UCC Program Review Committee summary of review

Program – School of Communication Studies

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- B.S.in Communication (for regional campus students)
- B.S.in Communication
- B.S.in Communication (Honors Tutorial College)
- Minor in Communication Studies
- Political Communication Certificate
- M.A. Communication Studies
- M.A. Organizational Communication
- Ph.D. Communication Studies

Recommendation

This program is found to be viable, see report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

Date of last review – AY 2008

Date of this review – AY 2014

This review has been sent to program director, his comments are attached.

This review has been sent to program college dean, his comment is included in the director’s response.

This review has been sent to graduate council, their comment is attached.
Ohio University School of Communication Studies
Report of the Program Review Committee
May, 2015

Internal Committee Members: Dorothy Sack (Geography), Alycia Stigall (Geol Sciences)
External Committee Member: Michael Hecht, Penn State University

Methods: The committee examined the extensive internal report and school website. We then spent over 11 hours in individual and group discussions with faculty (17 Group 1; 1 Group 2), graduate students (approximately 20), undergraduate students (3), staff (2), the director of the school and dean of the college. The report is based on our analysis of these data.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The OU School of Communication Studies successfully serves a very large number (500) of undergraduate majors and a well-enrolled doctoral program on the Athens campus. The online master’s program, administered from a branch campus, is directed toward nonacademic professionals. The faculty consists of dedicated, thoughtful, and accomplished teachers and researchers from a very wide range of subspecialties, who individually strive to teach and mentor undergraduate and graduate students to the best of their considerable ability, and to sustain a record of high-quality research. By spanning the gamut from social science to humanities, the School provides a broad base of opportunities for its students and others in the College. Organizing the COMS subdisciplines into three areas of programmatic concentration at the doctoral level creates some challenges, such as striving to maintain numerical balance of students and course offerings in each concentration. Overall, the doctoral program would benefit from the School revisiting how it packages at least one of the three areas of concentration, by developing a two- or three-year plan for graduate course offerings to ensure adequate course coverage for each concentration, and by increasing graduate stipend amounts. The School appears to have very effective leadership in place and this figures prominently in our overall positive evaluation.

COMMITTEE RESPONSES TO PROGRAM REVIEW QUESTIONS

SECTION 1: OVERALL QUESTIONS

A. Is the current number and distribution of faculty sufficient for overall mission?
   1. The number of the Group I faculty appears appropriate to the School’s mission, provided that upcoming retirements are replaced with Group I faculty hires. An additional Group II faculty hire could help the school better cope with the high demands from undergraduate major and service courses. Group II faculty also could help bridge the gap between the theoretical foci of Group I faculty and student needs, and promote increased opportunities for individualized learning opportunities, such as internships, although many of the Group I faculty are clearly adept at these linkages.
   2. Given the demands of serving both a very large undergraduate student body and a multi-focused doctoral program it may be very difficult for the School to achieve the goal, expressed by some faculty, of becoming one of the premier doctoral programs. The de facto goal of being among the best comprehensive and balanced programs instead plays to the strengths of the School and recognizes the difficulty of competing with the very best
research-focused doctoral programs. The School clearly excels at the mission of training scholars who balance teaching and research, with the occasional outlier who aspires to and achieves placement in a top tier research intensive program (e.g., the recent placement at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill).

3. Given the goal of maintaining excellent comprehensive undergraduate and doctoral programs, future readjustment of faculty areas of expertise may be in order. The School currently has an adequate number of faculty members in the Rhetoric and Public Culture (graduate) and Public Advocacy (undergraduate) groups. However, the other areas of curricular specialization are probably underserved—especially if the concentration in Relating and Organizing, an amalgam, is broken into its constituent elements of Interpersonal Communication, Organizational Communication, and possibly Intercultural Communication. Moreover, coverage of quantitative methods, while improved by recent hires, needs to be augmented further to adequately support this component of advanced doctoral training. Despite the recent hires, as well as available resources in cognate disciplines on campus (e.g., Education), some aspects of quantitative methodological expertise (i.e., statistical analysis) to support training doctoral students at the highest levels needs to be bolstered. This is particularly acute in the health area where advanced skills are needed for external funding.

