**Department/Program Review Summary**

**2011-12**

**Department:** Communication (COM)

**Date of Review:** May 3, 2012

**Review Team Members and Titles:**

Helen Grove, Sr. Vice President and Provost

Eva Abdullahi, Senior Academic Advisor, Academic Advising

Roger Abernathy, Dean, Science, Math and Engineering

Bob Coates, Associate Professor, Art

Jared Cutler, Director, Curriculum and Assessment

Anita Gilkey, Associate Professor, Business Information Systems

Surinder Jain, Assistant Dean, Science, Math and Engineering

James Johnson, Professor, Chemistry

Lauren Johnson, Stewardship Officer/Advance, Advancement Division

Gwen Jones, Diversity Officer, Vice President for Organizational Development

Karl Konsdorf, Manager, Research Analytics & Reporting

Melissa Tolle, Assistant Director, Senior Vice President’s Office

**Department Members Present:**

Lori Zakel, Dean, Liberal Arts, Communication, and Social Studies

Heidi McGrew, Interim Chair, Communication

Faculty:

Heidi Arnold

David Bodary

Myra Bozeman

Nadine Cichy

Sandy Hilt

Jessica McKinley

Richard Morales

Kelly Smith

Kent Zimmerman

**Commendations**:

* This is a department that has a strong student-centered focus. The department not only has actively sought feedback from students, but also has accepted and utilized that feedback. The entire department participated in the End of Course Student Survey back when it was only voluntary for full-time faculty. The department’s use of mid-term course evaluations is impressive; faculty in the department seem to recognize the value of getting feedback prior to the end of the term. In addition, they not only listen to their students, they advocate for them. It was clear from the self-study and Program Review meeting that students are put squarely in the center of the department’s efforts.
* The student focus of the department is an indicator of one of the major strengths of the department: historically there has been a willingness to examine what the department is doing, to make changes where appropriate, to embrace innovation, and to change or abandon approaches that have been tried and are not working. The department has evidenced that it has the courage to make hard decisions, to revise processes that aren’t functioning as intended, to abandon courses that are no longer needed or appropriate, and to modify curriculum where called for. The conversation in the Program Review meeting made it clear that the department is constantly revising and revamping, seeking to improve. This is a department that looks ahead and moves forward.
* The Speech Meet is a marvelous opportunity for students to display their learning and for other students to see examples of students who have mastered skills taught in communications courses.
* The department uses technology well, both in terms of incorporating technology into course content and in using technology in its teaching.
* The department has found an excellent balance between standardization of course materials – which is crucial for high level assessment of course and program outcomes – and allowing faculty freedom in their approach to teaching course content. The level of standardization places the department in the forefront of departments on campus that are positioned to comprehensively assess course and program outcomes. This standardization also serves students well by ensuring consistent experiences, regardless of which section of a course in which they are enrolled. This practice represents a major accomplishment that should serve as an example across campus.
* There is a strong recognition in this department of the importance of diversity and inclusiveness. It is clear that these values are addressed and taken seriously.
* The integration of ethics in to the curriculum is praiseworthy.
* The courses this department teaches on public speaking are of vital importance and impact the performance of students making presentations in a large number of other courses on campus.
* One word that aptly describes this department is “involved.” There is a high degree of Communication Department representation on various committees around campus. Faculty in the department are often involved in workshops and other presentations, and a number of the faculty are recognized leaders on campus.

**Recommendations for Action**:

* The department is encouraged to continue pursuing the development of hybrid courses, while keeping a close watch to monitor the success of these courses.
* The department is encouraged to reach out to other departments across campus to determine what unmet needs they might fill and to share what the department has to offer. Faculty in this department have a considerable amount of knowledge and skill that could be beneficial to many across campus who may not currently be taking advantage of it. Perhaps most notably, the faculty in the Communication Department are in an excellent position to engage colleagues in other disciplines about the value of common agreement on not only student outcomes for all sections of a course but also common instructional approaches that are effective.
* Students as a whole may be unaware of the opportunities that exist in the field of communication. The department may want to consider how to increase outreach to students to inform them of career paths in the field. Career Coach may be an appropriate tool to use in this regard, with the help of RAR.
* A sentiment was expressed in the self-study that tracking graduates at other institutions was not possible. There are new resources for tracking graduates such as the National Student Clearinghouse and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services. The department is encouraged to work with RAR to better track graduates and determine graduate outcomes.
* The department is encouraged to evaluate future prospects for the journalism program. Enrollment in the program has not been high and job opportunities for associate degree graduates appear to be limited in this region. An analysis should be completed by the end of fall term 2012 and reported to the dean and provost.
* While the department has done an exemplary job of setting up standardized exams and assignments, there is a sense that this data is not being collected and analyzed across sections. The department is encouraged to capitalize on the excellent framework they have established and begin collecting and analyzing results from their common exams and assignments, using this as an approach for course and program outcomes assessment. These results should be reported yearly in the Annual Update and should figure prominently in the next Program Review self-study.
* Similarly, there was an extensive discussion of general education in the self-study, but a noticeable lack of quantitative data regarding student performance on general education outcomes. The department is encouraged to capture and assess student performance on general education outcomes, reporting specific results and using that data to inform improvement efforts.
* This is a time of considerable focus on the relationship between higher education and job preparation. The public increasingly focuses on college education as preparation for success in employment. The department is encouraged to develop a more comprehensive and detailed knowledge of what area employers are specifically looking for in potential employees in terms of communication skills, both now and in the future, and to document – and promote – how COM classes prepare students to meet these expectations.

**Overall Assessment of Department’s Progress and Goals**:

This is a department of committed faculty who have the benefit of strong leadership and who have developed innovative and effective approaches to increasing student learning. There is a level of consistency across sections offered by this department that serves as an example to the campus as a whole. Not only is the department able to ensure students in different sections of a course have a comparable learning experience, the department also has great promise for using this consistency to take the department’s assessment efforts to a new level.

Like all departments, this one faces unique challenges, but the quality of the faculty and the commitment to students leaves little doubt that these challenges can be met successfully. This department has a history of thoughtful, strategic responses to the challenges it faces in improving student learning, and it is anticipated that this will continue to be the case in the future.

**Institutional or Resource Barriers to the Department’s Ability to accomplish its Goals, if any**:

None. This is a committed, high-functioning department that is highly engaged with the institution as a whole and is well-positioned to achieve its goals and address the recommendations above.