



Department of Communication Studies 2022 Assessment Report

All areas shaded in **gray** are to be completed by the department/program.

This document will be posted online and must be [accessible electronically](#) (including appendices).

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Department of Communication Studies is to provide students with communication skills and understanding of the communication process to function in a complex and changing society. We are concerned with the ability to express ideas in an informed and coherent manner; the ability to articulate, debate, and negotiate issues; and to do so both orally and in writing. We are committed to promoting knowledge, criticism, and practical application of human communication. We educate students to be critical observers of social problems and discourse about them, to participate effectively in public life as citizens, and to become involved in culturally diverse personal and professional relationships in their communities.

DEPARTMENT ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

After listing each departmental objective, indicate which of the five Priorities for Action the objective supports. In this section, you may also briefly describe any innovative or noteworthy programs/initiatives that support the Priorities for Action.

1. **Encourage the development of students' critical and analytic abilities about the processes and consequences of human communication.** (Place Student Success at the Center of What We Do). COMX teaches students core principles about communication and then deepens understanding of those principles through application in a variety of socially significant themes and contexts, such as health communication, non-profit and social movement organizations, and gender and intercultural communication. Many of our majors pursue internships that allow students to put these skills into practice. In addition, the department sponsors the UM Debate Team, a truly co-curricular activity involving 5-10 students annually that develops speaking, research, and critical thinking skills for students across campus. One faculty member taught a freshman seminar course in the Global Leadership Initiative designed to incorporate communication theories and skills with global leadership development. Finally, starting in F21 students are now able to earn our major fully online which will increase access to a communication degree for students.
2. **Deliver a curriculum that integrates humanistic and social-scientific perspectives on human communication.** (Drive Excellence and Innovation in Teaching , Learning and Research). Our program blends humanistic approaches (rhetoric) and social scientific approaches (interpersonal and organizational) into the curriculum. COMX was also one of the first departments to partner with Missoula College to develop A.A. concentrations for their students. Missoula College students may satisfy several lower-division requirements that count towards the major at the Mountain Campus, thereby exposing them to both humanistic and social-scientific perspectives early in their career.
3. **Raise students' awareness of diverse cultures, ways of thinking, and styles of communication.** (Partner with Place). Our courses on gender and communication, intercultural communication, and communication and conflict provide students with opportunities to explore matters of identity, difference, and power in their personal and social relationships. Approximately ½ of our upper-division courses directly address issues of local to global action and responsibility.
4. **Establish high standards of scholarship for graduate and undergraduate students in communication.** (Drive Excellence and Innovation in Teaching , Learning and Research). At the undergraduate level, every COMX major (45-55 students

annually) engages in an applied research project as part of the required course in Communication Research Methods. At the graduate level, most of our students have presented research at scholarly conferences, and they have published numerous articles and book chapters in the past five years (several co-authored with faculty). Our graduate students have regularly garnered Top Paper honors at our regional communication conference for student research and several have been accepted into top Ph.D. programs in the past two years.

5. **Encourage and support faculty in research and service activities for the campus, discipline, community, and society.** (Embody the Principle of “Mission First, People Always”). COMX has a nationally recognized MA program guided by faculty members who are scholarly leaders in the discipline. In the past two years among our six tenured/tenure-track faculty, we published 17 articles, book chapters and technical reports, two recently served as President or Executive Director of regional disciplinary associations, and another won UM’s Distinguished Teaching Award in 2021.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS and MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Student Learning Goals	<Measurement Tool>	<Measurement Tool>	<Measurement Tool>	<Measurement Tool>	<Measurement Tool>
	Senior Exit Survey	UD Writing Rubric	PRCA	Research Methods Projects	Alumni Survey
<p>1. Discipline-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities Explain, synthesize, apply and critique:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication theory; • principles of interpersonal communication and their application to everyday life; • principles of rhetoric and their application to contemporary social issues; • the nature of organizations and communication issues in work situations; • principles and practice of social science • cultural issues in interpersonal relationships, organizations, and the larger society; • communication processes in family and personal relationships; • uses of new media in organizations and the social uses/impacts of new comm technology. • Categorize the various career pathways for 	<p>The senior exit survey provides an indirect measure as it gauges student perceptions of effectiveness across several areas of our curriculum. It asks specifically about the breadth of knowledge gained through our curriculum, and the relevance of courses to personal life and career goals.</p>	<p>The argument and scholarship categories on the writing rubric assess student’s abilities to integrate discipline-specific conceptual knowledge into written argument.</p>		<p>Projects in the required research methods course provide the clearest site for assessing student knowledge and skills regarding the principles and practice of social science.</p>	<p>The alumni survey provides another indirect measure of perceptions of effectiveness. A core part of the survey asks how well the program prepared them for their personal and professional lives in nine different knowledge areas and eleven different skill areas connected to our curriculum.</p>

