

California State University, Stanislaus
Department of Communication Studies
Assessment Report
2007-2008

Mission Statement:

The Department of Communication Studies takes a leading role in sustaining the strongly student-centered, broadly accessible educational mission of California State University, Stanislaus. We do so through engaging students in experience-based learning, fostering their development of such skills and competences as: a complex understanding of the communication process as the foundation of the ongoing human process of meaning-making and community-building; a profound respect for the diverse range of identities and messages within our local and global communities; a sophisticated grasp, as creator and user, of the wide range of information technologies that shape communication today and will evolve to shape it differently in the future; and a lifelong commitment to presenting and interpreting messages in an ethical, responsible manner.

Program Goals:

- An understanding of the theories and processes of human communication as a necessary part of one's education in the liberal arts and sciences.
- A requisite background in the diverse theories and methodologies of the discipline as a preparation for graduate study in the various fields of communication.
- A specialized knowledge of and proficiency in the communicative arts and sciences for entrance into such communication careers as public relations, newspaper reporting, radio and television broadcasting, media sales and promotions, and communication research.
- A specialized knowledge of and proficiency in the communication arts and sciences for entrance into such professional programs as education, law, the ministry, public service, and business.

Student Learning Objectives:

Graduates of the Communication Studies Program will meet the following objectives:

Knowledge and Skills

- Demonstrate an understanding of the theories and research processes used by communication scholars.
- Apply the understanding of theories and research to the design and evaluation of original research proposals and projects.
- Practice and demonstrate competence in the ability to speak in a variety of communication contexts.
- Practice and demonstrate competence in the ability to work effectively in groups.
- Demonstrate their ability to write effectively in a variety of communication contexts.
- Demonstrate critical thinking by analyzing and evaluating communication products and processes using relevant communication frameworks.

Values

- Apply an ethical framework to communication interactions.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the variety of communication practices found in a multicultural and globalized society.

Communication Studies Program Assessment: Pilot Study (2007)

Rationale: Discussions in meetings of both the Communication Studies Curriculum Committee and general Communication Studies Department faculty meetings in Fall 2007 highlighted the importance of students' integration of communication theories in their scholarly writing. Several participants voiced persistent concerns about assessing this integration of communication theories and models in senior capstone projects and similar research papers. Based on these discussions, the PAC proposed that we select—as the single Learning Objective required for a program-level assessment Pilot Study—the following Objective:

Objective: Demonstrate and Apply an understanding of the theories and research processes used by communication scholars.

Plan: The PAC wrote an Assessment Plan according to the specifications outlined in the book by Allen; this plan was subsequently submitted to Communication Studies faculty as well as to the Faculty Assessment Coordinator for review; this resulted in minor modifications of some language, especially language concerning who would be responsible for maintaining assessment records and “closing the loop” by stimulating discussion about the results of assessment projects. The Assessment Plan specified that capstone projects in Spring 2007 would be collected and assessed according to measures still to be determined.

Data Collection: The PAC received, in Fall 2007, 22 capstone projects for the purposes of assessing the stated Learning Objective.

Method: After consulting with other PACs and the Faculty Assessment Coordinator, the PAC modified an existing rubric designed for the assessment of undergraduate level research papers. This rubric may be used for examining a wide range of learning objectives, so for the purposes of assessing these 22 capstone papers the PAC narrowed the larger rubric to two measures relevant to the target Learning Objective; the rubric for these two measures is attached.

The PAC reviewed the data once to establish a qualitative exemplar for each segment (1 through 4); sample passages that served as exemplars are attached. After establishing a baseline for each segment through identification of exemplars, the PAC reviewed the data a second time to assign a rubric score to each paper for each of the two measures; a table of scores and averages is attached.

Findings: While a sample of 22 capstone projects assessed by one faculty member lacks both predictive significance and inter-rater reliability, useful implications may potentially be drawn from this study if drawn tentatively and with limits:

(1) The rubric developed by the PAC may need to be modified to more closely reflect our actual expectations for how students should integrate communication theories and models in their research papers. This data suggests that students are drawing primarily upon a mix of scholarly perspectives, from within and outside the communication discipline, when establishing a rationale and developing research questions. This approach to reviews of literature has long been common in our discipline, but the rubric may not adequately account for this because it emphasizes the description, testing, and analysis of “a single coherent theory/model” in a research project.

(2) To the extent that student writing in this data set reflects a distinction between how students integrate theory when defining their studies and how they integrate theory when analyzing data, the study suggests that students may more effectively integrate in the design phase of their projects and less effectively integrate theory in the analysis phase. The rubric, as designed, includes a separate measure for each of these phases because faculty deliberations on the issue of theory integration included concerns about both phases of students' research. If Communication Studies faculty do, in fact, consider the

successful integration of theory to be a significant Learning Objective with components at both the design and the analysis phases of research projects, then the present study suggests that the program may want to consider ways to enhance students' effectiveness working with theory in the analysis phase—or, more likely, to continue assessing this outcome in an effort to more carefully identify whether it is truly a problem.

