

**Comprehensive Program Review (2020)**  
**Department of Communication**  
**Georgia State University**  
**July 2020**

The following programs are critical to the institutional mission and thus **MEET** the institution's criteria for retention:

**Bachelor of Arts with a major in Journalism (09040100)**

**Bachelor of Arts with a major in Speech Communication (09010101)**

**COMM Undergraduate Programs**

Not including Film and Theater (FLMTH), COMM graduates an average of 316 students per year. While the numbers have fluctuated, both COMM majors are healthy:

- BA Journalism: JOU granted 249 BA's in FY2016, 262 in 2017, and 257 in 2018;
- BA Speech Communication: SPCM had 44 in FY2016, 73 in 2017, and 63 in 2018.

Four-year retention and graduation rates for juniors are higher than CAS averages. The 4-year retention/graduation rates based on the fall 2014 cohort were:

- BA Journalism: 90%/89%
- BA Speech Communication: 74%/69%.

Recent reconfiguration of both majors was intended to speed student progress toward graduation and match professional trends in related fields. During the last year of the review period, COMM generated 23,239 lower-division credit hours and 15,964 upper-division credit hours

**Applicable Action Steps (see Appendi)**

1. Action step 1.c)
2. Action step 3, all components
3. Action step 4.a), 4.b), 4.c), 4.d), 4.e)

**Master of Arts with a major in Communication (09010101)**

**Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Communication Studies (09010101)**

**COMM Graduate Programs**

Although the total size of the COMM graduate program decreased significantly – by about onethird – after Film and Theater (FLMTH) departed in 2017, enrollment within particular concentrations remained steady over the review period.

- **MA Communication:** The M.A. program enrolled 34 students in fall 2015, 43 in 2016, and 34 in 2017 .. During the review period, COMM graduated an annual average of 21 M.A. students. Four-year graduation/retention rates for the fall 2014 cohort M.A. programs were 71%/86%. The new M.A. concentration in Digital Media Strategies has already been successful enough in attracting students that the ratio of graduate to undergraduate students has remained steady, even without M.A. FLMTH students. M.A. students received annual stipends, between \$6,000-\$9,000.
- **PhD Communication:** the Ph.D. program enrolled 51 in fall 2015, 55 in 2016, and 54 in 2017. COMM graduated an annual average of 9 Ph.D. students. The average Ph.D. student took 6.7 years to degree. For doctoral programs, using the fall 2012 cohort, the 6-year graduation/retention rates were 30%/60%. All admitted fulltime Ph.D. students are awarded funding at \$15,000, renewable annually; approximately 10 doctoral students were funded via 2CI TCVE fellowships at \$22,000, renewable annually. The Ph.D. funding levels are low among CAS departments, below those of other peer institutions, despite the GSU students' greater workload.

**Applicable Action Steps (see Appendix)**

1. Action step 1.c)
2. Action step 2, all components
3. Action step 4.d), 4.e), 4.f).

Provost/VPAA Signature and Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Provost/VPAA's Designee Signature and Date

  
7/30/20

**Appendix: Georgia State University  
Department of Communication  
ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW ACTION PLAN (2019)**

The Department of Communication conducted its last Academic Program Review in 2009. Over the next eight years, the Department grew dramatically, both in its number of students and credit-hour generation. In the last several years, however, it has undergone an important reformation, facing significant challenges and benefitting from unique opportunities associated with the following University changes: the 2016 creation of a new College of the Arts; the 2015 partnership with Georgia Public Broadcasting which resulted in the creation of GSU-TV; the 2015 creation of the interdisciplinary Global Studies Institute (GSI) and Creative Media Industries Institute (CMII); and the 2016 consolidation with Perimeter College. Most notably, with the relocation of the Film/Moving Image Studies and Theater programs to the College of the Arts on July 1, 2017, the Department of Communication was re-established as a “new” academic unit, after being reduced in size and resource allocation by about a third, as part of the implementation of the University’s 2011-2016 strategic plan.

**Status of Action Items from Prior Review:** No action plan was developed or approved as part of our last Academic Program Review. In addition, so much has changed in the Department since its last self-study that most proposed action items are no longer applicable and thus cannot guide the development of this action plan. Since that last review, however, Communication has achieved several notable milestones:

- It updated its curriculum, especially its undergraduate Journalism program, reflecting the multimedia and cross-platform nature of modern Journalism, and enhanced its focus on faculty research scholarship dealing with new and emerging media issues.
- It facilitated the creation of CMII through fund-raising initiatives by departmental faculty, which resulted in a \$22.8 million gift from the James Cox Jr. Foundation.
- It took steps to strengthen its graduate curriculum, as well as its programmatic processes, such as its comprehensive examinations.
- It streamlined its undergraduate Speech Communication major through the elimination of programmatic tracks.
- It updated and enhanced Journalism facilities and equipment (though this action item has been complicated by the division of the Department).

**Major Findings in the Current Review:** Despite the Department’s reconfiguration during the review period, the external reviewers noted that the Department continues to make significant scholarly contributions to the field, to maintain high quality graduate and undergraduate programs, and to offer students (of all levels) real world experience that will enhance their career opportunities. The most significant and actionable conclusions are:

1. **Research Productivity:** External reviewers and the APRC report agree that Communication faculty are accomplished and productive, especially in securing external funding and publishing their research in top scholarly journals and in respected academic and university presses. Both agree that faculty productivity exceeds that of our peers and aspirational peers. Grant support, however, may be negatively influenced by the loss of faculty and the changing priorities in funding agencies.