Student Learning Goals	<Measurement Tool>	<Measurement Tool>	<Measurement Tool>	<Measurement Tool>	<Measurement Tool>
students in Communication					
2. Communication skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing • public communication • Interpersonal and group communication • Adapt messages to the diverse needs of individuals, groups and contexts • Locate, evaluate and use information (information literacy) 	The exit survey asks specifically about the effectiveness of teaching public speaking and discussion skills, and writing skills	The writing rubric provides our most comprehensive measure of student writing. One area of the rubric (argument) addresses the use of outside supporting sources.	The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) assesses pre and post levels of communication apprehension in several contexts.		
3. Problem-solving skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to analyze and evaluate the claims and arguments made by others; • ability to analyze and synthesize information • ability to evaluate theory and to assess theory in light of data; • ability to make connections between theory and practice in a variety of contexts • knowledge of research methods that are usable in academe and beyond. 	The exit survey also asks specifically about the effectiveness of teaching critical thinking skills	Two areas of the rubric (argument and scholarship) address several of the learning goals in this category		The research projects provide an opportunity to assess students' ability to analyze and synthesize information	

RESULTS and MODIFICATIONS

Learning Goal results	Modifications made to enhance learning
<p>Discipline-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UD Writing Rubric: The writing rubric measures <u>scholarship</u>—“the effective use of communication scholarship, concepts and theories to analyze data or sources” and <u>argument</u>—“claims are supported with accurate and credible evidence.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a five point scale, with “3” indicating “meets college expectations” students averaged 4.6 for Scholarship and 3.8 for Argument. • Exit survey: We did not administer the senior exit survey due to changes in the way graduate applications are processed at UM, staffing changes and COVID. • Alumni survey: We administered the Alumni Survey during F22 (See attached). 	<p>The writing rubric is one measure of how well students are able to apply discipline specific knowledge. While our scores indicate students meet expectations, we don’t have a good way of assessing differences between our various sub-disciplines. Furthermore, as discussed in more detail in the following section, our data collection for this assessment period was limited.</p> <p>The Alumni survey, administered in F22 in conjunction with the UM Alumni Association, did not have a great response rate (N = 10) despite multiple attempts to solicit feedback. In a contemporary society when people are asked to complete so many online evaluations, we need to rethink how we might better capture alumni feedback. That said, our survey provided some feedback as to how our graduates perceive the value of their Communication Studies degree across nine different knowledge areas and eleven different skills areas. On a five-point scale, we scored 4 or better on 19/20 items assessed. The lowest score (average of 3/5) was “Technological Skills (using various types of software).” This result is not unexpected given our curriculum content, but should provide at least a point for faculty conversation regarding whether or not we do want to incorporate more specific technological skills training in the future.</p> <p>The department recognizes that we do not have an overall assessment of discipline-specific knowledge and skills across our entire curriculum at the senior level. We’ve discussed some options to do so, but with three different options in the major, plus the general option, and two different certificate programs students may take significantly different paths through the major. In addition, we do not have a senior capstone-type course in which we could administer such an assessment. We plan to submit curriculum changes to ASCRC in February 2023 that will move us closer to establishing a senior capstone experience for our students.</p>