Measure One

Score: 1

While not many theories have been produced about office romantics, some theories can be associated with the politics that deal with office romance. The feminist theory can support the new policies and procedures that are being put into place in regards to sexual harassment in the workplace. For many years, women had been subject to oppression by being forced into situations, quid pro quo for example, and since men held most power positions within an organization, there wasn't much a woman could do except to endure it. Since the incorporation of the feminist theory, a new hegemony has emerged. More and more women are in positions of power at organizations presently and men are not getting away with most of the antics that they have gotten away with in the past. Current policies and procedures for harassment now prohibit most everything sexual within the workplace such as jokes, pictures or any other suggestive material that has a possibility to offend anybody.

Score: 2

In previous research, there is a great amount of information that stresses the importance of ethics training and new member orientations in corporations. Theorists have speculated that organizational growth and contraction, technology, personnel practices, and unionization will alter organizational demography, specifically firms' tenure profiles (Heather 1995). However, each organization varies to some extent, and the literature will guide this research with possible ideas. "Forty-four states include some type of ethics training in their new member orientations. Ethics commission or the legislature conducts the training..." (National Conference, 2007). It is essential that fundamental ethical principles be included in the design and implementation of the training period by the corporation. Ethical principles are considered to be universal, transcending, cultural, economic, legal and political.

The common theme discussed in previous research in relations to ethics training is amplifying the magnitude of ethical conduct in a corporation. It is for this reason that conducting and observing this research will be beneficial for the organization and for the field of study.

Score: 2

The importance of this study is based on the fact that if all staff members believe that they are effective within the rules, goals, or standards set by management. Significant areas of research include persuasion, staff communication, organization policies, and intercultural communication. No theories will be tested, extended, nor are there any competing theories but there are replicates of previous studies in this category.

Score: 3

A common thread found in the review of the literature was that communication between superiors and subordinates was a key factor in satisfaction and performance. The way workers related to each other, on personal and professional levels, suggested that this was a key in how they performed and how they felt about the amount of work performed and effort put into their work. [. . .] An important element in the relational environment of any organization is the affect of the "cyclic process of socialization." Over time the duration of a relationship allows for choices and adjustment to the climate of the setting (Jaesub, 1992). The relationship maintenance was cited as a critical component in production, creativity and communication between key components within an organization.

The research questions that emerge from the literature were:

- 1.) What primary factors affect subordinates' opinions of supervisors?
- 2.) In what way, if any, do subordinate opinions of supervisors promoted from within the agency differ from subordinate opinions about supervisors hired from outside the agency?
- 3.) Do subordinates report more overall desire to work harder if there is potential for promotion within an organization?
- 4.) Do supervisors promoted from within the agency and supervisors hired from outside the agency report differing communication factors within the agency?

Participants were prompted to expand upon their initial responses and to feel free to speak out both positively and negatively about their experiences.

Score: 3

Critical Incidents are reports or descriptions of things the population reports having done or have been observed doing by others. These incidences affect the dynamic of an organization in a positive or a negative way. The organizational members will give credit and value to these incidents.

A methodology of critical incidents was used to study the team and its dynamics. I did not test a theory, but rather used ethnographical observation in order to determine what was the best way to maximize efficiency and performance on the field is and what critical incidents are maximizing or minimizing the influence. Essentially, I examined the internal culture of the team and focused on critical incidents during the season which was important to the team's success and failure.

Score: 4

The important terms that will be assessed are general learning and communicating theories that have been applied to previous research, such as the social learning theory and the standpoint theory (Wood, 2004), and organization theories for larger scale research, which include classical and cultural methods and the cultivation theory. The significance of the problem is to understand society's nature in handling and understanding new communication technology and to determine if the public can adapt to newer changes that will occur as scientific breakthroughs flourish. This research can be applied to changes in businesses that have reflected their changes as the needs to the employees or group members fluctuate. There is no specific time frame for the entire research project, but it is expected to take about one month to gather and analyze the data needed for quantitative purposes.

Score: 4

The limitations of this study are the exact connections that can be made using Hall's Conflict Management Survey and Spitzberg and Canary's Interpersonal Communication Competency Scale (ICCS). Furthermore, the ICCS will not be used for statistical information, for participants will not be rating each other's competency. Further research can be done in this area, but it will not be the target of this study. Also, no research has been done regarding what types of conflict management styles are best suited for this type of organization. It is not known which styles work best collectively, so no inferences can be made regarding the effectiveness of the group in general.