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**Department of Communication**  
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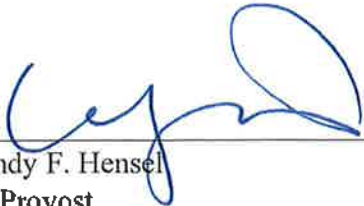
2. **Graduate Program Quality & Viability:** Doctoral and M.A. programs have strength in numbers of students enrolled and graduating, as well as in the diversity of the student body at all levels. APRC reports these programs to be steady in enrollment and the new M.A. concentration to be successfully attracting students. As the technological side of the field of Communication continually advances, the external reviewers noted that current curricular revisions must continue to build on strengths and fill in gaps. Additionally, the Department needs to develop a clearer identity for its graduate programs and should revisit assistantship models, funding levels, and workloads. We also identified the need to streamline the doctoral curriculum to encourage interdisciplinary work and eliminate specializations that no longer relate to faculty expertise.
3. **Undergraduate Program Quality & Viability:** As the external reviewers note, “Although it is somewhat unusual to find Journalism and Speech Communication programs within the same academic department, the GSU Department of Communication has been successful in ensuring the quality of both programs and encouraging a culture in which both programs make valuable contributions to the Department’s mission.” APRC notes that the majors are healthy in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.
4. **College-to-Career Experiences, Cross-Disciplinary and Outside Collaborations:** The Department’s primary effort at synchronizing departmental instructional experiences with industry needs, while at the same time adapting industry measures of excellence to instructional contexts, is GSU-TV. Its instructional model involving professors of practice working with students to create broadcast-quality content, without TV station ownership costs and responsibilities, is a success. Students, working with industry professionals, have won 1 Southeastern Emmy Award and 1 international Telly Award in 2018, and 2 Emmys and 3 Tellys in 2019. The external reviewers describe GSU-TV as “a jewel,” but worry its “shoe-string” operation limits its ability to innovate and grow.

**Action Steps for the Coming Cycle:** These actionable findings (above) can be divided into four areas or categories of challenge and opportunity: 1) the Department’s scholarship and its research reputation; 2) the Department’s graduate programs, 3) the Department’s undergraduate programs, and 4) the Department’s college-to-career experiences and collaborative relationships. Action steps below are listed chronologically:


1. The Department will foster stronger and more trans-disciplinary research.
  - a) The Department chair will supply summer research funding to incentivize faculty project development (AY2019-2020 and ongoing).
  - b) The Department P&T Committee will review the Department’s P&T guidelines to identify and develop new metrics relating to trans-disciplinary research to encourage and measure outcomes of such research (AY2019-2020).
  - c) The Department chair will encourage faculty to develop grant proposals that create opportunities for students to participate in faculty research projects around such foci as health communication, media portrayals & effects, visual communication, and strategic communication (AY2020-2021 and ongoing).
  - d) The Department chair will use “indirects” from existing grants to help faculty develop proposals that will include proposed faculty hires with multi-disciplinary research programs (e.g., NextGen) (AY2023-2024).
2. The Department will enhance graduate education.
  - a) The Department will increase doctoral student stipends to \$18,000 annually through

- departmental budget redirection annually (AY2019-2020 and reviewed annually).
- b) The Graduate Committee will reorient the doctoral program by developing proposals to eliminate doctoral program tracks (AY2019-2020).
  - c) The Graduate Committee will reorient the doctoral program by revising the required and elective course structure to clarify the Department's scholarly identity (AY2020-2021).
  - d) The Associate Graduate Director for the Digital Media Strategies M.A. concentration, in consultation with the faculty and Department chair, will revise the M.A. concentration's curriculum to meet industry needs and trends (AY2021-2022).
  - e) The Associate Graduate Director for the Digital Media Strategies M.A. concentration, in consultation with the faculty and Department chair, will create an advisory board of metropolitan Atlanta media professionals to advise the curricular revision process and to mentor students (AY2022-2023).
3. The Department will enhance undergraduate education.
    - a) The Department will open its JOUR 4030 (Practicum) to Journalism majors in the Public Relations concentration to enable them to benefit from the Department's Signature Student Experience (AY2019-2020).
    - b) The Department will review online instruction, including success measures for courses taught in past three years and potential courses and programs that could be taught online. These results will inform plans to increase and improve online instruction (AY2019-2020).
    - c) The Undergraduate Committee will review the undergraduate curriculum to streamline offerings in order to reduce time to graduation (AY2019-2020).
    - d) The Department will establish an enrollment management system for JOUR 4030 to improve instructional quality with limited resources and to guarantee that the best students are able to benefit from the experience (AY2019-2020).
    - e) The departmental Undergraduate Directors, new Public Relations (PR) Lecturer, and Undergraduate Committee will examine the benefits of seeking accreditation for our PR concentration (AY2020-2021).
  4. The Department will develop collaborative relationships inside and outside the University to prepare our students for specific career paths (through college-to-career QEP alignment plans).
    - a) The new Lecturer in PR will revitalize the student organization, Public Relations Student Society of America and connect students to PR professionals as mentors (AY2019-2020).
    - b) Speech Communication faculty will revise the undergraduate curriculum to identify and target specific career paths more clearly (AY2019-2020).
    - c) The Department faculty search committee will work with the College of Public Health and the CDC in finding applicants for and filling our tenure-track International Health Communication position (AY2019-2020).
    - d) Graduate directors, undergraduate directors, and PR staff will work with the College to systematically collect information from alumni and showcase on our website (AY2020-2021).
    - e) Journalism faculty, especially those associated with our Digital Media Strategies M.A. concentration, will work with English and CMII on podcasting instruction, experience, and dissemination (AY2023-2024).

Signatures:

  
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Dr. Wendy F. Hensel  
Interim Provost

9/7/19  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Sara T. Rosen  
Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

8/29/19  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Gregory C. Lisby  
Chair, Department of Communication

8/29/19  
Date