Learning Goal results	Modifications made to enhance learning
<p>and challenges incurred by our Graduate TAs who teach these public speaking courses.</p>	
<p>Problem-solving skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between spring of 2021 and spring of 2022 nine full undergraduate research projects were completed in COMX 460, one of which was submitted for presentation at the 2023 International Communication Association Conference and another of which will be submitted for presentation at the 2023 Northwest Communication Association Conference. 	<p>Upcoming curriculum changes starting in F23, will decrease our reliance on COMX 460: Research Methods as our common upper-division, project-based experience for our majors. As a result, we will need to identify other project-based and writing intensive courses at the 400-level to be sites for student assessment in this area in the future.</p>

FUTURE PLANS FOR CONTINUED ASSESSMENT

The key areas for future assessment are:

- 1). Our assessment plans for 2020/2022 were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and college-wide staffing changes/shortages. While we did collect some of the same data as from previous assessment periods, some of our data collection, for example our implementation of the writing rubric, was not as consistent as in previous periods. Furthermore, we were not able to engage in the new assessment activities that we envisioned in our last assessment report. Given this disruption, our first goal for the next evaluation period is to establish better structures and mechanisms for consistently implementing our current assessment tools.
- 2) Our second goal for this next assessment period is to evaluate the career readiness training of our graduates in conjunction with UM's ELEVATEU, career readiness program. Our plan involves:
 - a. Reviewing the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) competencies for career readiness

- b. Discussing and evaluating where we address these competencies in our curriculum
- c. Developing strategies to enhance student learning in certain career readiness competencies
- d. Evaluating potential assessment tools available through NACE
- e. Selecting and implementing a career competency assessment tool in one or more of our courses

3) Continue to integrate the nine learning outcomes developed by the National Communication Association to enhance our own

