring Semester - December 9
- Summer Semester - May 15

- Fall Semester - June 30

b. How long does the admission process take?
Ans: Once all the application materials have been submitted, it typically takes approximately two weeks to process the application.

c. What are the department-specific requirements?

Ans: Minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on all undergraduate work from an accredited institution or program in fulfillment of the requirements for a baccalaureate degree in a related field.

- [Brief department application (PDF)](#)

If an applicant does not meet the required overall 3.0 GPA, the applicant may choose to strengthen their application by submitting one or more of the following:

- A one-page statement of purpose for entering the master's program
- A current resume or CV
- 1-3 [letters of recommendation (PDF)](#) (academic or professional, no personal recommendations)
- Writing sample or work portfolio (academic or professional)

Keeping in line with current trends in the discipline, we do NOT require the GRE or other standardized tests for admission to the program.

d. I do not have an undergraduate degree in Communication Studies. Will I meet the admission requirements?
Ans: Yes, you are eligible to apply to our program if you do not have an undergraduate degree in any of the Communication Studies areas. However, if you are seeking admission into our "Creative Services Management" track we expect you to not only have an interest in audio and video production but that you have some experience and skills in the area. A portfolio or samples of your work in those areas would help us evaluate your application.

e. Why is a résumé required as part of the admissions package if I do not have the required 3.0 GPA? What should be in the résumé?
Ans: A résumé helps offer additional support to an applicant when their GPA does not match the required minimum as résumés include work experience, additional qualifications including certificates earned in relevant areas, etc. Your résumé will help the admissions committee determine your preparedness for the MA in Communication program. Please Include all communication-related skills, projects involved in, and experience in the field. If you think that a résumé will improve your chance of admission, include one.

f. Regarding my professional background and certifications, will I be allowed to transfer credits, and if so, how many?
    Ans: We will accept for transfer a maximum of six (6) credits of graduate-level coursework that was completed no earlier than 7 years before your expected graduation date with an MA in Communication at CSU and that was passed with a grade of B or higher from accredited universities. We do not accept credit for certification courses. The transfer has to be approved by a graduate student advisor in the Department of Communication.

g. I have a degree from a foreign university. Would that be a problem?
    Ans: Undergraduate degrees must be 4 years in length to be considered the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in the United States. Please check with the CSU Admissions Office for transcript evaluation instructions. International students cannot be enrolled in fully online programs. Please check with CSU's Admissions Office before completing and sending in your application.

h. My application was denied. Can I reapply?
    Ans: Yes, you can certainly do so. Please follow the same process that you followed when you applied the first time, and make sure that your new application shows that the reason your initial application was denied is no longer applicable.

i. Is this a part-time program or a full-time program?
    Ans: It is up to you to decide how quickly you can or want to complete the program. All course work is offered online at present in the Strategic Communication Management Track, and there is only a limited number of hours required in-seat in the Creative Services Management Track. The number of courses that you choose to take determines the pace at which you proceed and finish the program. Most CSU part-time students take 1-2 courses per semester, and full-time students take three semesters per semester. In a limited number of situations, the Department Chair may approve a student to take four courses per semester.

j. How long does it take to complete the program?
    Ans: All work credited towards a graduate degree must be completed within seven years. The maximum course load for any graduate student in a semester is 12 hours, so a student could complete the degree in a minimum of three semesters. However, the typical load for a full-time graduate student is nine hours in a semester, which would suggest that most full-time students would need four semesters to complete their degree. Students who are employed will typically only take 1-2 courses per semester and will require longer to complete the program.

k. Can this program be completed 100 percent online?

Ans: Yes, all graduate courses are offered online. However, there is a limited number of hours required in-seat in the Creative Services Management Track, the meeting hours for which are flexible and can be worked out on an individual student basis.

l. When do I select a concentration for the MA in Communication degree? Can I later switch to another concentration?
    Ans: All students should indicate their choice of concentration when they apply to join the program. You could, however, change the concentration (in consultation with your academic advisor) later as you progress toward the degree. If you choose to go with a new concentration, then you may have to take some additional concentration electives and end up taking more than the required 30 credit hours that most students must take.

m. What are the estimated expenses for the MA in Communication program?
    Ans: Please see the [Graduate Student Tuition and Fees page](#) for the details in the fee breakdown.

n. Is there a flexible payment plan?
    Ans: We do not have a payment plan. However, we do have an Emergency Loan program that allows you to pay for tuition in three payments.

o. Are graduate student assistantships available?
    Ans: Yes. There are a limited number of Graduate Assistantships (GAs) each year. Applications should be submitted to the Human Resources Office through the [Graduate School's assistantships portal](#). Although graduate assistantships are awarded for an academic year at a time, renewal is based on eligibility and renewal criteria. Graduate assistants are expected to do research and may be asked to help for a total of 10-19 hours a week.

p. Are graduate scholarships available?
    Ans: At present, the Department of Communication does not offer any graduate scholarships.

q. Are HOPE scholarships available for graduate students?
    Ans: No, it is not available at this time.

1.5 What is Strategic Communication?

•   Strategic communication is an essential aspect of any large organization – from corporations and businesses to non-profit organizations and educational institutions.

•   Strategic communication is an umbrella term to describe the activities of disciplines including public relations, management communication, crisis communication, and advertising. However, strategic communication is also increasingly recognized as a developing subfield within communication. As such, it explores the capacity of all

organizations—not only corporations but also not-for-profit organizations (including advocacy and activist groups) and government—to engage in purposeful communication (https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756841/obo9780199756841-0007.xml)

- "Strategic communication is a type of communication that includes an agenda and a master plan as per the behavioral preferences of target audiences to fulfill the organization's mission. Strategic communication is defined as effective message development and delivery by using high levels of planning and audience research as per business objectives to meet organizational goals. It is responsible for managing and channelizing the internal and external communication processes of an organization" -- https://digiaide.com/strategic-communication/

- Marissa Moran says strategic communications "…means a company is thinking about its communications function as an essential factor in achieving its organization-wide goals". https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2021/09/01/strategiccommunications-101-shifting-from-reactive-to-proactivecommunications/?sh=f813f9d2fad1

- "Strategic communication is an in-depth process that considers 'who you are talking to, why you are talking to them, how and when you will talk to them, what form of communication the content should take and what channels you should use to share it'." https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2021/06/22/fivecomponents-of-a-successful-strategic-communications-plan/?sh=61d35e075813

- Strategic communication is all about being consistent in your messaging, being precise, and focusing on targets to achieve desired results.

1.6 What is the Importance of Strategic Communication?

Some of the key reasons behind the importance of strategic communications are the following:

1. Being strategic entails sending the best message possible through the most appropriate channels, as assessed against well-defined organizational and communications-specific objectives.
2. Creating a strategy and plan lays the foundation for achieving a goal and allocating resources to the bigger picture.
3. Strategic communication is a concerted communication effort that influences consumers and focuses on product promotion in a commercial application.
4. It stresses the organization's priorities and establishes brand recognition. As a result, the reputation and trustworthiness of the company grow.
5. It deals with responses to crises, and how organizations can respond to crises in a timely, effective, and skillful manner (https://digiaide.com/strategic-communication/).

1.7 What Can Students Learn or Do with a Strategic Communication Degree?

- "Students learn to do and apply research on communication campaigns and messaging; develop multiplatform messaging plans; learn practical skills like data analysis, visualization, and multimedia design; adapt communication needs to speak to a diverse audience; apply persuasive techniques; develop a unique brand voice that can be used in broadcast, digital media, print, and others" – National University, Singapore, https://www.nu.edu/blog/what-is-strategic-communications/

- Career paths include the following:

  - Public Relations Specialist
  - Social Media Marketing Manager
  - Communications Officer
  - Research Analyst
  - Communications Director
  - PR/Marketing Specialist
  - Public Information Officer
  - Advertising Executive
  - Event Planner
  - Editor

Part 2: Department Resources and Forms

2.1 Faculty Credentials and Interests

Dr. Benjamin Baker

Education:

- MA, Communication Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Completed a professional packet, not a thesis.
- PhD, Communication Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Dissertation title: "Exploring the Discourses of Marriage, Family, and Fatherhood in Married Gay Parents' Relational Talk".

