**Institutional Effectiveness**
**2019-2020**

**Program:** Communication BS

**College and Department:** College of Interdisciplinary Studies – Department of Communications

**Contact:** Brenda Wilson

**Mission:** The Bachelor of Science degree in Communication supports the department's goals to help students "tap the power of words to create meaning and understanding, to pursue intellectual curiosity, cultural awareness, and creative expression, and to build effective communication skills." The 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. The B.S. in communication degree program includes both communication studies and journalism and supports these outcomes by using active learning strategies and experiential learning to develop students' critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills for their professional goals and personal success. Our mission is to provide general education instruction in oral communication and a variety of undergraduate courses in communication studies and journalism including mass communication, print and broadcast journalism, literary journalism, public relations, advertising, photojournalism, interpersonal, intercultural, and computer-mediated communication, persuasion, and conflict resolution. Besides those majoring in communication with an emphasis in communication studies or journalism, Tennessee Tech students take our courses for general education requirements or sometimes as a minor that will enhance their communication skills and their versatility in whatever career they choose. Students are encouraged to get hands-on, real-world experience in their field through the internship or co-op program. Our program provides students the opportunity to participate in various clubs related to their major as well.

The journalism curriculum is designed to prepare students for a variety of employment opportunities in the communication professions, primarily in print media and public relations. The program stresses practical experience. We offer students experience in media through work for the student-run newspaper (The Oracle), radio station (WTTU-FM), yearbook (the Eagle), campus magazine (Eagle Eye), and multimedia club (Eagle View Productions). The student newspaper, magazine, yearbook, radio station, and multimedia club, and the regional educational television station are utilized extensively in connection with class work.

The communication studies curriculum provides instruction in 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 settings. Our award-winning speech and debate team gives students competitive forensics experience to strengthen their oral presentation skills and debate and persuasion techniques.

The Communication Department's Mission relates to the Tech Tomorrow core principles of Academic Excellence, Community Engagement and Student Success.

Annually, at the conclusion of each reporting period, the department chair shares the results of assessment data with the faculty by emailing the final report for their review before the opening faculty

meeting at the beginning of fall semester. If assessment data indicates curricular modifications may be needed, the department chair reviews the year's results with the directors of each academic program prior to the fall faculty meeting to discuss whether modifications are needed and consider specific modifications to propose to the faculty. If faculty decides curricular modifications are needed, the process follows the campus shared governance structure. If data indicate modifications related to student media or speech and debate team performance, the department chair and directors meet with the advisers/coaches of those groups to discuss a strategy for improved outcomes. If data indicate improvements are needed related to internships, the chair will discuss with the internship coordinators strategies for improved outcomes. Any general suggestions for improved outcomes indicated on the senior exit survey are discussed with all faculty and staff to determine whether modifications are needed.

**Program Goals:**

1. The program will provide instruction in effective written and oral communication skills and current technology for a variety of media and for interpersonal, small and large group settings, and business environments.

2. The program will prepare students for entry-level positions in a number of different fields that emphasize effective communication skills or for a graduate program.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Journalism Graduates will be able to:

Student Learning Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to write and edit competently for the news media and public relations settings.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate the knowledge and critical-thinking skills to be discerning consumers of the media through an understanding of the roles and functions of the media.

Communication Studies Graduates will be able to:

Student Learning Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate effective oral presentation skills that correspond with various communication events and the ability to evaluate written and oral presentations.

Student Learning Outcome 4: Students will demonstrate an understanding of communication theory and research and their practical application to Interpersonal, Intercultural, Public Address, and Business Communication.

A departmentally developed curriculum map can be found in Appendix 1 that shows the connections between courses and student learning outcomes.

**Assessment Methods:**

1. *Area Concentration Assessment Test (ACAT) for Communication:* Communication majors take the ACAT (Area Concentration Assessment Test) for Communication which tests students in the following areas of the communication discipline: Interpersonal Communications, Laws and Ethics, Mass Communication/Mass Media, and Public Speaking/Debate. Students are expected to score at least as well as the average score in their reference group. Students' overall performance score should be at or above the 50th percentile. If scores in subject categories fall below the 30th percentile for three consecutive testing periods, we will review the course content for that subject area to determine if adjustments are needed. Therefore, our thresholds of acceptability are the following:

   ***Target performance****=Overall average at or above the 50th percentile*

   ***Current performance****=Between 62nd and 86th percentile overall for past five years*

   ***Minimum performance****=Below the 50th percentile overall or below 30th percentile on subject categories for three consecutive testing periods.*

   *ACAT scores range from 200-800 with an average score of 500 and a standard deviation of 100. Nationally, 68% of scores in any given year should fall between approximately 400 and 600. Year-to-year variations in the size of the reference groups will cause scores to fall outside these limits. The content area scores are compared with a reference group of other examinees taking the same content area. The overall performance score is compared with other examinees taking the ACAT in this discipline with the same number of content areas. The overall score is a separately determined performance appraisal rather than a numerical average of the area scores. From ACAT Departmental Score Report. For more information, visit www.collegeoutcomes.com

2. *California Critical Thinking Skills Test:* The California Critical Thinking Skills Test is given each semester to graduating seniors to assess general education learning outcomes of our graduates. Critical-thinking skills are necessary to be discerning consumers of media and for the practical application of theoretical concepts (learning outcomes 2 and 4).