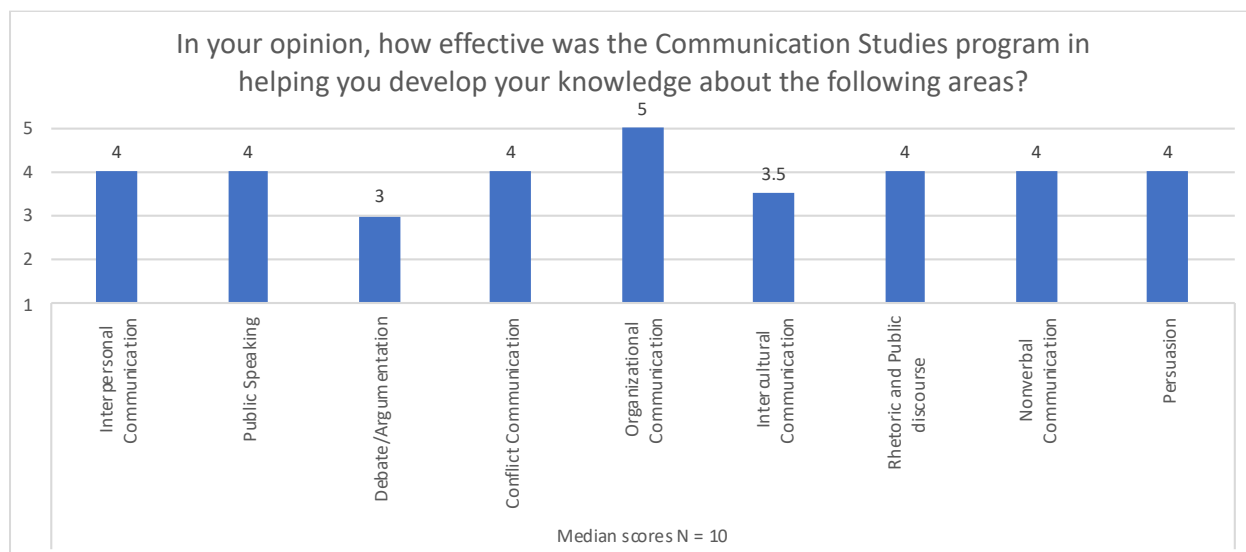
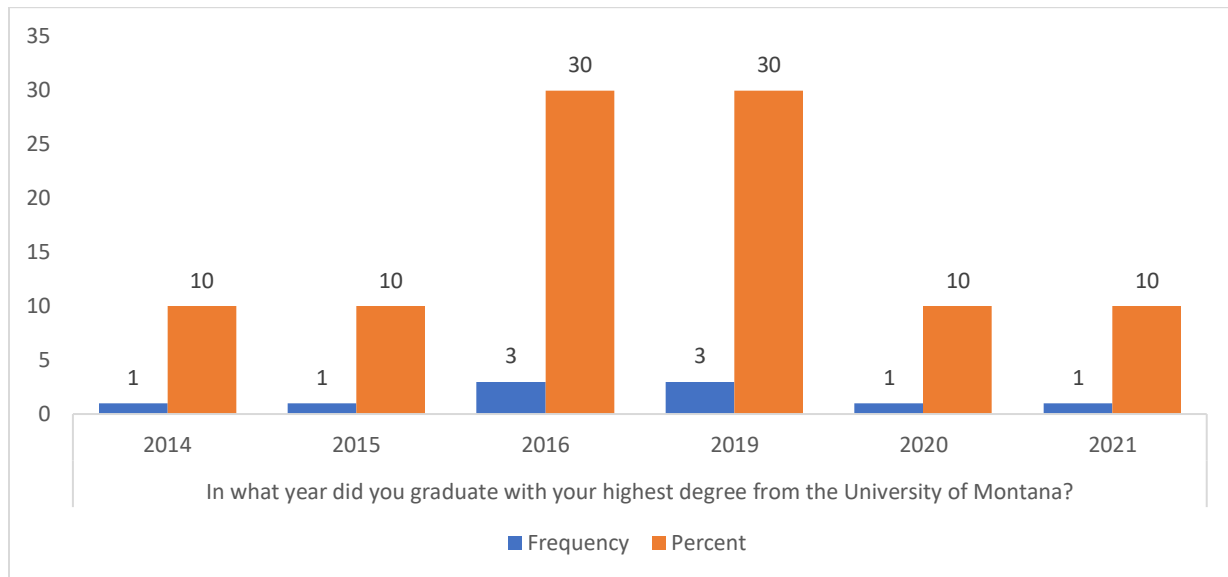
4) identifying practical ways of assessing student learning in the core content areas of the discipline and, especially, identifying 400-level courses to use for the measurement of “problem-solving skills.”