B. Is level of faculty research, service, and creative activity appropriate to size and resources? Is level of external funding appropriate?

1. The faculty are producing research at a level commensurate with the overall size and demands of the School and program. As is true for almost any school or department faculty productivity varies somewhat from individual to individual. The School boasts a number of high achievers, and all are research-active. Some of the faculty are having a high level of impact on the field, shaping the direction of theory and research. A number of the recent hires have established impressive records with promise for external funding. Turnover, primarily among the pre-tenure faculty, has created some instability in the program, particularly among Relating and Organizing faculty, but also in the Health area. The review committee attributes these faculty departures mainly to individualistic choices rather than a systematic issue within the School. The overall quality of the faculty, particularly those using rhetorical and qualitative methods, is comparable to that at many of the very best doctoral programs.

2. While not all research requires external support to maximize impact, the scope and impact of research in the social science subfields as well as the public advocacy component of the humanities part of the field could benefit from continued and expanded efforts to obtain external support. The recent gift for the Institute for Creative Storytelling highlights this promise and the School is to be congratulated on this achievement and opportunity.

3. Level of travel support seems adequate, but we suggest that funds earmarked for travel be deployed with more flexibility so that some of those funds might be used for other forms of research support. Efforts to increase the amount of support should be pursued to further enhance these efforts.

C. Are faculty involved in adequate and appropriate types of service?

1. COMS faculty maintain a commendable involvement in demanding service obligations particularly to the university and discipline. Departmental committee assignments rotate on a regular basis.

2. The School rewards service to the discipline. For example, faculty can receive grad student assistance with journal editorships. However, the size of this effort seems somewhat
disproportionate to other areas (e.g., service to the community, research productivity, grants).

D. Does school have appropriate financial resources?
   1. COMS faculty seem generally satisfied with the current level and distribution of funding, but the program review committee suggests some changes.
      - Graduate recruitment, training, and placement: Linking graduate research funds to graduate travel and requiring it be spread over two semesters invites students to put too much time into numerous conference presentations. Allowing students to spend more on a single, key conference as well as broadening the scope to allow funds to support research (e.g., participant fees and other special research needs) would increase their impact. Support for recruitment and placement seems to be appropriate.
      - Faculty research support: Although at first glance the amount of start-up funds seems relatively generous (although less than some Big Ten universities with whom OU may be competing for top hires), those funds must cover the hire’s first three years of travel. We could find no assistant professors who were able to use start-up funds to directly support research through activities such as participant incentives.
      - Hiring and retention: As noted above, faculty turnover in two areas has been disruptive. While the causes are not certain, multiple faculty attributed the moves to personal reasons.
      - Staff: 2.0 FTE is probably typical for a faculty of this size at Ohio University, but is small for School of this size when compared to peers in more research-intensive environments. For example, it is not clear how the staff would accommodate a large influx of external funding.
   2. The School’s new facilities at the Schoonover Center, to be occupied this summer, should be an important asset. While the committee only saw plans, the new space, proximity to other Schools in the college, and co-location of faculty and staff should enhance school activities and interactions.

SECTION 2: UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

Unfortunately, only 3 undergraduates participated in our discussions and two of them were first-year students. We base our findings in part on these discussions, but relied heavily on report data, faculty interviews, and the School website.

A. Is COMS fulfilling its educational service role to non-majors?
   The school appears to be doing an excellent job balancing the demands of its service courses. Lower division COMS courses attract a large number of students from most, if not all, OU colleges. Faculty recognize their crucial role in providing a liberal arts education, as well as practical skills training, within the College of Communication. The curriculum appears to accommodate this service mission appropriately and well, and, in fact, is designed to do so.