Courses Taught:

- Interpersonal Communication
- Family Communication; Community
- Dialogue, & Advocacy
- Qualitative Methods
- Interpersonal Conflict Resolution
- Communication Theories
- Gender, Sexuality, and Communication

Areas of Interest:

My research/professional interests are primarily focused on interpersonal identity development and communication, especially among marginalized populations. Using qualitative research techniques (e.g., interviews, and transcript analysis), I explore participants' individual narratives/experiences through a critical lens to generate emergent, meaningful themes.

The aim of my research is twofold:
- To bear witness to and share the stories that I gather through the data collection process.
- To develop resources/best practices for others whose marginalized identity reflects that of my study's participants.

Prof Adam Bova

Education:

- Master of Fine Arts in Directing Cinema and Television, Regent University (2013)

Thesis: "Creating a Network for a New Method of Distribution" - about streaming platforms their development and releasing serialzed content on streamers circa 2013.

Courses Taught:

- Multi-Camera Directing
- Single Camera Directing
- Aesthetics and Techniques of Editing
- Fundamentals of Postproduction
- Fundamentals of Broadcast Television
- Social and Digital Media Writing
- Video 1, Video 2
- Introducing to Mass Communication
- Interactive Media
- Writing for Media.

Interest Areas:

Professional interests lie in feature film production, documentary shorts production, feature film, podcast, and series writing.

Scholarly interests lie in the intersection and analysis of communication and film theory, the historical periods of film theory, the development of a genre theory structure to apply to modern commercial advertisements, and the application of the hero's journey to modern supernatural television shows.

Dr. Danna M. Gibson

Education:

Ph.D., 2001   Communication, The University of Memphis
                    Dissertation: Family Communication Environment and Willingness to Medicate
                    ADHD-Diagnosed Children
M.A., 1994   Speech, Communication, and Theatre, Austin Peay State University
                    Thesis: Legal Issues of AT&T Divestiture: Monopoly or Communication Challenge?

Courses Taught:

- Group Communication
- Family Communication
- Organizational Community

- Dialogue, & Advocacy
- Nonverbal Communication
- Listening
- Media Law and Ethics
- Introduction to Mass Communication
- Communication Theories
- Persuasion
- Interpersonal Communication
- Public Speaking
- Business and Professional Communication

Areas of Special Interest:

Public/Private Partnership Building, Experiential/Engaged Learning, Curriculum Design, Organizational Culture, Community Advocacy, Communication Theory, Mediated Communication, Interpersonal Communication

The aim of Dr. Gibson's research is twofold:
- To contribute to the communication discipline by expanding the body of knowledge in the content areas.
- To use research as a bridge that can connect resources to meet needs.

I believe science should never be too far removed from the subjects it is studying.

Dr. Gary Guffey

Education:

- PhD -- University of Georgia – Mass Communication
- MA – Indiana University – Journalism
- MBA – Wake Forest University
- BA – High Point University – Majors: Media Communication, Business & Economics

Teaching:

- Has taught a variety of courses in the areas of media/business/art administration law, media research, public relations, media management and marketing.

Research and Scholarly Interests:

- His main research interests are copyright law and media management.

Dr. Kisun Kim

Education:

- Ph.D., Bowling Green State University, Ohio, 2020 (Dissertation topic: How do message strategies and technology affordances influence individuals' donation behaviors on the Facebook fundraising pages?)
- MA, Bowling Green State University, Ohio, 2016 (Thesis topic: Experience with surveillance, perceived threat of surveillance, SNS posting behavior, and identity construction on SNSs: An examination of Chinese college students in the U.S.)
- MA, Sookmyung Women's University (SMU), Seoul, South Korea (2014). School of Media and Communication. (Thesis Title: The effects of smartphone use on seniors' ego integrity)
- BA, Sookmyung Women's University (SMU), Seoul, South Korea (2011) Double Major: Instrumental Music (Piano), Public Relations and Advertising. Minor: Visual and Multimedia Design

Courses taught at CSU:

- COMM 1110 -- Public Speaking
  COMM 3141 -- Introduction to PR
- COMM 6275 -- Strategic Social Media and Data Analytics
- COMM 6145 -- Strategic Communication Campaign Management

Courses Taught in Albany State University:

- COMM 1110 Public Speaking
- COMM 2035 Fundamentals of Web and Graphics Design
- COMM 3110 Communication Research and Theory
- COMM 3240 Audience Research
- COMM 3250 Intercultural Communication
- COMM 3310 Fundamentals of Visual Communication
- COMM 3360 Media Advertising and Sales
- COMM 4205 Theories and Strategies in Emerging Media
- COMM 4215 PR Management & Administration
- COMM 4240 Crisis Communication

Areas of scholarly/professional interest:

- Public Relations, Social Media Campaigns, Visual Communication for PR

Dr. Tiffany McBride

Education:
- BA, Mass Communication, Columbus State University
- MBA, Master of Business Administration, University of Phoenix
- MS, Master of Science in Strategic Communications and Public Relations, Troy University
- PhD, Higher Education Leadership, Mercer University. Dissertation title: "You're on mute: the communicative experiences of black females on the outside and inside of the academic ivory tower".

Courses Taught:

- Crisis Communication
- Public Relations Management
- Public Relations Campaigns
- Multimedia Writing for Communication
- Race and Communication
- Public Speaking
- Style and Design for Public Relations
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Communication

Areas of Interest:

As an educator and researcher, my primary research interest revolves around understanding and analyzing the communication behaviors of black female faculty within the academic environment, particularly in the context of higher education institutions. Additionally, I am deeply committed to investigating and contributing to research focused on underrepresented populations in the field of education. I am passionate about investigating the barriers faced by diverse students, faculty, and staff members in educational settings.

My research and interest area focuses on captivating messaging, creating effective communication strategies, and building relationships with stakeholders, especially in the charity sector. In higher education, I have used strategic communications to build narratives, understand reputation management, and implement programs that effectively communicate critical messages to the target audience.

I have worked with Girls, Inc., Urban League of the River Valley, Junior League of Columbus, and other nonprofits that must effectively communicate their mission, values, and impact to attract donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders. I have worked in crisis management, a crucial part of public relations that involves resolving communication issues in tough times. This skill set helps organizations preserve stakeholder confidence and reputation during difficult times.

I use technology to improve education, student communication, and administration. I'm Adobe and Graphic Design Certified and work with students to use technology to enhance public relations. This includes employing social media for student involvement, online learning platforms, digital marketing tactics for educational institutions, and staying up to current on developing technologies that can help higher education.

The aim of Dr. McBride's research is twofold:
- To develop resources/best practices for others whose marginalized identity reflects that of my study's participants.
- To contribute not only to the scholarly discourse but also to the development of practical strategies that empower black female faculty and uplift underrepresented populations in education.

Dr. Youngrak Park

Education:

- Ph.D., Florida State University -- mass communication; Dissertation title "The Effects of Interactivity on Mood Management: An Experimental Study"
- MA, Temple University -- communication.

Teaching:

- COMM 1110 – Public Speaking
- COMM 2137 – Introduction to Mass Communication
- COMM 3119 – Introduction to Computer-Mediated Communication
- COMM 3256 – Communication Theories
- COMM 3255 – Quantitative Communication Research
- COMM 4259 – Integrated Web Design

Scholarly Interests:

- Primary research focuses on Computer-Mediated Communication, Media Gratification, and Interactive Media Use Motives. In his research, Park uses quantitative content analysis, surveys, and experimental methods to examine whether media interactivity affects or regulates moods.

Dr. Ramesh Rao

Education:

- BA (Economics, Political Science, Sociology), University of Bangalore, 1977
- Post Grad Diploma in Journalism, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bangalore/Bengaluru, 1984

- MS, Mass Communication, University of Southern Mississippi, 1987
- Ph.D., Communication, Michigan State University, 1992 (Dissertation title: The Influence of Power on Hostage Negotiation Outcomes: A Contextual, Descriptive, and Fantasy-Theme Analysis)

Teaching:

- Has taught about 25 courses at the undergraduate level since 1987 – at Michigan State University, Truman State University, Longwood University, and now at Columbus State University – including public speaking, interpersonal communication, small group communication, intro to mass communication, intercultural communication, race and communication, persuasion, media and culture, research methods, media law, ethics, etc.
- At the graduate level, he has taught communication ethics, crisis communication, and communication theory.

