Learning Outcomes and Assessment
B.S. Degree in Communication
Speech Communication Concentration

Mission/Program Description:
Speech Communication was proposed as a specialization by the speech communication faculty and approved by TBR in January 2007, effective Fall 2007. At the same time the B.S. degree in Communication was established with two concentrations: the existing program in Journalism and new program in Speech Communication. The Speech Communication program was introduced at TTU in response to the following factors:

- A general need for communication skills as evidenced in NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) surveys.
- General education assessment at TTU found that Tech graduates were rated as weak in communication skills.
- TTU’s need to emphasize the importance and improvement of communication skills as indicated by the QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan).

The new Speech Communication program serves two primary functions. First, it provides instruction for speech communication requirement in the University’s General Curriculum and Honors Program. Second, it offers a B.S. in Communication with a concentration in Speech Communication. The program currently has 23 majors. In line with the two clearly delineated functions, the Speech Communication program at TTU is dedicated to fostering a strong sense of public citizenship preparing students for civic participation in an increasingly complex world that requires sophisticated practical, critical, and theoretical understanding of the human communication process.

We understand human communication as the process in which people create, exchange, and interpret symbolic messages. Our primary goal is to improve our students’ ability to understand this process. Towards this end, our courses focus primarily on skills in various forms of communication, be it verbal, nonverbal, or visual. The context of communication also provides a foundation of study, ranging from the interpersonal, group, organizational, to the broader cultural and historical milieu, which pervades all our messages. Finally, we offer courses that examine the various functions of communication: to persuade, to define relationships, to entertain, and to inform.

We view communication as a major formative process shaping individual identities, interpersonal relationships, social and political policies, and cross-cultural understandings. In our teaching, research, and service activities, we assess the role that communication plays in social changes, interpret and critique the present and the past from the perspective of human communication, and seek to improve the forms of communication that are shaping the future.

Our curriculum integrates theory and practice consistent with the concept of praxis (practical knowledge). Students in Speech Communication learn communication theories, perform
theoretically-grounded critiques of communication practices and situations, evaluate and employ research methods, and engage in field-oriented independent studies. The well-balanced curricular design reflects the classical roots of our discipline as well as social and technological changes. The speech faculty members, with their diverse academic backgrounds, are committed to creating opportunities for field-oriented activities as part of an integrated learning of a practical, socially responsible field of study.

This program is consistent with the mission of the University as well as with the mission of the Department of English and Communications in that it serves to provide opportunities for students to develop and/or improve their ability to communicate effectively with diverse individuals in a variety of social situations. The study of communication is at the forefront of a liberal education, preparing students to analyze carefully, to think critically and ethically, and to develop skills that can be applied to a wide variety of careers available today. Through it all, speech teachers work to foster in students a sense of the discipline’s place in history and its role in the future.

**Program Goals:** In addition to the specific learning outcomes the ultimate goal of our program is to provide students with the written, oral, and critical thinking skills necessary to function effectively in the profession and in society. Our immediate objectives include:

1. To become an independent academic Department of Communications consisting of Journalism, Speech Communication, and Web Design.
2. To continue the process of increasing the undergraduate student enrollment through recruitment, retention, and marketing.
3. To continue hiring instructor-level faculty to assist in teaching SPCH 2410 general education course.
4. To re-organize the curriculum to develop two tracks: Organizational Communication and Public Address.
5. To develop and teach a new course in communication theory and methods.

**Learning Outcomes:** The primary objective of the Speech Communication curriculum is to teach communication skills for assessment and practice across communication contexts. To meet requirements for the Speech Communication specialization a student must demonstrate the following basic skills: the ability to understand and apply principles that guide communication theory and research; the ability to deliver effective public speeches; the ability to write clearly and concisely; the ability to engage in effective communication on the interpersonal level, in small and large group activities and other settings.

The following goals and assessment methods were generated by the Speech faculty in consultation with the departmental chairperson in 2007 when the Speech concentration was established. Some assessment indicators were modified as new instruments for measurement were developed or became available.

Every student graduating from our program will demonstrate the following abilities:

1. Effective oral presentation skills that correspond with various communication events.
2. Understanding of communication theory and research and its practical application to Interpersonal, Intercultural, Public Address, and Business Communication.
3. Evaluating written and oral presentations.
4. Students will be prepared for an entry level position in a number of different fields that emphasize effective communication skills or for a graduate program.

**Assessment Indicators: (new since 2006 in italics)**

- *ACAT Communication Major Field Exam* (#1, #2)
- *General Education Oral Communication Outcomes Assessment* (#1, #3)
- IDEA Objectives on oral communication skills and teamwork (#1, #2)
- Debate and Forensics tournaments (#1, #3)
- Exit interview with graduating seniors (#4)
- Periodic Peer Review or Academic Audit (every 5 years)
- Alumni contacts (#2, #4)

**Assessment Methods and Results:**

To increase the degree of success in the above objectives the following new courses with the course-embedded measurement tools have been added since 2007:

- SPCH 2800 Interviewing
- SPCH 2000 Communication Practices in Organizations
- SPCH 3000 Computer Mediated Communication
- SPCH 4540 Historic Public Address
- SPCH 4550 Contemporary Public Address

ACAT Communication Major Field Exam was instituted and administered in the Fall of 2010 and Spring of 2011 to all graduating seniors. There were seven Speech students who took the exam, five in the Fall of 2010, and two in the Spring of 2011. The results were shared with the speech faculty. Recommendations for new goals and/or changes in the assessment indicators will be discussed and voted.

The ACAT average score is 500 with a standard deviation of 100. Exam scores for the seven speech graduating seniors(2010-2011):

- **Fall 2010:**
  - Interpersonal Communication: 601, 688, 723, 513, 548
  - Laws and Ethics: 557, 597, 605, 613, 557
  - Mass Communication: 548, 684, 612, 639, 612
  - Public Speaking: 585, 575, 743, 611, 458

- **Spring 2011:**
  - Interpersonal Communication: 775, 775
  - Laws and Ethics: 637, 453
  - Mass Communication: 594, 503
  - Public Speaking: 696, 422
The director of the program conducts an annual TBR mandated General Education Learning Outcomes assessment of the oral communication competencies of students enrolled in *SPCH 2410 Introduction to Speech Communication* course. The analysis of the statistical data for years 2009/2010/2011 indicates that students enrolled in *SPCH 2410* continue to meet or exceed outcome goals in excess of 92%.

The IDEA teaching evaluation identifies two speech related learning outcomes on its form including “developing skill in expressing oneself orally” and “working as a member of a team.” The completed evaluation form can indicate a degree of effectiveness in any given speech course when these two objectives are specified by the instructor.

Debate and Forensics tournament offers students training and application opportunities for their public speaking skills in argumentation and persuasion. The team travels and participates in state and regional speech contests and tournaments. The number of various awards received by our students provides a measure of success in achieving the learning objectives.

The director conducts and files exit interviews with graduating seniors. She asks for students' input regarding all aspects of the program.

Program is subject to a peer review every five years. The review process provides valuable recommendations for improvement. The most recent evaluation was completed in the Fall of 2008.

The Speech alumni database includes ten graduates. Initial contacts with the alumni indicate that communications skills that they gained in Speech Communication classes are helpful and beneficial for their careers and personal lives. They cite confidence, public speaking abilities, intercultural and professional communication as most helpful. Keeping an updated information and feedback from our graduates gives the communication faculty another venue to ascertain graduates’ attitudes toward the program and their employment and graduate school success / failure rates.