B. Is the program attracting majors likely to succeed? Is it the right size? Diverse?
   The program appears to be attracting a large and talented group of students and doing an effective job educating them. The students we spoke with were very positive about their educational experiences, including both classes and advising. Indicators are equally positive. With 500 majors, the School is more than meeting its obligations and should other demands increase (e.g., external funding, service to the community) may wish to rethink the size of the major. We are pleased to see that the director is developing new initiatives to improve tracking of its graduates and staying in touch with a broader base of its alumni. In addition, both data and student comments speak to the need for greater national, ethnic, and gender diversity among majors. One student suggested that this could be addressed through more aggressive recruitment overall. A plan for targeted recruitment of under-represented groups would be welcomed.
SECTION C: B.

C. Does curriculum provide majors with background for careers or graduate school?
Yes, it balances theoretical/liberal arts content with practical skills training. The presence of capstone courses is particularly important.

D. Are resources and distribution of faculty adequate?
Faculty discussed how the competing demands of a liberal education that is practical could be addressed in the future since the practical nature of some of the courses (e.g., interviewing) does not always match tenure-line faculty research interests. Possible approaches to this issue include greater attention to thematically aligning the techniques courses with faculty interests and expertise (e.g., having a course in Organizational Socialization and Membership) or increasing the number of Group II faculty. The latter strategy has been adopted to date.

E. Are pedagogical practices appropriate? Is teaching properly assessed?
Overall, the answer to these questions is positive, although faculty teaching is not currently observed after tenure and online course offerings appear limited. Maintaining quality teaching, however, is obviously very important to the School. Graduate assistants, who contribute significantly to teaching at the lower division level, appear to be well mentored and well prepared by the School for their teaching responsibilities.

F. The exceptions to this overall level of effectiveness are the heavy advising load, lack of online course offerings, and need for greater diversity among undergraduate majors. The heavy undergraduate advising load carried by each faculty member is to some extent unavoidable because of the very large number of majors. The School is encouraged to consider strategies, such as group DARS-advising sessions, for reducing some of the time spent on undergraduate advising, which necessarily detracts from time spent on research and graduate student mentorship.

SECTION 3: GRADUATE PROGRAM
A large group of graduate students attended our session and appeared very committed to the program. At the same time, they raised a number of important issues that are summarized below. We based our conclusions on these, interviews, interviews with faculty, and published materials.

A. Is program attracting quality students? Is it a diverse group?
Graduate recruitment was mentioned to us numerous times as an area of concern and potential improvement. While students who matriculate are of high quality, the yield from each cohort’s group of first-round assistantship offers can be problematic. For example, only 4 of the 10 offers were accepted this year. Based on students who attended the discussion and the statistics, COMS graduate students appear to be a diverse group who fit the targeted balanced teaching/research profile.

B. Does curriculum prepare them for careers?
Numerous concerns were expressed about the graduate curriculum, which is slated for revision this next year. All students take a proscribed first-year sequence that provides an overview of certain general topics in theory and methods. Other than that sequence, the curriculum appears to need some improvement in structure and scheduling predictability. Very few basic graduate courses are offered for some areas of specialization. Instead, many courses offered are narrow, specialty courses based on faculty research interests, with broad, overviews often covered through independent studies. This not only limits research opportunities that one would expect to emerge from independent studies, but is inefficient. Students report considerable uncertainty about when courses important to their academic program will be offered, with the exception being those in health communication. Similarly, some faculty expressed concern that students are no longer getting the basics of their specializations, with the emphasis on theory and basic research methods. Students do feel well prepared in general
for teaching but receive few opportunities for upper level teaching, which could be a pedagogical decision on the part of the faculty but disadvantages students looking for teaching or teaching/research jobs. The committee observed gaps in the quantitative offerings, something that was remarked upon directly by graduate students. The current faculty may not be able to deliver this advanced training that social science students pursuing research careers will need.