Measure Two

Score: 1

While conducting this ethnography I have come to find many commonalities in the data and in the interview. Some of the major commonalities are in the data of the gender, males seem to be having a lot more conflicts than the females at the parlor. The one major problem that creates half of the conflicts that I observed is the scheduling, and the lack of hours for the males. This leads to conflict due to the fact that their isn't a manager to control the situation or to step in. Also if the schedule was pre set so that way everyone knew when they were working they could better accept their hours instead of trying to fight for more. A lot of the scheduling frustrations are felt by everyone as they stated in the personal interviews. Another commonality that I found in the data is that 3 of the people that were in the conflicts were in three or more conflicts out of the twelve. If these people were put in place by a manager or had some sort

of discipline for their actions maybe others could feel more open to speak freely without worry of confrontation. In the interview many stated that they did not want to bring up certain issues, mostly the new people were fearful of certain people, and how they deal with confrontation. A manager needs to be appointed and employees need to have rules and structure to follow, also discipline must be taken to employees that do not follow rules so the rules will be taken seriously.

Score: 1

While some employees believe that there should be more programs added to the club in general, some feel that the organization is fine the way it is. These specifics create differences and diversity that can alter the organization's main objectives. But this can be viewed as a positive and a negative. The positive form of this is that there will always be change and the acceptance of new things being tried or introduced. The negative side is that it will show "clicks;" people who believe in change versus the ones who oppose it. At this location, differences did occur such as there being a fifty-fifty split in the decision of there being improvements done to better fit staff members (question #9).

Score: 2

Integrity is at the heart of the corporate training program. Being honest, ethical and upfront is stressed amongst the relationships and foundation of the community. Respect is seen throughout every level of communication in the organization and also thoroughly explained in the databases available to the employees of the company. Ethics and Code of Conduct is definitely available to the employees in written format with continuous booklets, newsletters and pamphlets' around the center to help remind the employees of ethics training.

This is the irony of the findings in this research because ethics seemed so available just by reading the documentation provided by the corporate office. However, through observation over the three week course, the results of employees following these ethical rules were quite different from the textbook version.

Score: 2

Language use is the key to forming relationships and organizations within the game. Without a set language or communications norm, it would be difficult to maintain understanding across the board of the organization, *guild*, because some members of an organization have different views about what language should be used within the game.

Some players enjoy the shorthanded text, others prefer descriptive text, and some like to stay true to the depicted time and mythology that they prefer to talk in a more, *old English* sort of way. There are a wide variety of communication styles that are used. We must not forget that besides text based messages, there are also VoIP, or Voice over Internet Protocol, that allows verbal communication to take place.

Score: 3

Of the 14 subordinates, all but two had worked for a superior promoted from within. The remaining two subordinates work under the same superior hired from outside the agency for approximately three years. All of the superiors had been employed in their current position from between five and nine years. This accounted for all of the participating superiors.

From the subordinate questionnaires, every one of the participants were pleased to be working under a former co-worker or person hired from within. The general theme that kept reoccurring was that they felt promotion from within was desirable whenever possible. While there were no negative comments from superior hires from outside the agency when necessary, each of the subordinates indicated that they were perhaps a little less confident of their initial ability, due to not knowing the agency, local area, positions and responsibilities of current employees and lack of proven ability. Promotions from within were generally indicated as being trustworthy, proven through experience and considered a "fixture" at the agency. It appears that a familiar face added the overall comfort of subordinates to a new superior.

Score: 3

At the conclusion of the focus group meetings and following the WASC accreditation recommendation, a survey was conducted, using random sampling, of members of the faculty to determine the effects, if any, of the use of focus groups in affecting attitudinal change in teachers at the high school. While 35 teachers were chosen to participate in the survey, 23 faculty members actually completed the survey. Appendix 1 illustrates the questions responded to by the teachers, and Appendix 2 offers a chart documenting the findings. Teachers felt favorably that the focus groups into which they were assigned included all members in discussions and encouraged feedback from others. Conclusively, most teachers found focus groups useful in attaining goals. In addition, most teachers felt the participation of students and parents in the focus groups to be a positive aspect, and disagreed when asked if only faculty and staff should be members. Only one faculty member felt that students and parents should not be included in focus group membership, and that focus group participants should consist of only faculty and staff members. This appears to indicate that more diverse focus group membership is preferred by teachers. In addition, the focus group facilitators were considered to be skilled in focus group processes. Most teachers agreed that the focus groups worked well as a team and were successful in accomplishing assigned tasks. When asked if focus group participation was a waste of time, the majority of teachers disagreed. Finally, the majority of teachers felt the use of focus groups is a productive method for effecting change in high schools.

