

# Youngstown State University

## Annual Report on the Degree Program Assessment of Student Learning

September 2007

Department: **Communication**

Degree Program Covered By This Report: **BA in Communication Studies**

College: **Fine and Performing Arts**

List the learning outcomes covered by this report (by number and description)

### Learning Outcome 1:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of communication theories.

### LO<sub>1</sub>: Cognitive test data to date:

Group Statistics

	COURSE	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCORE	1530	135	22.6000	5.79011	.49833
	4899	65	25.5692	5.27959	.65485

$$t = -3.49 \text{ (} df = 198, p < .001 \text{)}$$

These data indicate a significant difference between cognitive exam results, pre- and post- test. Further analysis should be conducted to determine specific areas that need improvement.

### Learning Outcome 2:

Students will demonstrate basic competence in public speaking.

### LO<sub>2</sub>: Public speaking skills assessment data to date:

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	SPK2645 (pretest)	2.4000	15	.73679	.19024
	SPK4899 (posttest)	3.1133	15	.61513	.15883

$$t = -3.95 \text{ (} df = 14, p < .001 \text{)}$$

**These data show that our students improve significantly with regard to public speaking skill, with entering students scoring a C on average, and graduating seniors scoring above a B on average. Scores among seniors also deviated less than entering students. Further analysis indicates that common strengths include dynamism, extemporaneous delivery, nonverbal elements, and organization of ideas. One common weakness noted is the presence of vocalized pauses. This should receive more attention in skills instruction.**

**Learning Outcome 3:**

Students will gain competence in group communication.

**LO3: Self-reported competence gain in group communication to date:**

**Anonymous self-report narratives indicate that all students felt that their communication coursework resulted in greater competence in small groups, including member and leader responsibilities, listening and decision-making (detailed responses on file).**

**Learning Outcome 4:**

Students will gain competence in interpersonal communication.

**LO4: Self-reported competence gain in interpersonal communication to date:**

**Anonymous self-report narratives indicate that all but one student felt that their communication coursework resulted in greater competence in interpersonal relationships. Comments indicated that most students felt as if they have improved in many specific skills, and numerous students also mention that they are more aware of communication skill, feel more confident and clear when communicating, and feel that their personal relationships have benefited from instruction (detailed responses on file).**

**Together, these data support the idea that we are achieving our learning outcomes. Our students gain: knowledge of communication theory and concepts, public speaking skill, and greater awareness and competence in interpersonal and group settings.**

**This year's exit interview data indicated additional strengths and weaknesses (highlights of student statements):**

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**The Major**

Students love this major, their peers, and the faculty. They advise their friends, especially those majoring in business, to change to communication. They find the culture in communication studies to be "like a family:" warm, friendly, where "everyone knows your name." They report that everyone, including students, is friendlier here. They feel a sense of comfort in communication; one student said he feels like he's "home" when

entering Maag basement. “Students know each other,” and “the major makes sense” were two notable comments.

They said that they learned more from our courses than they did from other courses, as well. For example, in other classes across campus, small group work consists of gluing together independent projects at semester’s end. In communication studies, people actually learn to work in groups. They all felt that course content is extremely useful. One student remarked that when giving a presentation in another course, the professor asked what his major was. When he said “communication,” the professor said, “I can tell.”

If they had to do it over, they would again choose this major (one remarked that she wished she would have selected the major much earlier). It is also nice that our class sizes are small, even in the basic course.

#### Specific Feedback on Courses:

Students gave positive feedback regarding Communication Theory (1530) because it provided an *overview to the discipline*. Strong support emerged for *hands-on, applied* courses such as interviewing and computer-mediated communication. In both courses, practical skills and outcomes were realized (such as interview skills or web page development). Service learning projects were also favored, for example, in the small group course. Students did not enjoy courses that lacked an applied focus. Theory-heavy, text-heavy courses (org comm was mentioned) were not seen as positively.

#### **Career**

Students felt that communication would be very helpful in their career pursuits. They are planning careers in event planning, music, sales, and politics or law. They offered the following suggestions:

- Students should be required to register with Career Services.
- Guest speakers (like those in spring 07) who could assist students in career networking should be a usual occurrence.

#### **Assessment Outcomes/Changes based on recent feedback:**

**We have partnered with Volunteer Services Agency to infuse greater opportunities for service learning into our curriculum.**

**We have decided to more strategically integrate APA writing style into the curriculum.**

**We encourage students to see communication studies faculty members for advisement, and plan to share information regularly with the Dean’s office staff. Description sheets containing information about the tracks and associated career directions, suggested minors, and ideas for graduate school: updated and appear on website. Course rotation is now posted on dept. website.**

**A curriculum committee has been put in place to review syllabi with the purpose of reducing redundancy in topics and assignment types.**

**We plan to invite a speaker to meet with us about travel abroad possibilities.**

**We put more major courses on the schedule for Summer 08.**

**Career Services will have a role in Comst 1530 (cornerstone course).**

**We will discuss a “communication week” event to be held in the spring.**

**On file:**

**Student portfolios (speaking samples)**

**Portfolio assessment data**

**Exit interview summaries (written and spoken)**

**Communication Knowledge test data**