C. Is there adequate advising and mentoring?
This is an area of serious concern. First, advising loads are very unevenly distributed and this disadvantages both faculty and students. In addition, while students expressed positive regard for their own advisors and faculty appear committed to the role, the system, itself, does not seem to serve them well. Graduate students are assigned a temporary advisor and pick a temporary committee for their first year. At the end of the first year, a program of study is finalized and preliminary exams completed. At this point the committee disbands and a new advisor and committee are not selected until sometime during the third year. Not only does this leave students without formal advising for a period of time, but it means that the permanent advisor and committee do not play a role in shaping the student’s academic program. In addition, during this indeterminate period and even beyond, some faculty appear to be competing for students, even to the point of “poaching” them from another advisor, a practice that makes the students very uncomfortable and may result in a mismatch between advisor and committee. Another unfortunate aspect of the process is that some faculty appear unwilling to serve together on committees, which not only puts graduate students in an awkward position, especially when being recruited, but does not serve them well. These issues were reported by both graduate students and some faculty (poaching, not serving together) along with concerns for the impact that these have on the students and program.

D. Are resources and distribution of faculty supporting program?
With the exception of issues surrounding advanced quantitative methods and overview courses, there appears to be adequate overall support.

E. Is financial support adequate?
The amount of the graduate student stipend could be a factor contributing to disappointing recruitment efforts. Other types of financial support provided to graduate students seem adequate overall, but it is not clear why funds are mandated to be used for travel and limited to a 50/50 split across semesters. In particular, some faculty expressed concern that this policy encourages students to attend so many conferences that it detracts from student efforts to submit papers for publication, which are more important for securing faculty positions in top-tier institutions upon completion of the degree. It also limits graduate students ability to conduct independent research.

F. Is teaching adequately assessed?
The committee felt this was done effectively.

G. What jobs do students get?
Students are getting mostly teaching-focused faculty positions, with an occasional research focused position (e.g., UNC Chapel Hill).

SECTION 4: AREAS OF CONCERN

A. Culture/climate
This was one of the major concerns articulated by faculty and graduate students. While by no means unanimously held, many believe that the culture favors an in-group, that there are cliques, and that differences and genuine discussion is stifled. A very small minority attributed part of the problem to relatively frequent turnover of Directors and Acting Directors in recent
history. More commonly, faculty who mentioned this issue expressed concern with the effects of this culture on group decision-making and the graduate program (see #2 below). There were reports that some faculty “bad mouth” others. Other faculty were adamant that the School’s culture is to “attack problems not each other” and to allow privacy, with the overall culture described as collegial, cooperative, and respectful. A symptom of this culture is that maintaining the superficial edifice of collegiality can retard substantive discussion for fear of reigniting former or background divisions within the School. The committee is convinced that this problem negatively impacts graduate students and is inhibiting the effectiveness of the graduate program.

B. Graduate Program Culture
There appear to be serious problems in the culture regarding the graduate program. This is one of the most serious concerns that arose during our talks. A large number of graduate students expressed concerns that some faculty recruit students away from other faculty (a practice known as “poaching”), and that some faculty are unwilling to serve on committees with other faculty members. Students are very uncomfortable with this, and these practices negatively impact their education. In addition, students report that they are rarely provided the opportunity to see their own papers and research through to a conclusion prior to the dissertation. As a result, they are unprepared for the dissertation and disadvantaged in the job market. Even faculty who see the overall culture as positive, were likely to comment on the need to set norms and expectations about engagement and participation for students. Some went so far as to suggest that the program needs to be more coherent and rigorous.

C. Graduate Student Voice
Graduate students feel that they have no voice except through a small number of faculty. In general, they feel the faculty are not interested in their views and they have no input into decisions that affect them directly. They pointed to the coming retreat focused on graduate issues and said they do not have a vehicle to provide input into these processes.

D. Graduate Student Cohort
The School averages 10 Ph.D. graduates per year, about 3 per research area. Some cohorts naturally experience attrition. If the school is now adding faculty expertise in social media, how will they support each of the areas with an adequate cohort of doctoral students?

E. Evaluation Process
In general, evaluation procedures appear appropriate. The school uses a small, but elected, “merit committee” to make faculty evaluation recommendations, which seems to function well. However, the use of a single year as the time frame for evaluation does not recognize the scope needed for larger initiative such as books, films, and grants. A three year moving average might serve the School better.

