

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOR THE B.A. COMMUNICATION

Major Findings of the Program's Quality and Productivity

The detailed self-study of the Communication program provided an opportunity to assess those areas within our different degree tracks where we are having success and those areas where we need adjustment. The areas that were assessed by the Department faculty members as above average to very strong are listed as our strengths, while those areas assessed by the faculty members to be satisfactory or below average are listed as our weaknesses.

Program's Strengths in the Area of Quality

- Quality of Teaching (**Very Strong**)
- Quality of Faculty (**Very Strong**)
- Quality of Research and Scholarship (**Very Strong**)
- Faculty and Student Honors and Awards (**Very Strong**)
- Quality of Service (**Very Strong**)
- Student Learning Indicators (**Very Strong**)
- Quality of Curriculum (**Above Average**)

Program's Weaknesses in the Area of Quality

- Quality of Facilities and Equipment Supporting Program (**Satisfactory**)

Program's Strengths in the Area of Productivity

- Enrollment in Program (**Very Strong**)
- Cost-Effectiveness of Instructional Delivery in Program Home Department (**Very Strong**)
- Program Completion Efficiency and Graduation Rate (**Above Average**)

Program's Weaknesses in the Area of Productivity

- Program's Annual Degree Productivity Among Comparable USG Programs (**Satisfactory**)

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Quality & Productivity

Faculty/Student Development

- Expand resources to support larger conference travel budgets, which will raise the profile of the program, enhance the skill set of our faculty, and enhance our ability to recruit quality faculty.
- Expand resources to support larger travel budgets to allow students to attend national conferences, helping raise the profile of the program and increase networking opportunities for students in national organizations like NCA, PRSSA, and BEA.
- Actively pursue pay equity with regional and national standards of peer institutions, as we are currently \$10,000-\$12,000 below the average.

Staffing

- Continuing our annual expansion of our faculty and staff to facilities the need for new areas of expansion, as well as to satisfy the current needs of students in upper division and university general education COMM 1110 offerings.

Facilities

- Additional classroom space to support growing demand for in-seat course offerings.
- Additional office space for faculty and staff, now that we have exceeded the limits of our current facilities in Carpenters' Hall.
- Additional production facility space to support increased student project productivity and to promote an integrated student media platform including print, broadcast, and digital media.

Technology

- Expand our current recording technology inventory to enable individual students to attend independent proficiency with the equipment and expand on their individual project output.
- Expand on our existing editing bays to support the same student production and student media initiatives.
- Expand on our available student media writing space to support the same student production and student media initiatives.

Conclusion About the Program's Viability at CSU:

In the era of Retention, Progression, and Graduation, the Communication program at CSU is the fastest growing program at CSU. Its viability is not only certain, but is one of the few programs showing immense growth and vitality when many other programs have stabilized or regressed in the enrollment and graduation numbers. Our students are now becoming the journalists, public relations practitioners, communication specialists, SEO specialists, and media content producers of the next generation. We continue to strive to

provide them an industry-relevant education that we will endeavor to keep current with the times through our own research, professional development, and practice in serving our community here in the Chattahoochee Valley Region. Our program of study is not only producing high quality graduates, it is placing them in high quality work, and it is doing so at less than half the average cost per semester of any student earning an undergraduate at CSU. We know we represent CSU well, and we know what we will need to continue to thrive in the next decade.

Program Improvement Plan

After a careful and thorough review of the Comprehensive Program Review for the Communication Department, it is obvious that this program should be enhanced and has positioned itself for additional program expansion. It is likely that within the next five (5) years, the program could exceed 750 majors. Given this high potential for growth, it will be necessary to either provide additional funding support or to cap enrollment by setting entrance standards into the program similar to the audition process in other College of the Arts programs.

As noted, previously in this report, the Department continues to need additional faculty to meet student demand for courses. Current faculty members teach 4/4 loads, but enrollments in upper division courses and the dependence upon part-time faculty continuous to negatively affect quality improvements for the program. Additionally, the Department's operational budget reflects funding levels appropriate for a much smaller department, which the Department had historically been. This funding is inadequate for efforts to improve scholarship and faculty development productivity. Faculty SCH productivity is very high given the limited resources.

In an attempt to address these resource allocation deficiencies, the Dean four years ago allocated an additional \$12,000 in operating funds to the Department. Using College online fee and summer revenues, the Dean has provided additional operating funds for the Department to purchase technology and equipment necessary to offer the integrated media track in the Department. Finally, the Dean provides \$42,000 per year from private funds to operate the Department's student radio station. While the new funding has been helpful, it is not adequate to pay student labor for the radio station, TV studio and other Departmental community outreach initiatives through the Department's NPACE Center. Student course fees provide the remainder of the necessary funds for the program to deliver its various academic tracks. The dependency on course fees is perilous given the current environment relative to course fee assessments.