   Employers cite communication and critical-thinking skills as top qualifications for potential employees. The CCTST permits test-takers to demonstrate the critical-thinking skills required to succeed in educational or workplace settings where solving problems and making decisions by forming reasoned judgments are important. Communication students are expected to perform as well as their campus peers and the national average for the test. If scores fall below these two benchmarks for three consecutive testing periods, we will review course content to determine whether adjustments are needed to improve critical-thinking skills and we will seek added extra-curricular opportunities for students to build these skills. Therefore, our thresholds of acceptability are as follows:

   ***Target performance****=At or above the campus and national averages*

   ***Current performance****=Students have scored higher than the campus and national averages for three of the past five years*

   ***Minimum performance****=If students score lower than their campus and national peers for three consecutive testing periods, we will review course content and seek ways to improve students' skills in these areas.*

3. *General Education Learning Outcomes Assessment of Oral Communication:* The General Education Learning Outcomes Assessment of the oral communication competencies of students enrolled in COMM 2025 Fundamentals of Communication course is conducted annually every spring semester. This assessment provides very useful data on student progress in oral communication competencies across multiple sections of the COMM 2025 Fundamentals of Communication including the following oral communication competencies: 1. Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement; 2. Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose; 3. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition); 4. Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics; and 5. Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources. Our students are expected to score at or above the satisfactory level. If a majority of students fall below the satisfactory level for two consecutive testing periods, we will review the COMM 2025 course content to determine if adjustments are needed. Therefore, our thresholds of acceptability are as follows:

   ***Target performance****=Students are expected to score at or above satisfactory.*

   ***Current performance****=For the past three testing periods, 92% of students have scored satisfactory or higher.*

   ***Minimum performance****=If a majority of students fall below the satisfactory level for two consecutive testing periods, we will review the content of COMM 2025 to determine what adjustments may be needed.*

4. *Internship Extra-Curricular Experiences:* All program goals and student learning outcomes are evaluated on an ongoing and systematic basis. Students are evaluated through coursework, internships, and extra-curricular experiences on their performance of effective written and oral communication skills in various settings.

   Faculty oversight of internships is maintained by interns supplying written monthly summaries of their internship work.

   Students receive a grade for internships to reflect their level of performance in relevant, real-world settings. Students are expected to make at least a "B" on the recommendation of their internship supervisor. If a majority of students make below a "B" in a given semester, the internship coordinators will consult with the employment supervisors to determine why overall student performance is low and develop a strategy for improvement. Therefore, our thresholds of acceptability are the following:

   ***Target performance****=Students are expected to make at least a B upon the recommendation of their internship supervisor.*

   ***Current performance****=For the past five years most students have earned As.*

   ***Minimum performance****=If a majority of students earn below a B in a given semester, we will consult the internship supervisors to identify and correct student performance deficiencies.*

5. *National Survey of Student Engagement:* The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) assesses students' confidence in their abilities to communicate effectively using written and oral communication skills.

Through coursework and extra-curricular experiences, communication majors will be required to write, edit, and present to a variety of audiences and through several media. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) assesses students' confidence in their abilities to write and speak clearly and effectively. These results are compared to other TTU students and our Carnegie peer institutions. Students are expected to score at least as well as other Tech students and Carnegie peers. If Communication majors fall below the average scores in both of these categories for three consecutive testing periods, faculty will review our course content and student participation in extra-curricular experiences to determine if adjustments are needed. Therefore, our thresholds of acceptability are as follows:

***Target performance****=Students are expected to score at least as well as other Tech students and Carnegie peers*

***Current performance****=Communication students have outperformed their campus and Carnegie peers for the past three testing periods except for the 2016 freshmen written communication category; however, students have shown strong gains in both categories in all recent testing periods.*

***Minimum performance****=If Communication majors fall below the average scores in both of these categories for three consecutive testing periods, faculty will review our course content and student participation in extra-curricular experiences to determine if adjustments are needed.*

6. *QEP/EDGE Participation:* Communication faculty members participate in the University's Quality Enhancement Plan, now known as the EDGE program, in order to give students, the opportunity to improve communication and critical-thinking skills as well as to provide hands-on, experiential learning. The EDGE program seeks to improve critical-thinking and communication skills and real-world problem-solving through the use of active learning strategies. The program administers a pre- and post- survey to measure students' perceived progress in these skills.

   Employers cite communication and critical-thinking skills as top qualifications for potential employees.

   The communication program participates in the EDGE initiative when possible in order to show student gains in these areas.