F. Bangkok Program
The future of the Bangkok program is uncertain with the recent retirement of Dr. McKerrow. Dr. Bates has assumed the liaison role and there are transitions occurring in their partner institution as well (i.e., changes in graduate program director and university president). This may provide opportunities for enhancing the program, which contributes to the internationalization of the curriculum.

G. Faculty Mentorship
Junior faculty do not have a clear mentoring system. While the promotion and tenure system is seen as humane and generous, assistant professors may not be getting the type of mentorship they need to excel.

SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS
A. Establish Strategic Goals

1. We recommend that the School establish a formal internal planning process that is transparent to faculty and provides for student input. The internal report and some interviews note the tendency to favor collegiality over conflict resolution. While a positive culture is rare and a valued resource, a process for regular strategic planning might facilitate progress.
   - Currently, retreats are being used for that planning process, but some faculty appear unclear about their structure and specific purpose. We recommend that the Director communicate this clearly to the faculty.
   - We recommend that some process be established to obtain graduate student input for the upcoming retreat focused on that program. One idea would be to conduct focus groups and/or allow anonymous input as part of the planning process. Another suggestion to consider is to schedule a breakfast at the retreat that includes students at which they could air their ideas and suggestions.
   - Another issue that should be dealt with soon is the desired balance between tenure and non-tenure line faculty. The presence of a promotional track for non-tenure line faculty may make this direction viable but the national trend in this direction is objectionable to some faculty. This decision could also impact the number and assignment of graduate teaching assistants. For example, increasing non-tenure faculty may free them up to teach something other than public speaking but could also reduce their overall number depending on funding.
   - We recommend that the School develop more clarity about the role of Group II faculty members present in the department. There appears to be some confusion about which departmental activities they are (or are not) considered equal participants with Group I faculty.
   - In addition, the public advocacy group should decide if it will practice advocacy or only study it. Community interventions to enhance local, state, and/or national (even international) discourse is one direction to be considered. Communication scholars, for example, have worked with local governments to improve decision making and states to deal with water rights issues and voter information. This requires active outreach in addition to critique.

2. “Relating and Organizing” is currently used as a covering label for “everything else”. This is not an efficient way to define a graduate specialty. Careful consideration of strategic directions is needed that balances undergraduate and graduate program needs with faculty expertise. Reconsidering departmental foci (or at least their labels) would be a useful component of the current program revisions.

3. The health program would benefit from at least one faculty with expertise in advanced quantitative methods, particularly those analyzing longitudinal data. If coursework were developed around these methodological issues it would probably draw students from cognate disciplines given the apparent absence of these methods among the social science faculty on campus.

4. It is not yet clear how the research area of social media will be infused into the curriculum. The faculty need to decide if this will become an additional area or be part of the existing emphases.

5. Although the attitude of continuing improvement of the graduate program is admirable, the specific goal expressed by several faculty of being a “premier” graduate program may not be realistic given the very large undergraduate program that must receive some focus in configuring faculty, lack of an in-house academic (as opposed to the online professional)
master’s program, desire for offering 3 areas of degree concentration with the current faculty size, current extent of staff support, current level of grant activity, teaching and service loads, and research support. This, of course, could be revisited in the future. Discussion of being a comprehensive program should consider competition within the discipline (e.g., Illinois, Penn State, Penn, USC).

6. We encourage COMS to further strengthen its engagement with other Schools in the College, seek a unified vision of itself for the future, and continue to develop an entrepreneurial spirit.

B. Revenue Enhancement. Revenue enhancement is a common theme throughout most of academia and the School is no different. Possible means for revenue enhancement include:

1. Increased attention to this issue by the Dean and Director, including developing more thorough strategies for maintaining contacts with alumni.
2. Increased online teaching.
3. Developing external certificate programs in areas like leadership, organizational change, health communication, etc.
4. Promote external grants by strategies such as:
   - Increased resources toward grant workshops and internal funding for pilot work.
   - Increased attention to grants in hiring, annual reviews, and promotion.
   - Reward grant submission with resources to conduct pilot work (e.g., as a percentage of proposed indirect cost recovery).