Scholarly Interests:

- Dr. Rao has co-authored two books on intercultural communication, and one book on Indian communication history/theory. His Ph.D. work was on hostage negotiations. He has also authored/co-authored/edited about half a dozen books on Indian culture, politics, and society.

Professional Interests:

- Dr. Rao continues to write articles on inter-faith matters, religious conflict, identity, politics – US and India, and social dynamics. He edits the online platform called "India Facts". His articles have been published in newspapers and magazines in the US, England, and India.
- Dr. Rao is a consultant to Sewa International (USA) – a Hindu faith-based charity that is involved in disaster relief work, volunteerism, girls' and women's development, education, and family services. I was an Executive Council Member of the Hindu American Foundation and wrote eight of their annual Hindu Human Rights reports.

Prof. Chris Robinson

Education:

- MBA / University of Phoenix

Courses taught:

- Introduction to Mass Communication

- Video Production 1
- Video Production 2
- Video Production 3
- Interactive Media Production
- Podcasting
- Television and Radio Practicum

Areas of scholarly/professional interest:

- Broadcast / Creative Services, Documentaries, Podcasting, Video Production

2.2 Thesis and Professional Project Guidelines and Resources

In the Department of Communication, at Columbus State University, we seek to instill in each student the mindset needed to understand the nature and the rigors of scholarship, ensure that in the work we do we follow all university and academic guidelines, and that we exercise independent judgment and be intellectually honest. We wish to see you succeed, and we will motivate and guide you so that you can become the serious scholar or the accomplished professional you wish to be.

The MA in Communication – either the Strategic Communication Management Track or the Creative Services Management Track – offers students the option of presenting a thesis or a professional project in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree.

Thesis Option:

A master's thesis is intended to demonstrate that you know the background and principal works of the research area and that you can produce significant scholarly work. While not as demanding as a Ph.D. dissertation, an MA thesis should contain some original contribution and not merely summarize extant literature. While a minimum page/length requirement is not set, we expect the thesis to be of a substantial nature. Thesis documents could run anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000 words. Please see at the end of this document links to some sample MA theses and theses topics.

A thesis is scholarly writing that reflects your ability to perform the following:

- Conduct research
- Communicate the procedures for and results of the research.
- Analyze relevant literature critically.
- Link the topic of the thesis with the broader field.
- Verify knowledge claims and sources meticulously.

- Present a detailed methodology.
- Describe results accurately.

The thesis proposal should be developed in consultation with the student's supervisor and committee. The thesis proposal should include the following:

- A background theory or theories
- A working hypothesis or hypotheses, or research question/s
- A choice of method/s or methodology for investigating the hypothesis/research question
- A body of work for analysis
- A results and discussion section
- A bibliography
- Relevant appendices

Professional Project Option:

A professional project may be any combination of professional, high-quality products, that reflect the highest technical skill of the student, and effectively meet client/message need(s). Examples may include, but are not limited to, scholarly writing that reflects your ability to perform the following:

- Conduct research & and create an in-depth client/competition/market analysis.
- Create a client/investor proposal that effectively communicates research-informed strategy and content goals.
- Produce digital media products/campaigns.
- Produce individual elements to support products/campaigns (e.g., individual advertisements, short films, podcasts, etc.)

If students choose the professional project track, they will do the required research and work that leads to a project like one of the following but not limited to -- advertising or PR campaigns, social media campaigns, documentary/narrative/serialized videos, audio podcasts, or corporate and organizational training seminars. You may complete a project where you develop a plan or case study in response to an approved partner organization's real-world communication challenge or opportunity, or an approved social, technical, or industry real-world challenge. Another option to consider would be to create a training module that could be delivered within an organizational setting that also addresses communication challenges/opportunities. Serialized (television) content that addresses a specific goal/problem/analysis is another option. Depending upon the track, the professional project could contain communication/publicity projects that include the research, content creation of marketing/communication materials, and coordinating logistics for delivering the workshop/conference, or program launch (all of this depends upon your focus area).

Examples of Video and Digital Projects could include documentary and narrative videos, where you would be required to do a full production with a script that explores some theme/issue/personality potentially in the broad area of strategic communication, public relations, social media, social or community justice, advertising, or creative endeavor and should have some theoretical framework for it. Another consideration could be commercial video / digital work done for a client/organization. Whether the focus of your work is a long documentary/narrative or commercial, you should be discussing your choice/option with your project chair before you launch your work. This theme/issue/person should be researched in detail, in the context of your theoretical framework, and a plan developed for your documentary/narrative or commercial to explore the theme you have chosen. You are not required to have a written thesis, but your digital (video and/or audio) work should be supported with enough written material including rationale, theoretical framework, any script/questionnaire used, and a discussion of the project process, along with a short bibliography. Ideally, the rationale, theoretical framework, and bibliography/literature review build from previous coursework.

Timeline:

A. When do you start work on the thesis or professional project?
Ans: The first semester of your work! Please make an appointment with the Graduate Program Coordinator, either face-to-face or virtually so that you can begin the discussion on the two options, your areas of interest, potential committee chairs and members, and the process to start and complete these major requirements.

B. Who should you choose as your thesis/project committee chair and committee members, and when?
Ans: In your first meeting with the Graduate Program Coordinator, you will have a chance to talk about your options; how to approach a potential committee chair or committee members for their willingness to serve as chair/members; and the documents you need to submit once committee chair/members are chosen.

C. When should you begin your work on the thesis/project?
Ans: As soon as you have chosen your committee chair and members it is time to seriously get down to fine-tuning your thesis/project topic, drawing an outline, and beginning the necessary planning for doing the literature review, taking a careful look at the thesis format, collecting the data, etc. You need to download the CSU Thesis Guide go through it carefully and follow all the rules/guidelines for writing the thesis.

Resources and Links:

1. CSU Thesis Guide – Instructions for Preparation and Submission:
https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/_docs/thesis-guide.pdf

2. Publishing Directions for Thesis and Dissertation:
https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/guide/1/

3. Need help in preparing and writing your thesis? Visit the Graduate Writing Center for a variety of resources and help: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/graduatewriting-center.php

4. Want to present your research at the CSU Faculty & Graduate Research Conference? -- https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/research-conference/

5. Have some concerns about the graduate school process, programs, and resources? Connect with or become part of the Graduate Student Advisory Council: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/advisory-council.php

Sample MA Communication Theses – Including Potential Topics:

- https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/com_etd/
- https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/communication_theses/
- https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd-communication/
- https://commstudies.utexas.edu/graduate/masters-thesis-topics

2.3 Request for Thesis/Professional Project Committee

Students will choose three faculty members – one who serves as the chair of a thesis/professional project committee, and two others who serve as members of the committee. The chair of the committee should be a faculty member from the Department of Communication. The other two members could be faculty from any other Columbus State University academic department. All three members should be certified by CSU's Graduate School as "Graduate Faculty". Please check with those faculty whom you invite to be on your thesis or professional project committee whether they have been approved by CSU's Graduate School as "graduate faculty".

Students will form their thesis or professional project committees when they are enrolled in the COMM 6765 (Proseminar) course. Please consult with the instructor of the COMM 6765 course about the process for choosing and seeking committee members. Once the three members are chosen, students will have to fill out the "Request for Thesis/Professional Project Committee" form. Please check with the Administrative Assistant of the Department of Communication for completing the DocuSign procedure.

2.4 Comprehensive Exam Option

MA candidates may opt to complete a comprehensive examination instead of submitting a thesis or a professional project. The comprehensive exam is a written examination and is

completed online in their final semester of classes. The comprehensive exam includes questions from courses that the MA candidates have completed. The scope of the examination includes knowledge of specific courses (communication theory, research methods, and one from the content area – either from the Program Track or from Electives) as well as the larger issues in communication philosophy, methods, and history. The examination, taken in the COMM 6766 course, should be completed in the final semester in the program.

