The Bachelor of Arts in English program, Professional Communication concentration, is housed within the Department of English and Communications.

**Program Mission**

The Professional Communication curriculum provides students with knowledge of communication skills, strategies, and theories necessary for employment in technological environments. Within the relatively new Professional Communication concentration in the English Bachelor of Arts, three optional options exist for students who wish to use elective hours to gain more specialized experience in a particular area: Scientific and Technical Writing, Corporate Culture, and Information Architecture. The Scientific and Technical Writing option focuses on editing and specialized fields in the sciences; it allows students to work effectively with subject matter experts. The Corporate Culture option prepares students to communicate through exposure to fields such as business management and speech. Finally, the Information Architecture option provides students with basic experience in communicating effectively through Web Design. All of these options provide students with a broad-based knowledge of communicating in the workplace, as well as specifics about communicating in various disciplines using different types of media, both written and oral.

**Program/Student Learning Goals and Objectives**

The Program/Student Learning Goals and Objectives are as follows:

The Professional Communication Program follows the overall departmental objective and learning outcome of

- Students will demonstrate the capacity to write and speak clearly, read perceptively, and think critically.

In addition, the Program has the following student learning outcomes:

1. Students in all three options will be able to write in a variety of technical and professional writing genres.
2. Students will practice effective oral communication skills that relate to persuading an audience toward their point of view.
3. Students will learn to write clear, audience-friendly professional and technical documents.
4. Students will utilize basic rhetorical principles for effective writing and oratory.
5. Students will learn how to design web pages, including incorporating visual elements.
6. Students will learn and demonstrate the ability to edit professional documents effectively.
In addition to these learning outcomes, the Program also has the following program goals:

1. Hire at least one more Ph.D. faculty member to assist in teaching upper-level Professional Communication required courses.
2. Continue hiring instructor-level faculty to assist in teaching general education courses (PC 2500) and lower-level Professional Communication courses.
3. Determine strategies for integrating more technological expertise into the Program.
4. Increase number of graduates per year to 10.
5. Streamline hiring processes for adjuncts in the Program, and develop an administrative framework for handling the growing number of PC 2500 sections (and facilitate working with the adjuncts who teach them).
6. Revise Professional Communication curriculum to be incorporated within the English B.A. Program rather than the English-Communication B.S. Program.

Assessment Methods for Measuring Progress on Objectives

The learning outcomes are measured through the following assessment indicators:

- Portfolio of five documents produced in Professional Communication courses
- Written evaluation by students of strengths and weaknesses of the Program
- Sample web page, including text as well as graphics
- Exit essay on rhetoric and how it applies to Professional Communication
- Audio tape of oral communication skills (usually an oral presentation given for a class)
- Alumni contacts – A formal survey was given to three alumni in fall of 2011 as part of a five-year, academic audit process; the survey instrument and its results appear at the end of this report.
- Five-year review by outside evaluator(s)

The program goals are measured by the numbers of faculty hired, types of strategies for integrating technological expertise into the Program, number of graduates, hiring processes, and curriculum revision, respectively.

Results of Assessment

Learning Outcomes

The results of assessing the learning outcomes reflected a need to better ensure students were being exposed to a variety of oral communication and writing genres. The themed “in the Professions” courses (Communicating in the Professions, Technical Documents in the Professions [soon to be renamed Information Design in the Professions], and Ethics in the Professions) are designed to help fill that need. The second and third courses in this list were first offered in spring of 2007 and 2009, respectively. Based on the portfolio assessment, students reproduced technical, professional, and oral communication genres in ways that showed they had internalized generic features of written and oral communication taught in the courses, but the faculty wanted to increase the variety of genres students learned so that they would be better
prepared for the workplace. The portfolio documents are usually ones originally created for Professional Communication courses, so these documents are assessed twice: once for the final course grade, during which course objectives are also used to assess the documents, and second during the portfolio assessment at the end of the student’s program.

The essay on rhetoric and its connection to Professional Communication also helps emphasize the learning outcomes in that the essay should reflect application of the outcomes (the audio recording of students’ oral presentations likewise demonstrates students’ oral communication skills). While the essay is a separate assignment (not required for a class), this particular essay question is included as a choice in a final exam essay for PC 4970, Professional Communication II, a course all Professional Communication majors take. Throughout their Professional Communication courses, students learn the importance of rhetoric and its application to effective communication. The audio recording is usually done for a class. Learning outcome two is also addressed in PC 2500, Communicating in the Professions, which is a required course in the Professional Communication curriculum. All faculty teaching this course participate in the TBR outcomes assessment process to ensure that the course is addressing the communication outcomes goals required for general education.

