

**Communication and Information Planning Cluster:**

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## **Communication and Information Planning Cluster Report**

### **Methodology**

The Planning Cluster met each week for a period of eight weeks. The methodology it selected for conducting its business was to inventory existing needs and identify innovative ideas by asking each member to report their views from the perspective of their individual units. Needs and innovative ideas were then discussed and aggregated for purposes of this report.

### **Executive Summary**

The rapid pace of technological change in the area of communication and information management is having profound effects on society.

These effects include the advent of new jobs and career tracks and the need for new academic programs to provide required knowledge and skills. Universities struggle to acquire advanced technologies and design and deliver the educational programs that a new generation of students require.

There is a growing need for a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach, in classes or new concentrations of study where students with parallel interests interact with one another to solve real-world problems designed by faculty members from different units. We might find that the relationships among professors with different specialties serve as the important foundation for increased connections, yet we need to maintain the uniqueness of existing successful niche programs and schools on campus.

And while we work towards that approach we need to maintain the idea of “Develop, Don’t Dilute.” This refers to the resources needed to accomplish any ideas we put forward and how they might affect existing goals and needs.

## **Recommendations**

1. Graduate students interested in public relations and the development of sophisticated internal and external campaigns could take a media arts class (FINE ARTS), a marketing class (BUSINESS), and public relations (EDUC). Perhaps all three would initially meet Mondays from 4:10-7:00 p.m., so selected projects could be intertwined. Maybe the faculty would, on occasion, trade groups of students for specialized content information or bring all three classes together for common activities.
2. Undergraduates interested in exploring how technology changes communication might have a similar experience where COMM, PSYCH, and MIS become the intersecting courses. This would build bridges for faculty research and foster divergent thinking among students.
3. There is interest in the possible development of an interdisciplinary minor or something “less than a minor,” perhaps a certificate program, in order to get students to add areas of technology to their tool set when a given major doesn’t have that technology themselves. This minor or program could serve as a recruiting mechanism. We need to give it a name and house it somewhere.
4. Leadership as a field of study could be combined with a graduate course linking key faculty from Education, Business, and Public Administration. One valuable preliminary step would be to bring the faculty together to share seminal works and consider sending students to another program for a course taught in another area.

Additionally, with the various cohorts in Educational Leadership and MBA programs, faculty could utilize their online programs to expand the discussions about leadership among students in diverse areas.

- An important precursor to this might be to provide some special professional development on such things as Contextual Teaching (Elaine Johnson) for targeted groups of faculty who could meet together for some ongoing study in multidisciplinary teaching and learning. In addition to stipends or course release time as incentives for increased interaction, we could use professional development on campus or send teams of professors to national conferences to pursue new knowledge through a central funding source as a “bonus” for the time and effort involved in this undertaking.
5. Form an interdisciplinary committee comprised of faculty from Computer Sciences, Journalism and Media Arts that are interested in developing a unified approach to instruction in Web design/development classes and related technologies. The idea is to create a more cohesive series of classes.
  6. The Media Arts minor might be adaptable or enhanced to fit specific needs of departments (other than example #1) that are interested in using its expertise. Projects would be targeted to specific outcomes delineated by Media Arts and the interested department(s).
  7. Basic software skills: where will students learn them. In other words, there is an access hardware/software situation here as well as an instructional aspect. We need to solidify a campus plan for basic software instruction/learning and provide adequate facilities for such.

## **Resources**

There must be resources applied to initiatives outlined above or they will remain on paper and never make it to the classroom. There was considerable discussion about this topic.

1. The interdisciplinary team would require one new faculty line to be the coordinator for the program and oversee the curriculum development. This person will need at least some office support, so the coordinator doesn't end up being a secretary also. We also discussed forming a committee to develop such a curriculum. Faculty from the involved departments and possibly graduate students should be represented.
2. There is the possibility of shared faculty lines that might be procured if they serve the needs of the given departments in these interdisciplinary ventures.
3. In regard to Web design classes, we need to be sure there is adequate faculty to teach the students interested in those classes.
4. In this ever-increasing digital world much of the outlined above requires more computers, peripherals and software. There has been a consolidation on campus in purchasing faculty computers, how far has this been extended in relation to current and future computer labs, and their computers, peripherals and software?
5. There is an ongoing problem with the maintenance and upgrading of computer systems with many of the disciplines represented in this cluster. Macintosh and UNIX based labs on campus are in need of system administrators. This needs to be pursued.
6. It would be good to consolidate resources where possible. There was discussion of the common needs of the library, journalism and art regarding darkroom facilities.
7. There was also a desire on the part of Media Arts to look into the possibility of the renovation of McGill Hall to address some of the

possible lab needs of other programs on campus for which these labs might serve as a logical integration with Media Arts.