The Provost has been very supportive in continuing to try and add a new faculty line for the Department each of the last three years. Enrollment growth, however, has still exceeded the rate of new faculty hires. The Dean has informed Department Chairs in the other College of the Arts programs that faculty vacancies in programs that are not growing may not be filled and that those lines might be reallocated to Communication.

Finally, space allocation has to be addressed. When the Carpenters Building was renovated to become the home of the Department, there were six (6) faculty and 180 majors in the Department. The Provost and Vice President for Business and Finance assisted the Department in creating TV and radio studios in Carpenters and added three new faculty offices in the building this year. Classroom and office space is being strained and will soon be inadequate. These issues will need to be addressed in a facility usage assessment for the RiverPark Campus.

Summary Recommendation and Supporting Rationale

It is clear that after review of the 2015-16 Comprehensive Program Review that the Department of Communication is a viable academic program, and one that is to be actively supported over the next seven years before its next Comprehensive Program Review. The growth and overall success of the program is in no small part due to its commitment to a service-learning curriculum, and its overall alignment with the University's strategic plan in actively supporting the civic and community health of the region and its economic health. Going further, the focus on service-learning has helped position the Department of Communication to effectively promote and support our university's latest Quality Enhancement Plan, which focuses on developing student acumen in real-world problem solving. It is the view of the VPAA, Dean, and Department Chair that the Department of Communication continue its focus on outreach in its academic programs, which its Non-Profit and Civic Engagement (NPACE) Center serves as a bridge between the university and community on our RiverPark Campus.

In order to sustain and expand on the overall program quality, there are some areas of focus we agree must be a point of emphasis over the next seven years to ensure continued success. First, the Department of Communication must continue to add faculty to provide instruction for majors in upper division courses. Going further, additional faculty will aid the department in reducing their current 60 percent dependency on adjunct faculty to fulfill the department's commitment to provide instruction in the COMM 1110 general education course.

Another key area of strategic focus is to support the continued expansion of technology and equipment to support the growing demand of majors for technology that supports all three tracks of the degree program. As this report indicates in Section IIG, the department is currently operating at approximately one third of the needed equipment and resources to meet the needs of the projected student enrollment for the 2017-18 AY. Given the strategic aim of the Department of Communication to grow to 750 majors in five years, it will not only be necessary to expand to meet the projected needs of the next couple of years, but to also expand to meet the needs of a 750-student body in time. Going further, working in communication in the 21st century means being adaptive and up-to-date with skill proficiency with current equipment used in the industry. As such, it

will be necessary to plan for and actively pursue maintaining an inventory of industry standard equipment and software on an annual basis.

Faculty development continues to be an active challenge for the Department of Communication, and another key area of focus will be to enhance the resources available to our faculty and staff for development. Measuring against current national salary data, our faculty members are roughly \$12,000 below southeast regional averages for salary among peer institutions. A base budget of \$2500 for all faculty development travel is woefully inadequate to enable faculty to maintain an active research and presentation agenda, and it inhibit their ability to put CSU on a national stage.

Facilities are also essential to consider in supporting the Department of Communication's growth and its continued success. With two additional hires this year, the program now has 10 full-time faculty and staff. As such, the department no longer has enough office space to facilitate housing faculty and staff where students can interact with them on site. This means efforts will have to be made to expand office space for the faculty and staff. In addition, with the prodigious growth of the student body, there must also be a strategic commitment to provide additional classroom space that is not only large enough for student instruction, but also of a quality that facilitates 21st century instruction. Failing to enhance this over the next evaluation period has the potential to cripple the department's ability to retain current faculty and recruit the best in the discipline to help continue the department's growth.

In conclusion, the Department of Communication is currently the fastest growing academic program at Columbus State University. Since the 2007-08 Comprehensive Program Review, the enrollment in the program has grown from 180 majors to 465+ majors, nearly a 300% increase. With the growing connection to four local media organization, the Georgia Film Academy, and the NPACE Center's ability to cultivate and sustain community and university partnerships, the program's become quite visible and is now developing a strong reputation for producing quality graduates who are civically minded. Additionally, the program's commitment to service learning is enhancing CSU's reputation in the region and at the state level. These results show the Department of Communication is aligned with the University's active pursuit of a student body of 10,000 students over the next 5 years, and is one of its chief contributors over the past seven years.