While an emphasis on editing takes place for all assignments students complete in Professional Communication courses (and different professors have various rubrics and objectives used for evaluating documents completed for these courses), the course PC 4940 (Technical Editing) has been moved to the Scientific and Technical Writing option. Based on assessments of students’ work completed for the portfolio, students need more help in this area, mainly regarding punctuation.

Learning outcome five has not been emphasized since the Professional Communication Program became part of the English B.A., during which time an option in Information Architecture was created for students interested in this field.

All of these assessment changes reflect a growing need for students to learn more about different types of documents produced in different types of jobs, and the options allow students to specialize in additional areas, if they choose.

Program Goals

Program goals one and two have not progressed as expected; one senior-level faculty member is completing his first year of post-retirement teaching, and he is able to cover the upper-level Professional Communication courses that he had been when he was teaching full time. When he completes his post-retirement teaching, though, the Program will need to hire an additional Ph.D. faculty member. The Program lost one full-time instructor and one temporary full-time instructor, both of whom taught several sections of PC 2500. As a result of these losses, the number of PC 2500 courses has declined sharply. The director of the Professional Communication Program is in the process of identifying additional qualified adjuncts to staff this popular and much-needed course, not only within the Professional Communication curriculum but also within the University as a whole, since it is one of two general education oral communication courses that fulfills students’ general education requirements.

Program goal three continues to be a challenge; the one-credit-hour lab courses that used to exist in the “old” Professional Communication B.S. were deleted so that a new course could be created; now that Professional Communication is housed as a concentration within the English
B.A., enough elective hours exist to where these labs could be reintroduced, if someone were available to teach them. In the past, these labs were used to expose students to software they may not encounter in other courses but that would help them to be more marketable; also, these one-credit-hour courses sometimes focused on special topics that later were developed into three-credit-hour courses. Currently, students receive exposure to innovative technologies through internship opportunities; students are required to take one three-credit-hour internship, and some students choose to take an additional one for elective credit.

Program goal four does need additional effort, since there are currently only about 20 majors in the Professional Communication concentration, and graduation rates have been less than 10 students per year over the past five years.

Program goal five has been accomplished in that an interview/evaluation process was established to hire effective adjuncts to teach PC 2500, and a workshop luncheon is scheduled every semester to offer informal mentoring/collaboration among more experienced and less experienced faculty. Also, there is an evaluation process that occurs at the end of every semester to ensure that the courses are being taught effectively, and the director is available to support adjunct faculty throughout the semester.

Program goal six was accomplished with the addition of the Professional Communication concentration to the English B.A. curriculum in 2007, including the three options. Students remaining in the “old” curriculum were advised until the Program’s sunset date in spring 2011.

**Summary of Key Continuous Improvement Achievements and the Impact on the Program**

The Program has undergone several curriculum/program changes since the last SACSCOC review:

- Revision of the Professional Communication curriculum to be incorporated into the English Bachelor of Arts degree program, as of 2007. This revision involved establishing a common core with the English B.A., a process which was completed successfully. Twenty-one hours of Professional Communication courses are also required, along with general education courses and twenty-four elective hours, which students can use to focus on one or more of the optional options, if desired. This change was made in part to increase enrollment in the Program by aligning the Program more closely with its intellectual home and roots (Rhetoric and Composition). This change has resulted in approximately five double majors currently; double majoring has been made easier for students who are English majors but wish to have two concentrations because of the common core shared among all concentrations.

- Addition of two courses to the Professional Communication concentration. PC 3700, Technical Documents in the Professions, was taught for the first time in spring of 2007, as a result of students’ needs to learn more about technical documents required in various workplaces. The professor of this course has submitted a proposal to revise and update the course, including a new course title: Information Design in the Professions, which
provides additional opportunities for students wishing to develop their Web Design expertise. These changes reflect changing document design knowledge in both Professional Communication and Web Design. Another course that was taught for the first time in spring of 2009 was Ethics in the Professions, a course designed to help Professional Communication majors gain more specialized knowledge of ethics in fields such as law, medicine, education, and social science. These additions resulted in part from students’ comments in their exit exam essays that they desired more courses related to workplace writing and documents.