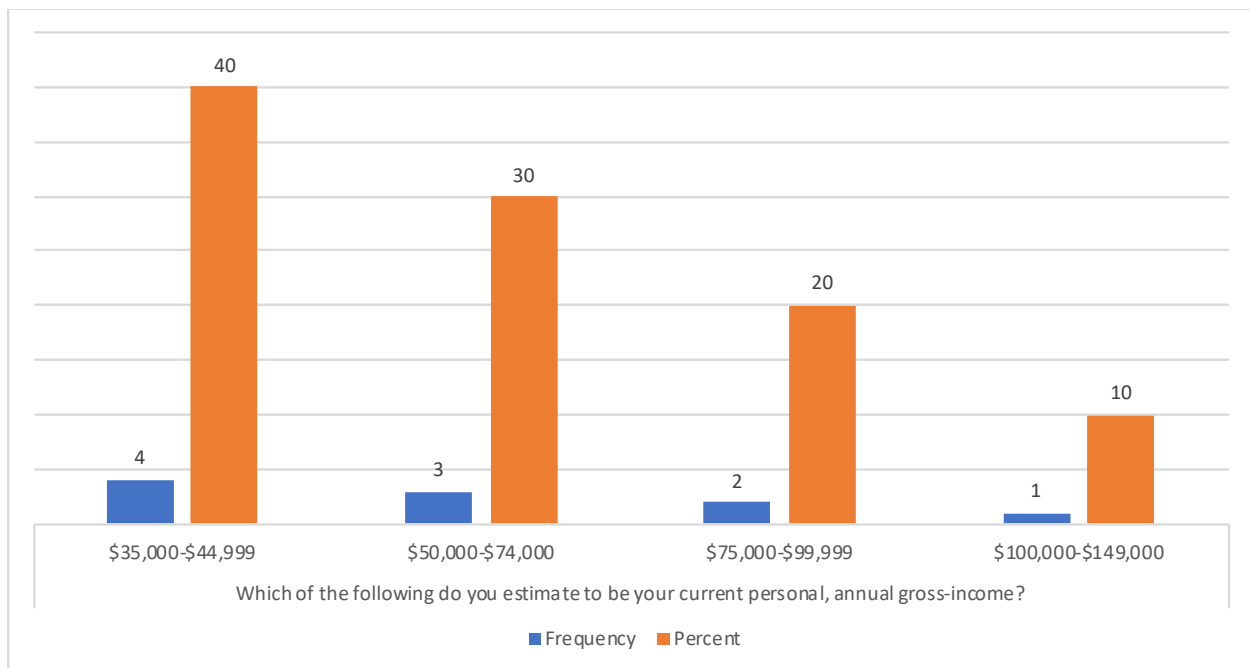
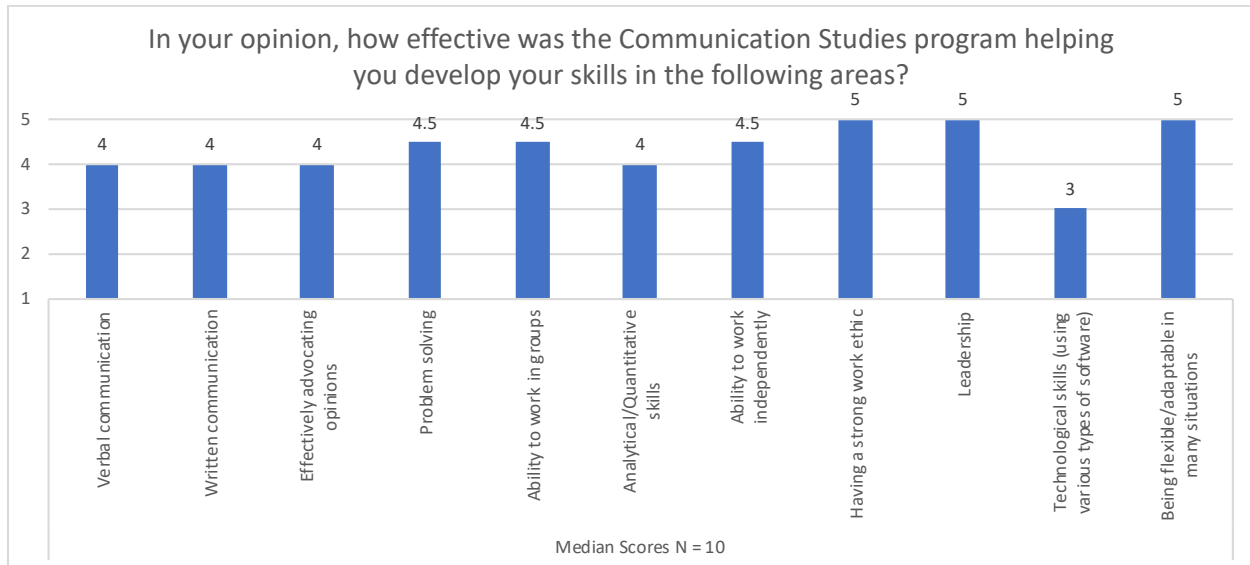
5). Reinstigate the consistent use of the PRAC each spring semester to collect data and to use the data from the PRAC to improve public speaking training.