C. Workload

1. Advising
   - The hiring of a full-time staff advisor by the college has the potential to relieve faculty advising burden. It will be important to work out how this will impact student/teacher relationships. For example, will the staff advisor be responsible for undergraduate general studies requirements and faculty continue advising for major requirements and career directions? Will the advisor be involved in student recruitment, especially initiatives to diversify the undergraduate population?
   - Balance graduate advising among faculty (given placements, no need for more research active faculty to have heavier advising loads). Have an assigned advisor for doctoral students at all points in their graduate career.
2. Consider the balance of external service. Faculty records seem overly balanced in this direction compared to research and creative activity. This is especially true of service to professional organizations.
3. Reconsider the role of non-tenure line faculty.
   - Coverage of popular applied courses that do not match tenure-track faculty interests (e.g., training, event planning).
   - Modernizing curriculum by offerings in technology.
4. Reconsider faculty review process.
   - The period for annual review does not consider larger projects such as books and grants. Consider a 3-year running review cycle.

D. Culture/Climate
1. Faculty recognition system: Some of the faculty believe that their efforts are not adequately recognized. While not all faculty agree with this, the perception is common enough that it merits some attention. A system for recognizing faculty, short of named professorships, might be established. For example, the school might create yearly awards for teaching, research and creative activity, and service. Named professors would not be eligible and serve as the awards committee along with the previous year’s winners, who are also would be ineligible.

2. Faculty voice: Some people in the department believe that there is an in-group or clique whose voices are privileged. Since the graduate students also we believe this is a problem it probably merits some consideration. We suggest both formal and informal systems be established to facilitate input. Informally, the director might consider a “management-by-walking around” strategy to solicit input on a one-on-one basis. More formally, an elected advisory committee might be appropriate with proportional voting to promote minority voices. Whatever is done, the procedures must be transparent.

3. Direct conversations: Another strategy is to directly address issues of culture and voice. One way of approaching this would be for the Director to invite discussion with him and/or schedule a School-level discussion. This strategy is somewhat risky and may be facilitated by an outsider.

4. Collegial disagreement: Open disagreement among the faculty on departmental issues should not be equated by the faculty with a lack of collegiality. The notion of collegiality should include the willingness to openly discuss different views and different possible solutions, and to compromise to further the goals of the School.

5. Graduate program: Some of the people we interviewed remarked quite pointedly about the feeling that graduate student voices are not heard. They felt the role of the student attending faculty meetings was reduced to communicating faculty concerns to the other students rather than representing graduate student concerns. The School should consider setting aside some scheduled time for this student to communicate with the faculty and/or adding graduate students to the standing committees such as Curriculum, Technology, and Graduate.

6. Negotiating Change; The Director’s agenda to revise both graduate and undergraduate curricula is a major step forward. We encourage all faculty members to openly discuss possible changes as a group and to be open to compromise with each other on major points of disagreement.

7. Realism: The review committee recognizes that some level of dissatisfaction is not unusual and the school may just have to accept some level of discontent as human nature. Given the cost-benefit of taking action versus inaction, the current system may be preferable.

E. Undergraduate Program

1. The advising load on faculty is challenging the balance between different areas of emphasis (e.g., teaching, research, service). The hiring of a college professional advisor may alleviate this concern.

2. In revising the program consideration should be given to the wisdom of the 3 emphases or tracks. In making these decisions we recommend that the following elements be brought in line with each other.
   - The core courses do not match areas of emphasis
   - Emphases do not match department foci
   - Emphases need a course sequence.
• Students may need more flexibility in configuring their emphases. It is not clear if tracks is the best approach. An alternative might be to articulate pathways through the major that are constructed by configuring courses in creative ways.

3. The program needs to do a better job explaining career paths in health. Students seemed unaware of opportunities and the website does not adequately emphasize this segment of the market.

4. The school should consider how courses are named. Student input would be most helpful in this process. Faculty have a tendency to name courses after their foci; this may not be attractive to students.