Score: 4

For the first problem, the hypothesis that trust affects how a person accepts technology in the workplace, it can be said that it does not fully apply to this situation, but is visible regarding the difficulty the individual has experienced. The participant will still accept technology in their job, but their trust towards it is low. The individual expressed no opinion regarding other businesses that might also use technology to obtain their authority. For the second problem, it can be determined that training programs would have greatly assisted the individual in her work, especially since her job requires frequent and adequate knowledge of technology to be efficient. While certain technologies do not require much training, such as a cell phone for example, the use of fax machines and researching subjects could be made easier if the subject had a better knowledge of how to perform these tasks. The final problem stated that the use of technology affected performance or work ethic. While work ethic appears unaffected by technology, the participant noted much improvement with her business, especially where communications were concerned. The cell phone, for example, was the most crucial piece of technology that the individual used in her business, allowing for immediate communication to her clients at any time of the day. Faxing also provided immediate access to documents from medical and professional organizations, which allowed for a faster analysis of the patients without having to wait long.

Rubric Component	4	3	2	1
Identifies and summarizes a specific comm'nicat'n problem/question	Accurately identifies the problem/question and provides a well-developed summary.	Accurately identifies the problem/question and provides a brief summary.	Identifies the problem/question and provides a poor summary; or identifies an inappropriate problem/question.	Does not identify or summarize the problem/question accurately if at all.
Identifies and effectively summarizes existing scholarship relevant to the problem/question	Accurately identifies all key scholarly perspectives relevant to the problem/question and provides a summary that synthesizes these perspectives in a coherent manner.	Accurately identifies important scholarship and provides a brief synthesis of its relevance to the problem/question.	Identifies only some relevant scholarship while missing other perspectives; or cites a series of scholarly texts without offering any synthesis.	Does not identify relevant scholarship.
Identifies and describes a coherent theory/model relevant to the problem/question	Accurately identifies and describes the key features of a single coherent theory/model, and explains why it fits the problem/question.	Accurately identifies a single coherent theory/model, and briefly addresses its key features and/or its fit for the problem/question.	Identifies a single theory/model without explaining its features or fit; or conflates some aspects of multiple theories/models.	Does not distinguish any specific relevant theories or models.

Rubric Component	4	3	2	1
Identifies and describes a coherent theory/model relevant to the problem/question	Accurately identifies and describes the key features of a single coherent theory/model, and explains why it fits the problem/question.	Accurately identifies a single coherent theory/model, and briefly addresses its key features and/or its fit for the problem/question.	Identifies a single theory/model without explaining its features or fit; or conflates some aspects of multiple theories/models.	Does not distinguish any specific relevant theories or models.

Analyzes the meaning and/or the significance of findings based on the appropriate theory/model	Develops a comprehensive analysis that is clearly grounded in the data, that uses an appropriate analytic method and that is based on a specific theory/model; clearly discusses the significance of the findings in light of the research questions.	Develops an analysis grounded in the data using an appropriate method and based on a specific theory/model, though the analysis may not be comprehensive; usually connects significant findings to research questions.	Some effort is made to analyze data and discuss the significance of findings, though the analysis may not be rigorous, may not be grounded in a specific theory/model or may not be connected to RQs.	Data may be discussed and inferences may be drawn, but little analytic methodology, grounding in existing theories/models, or connection to research questions is evident.
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Assessment Tool	Presentation	Presentation	Presentation	Test	Paper	Presentation	Paper	Cap/Paper	Test	Presentation	Cap/Paper	Paper	Presentation	Cap/Paper	Presentation
<p>Assessment Matrix H=High (major focus) L=Low (minor focus) N=Not taught</p>	COMM2000 Public Speaking	COMM2110 Group Discuss	COMM3100 Adv Interper	COMM3110 Org Comm	COMM3200 Comm Theory	COMM3140 Persuasion	COMM3900 Research Meth	COMM4050 Relational	COMM4110 Org Diag/Dsign	COMM4120 PR Campaings	COMM4140 Rhetorical	COMM4160 Intercultural	COMM4170 Prof Interview	COMM4200 Mass Media	COMM4210 Public Relation
Understanding and situating communication processes and products in a Multicultural Society	L	L	H	H	N	L	N	H	L	L	L	H	H	H	L
Applying Ethical Frameworks to communication interactions	L	L	L	L	L	H	L	L	L	L	L	L	H	N	H
Using Communication Theory to Explain and Analyze communication processes and products	L	L	H	H	H	H	N	L	H	H	H	H	N	H	H
Designing and Evaluating Research in communication, using appropriate theories and methods	N	N	N	N	N	H	H	H	H	H	H	N	N	H	H
Thinking Critically about, and assessing, communication processes and products	H	H	H	H	H	H	L	H	H	H	L	H	L	H	H
Writing and Responding effectively in a variety of communication contexts	L	L	L	L	H	H	N	H	H	H	H	H	L	H	H
Speaking and Listening effectively in a variety of communication contexts	H	H	L	L	N	H	N	L	L	L	L	L	H	H	N
Developing Subject Knowledge in the field of Communication Studies	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H