- Removal of the requirements of web page submission for the portfolio, as well as the deletion of that specific learning outcome. This change occurred as a result of the development of an option in that area for students who are interested in that field. In addition, PC 3500, Web Site Construction/The Rhetoric of Internet Publishing, was removed from the list of courses in the Professional Communication concentration and instead was placed as a required course in the Information Architecture option. This development occurred in response to Professional Communication moving into the English B.A.: the concentration itself is a bit more general while allowing students who wish to specialize the opportunity to do so within the three options.
- PC 4940, Technical Editing, was also deleted from the Professional Communication concentration and was included as part of the Scientific and Technical Writing option.
- Addition of ENGL 4995, Senior Colloquium, a required course in the English B.A. core curriculum. In this course, students complete a project relevant to their field; the course is populated with students from all concentrations within the English B.A. and therefore responds to learning outcomes within the English B.A. as a whole.
Alumni Survey

Please take a moment to complete the brief, anonymous survey below. Your responses will assist us in evaluating our current programs and objectives.

After completing the survey, please return it to your academic advisor, or drop it off with the secretary in the English/Communications Department, HH320.

Instructions - On the line at the end of each question, please enter the number that most closely expresses your response: 4 = strongly agree; 3 = somewhat agree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

1. Have you pursued a career related to your major? ____
2. Did the courses you took help prepare you for that career? ____
3. In your opinion, what were some strengths and weaknesses of your major program?
   Strengths: _______________________________________________________
   Weaknesses: _____________________________________________________

4. Do you feel you were mentored adequately as you transitioned from your university career to the workplace? ____
5. Did the English major provide you with diverse cultural experiences? ____
6. Did the courses provide you with experience in effectively communicating orally?____
7. What was your area of concentration or course specialty and what year did you graduate? __________________________ Year ________

Additional comments: __________________________________________________________
                                                                       ___________________________

Thank you for your participation.
Alumni Survey Results (3 Completed, All Professional Communication Majors)

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<th>Question</th>
<th>1 (Strongly Disagree)</th>
<th>2 (Somewhat Disagree)</th>
<th>3 (Somewhat Agree)</th>
<th>4 (Strongly Agree)</th>
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<td>Mentored adequately as you transitioned from university career to workplace?</td>
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<td>Diverse cultural experiences?</td>
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<td>Courses provide you with experience in effectively communicating orally?</td>
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Responses to Question 3 about strengths and weaknesses of your major program:

1) Strengths: Variety and flexibility. Being able to tailor my classes toward my goals was excellent in that I felt very prepared to enter my job hunt with a competitive edge.
   Weaknesses: Not well-known outside of Tennessee.

2) Strengths: A variety of classes that gave me knowledge for an array of skills needed in similar fields that made a change in fields easy to navigate.
   Weaknesses: I personally needed more classes on website design/coding, etc. More computer background would have been more beneficial for me in my current position.

3) Strengths: Coursework gave real-life experience (e.g., final exams that required us to write reports on the spot) and small class sizes allowed students like me more personal time with my instructors.
Weaknesses: There could have been more diverse courses offered and stronger relationships with local employers so students can find an internship easier.

One alumna clarified her negative response to the question about mentoring by stating, “No, but not because of the English Department. I received no help from the career department at Tech, since I was neither an Engineer nor a business major.”

Additional alumni comments:

- I loved the professors: Dr. [D], Dr. [E], Dr. [F], and Dr. [G]; and could not be happier to have such strong mentors in my life. Tn Tech Univ attracts wonderful professors who really commit to not only quality teaching but personal development. I wish more students knew about TTU and the public service communication major. Thank you.
- My area of study has provided me the opportunity to explore and compete for jobs in industries such as Development and Fundraising, Marketing, Public Relations, and overall Business. My skills that range in form from formal writing, public speaking, design, marketing, public relations and advertising have truly made me a unique and competitive candidate in my career path. My employers find my skill set truly unique. I had an excellent staff of professors that provided me an unlimited amount of resources to develop my skills and talents. I have yet to find a course of study that combines such an array of classes to develop and cultivate a multi skilled graduate as the Professional Communication program did at Tennessee Technological University.
- Dr. [D] in particular was a fantastic advisor. She truly cares about her students and I always felt comfortable going to her with questions and concerns, even if other professors might think my concerns were invalid or silly.