Guidelines:

1. **Prepare for the comprehensive exam from the beginning of your studies.** In each of your classes prepare a written electronic document summarizing the argument of major issues, debates, and course/field-specific issues raised in your classes. These documents would serve as your notes for completing the exam. Preparation is key.
2. **Contact the Examination Committee** no later than the third week of the semester in which you intend to graduate. Consult with the Graduate Studies Coordinator. This committee normally consists of three faculty members.
3. **Provide each member of the committee** with a complete list of courses taken, books and articles read, and papers written**.**
4. **The MA comprehensive exam is a written exam**. Students complete the exam online. Students answer one question each from the communication theory, communication research, and the program track courses. The exam will be offered once each semester. Dates will be announced in advance by the Graduate Studies Coordinator.
5. **The exam is completed within a limited time period (4-5 days) on CougarView**. Once accessed, the exam is open for a limited time period during which the student has to complete the exam.
6. **The exam consists of three take-home essays**, one in each area from the groups listed above – theory, research, program track course/s.
7. *You will follow instructions and submit your essays in CougarView*, where they will be automatically checked for plagiarism by Turnitin before being graded by two faculty experts in the area. *Plagiarism, including the use of AI programs like ChatGPT, will automatically result in a "Fail" grade on the exam as a whole. Plagiarism may also lead to placement on probation pursuant to disqualification from the MA program.*

If you fail in one or more essays, you will get a second chance to take the failed area(s); failure to earn a "Pass" on the second attempt will compute as a "Fail" on the comprehensive exam as a whole.

COMM 6766 – Comprehensive Review and Exam

This course will assess the student's ability to demonstrate, through scholarly writing, synthesis of graduate-level coursework in three content areas -- Communication Theory (COMM 6156), Communication Research (COMM 6157), and a chosen course from the student's "Program Track" or "Electives". Course instruction will include regular meetings with course instructor who provides individual guidance and advice to prepare students for their final comprehensive

exam, and graded responses to sample questions and discussion prompts. The course will culminate in a comprehensive exam that will be evaluated by the course instructor and by two other members of the Department of Communication's "Comprehensive Exam Committee".

Prerequisites: Minimum 21 credits earned in the program.

The comprehensive exam may be repeated only once. Failure of the second comprehensive exam attempt will result in an unsatisfactory grade in the course.

Lecture Hours: 3.00 Lab Hours: 0 Total Hours: 3.00

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of communication theories through application to real-world problems in the strategic communication field.
- Students will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of research methodologies by assessing design options in strategic communication research.
- Students will utilize theories and methods appropriate for the analysis of strategic communication problems.

Grading Scale: S/U with I/IP

Part 3: Research Involving Human Subjects

3.1 CSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) – Policies and Requirements

Students signed up for the COMM 6765 (Proseminar) course will learn about human research, and the ethical treatment of human subjects when collecting data from them. To be able to do research using human subjects (people), students will have to first earn their Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certificate. Instructions on how to complete the training can be accessed here: https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/research/irb/citi.php

Depending on the student's reading and comprehension speed, completing the CITI certification could take anywhere between two and three hours.

Once the CITI certification is done, students enrolled in the COMM 6965 (Graduate Thesis Research) or COMM 6966 (Graduate Professional Project) course will apply to CSU's "Institutional Review Board" (IRB) for approval of their research proposal – if the student is going to be collecting data from human subjects. The student will work with his/her committee chairperson to ensure that the application is carefully completed and submitted to the IRB. For instructions on how to complete and submit an application, see here: https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/research/irb/

To ensure that the IRB application and approval process is completed in a timely manner, it is important that the student plan ahead of time and work closely with his/her committee chair and members. A successful application process will enable the student to collect, analyze, and evaluate the necessary data for their research project/thesis. Students and their committee members should familiarize themselves with the IRB approval process, which is specified here: https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/_docs/institutional-review-board/IRB_approval_flowchart.pdf

The average processing time of IRB applications is between 12 and 24 days, and as the IRB states, "It is recommended that researchers submit applications for review *at least* one month prior to the desired start of research and that they promptly respond to requests from the Board to avoid delays. The IRB is not able to accelerate review or give special considerations to accommodate a desired research start date."

Part 4: Thesis and Project Guidelines and Resources

4.1 CSU Guidelines

4.1a Thesis Guide:

The Columbus State University, Graduate School "Thesis Guide" is the first place for you to begin learning about how to begin preparing your thesis as well as how to submit your thesis. Remember, your thesis or professional project report is your "capstone" work, and you can earn your MA in Communication only when you have completed writing your thesis/project report and defended it successfully in front of your thesis committee.

> There are a few rules that you need to pay attention to – from formatting your thesis/project report to how, where, and when to submit your thesis/project report. The Department of Communication requires that you follow APA guidelines (which can be accessed here:
> https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html
> You can access the CSU Thesis Guide here:
> https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/_docs/thesis-guide.pdf

4.1b Thesis Publishing Directions:

Preparing Your Thesis/Project Report for Defense:

Columbus State University requires that you provide copies of the thesis/project to your committee members and chair. You should check with your committee members to see if they prefer printed or electronic copies (or both). Printed copies do not need to be printed on heavyweight, expensive paper unless there is the need to do so for figures and images.

Printing and binding a dissertation can be expensive. You can use any copying and printing service in town or the CSU Printing Services to print and bind your dissertation. ***The Department of Communication requires that you submit one bound copy of your thesis/project report to the department.***

Registering Your Thesis/Project Report for the Final Oral Exam

To register your thesis/project report, you or your committee chair will have to create a record on the CSU Graduate School website. This record will include:

- Degree information
- Past degrees
- Contact information
- The defense version of your thesis/project report as a PDF

- Other relevant documents

The version of your thesis/project report attached to your online record is considered the registration copy.

When your MA completion record is finalized, committee members will receive emails with links to access your record and approve your thesis/project report to progress to defense. You'll need to provide copies of the thesis/project report identical to the registration copy to all members of your committee, including the chair, at least two weeks before the record is finalized. Everyone but the chair is required to comment or sign off on the thesis/project report before it is submitted.

After all committee members have provided their approval, your thesis will be reviewed by your faculty director/department chair, and the office of the Dean of Graduate School. When all of these officials have approved your committee and thesis for defense, your thesis is considered registered. You will be able to track these approvals in your online record and will receive a confirmation email when approvals are complete.

You are not allowed to distribute updated versions of your thesis prior to the defense but be sure to incorporate any corrections before your thesis/project committee chair uploads your final thesis. See the directions for publishing your thesis/project report here: https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/guide/1/

After the defense, if the committee has required major revisions to be approved by one or more of its members, it is your responsibility to provide them with the corrected final version for their approval. They will be asked to submit written confirmation of that approval to the Dean of the Graduate School. Failure to do so could delay the conferral of your degree.

After the defense, you will receive additional instructions by email for completion of all MA degree requirements.

It is important to walk into the defense knowing that your committee *wants* you to pass. If there is criticism, it is meant to be constructive. The defense is not solely an opportunity for the committee to compliment and congratulate you for the work you have done. It is also meant to challenge you and force you to consider tough questions.

4.2 Sample Theses, Proposals, and Topics

All theses and project reports successfully defended by students in the Department of Communication can be accessed here: https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/do/discipline_browser/articles?discipline_key=325

You can access the CSU ePress website here: https://columbusstate.libguides.com/epress

Some sample topic ideas, proposals, and theses relating to the communication field can be accessed at these sites:

- https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/com_etd/
- https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/communication_theses/
- https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd-communication/
- https://commstudies.utexas.edu/graduate/masters-thesis-topics

Thesis Proposals -- Samples:

- https://uwm.edu/communication/wp-content/uploads/sites/150/2014/12/babin.pdf

4.3 Writing Thesis and Project Proposals – Guidelines

Writing a Thesis and a Project Proposal
Based on NYU Gallatin documents -
- https://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/graduate/thesis/proposal.html; https://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/graduate/thesis/proposal.html#project

Project Proposal

The professional project report includes two major components: (a) an activity (program, intervention, campaign, etc.) designed to address (solve, remediate, improve) a problem, issue, or opportunity in your expert domain as a professional; and (b) a written document that describes, rationalizes, analyzes, and assesses the activity. It is not strictly a research study, but rather an exercise in reflective/professional practice. Therefore, the proposal takes a form different from that of the thesis proposal. Please note, as well, that a project report *must* be not only designed but which could be implemented and evaluated.

- **Problem Statement**
  This section of the proposal identifies, describes, and analyzes the problem (issue, need, opportunity) that you will address in the project. Clearly articulate the nature of the problem: its historical, social, and professional context; its dimensions and extent; its impact, and perhaps some previous efforts to address it. Present information that explains your understanding of the origins or causes of the problem, to set up the rationale for the choice of a strategy to solve it. At each stage, refer to appropriate scholarly and professional literature.