5. The number of majors seem appropriate for departments of this size but growth beyond this would challenge the capacity for research active faculty if the current advising model is retained (all faculty, equal distribution). Planning for possible growth should be part of this process.

6. The School should develop strategies to increase ethnic diversity. The committee did not have adequate information about recruitment, although a move to a professional advisor might alleviate this concern.

7. Class sizes seem appropriate. An increased number of large, lecture classes may be needed if enrollment rises without an increase in faculty FTE.

8. The school is going to have to come to grips with the issue of matching undergraduate student interests in applied areas with faculty interests. A move to hire more Group II, non-tenure line faculty for organizational communication makes sense but the School will have to think about long term balance between tenure and non-tenure line faculty.

9. The School should consider strategies to increase out-of-class, individualized opportunities to enrich curriculum.
   • The need to increase internship and study abroad options has been recognized and is being addressed. This also may internationalize the curriculum.
   • The School is encouraged to take advantage of the OU Program to Aid Career Enhancement (PACE) and/or develop other means for involving undergraduate students in faculty research. An undergraduate research assistantship program might also be considered. Those involved could meet periodically as a group to share experiences and discuss issues that transcend individual projects.

10. The School should consider increasing online course offerings as a way to reach a wider audience and provide a wider range of courses. Certificate programs in areas such as leadership, organizational change, public advocacy, and health communication might be considered.

11. As the faculty considers future directions, consideration should be given to the costs and strain of innovation and new directions as well as the role of technology.

F. Graduate Program

1. Research opportunities should be enhanced, including research assistantships. This would allow OU to compete more successfully for the best students and also improve placements.

2. Consider other enhancements for recruiting students. For example, many Big Ten universities provide a semester release from teaching in the dissertation year and at some the load is 3 courses per year. Increased graduate stipends would likely also help in recruitment efforts.

3. Goals of program should be revisited. Unless there is a significant shifting of resources, competing to be a premier program is not realistic. The goal of being one of the top
comprehensive programs is more realistic, but there is still considerable competition (e.g., Illinois, Penn, USC, and Penn State).

4. The School should consider alleviating the uneven graduate advising load. Given the placement of most graduates in teaching-oriented positions, all students do not need to be advised by the most research active faculty. This may require intervention on the part of the Director or the Associate Director for Graduate Studies. If more formal policies are articulated, a limit on the number of advisees should be considered.

5. The internal report notes the need to consider a committee structure that best serves graduate students. Replacing the temporary advisor and committee prior to establishing the program of study and preliminary exams is preferable to the current system.

6. Increase the amount allocated to graduate travel to enhance competitiveness for better students and support professional development. Consider allowing these funds to be used for a variety of research purposes and, if used for travel, be applied to a single trip. These changes would address the concerns about graduate students presenting too many oral papers and not converting them into articles.

7. Requiring public speaking teaching of new graduate students may be inhibiting recruitment, especially in the social sciences. The school should explore options for providing opportunities for teaching in their specialties. This might come through increased online teaching, hiring more Group II faculty to teach the basic course, or other strategies.

8. The school should explore post-doctoral opportunities for the best doctoral students. These positions allow the development of research skills and records prior to the tenure clock and are common in many social science and humanities disciplines.

9. The School should offer training in securing external funding.

10. School should consider an “article” option for the dissertation. The traditional structure promotes books, but not other forms of scholarship.

11. A regular, 3-year rotation of courses should be established that include broad, overview introductions to each area.

12. The graduate handbook needs to be re-written and should be followed.

G. Scholarship

1. The main issues involve the scope of work. While faculty, in general, are very productive, many limit their work to their disciplinary specialty without considering the larger academic and public communities. This will require external funding such as the gift funding the Institute and external grants, which have the potential to stimulate broader thinking about theory and research that impacts across disciplines as well as the public. For example, do faculty studying Public Culture want their work to impact those cultures (i.e., praxis)? Applications to health and organizational communication should be apparent.