APPENDICIES

1. Curriculum Map
2. Alumni Survey Results
3. Writing Assessment Rubric

Communication Studies Department Assessment Data, Collected December 2022





Which aspects of the Communication Studies Program did you find most positive or useful? (Undergraduates only)

1. Able to customize (to an extent) what you need/want to learn about. Keeps you engaged and interested in the content and allows to build skills and explore individual passions. All classes apply to real world issues and topics and can be adapted to create a career that fits the individual.
2. I feel like I left the program being able to speak and write effectively and persuasively. I think a particular strength of the education I receive was learning to evaluate information critically and form opinions of my own.

3. I found the risk and crisis classes the most effective in my day to day work along with my interpersonal training.
4. The program is easy to tailor to your passions. I was drawn to the nonprofit courses offered under organizational communication. While my fellow students were able to tailor toward business, journalism, etc. The ability to cross-learn with other fields of study allow for the program to meet the needs and interests of everybody.
5. Joel Iverson's courses on organizational communication, Greg Larson's course on conflict in communication, and Betsy Bach's course on communication training were all extremely helpful and relevant to my work as an organizational development consultant. I primarily work with public sector and nonprofit governing boards, facilitating board and executive evaluations. My dissertation work is on community college governing board effectiveness, and I can clearly see ways in which my coursework in Comm Studies is connected to that present project.

Which aspects of the Communication Studies program could have been better for you? (Undergraduates only)

1. I loved all the professors but would love to have more teachers and instructors to add a larger and more diverse perspective across areas.
2. I don't think that any student's major department can be responsible for every aspect of their education -- with that in mind I think COMX delivered some of the most valuable aspects of my college experience. But, for example, I certainly experienced a lot of leadership development through other campus activities. That was also a pivotal part of my experience at UM. However, I don't view it as something COMX could have done better. I'm satisfied with the role COMX filled and I don't necessarily think the department needs to address every educational need for each student
3. Research methods came too late. It was hard for me to contextualize it within the major more broadly. Having it come earlier (like I think it did for the UM's psych major at the time) would have been really helpful.

What aspects of the graduate program did you find to be most positive or useful? (Graduates only)

1. I really loved the COMX graduate program. Felt very connected and supported by my peers and professors. I got to learn about things that interested me most and improved skills like writing, teaching, facilitation, collaborating, and researching that I use every day.
2. Seminars were a wonderful way to sharpen the way I process complex information/ideas and synthesize them verbally and in writing. Research skills generally are also really useful in managing information outside of academic contexts. I think the most significant

gift I received from the COMX program at both the undergraduate and graduate level is learning to be a better thinker and effectively communicate ideas verbally and in writing. Those skills matter in any context.

What areas of the graduate program could have been better for you? (Graduates only)

1. Nothing. I loved my experience.
2. I don't really have any academic or cultural criticisms of the department, the program and professors were wonderful. I think in retrospect I felt a lot of pressure to pursue outside paid work since the TA stipend was difficult to live on and I was trying to avoid less ideal financial decisions (like student loans or credit card debt). I know TA pay is a College-wide problem that COMX doesn't specifically control, but a more livable stipend would have gone a long way for me in avoiding taking on too much.

Department of Communication Studies

Writing Assessment Rubric

The following rubric was developed by COMM faculty for the purpose of assessing writing among upper-division students in the major.

The baseline is whether the essay meets faculty expectations for the writing level of a college graduate. An essay that meets these expectations should merit a 3 across all categories.

- 5 = Significantly exceeds expectations
- 4 = Exceeds expectations
- 3 = Meets expectations
- 2 = Below expectations
- 1 = Significantly below expectations

THESIS: Stated clearly, developed throughout the essay	5	4	3	2	1
STRUCTURE: Well-organized, develops logically, uses transitions appropriately	5	4	3	2	1
ARGUMENT: claims are supported with accurate and credible evidence	5	4	3	2	1
SCHOLARSHIP: effective use of communication scholarship, concepts, and theories to analyze data or sources	5	4	3	2	1
STYLE: adheres to basic rules of mechanics and grammar; appropriate voice and vocabulary for intended audience; uses APA or MLA accurately	5	4	3	2	1

Semester: _____

Developed October 2011