- **Project Plan**
  You should spell out your plans for addressing the problem. You should describe the institutional setting (business, non-profit, educational institution, etc.) within which the project will take place, as well as the individuals, groups, or organizations with whom

you will work. What will you (and, perhaps, others) do? What resources and strategies will be used? If you need funds, how will they be raised and disbursed? What schedule will be followed? Be efficient, but concrete and clear in specifying the activities that will make up the project. Identify the professional and theoretical sources of the strategies for the project: What precedents and ideas are you drawing on?

Also, you should discuss the means by which you will record and report the project activities for the members of the thesis/project committee. Will you write a journal, shoot videos, and keep material artifacts and documents? You must be clear about how you intend to document the project. You may also elect to invite the members of your committee to witness the project first-hand.

- **Assessment**
  The proposal speaks to three aspects of the assessment process. In all three, you should be concrete and refer to appropriate literature as sources of your plans.

  Criteria: First, you should describe and justify the criteria by which you will determine whether the project has succeeded. What are the goals and objectives? What changes do you want to see in the participants, the organization, and the larger world?

  Methods: What information will be needed to determine whether the goals and objectives have been met? How will that information be collected and organized?

  Analysis: How will that information be utilized to describe the project's success or failure? What sorts of lessons do you hope to draw from the assessment?

- **Justification and Limitations**
  This section of the proposal should explain the rationale for the project and the importance of the topic. Indicate the reasons why this study is important to conduct and whom it will benefit. Identify the limits beyond which the inquiry will not go. Finally, describe the contribution the work will make to the field.

- **Conclusion**
  This section should summarize the nature and intention of the work. Conclude the discussion and mention any pertinent information that may not have been included above.

- **Bibliography**
  This section consists of a list of books and articles referenced in the proposal.

Thesis Proposal

The proposal for a research thesis consists of five sections:

- **Thesis Statement**
  Following an optional introduction, the basic function of this section is to articulate a phenomenon that you propose to investigate (whether a social event, process, intellectual idea, or something else), and the question(s), issue(s), or problem(s) related to that phenomenon that you plan to address in the thesis. The core of the statement may take the form of a hypothesis that you will test, of a proposition or argument that you intend to support, or of a general problem or question (research question) you will explore. The section puts that basic problem statement in a larger context by explaining its historical origins (where did it come from?) and its intellectual, social, business, or institutional context. It also describes the sub-questions or themes that constitute the general problem. You will cite appropriate scholarly, professional, and other sources for the ideas, questions, and background information contained in the section.

- **Research Methods**
  In this section, you will identify (a) the kinds of information that are needed to answer the question(s) raised in the hypotheses/research questions, (b) the methods you will use to gather that information, and (c) the strategies by which you will organize and analyze the information in such a way as to reach and support a conclusion, to construct a sound argument. If the central problem has several facets, you may need an array of different methods (quantitative, qualitative, archival, rhetorical criticism, etc.) for collecting and analyzing information. You should be as precise as possible in each stage of the methods statement: Is information needed about the social media campaigns in a non-profit organization, about changes in the rates of student athletes' success in CSU tennis teams, about the ways business leaders think about branding and marketing their products or services? Will you collect social media data, find government reports on student stress and anxiety levels, and interview business leaders about their experiences in their industry? Will you deploy statistical forms of content analysis, correlate social media campaign techniques to website visits, and interpret themes in social media posts and branding narratives? You should reflect on the broad methodological approaches that you propose to use, and cite sources from which you derive your methods and tools. Your central goal is to demonstrate that you know how to go about answering the question(s) that you have raised.

  Please note that if you intend to conduct research on living people, you will need to get the approval of CSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please refer to the IRB site for more information: https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/research/irb/

- **Justification and Limitations**
  This section of your proposal should explain the rationale for the thesis and the importance of the topic. Indicate the reasons why this study is important to conduct and whom it will benefit. Identify the limits beyond which the inquiry will not go. For instance, if you are writing about a Columbus area non-profit or religious institution or business, you must explain the relevance of the time period selected. Finally, describe the contribution the work will make to the field.

- **Conclusion**
  This section should summarize the nature and intention of your work. Conclude the discussion and mention any pertinent information that may not have been included above.

- **Bibliography**
  This section consists of a list of books and articles referenced in the proposal.

4.4 Professional Project Requirements

Professional Project Option:

A professional project may be any combination of professional, high-quality products, that reflect the highest technical skill of the student, and effectively meet client/message need(s). Examples may include, but are not limited to, scholarly writing that reflects your ability to perform the following:

- Conduct research & and create an in-depth client/competition/market analysis.
- Create a client/investor proposal that effectively communicates research-informed strategy and content goals.
- Produce digital media products/campaigns.
- Produce individual elements to support products/campaigns (e.g., individual advertisements, short films, podcasts, etc.)

If you choose the professional project track, you will do the required research and work that leads to a project like one of the following but not limited to -- advertising or PR campaigns, social media campaigns, documentary/narrative/serialized videos, audio podcasts, or corporate and organizational training seminars. You may complete a project where you develop a plan or case study in response to an approved partner organization's real-world communication challenge or opportunity, or an approved social, technical, or industry real-world challenge. Another option to consider would be to create a training module that could be delivered within an organizational setting that also addresses communication challenges/opportunities. Serialized (television) content that addresses a specific goal/problem/analysis is another option. Depending upon the track, the professional project could contain communication/publicity projects that include the research, content creation of marketing/communication materials, and coordinating logistics for delivering the workshop/conference, or program launch (all of this depends upon your focus area).

Examples of Video/Digital Projects could include documentary/narrative videos, where you would be required to do a full production with a script that explores some theme/issue/personality potentially in the broad area of strategic communication, public relations, social media, social or community justice, advertising, or creative endeavor and

should have some theoretical framework for it. Another consideration could be commercial video / digital work done for a client/organization. Whether the focus of your work is a long documentary/narrative or commercial, you should be discussing your choice/option with your project chair before you launch your work. This theme/issue/person should be researched in detail, in the context of your theoretical framework, and a plan developed for your documentary/narrative or commercial to explore the theme you have chosen.

You are not required to have a written thesis, but your digital (video and/or audio) work should be supported with enough written material including rationale, theoretical framework, any script/questionnaire used, and a discussion of the project process, along with a short bibliography. Ideally, the rationale, theoretical framework, and bibliography/literature review build from previous coursework.

Timeline:

A. When do you start work on the thesis or professional project?
Ans: The first semester of your work! Please make an appointment with the Graduate Program Coordinator, either face-to-face or virtually so that you can begin the discussion on the two options, your areas of interest, potential committee chairs and members, and the process to start and complete these major requirements.

B. Who should you choose as your thesis/project committee chair and committee members, and when?
Ans: In your first meeting with the Graduate Program Coordinator, you will have a chance to talk about your options; how to approach a potential committee chair or committee members for their willingness to serve as chair/members; and the documents you need to submit once committee chair/members are chosen.

C. When should you begin your work on the thesis/project?
Ans: As soon as you have chosen your committee chair and members it is time to seriously get down to fine-tuning your thesis/project topic, drawing an outline, and beginning the necessary planning for doing the literature review, taking a careful look at the thesis format, collecting the data, etc. You need to download the CSU Thesis Guide and go through it carefully to follow all the rules/guidelines for writing the thesis.

4.5 Writing Resources

The first stop for writing resources for CSU's graduate students is "The Graduate Writing Center": https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/graduate-writing-center.php

Peruse the variety of resources offered on the website including the following:

- Complete Playlist
- APA Style Formatting

- [Revising, Editing, & Proofreading:](#)
- [Scientific Writing: Improving Product Through Preparation](#)
- [Technical Writing for the STEM Fields](#)
- [Writing Strategies to Avoid Common Pitfalls & Reduce Stress](#)
- [Writing a Literature Review: Purpose, Planning, Process](#)
- [Avoiding Roadblocks for IRB Approval](#)
- [Beginning Your Research & Information Management](#)
- [Ethics & Professionalism in Research: Understanding the Institutional IRB](#)
- [Introduction to Research](#)
- [Quantitative Methodology](#)
- [Thesis/Dissertation Submission Process](#)

Purdue University continues to offer graduate students a variety of resources, including writing resources:

- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/graduate_writing/index.html

4.6 COMM 6965 – Graduate Thesis Research – Syllabus (Sample)

COMM 6965 -- Graduate Thesis Research

Fall 2023

Instructor Information

- Name:
- E-mail:
- Office Hours: by appointment –
- Office location:

Course Description

The research topic will have been approved by the student's advisory committee at the end of the Graduate Proseminar. Students write and present a thesis to their advisory committee for review and approval.