2. The role of the new Storytelling Institute should be clarified. The decision to initially focus its efforts on Dr. Harter’s work is to be applauded. Trying to be all things to all people is likely to spread resources and efforts so thinly that little of substance is accomplished. Once the Institute has established itself, a broader scope can be considered.

SECTION 6: COMMENDATIONS

A. Overall, the undergraduate mission seems to be very effectively accomplished. School faculty members have received numerous teaching awards and the retention rate, although dropping, and graduation rate, which is increasing, seem very good. The number of majors (500) should be tracked carefully given the overall size of faculty and staff, particularly given the advising load on
faculty. Admissions seems appropriately rigorous. Courses seem to be appropriately sized and close to planned/ideal enrollments. The COMS 1020 course appears to do a good job introducing students to the professors and allows them to meet other majors, forming a cohort. The School also does a good job communicating with its undergraduate majors. Undergraduates report feeling valued as students and that the faculty are passionate about teaching. Students say they are never bored, that there are many events to enrich their education. They say courses teach them to see communication in different ways as well as how they can use it in their lives. Centrally, students report that the School’s professors care and that this is not universally true of other departments.

B. Faculty research productivity is quite good overall, and a number of the faculty are leaders in the field. The new Institute, heading by Dr. Harter, while formally located in the College, should promote impactful work even further.

C. The School, particularly the Director, appears to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. They are realistic about what can be accomplished and are taking steps to mitigate many of the concerns through retreats, improved communication, and other strategies. The School leadership seems well informed, thoughtful, and proactive. This is clearly an important strength.

SECTION 7: OVERALL JUDGMENT: Is the program viable as a whole?
The review process revealed a number of important strengths. The School makes vital contributions to their majors and to students across campus. It has a strong and vital faculty that are accomplished in a number of areas. The graduate program is less well accomplished and culture issues appear to be inhibiting its impact. The Director, although relatively new to campus, appears to have a number of strengths and is making strides in moving the School forward. The committee views his presence as a key attribute. Similarly, Associate Directors appear dedicated and effective. Thus the leadership is effective. Overall, the School makes significant contributions to the discipline, the college, and the university.
Dear David,

I have now had a chance to review the report, receive feedback from faculty, and discuss everything with Dean Titsworth. Collectively, we feel the report is thorough and generally fair. We are pleased that the members of the committee were very affirmative of our programs and the future viability of the School. In addition, we recognize that the report serves as an invitation to discuss our curricula, especially at the graduate level, to determine areas for improvement. We look forward to starting those conversations this fall.

There is one area of the report in which I would like to make a clarification. The report references the newly formed Institute for Storytelling and Social Impact, and suggests that it could serve as a model for programmatic development in the School. To be clear, the Institute is housed in the Scripps College of Communication not in the School of Communication Studies. It is co-directed by Tom Hodson and Lynn Harter—Lynn is a faculty member in COMS, so the School is obviously invested in the Institute. However, I don’t want to create the impression that COMS “owns” the Institute.

Otherwise, I have no other corrections to offer. Thank you for your guidance during this process.

Best,

Mike

Scott and Mike
Attached is the reviewers report on the School of Communications Studies. According to UCC rules you have two weeks to provide any comments or ask for any corrections, your comments can be attached to the review as it proceeds through Graduate Council and on to UCC.
I would note that if Scott, as Dean, does not comment at this stage then the Provost will ask for his comments once the approved review reaches her desk.
I realize that, as this is the Summer term, you may be travelling over the next two weeks, so if you need an extension please let me know and we can agree a new deadline.

Thanks
David

David C. Ingram (ingram@ohio.edu)
Professor and Chair
Department of Physics and Astronomy
Good Morning David,

I am reporting on the Graduate Council's deliberation of the Communications program review. Since receiving the review, the second meeting of Graduate Council just occurred on Friday and the council endorsed the report. We also wish to express concerns, voiced by many council members, about the environment and need for improved relations among faculty and students. Graduate Council offers further involvement in addressing these issues if it would be helpful.

Best wishes,
Tim Anderson

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