Prerequisite(s): COMM 6765
Repeatability: Repeatable for credit up to 2 times or 5 hours.
Restriction(s): Enrollment is limited to Graduate Level students.

Suggested Support/Reading Materials

- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association: 7th Edition*.
- Thesis and/or Professional Project Options – Department Guidelines -- https://www.columbusstate.edu/academics/_docs/degrees/MA-Comm-Thesis-and-Project-Guidelines-and-Resources.pdf
- Committee Request Form: https://www.columbusstate.edu/academics/_docs/degrees/MA-Comm-Request-Thesis-Professional-Project-Committee.pdf
- CSU Thesis Guide: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/_docs/thesis-guide.pdf
- Publishing Directions for Thesis and Dissertation: https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/guide/

Graduate Student Resources -- CSU

- The Graduate Writing Center: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/graduate-writing-center.php
- Professional Development Series for Graduate Students: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/professional-development-series.php
- The Network & Knowledge Connection: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/network-knowledge-connect.php
- Institutional Review Board: https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/_docs/institutional-review-board/IRB_policies_100117.pdf

Student Learning Outcomes

This thesis research class will guide you through the process of developing your thesis. I will help you navigate requirements and paperwork, and guide you to work with your committee chair and members. By the end of this course, you are expected to have:

1. Developed a thesis.
2. Had your thesis approved by your committee.
3. Completed all requirements and submitted all paperwork as required by the chair, the Department of Communication, and the Graduate School for submitting the thesis.
4. Prepared to defend your thesis.
5. Defend your thesis.
6. Submit your thesis for CSU archives.

Time will move fast! It may seem like a lot of work but think of it this way: if you follow the deadlines, you will have completed your thesis, and you will have received guidance in doing so,

significantly increasing the chances of the acceptance of your thesis. This course can (and is expected to) help you to produce the highest quality of writing you have done thus far.

Assignment Requirements

Collaboration

There will be opportunities throughout the term for you to work with your committee chair and members to finetune your literature review, clarify your research questions, collect the necessary data, analyze the data, and write your thesis. Please make sure to submit updated versions/sections of your thesis to your committee members. Submit your request on time, and early, to seek permission from CSU's HRB to conduct any human subjects-related work.

Working with Committee Chair/Members

When working with faculty/your committee, some things should remain in your consideration. Be kind and courteous. Allow adequate time for response. Do not put off arranging meetings. Schedule in advance and keep your committee members up to date on your progress. Also, give your proposal readers plenty of time to read the proposal/work/updates before the meeting (one week should do it).

Expectations

What you can expect from me:

I will respond to your e-mail within 24 hours – weekdays, weekends, holidays!

- I will be available to discuss questions about the course with you.

What is expected from you:

- Be fully prepared for each meeting with your committee chair/members (having completed all assigned work from the previous meeting).
- Complete the requisite paperwork.
- Keep your committee chair/members updated on the progress of the thesis work.

Course Communication

E-mail

- Use your official CSU account for all e-mail communication.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty

Students: Please refer to the CSU Student Handbook (2018-2019) for additional information on academic honesty.

We plagiarize when we steal, borrow, or use someone's work as our own. In addition to being dishonest, plagiarism is unfair to your peers who spend hours preparing original work. If you are found guilty of plagiarism you will receive an F, and you will not be able to defend your thesis. You may even be dismissed from the University with a notation of the offense on your transcript. If you are in doubt about the legitimate use of sources for your work, please check with your committee chair/members. As a guiding principle, give credit for ideas or materials that you use from other sources, including visuals used in PowerPoint presentations. Please follow this link for more information on plagiarism:
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml

1. All work submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with CSU's rules on academic misconduct (https://www.columbusstate.edu/student-affairs/handbook/2011-2012/responsibilities-rights.php#xiv_academic_and_nonacademic_misconduct). You may not engage in unauthorized collaboration or make use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software.
2. You must obtain permission from your committee chair/members before using AI composition software (like ChatGPT) for any work on your thesis. Using these tools without their permission puts your academic integrity at risk. You can discuss what is legitimate and effective use of ChatGPT and similar AI tools with your committee chair.
3. If you have another person/entity do the writing of any substantive portion of the thesis for you, which includes hiring a person or a company to write drafts and/or other work, research-based or otherwise, and using artificial intelligence affordances like ChatGPT, you would be considered as violating CSU standards of academic integrity.

Course Attendance Policy

You will be expected to work closely with your committee chair/members in ongoing discussions and to interact with them regularly so that all work is done on time, and you are prepared to defend your thesis on time.

Thesis/Project Timeline/Sequence

- https://mydissertationeditor.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sheet1.html

1. Proposal – completed in the ProSeminar course (COMM 6765) – Review (Week 1 and 2)

    1.1 Review agreed research questions/hypotheses and/or project goals.

    1.2 Review and continue exploring, choosing, and drafting research methodology, data collection, or project work sequence.

    1.3 Prepare a statement of ethics for the CSU Institutional Research Board in case you are using human subjects.

    1.4 Work on the timeline -- detailed planning: chapters, sections, what will they include.

    1.5 Continue to update the bibliography and reference list.

    1.6 Meet with the committee chair to review the proposal and updates.

2. Literature Review (Partially completed in COMM 6765) (Week 3 and 4)

    2.1 Refresh searching skills (attend a workshop if offered or complete an online tutorial).

    2.2 Carry out further searches.

    2.3 Read through additional materials gathered after the previous draft, picking out common themes, topics, ideas, and questions.

    2.4 Update literature review.

    2.5 Speak to/consult with the committee chair to check if you have missed any major sources.

    2.6 Do proofreading, updating, and finalizing the literature review.

    2.7 Finalize and submit literature review.

3. Methodology (Week 5, 6, 7)

    3.1 Continue to work on the methods section, and update.

    3.2 Critique methodology; seek committee members' feedback.

    3.3 Create an ethics statement (if using human subjects)

    3.4 Meet with the committee chair and get approval on the ethics statement; complete the IRB (human subjects review sent to the Institutional Review Board) application.

3.5 Plan dates for gathering data/conducting individual or focus group interviews/ project production including adequate time for any editing, and distribution needed to meet your project goals.

3.6 Update bibliography and write-up methodology section

4. Data Collection and Analysis (Week 8 & 9)

4.1 Test selected methods

4.2 Review results and methodology

4.3 Carry out data collection

4.4 Record results

4.5 Validate data

4.6 Carry out an initial analysis of data

4.7 Write up "stories" – what does the data say? (Qualitative research – "stories"; Quantitative research – "explanations")

4.8 Finish writing data analysis section

5. Writing (Week 10, 11, 12)

5.1 Complete writing remaining sections

5.2 Review, edit, tweak writing

5.3 Proofread

5.4 Add charts, tables, graphics, and images as required in the data analysis section

5.5 Finish updating the reference list and bibliography

5.6 Add the front page, contents page, abstract, appendices, etc.

6. Concluding Steps (Week 13 & 14)

6.1 Final proofreading and writing

6.2 Arrange printing and binding

6.3 Submit thesis/project report

4.7 COMM 6966 – Graduate Professional Project – Syllabus (Sample)

COMM 6966 -- Graduate Professional Project

Fall 2023

Instructor Information

Course Description

Approved communication work experience, either as a volunteer or through employment. Work experience must be approved in advance. Successful completion requires a written evaluation from a supervisor, an academic paper related to work experience, and an oral presentation of the accompanying academic component to faculty.

A professional project may be any combination of professional, high-quality products, that reflect the highest technical skill of the student, and effectively meet client/message need(s). Examples may include, but are not limited to, scholarly writing that reflects your ability to perform the following:

- Conduct research and create an in-depth client/competition/market analysis.
- Create a client/investor proposal that effectively communicates research-informed strategy and content goals.
- Produce digital media products/campaigns.
- Produce individual elements to support products/campaigns (e.g., individual advertisements, short films, podcasts, etc.)

Prerequisite(s): COMM 6765
Repeatability: Repeatable for credit up to 2 times or 5 hours.
Restriction(s): Enrollment is limited to Graduate Level students.

Suggested Support/Reading Materials

- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association: 7th Edition*.
- Thesis and/or Professional Project Options – Department Guidelines -- https://www.columbusstate.edu/academics/_docs/degrees/MA-Comm-Thesis-and-Project-Guidelines-and-Resources.pdf
- Committee Request Form: https://www.columbusstate.edu/academics/_docs/degrees/MA-Comm-Request-Thesis-Professional-Project-Committee.pdf
- CSU Thesis Guide: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/_docs/thesis-guide.pdf

- Publishing Directions for Thesis and Dissertation: https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/guide/

Graduate Student Resources -- CSU

- The Graduate Writing Center: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/graduate-writing-center.php
- Professional Development Series for Graduate Students: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/professional-development-series.php
- The Network & Knowledge Connection: https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/network-knowledge-connect.php
- Institutional Review Board: https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/_docs/institutional-review-board/IRB_policies_100117.pdf

Student Learning Outcomes

This professional project class will guide you through the process of developing your project proposal and completing the work related to the project. I will help you navigate requirements and paperwork and guide you to work with your committee chair and members. By the end of this course, you are expected to have:

- Completed a project report and included relevant supporting material.
- Defended your project presentation and had your project approved by your committee.
- Completed all requirements and submitted all paperwork as required by the chair, the Department of Communication, and the Graduate School for submitting the project report and relevant accompanying materials.
- Prepared to defend your project outcomes and report.
- Defend your project report.
- Submit your project report for CSU archives.

Time will move fast! It may seem like a lot of work but think of it this way: if you follow the deadlines, you will have completed your project work, and you will have received guidance in doing so, significantly increasing the chances of the acceptance of your project report and the accompanying material (audio, video, text). This course can (and is expected to) help you to produce the highest quality of writing, reporting, and production you have done thus far.

Assignment Requirements

Collaboration: There will be opportunities throughout the term for you to work with your committee chair and members to finetune your project goals, clarify your work and production process, work on the necessary project materials, and write your project report. *There is a*

significant positive correlation between students who keep in regular touch, on a weekly basis, with the committee chair and their final and successful project defense and approval. Please make sure to submit updated versions/sections of your project report to your committee members. Submit your request on time, and early, to seek permission from CSU's IRB to conduct any human subjects-related work.

Working with Committee Chair/Members

When working with faculty/your committee, some things should remain in your consideration. Be kind and courteous. Allow adequate time for response. Do not put off arranging meetings. Schedule in advance and keep your committee members up to date on your progress. Also, give your proposal readers plenty of time to read the proposal/work/updates before the meeting (one week should do it).

Expectations

What you can expect from me:

I will respond to your e-mail within 24 hours – weekdays, weekends, holidays!

- I will be available to discuss questions about the course/process with you.

What is expected from you:

- Be fully prepared for each meeting with your committee chair/members (having completed all assigned work from the previous meeting).
- Complete the requisite paperwork.
- Keep your committee chair/members updated on the progress of the project work.

Course Communication

E-mail

- Use your official CSU account for all e-mail communication.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty

Students: Please refer to the CSU Student Handbook (2018-2019) for additional information on academic honesty.

We plagiarize when we steal, borrow, or use someone's work as our own. In addition to being dishonest, plagiarism is unfair to your peers who spend hours preparing original work. If you are found guilty of plagiarism you will receive an F, and you will not be able to defend your thesis. You may even be dismissed from the University with a notation of the offense on your transcript. If you are in doubt about the legitimate use of sources for your work, please check with your committee chair/members. As a guiding principle, give credit for ideas or materials that you use from other sources, including visuals used in PowerPoint presentations. Please follow this link for more information on plagiarism:
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml

4. All work submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with CSU's rules on academic misconduct (https://www.columbusstate.edu/student-affairs/handbook/2011-2012/responsibilities-rights.php#xiv_academic_and_nonacademic_misconduct). You may not engage in unauthorized collaboration or make use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software.
5. You must obtain permission from your committee chair/members before using AI composition software (like ChatGPT) for any work on your project report. Using these tools without their permission puts your academic integrity at risk. You can discuss what is legitimate and effective use of ChatGPT and similar AI tools with your committee chair.
6. If you have another person/entity do the writing of any substantive portion of the project report or supplementary material for you, which includes hiring a person or a company to write drafts and/or other professional work, research-based or otherwise, and using artificial intelligence affordances like ChatGPT, you would be considered as violating CSU standards of academic integrity.

Course Attendance Policy

You will be expected to work closely with your committee chair/members in ongoing discussions and to interact with them regularly so that all work is done on time, and you are prepared to defend your project on time.

Project Timeline/Sequence

- https://mydissertationeditor.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sheet1.html

1. Project Proposal – completed in ProSeminar (COMM 6765) – Review (Week 1 and 2)

1.1 Review agreed project goals.

1.2 Review and continue exploring, choosing, and drafting the project work sequence.

1.3 Prepare a statement of ethics for the CSU Institutional Research Board in case you are using human subjects.

1.4 Work on the timeline -- detailed planning: chapters, sections, what will they include.

1.5 Continue to update the bibliography and reference list.

1.6 Meet with the committee chair to review the proposal and updates.

2. Literature Review (Partially completed in COMM 6765) (Week 3 and 4)

2.1 Refresh researching/searching skills (attend a workshop if offered or complete an online tutorial).

2.2 Carry out further searches relevant to your project.

2.3 Read through additional materials gathered after the previous draft, picking out topics, ideas, goals, and questions.

2.4 Update literature review.

2.5 Speak to/consult with the committee chair to check if you have missed any major sources of information.

2.6 Do proofreading, updating, and finalizing the literature review, and project proposal.

2.7 Finalize and submit literature review/proposal.

3. Methodology/Production (Week 5, 6, 7)

3.1 Continue to work on the process, data collection, and production section; update.

3.2 Critique methodology; seek committee members' feedback.

3.3 Create an ethics statement (if using human subjects) (This is rare in a professional project, but we cannot completely dismiss the possibility).

3.4 Meet with committee chair and get approval on ethics statement; complete IRB (human subjects review sent to the Institutional Review Board) application.

3.5 Plan dates for project production including adequate time for any production, recording, editing, designing, and distribution of materials needed to meet your project goals.

3.6 Update bibliography and write-up methodology/production section.

4. Production, Testing, Analysis (Week 8 & 9)

      4.1 Check and test selected production processes, methods, and timelines.

      4.2 Review results and products.

      4.3 Carry out production processes.

      4.4 Record results.

      4.5 Validate, check, and confirm with supervisors/colleagues about product/design, etc.

      4.6 Write up details of the process, production challenges, changes made, etc.

      4.7 Finish writing the product, process, and analysis section.

5. Writing (Week 10, 11, 12)

      5.1 Complete writing remaining sections.

      5.2 Review, edit, and tweak writing.

      5.3 Proofread.

      5.4 Add charts, tables, graphics, and images as required in the design, product, process, and analysis section.

      5.5 Finish updating the reference list and bibliography.

      5.6 Add the front page, contents page, abstract, appendices, etc.

6. Concluding Steps (Week 13 & 14)

      6.1 Final proofreading and writing.

      6.2 Arrange printing and binding.

      6.3 Submit project report.

4.8 Timeline (sample) for Completing Thesis/Project

1. Proposal – completed in the ProSeminar course (COMM 6765) – Review (Week 1 and 2)

      1.1 Review agreed research questions/hypotheses and/or project goals.

      1.2 Review and continue exploring, choosing, and drafting research methodology, data collection, or project work sequence.

1.3 Prepare a statement of ethics for the CSU Institutional Research Board in case you are using human subjects.

1.4 Work on the timeline -- detailed planning: chapters, sections, what will they include.

1.5 Continue to update the bibliography and reference list.

1.6 Meet with the committee chair to review the proposal and updates.

2. Literature Review (Partially completed in COMM 6765) (Week 3 and 4)

2.1 Refresh searching skills (attend a workshop if offered or complete an online tutorial).

2.2 Carry out further searches.

2.3 Read through additional materials gathered after the previous draft, picking out common themes, topics, ideas, and questions.

2.4 Update literature review.

2.5 Speak to/consult with the committee chair to check if you have missed any major sources.

2.6 Do proofreading, updating, and finalizing the literature review.

2.7 Finalize and submit literature review.

3. Methodology (Week 5, 6, 7)

3.1 Continue to work on the methods section, and update.

3.2 Critique methodology; seek committee members' feedback.

3.3 Create an ethics statement (if using human subjects).

3.4 Meet with the committee chair and get approval on the ethics statement; complete the IRB (human subjects review sent to the Institutional Review Board) application.

3.5 Plan dates for gathering data/conducting individual or focus group interviews/ project production including adequate time for any editing, and distribution needed to meet your project goals.

3.6 Update bibliography and write-up methodology section

4. Data Collection and Analysis (Week 8 & 9)

4.1 Test selected methods

4.2 Review results and methodology

4.3 Carry out data collection

4.4 Record results

4.5 Validate data

4.6 Carry out an initial analysis of data

4.7 Write up "stories" – what does the data say? (Qualitative research – "stories"; Quantitative research – "explanations")

4.8 Finish writing data analysis section

5. Writing (Week 10, 11, 12)

5.1 Complete writing remaining sections

5.2 Review, edit, tweak writing

5.3 Proofread

5.4 Add charts, tables, graphics, and images as required in the data analysis section

5.5 Finish updating the reference list and bibliography

5.6 Add the front page, contents page, abstract, appendices, etc.

6. Concluding Steps (Week 13 & 14)

6.1 Final proofreading and writing

6.2 Arrange printing and binding

6.3 Submit thesis/project report

4.9 Defending Thesis/Project – Advice

Know the Rituals

The best way to prepare for your defense is to regularly attend the defenses of fellow graduate students throughout CSU, not just several weeks prior to your own defense.

You can also talk to people in your department who already defended to find out what their defenses were like. You should also speak with your advisor to get a sense of his/her specific expectations of a defense.

Use PowerPoint or Other Software to Create Slides

You should prepare a presentation of the research that comprises the thesis. Your slides should encapsulate the work and focus on its most salient contributions. In preparing, ask yourself these questions: "What do I want people to know about my thesis? What is the most important information that I can present and talk about?"

Here are some basic tips:

- Use text large enough to be read by the audience (especially text from figures).
- Ensure graphics and tables are clear.
- Don't clutter your slides—if necessary, have things come up on mouse clicks.
- Use spell check and proofread your slides.
- Practice your presentation with your peers.
- Work on pronunciation, if required.
- Time your presentation to ensure it will fit the allotted time while allowing time for questions.

Public Lecture

If your defense includes a public lecture, we recommend that you do a trial run a day or two before in the room that has been booked for your lecture. This will allow you to familiarize yourself with the space and the equipment and to address any problems that arise during the trial run.

Plan your public lecture to allow enough time for questions. Present enough information so that the audience understands what you did, why you did it, what the implications are, and what your suggestions are for future research.

Friends and family are welcome to attend your public lecture. Faculty and students in the audience are given the opportunity to ask questions.

Dress Professionally

Plan to dress professionally for the defense in the same way you would if presenting a paper at a conference or for a job interview. You will be standing for a long time on the day of your defense. You might want to keep this in mind when selecting the shoes you will wear for your defense.

Items to Bring to the Defense

- Your presentation
- A laser pointer
- A copy of your dissertation
- A pen or pencil
- A notepad (to help track suggestions/comments of committee members)
- A bottle of water

The Closed Examination

You will be asked to leave the room while your committee reviews your program of study, and decides whether:

- The thesis is acceptable/not acceptable.
- Whether members will ask sequential questions or whether each member will be allotted a specific time period for questioning.

The person to start the questioning is designated. You will be called back into the examining room and questioning will begin. After all questions have been addressed, you will be asked to leave the room while your committee decides the outcome of the exam. You will be asked to return to the room to be informed of the outcome by the chair of your exam committee.

Address Questions with Confidence

- **Listen** to the entire question no matter how long it takes the faculty member or student to ask it (take notes if necessary).
- **Pause and think** about the question before answering.
- **Rephrase** the question.
- **Answer** the question to the best of your ability; if you do not know the answer, remain calm and say so in a professional way (Sometimes, the best response is "this is outside the scope of my present study". Work with your thesis chair on how to best articulate an interest in the question posed without risking changing the entire direction of your research.)
- **Remember** that no one will know the ins and outs of the thesis and your research materials as well as you. *You* are the foremost expert in the thesis topic, and *You* know the research involved. Be positive!

Outcomes

Possible outcomes include:

- Acceptable with minor or no revisions (no further approval required)
- Acceptable with major revisions in content or format (in this case, one or more committee members must be responsible for overseeing and approving the major revisions before the final copies are submitted)
- Not acceptable
- If it is deemed not acceptable student will have to work with their committee/chair for options, which could include a new topic; new, reworked research questions/hypotheses; new methodology; new plan/project
- Students will have to re-register for the COMM 6965/6966 and COMM 6967 courses

After the Defense

Student Status

You can submit the final corrected copies of your thesis as soon as you address any remaining comments that were brought up during the defense or noted in the registration copy of your thesis, which will be returned to you usually within a few days before or after the defense. You can take up to one semester following the defense to address any comments, during which you can remain a full-time student. Your degree conferral date will depend on when you submit the final corrected copies of your thesis.

Final Corrected Copies of the Thesis

The day after your defense, you will receive an email from the CSU Dean of the Graduate School that provides instructions on how to:

- Submit the final corrected copies of your thesis.
- Provide authorization for the release of your thesis through Digital Commons – there is no need to submit paper copies of your thesis to Digital Commons. A digital copy is fine.
- Complete a mandatory online exit survey.
- Verify to the University dean of graduate studies office that the thesis has been submitted.

Publishing Your Final Thesis

Columbus State University requires all graduate students to deposit their theses/dissertations for publication with Digital Commons. Hard copies are not required. The library receives an electronic copy of the thesis/project report from Digital Commons/CSU EPress, but students must give the University permission to obtain it.

Binding Your Final Thesis/Project Report

Check with your Committee Chair/Graduate Studies Coordinator to see if your department wants a bound copy of your thesis/project report, and, if so, how the cost of binding is covered.

4.10 Thesis/Professional Project – Evaluation Rubric

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

MA in Communication
Department of Communication, Columbus State University
Master's Thesis/Professional Project Defense Evaluation Rubric

Candidate Name: _____   Date:_____

Title of Thesis: _____

Criterion	Exemplary (30)	Meets Expectations (20)	Does Not Meet Expectations (10)
Knowledge & Synthesis of the Literature or Project Purpose: Student demonstrated ability to search literature and synthesize knowledge gained from the literature review or offer summary of information related to nature of project goals.			
Critical Thinking: Student provided a critical evaluation of the literature/information and clearly explained need and primary purpose for their thesis/ project along with a/some research questions, hypotheses, or project goals and justification for their expected results, outcomes.			
Research/Project Design: Student demonstrated ability to design and implement a research project/professional project that answered their research question/s, hypotheses, project goals (i.e., project is methodologically sound).			

Analytical, Interpretive, and/or Professional Skills: Student demonstrated that they can effectively analyze and interpret data, or carry out project work (surveys, audits, audio/video material, website design, etc.) Student can clearly explain the findings from their research/professional project.			
Impact of Research/Project Goals, Achievements on the Field: Student explained how their study findings/project work impact practice and advance knowledge and/or skills within the area of study.			
Communication Skills: Student effectively communicated principles and findings from their research or project work by providing clear explanations and insightful answers to questions. Student presented information in a logical order with clear and skillful transitions between content areas, keeping the broader audience in mind.			
Total Points:			
Final Score (letter grade):	Pass Pass with Revisions Fail *Circle One*		

Signatures:

Chair: _____   Date: _____

Member: _____   Date: _____

Member: _____   Date: _____

4.11 Submission of Thesis/Project to CSU ePress – Guidelines

1. Students should follow the thesis CSU guidelines:
   https://www.columbusstate.edu/graduate-school/_docs/thesis-guide.pdf

2. Communication students should use the APA stylebook for citations, references, and formatting of the thesis/project report.

3. Students should use the following thesis defense page:

(Sample Defense Signature Page)

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF COLLEGE STUDENT-ATHLETES

A thesis submitted to the College of Arts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

By

Maria Blasco Maurici

2023

_____   _____
Dr. Ramesh Rao, Chair   Date

_____   _____
Dr. Benjamin Baker, Member   Date

_____   _____
Dr. Kisun Kim, Member   Date