   Thresholds of acceptability:

   ***Target performance****=Outcomes are dependent on the particulars of the EDGE project of a given semester. Significant gains from pre- to post-test would ideally be at the p=.05 level or higher.*

   ***Current performance****=We have not participated in recent years.*

   ***Minimum performance****=If significant gains are not seen, we would reevaluate the project components to determine what adjustments would improve significance between pre- and post-test.*

7. *Senior Exit Survey:* We specifically ask graduating seniors to report their progress on the program goals and learning objectives in each concentration.

   Senior Exit Surveys provide feedback for continuous quality improvement of our program and to determine students' perceived progress on our program goals and learning outcomes 1-4. The majority of comments are positive which indicates to us that students are pleased with our program. We review the data and implement improvements annually. We successfully completed an audit of

our academic program in spring 2013. One of the commendations we received from the audit team was for the enthusiasm students who participated in the review process showed for their major.

Thresholds of acceptability are the following:

***Target performance****=We expect a majority of students to express satisfaction in our offerings.*

***Current performance****=The majority of comments are positive which indicates to us that students are pleased with our program.*

***Minimum performance****=We review the data and implement improvements annually. If a majority of comments were negative, we would make adjustments based on specific items addressed and the judgement of faculty and staff.*

8. *Speech and Debate Team and Student Media Extra-Curricular Experiences:* Debate and Forensics team experience offers students training and application opportunities for their public speaking skills in argumentation and persuasion. While participation on the team is open to all students, speech majors are required to participate. The team travels to 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 and has grown each year.

   For decades, Tech's journalism program has produced a weekly newspaper, a year-round radio station and an annual yearbook that are supplemental to the curriculum and provide practical experience in both print and broadcast media. In 2012 we added a campus magazine, Eagle Eye, to the media mix, and in 2016 we added a broadcasting club, Eagle View Productions. An internship program is available to students that provides experience in organizations on and off campus for news reporting and public relations and with the PBS-affiliate on campus for television broadcasting experience.

   Student media experience is guaranteed through a "campus beat" system in print reporting and editing classes. We include beat assignments in one introductory and two advanced journalism courses. All three of these courses are required for the journalism degree program. Students may also take an introductory broadcasting course with a campus beat assignment for the broadcast media. Other opportunities for hands-on learning include management positions on the student media and the internship or co-op program. Students receive a grade in courses and internships to reflect their level of performance in relevant academic assignments and real-world settings. Academic assignments are designed to provide practical instruction for news reporting and editing and for public relations. These courses prepare students for work at internships and co-ops as well. The Speech and Debate team, student media and Society for Collegiate Journalists members compete regionally and nationally for external assessment and recognition of their skills. Students set individual and team goals for these competitions. The student media goal is to enter publications in at least three categories of competition each year. The speech and debate team compete in at least two tournaments each semester. Thresholds of acceptability are the following:

   ***Target performance****=The student media goal is to enter publications in at least three categories of competition for a national or regional contest each year. The speech and debate team goal is to compete in at least two tournaments each semester.*

   ***Current performance****=We are exceeding these goals*

***Minimum performance**=If student media do not compete in a national or regional competition for two consecutive competition cycles, we will consult media advisers to determine the reason for lack of competition. If the speech and debate team does not compete in at least one tournament for two consecutive semesters, we will consult the team coaches to determine the reason.*

9. *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24):* The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) typically has an α of .93-.95 (McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985). The scale accesses four dimensions of communication apprehension: interpersonal, group, meeting, and public speaking (McCroskey, 1982; Rubin, 2009). Instructors in COMM 2025, a required general education communication course, use the instrument to measure progress on building confidence in students' communication skills. The instrument can be scored both by adding the value of items in individual sub-measures to assess communication apprehension in a particular context or by combining the scores of each sub-measure to assess overall communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1982). The norms for the PRCA-24 are listed below. Our goal for Comm 2025 is to reduce communication anxiety scores of students from the pre-test to the post-test, or beginning and end of the courses. The thresholds of acceptability are the following:

   ***Target performance**=Our goal for Comm 2025 is a Communication Anxiety mean reduction of 6.25 from the pre-test to the post-test, or beginning and end of the courses.*

   ***Current performance**=The average mean for reduction of Communication Anxiety over the past five years is 7.42.*

   ***Minimum performance**=If the mean reduction in Communication Anxiety falls below 4.25 for two consecutive testing periods, we will reevaluate the COMM 2025 course to determine what adjustments would improve student outcomes.*

| Norms for the PRCA-24 | High Anxiety | Medium Anxiety | Low Anxiety | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interpersonal | 19 or more | 18-11 | 10 or lower | 14.2 | 3.9 |
| Group | 20 or more | 19-11 | 10 or lower | 15.4 | 4.8 |
| Meeting | 21 or more | 20-13 | 12 or lower | 16.4 | 4.2 |
| Public | 25 or more | 24-14 | 13 or lower | 19.3 | 5.1 |
| Overall Communication Anxiety | 81 or more | 80-51 | 50 or lower | 65.6 | 15.3 |

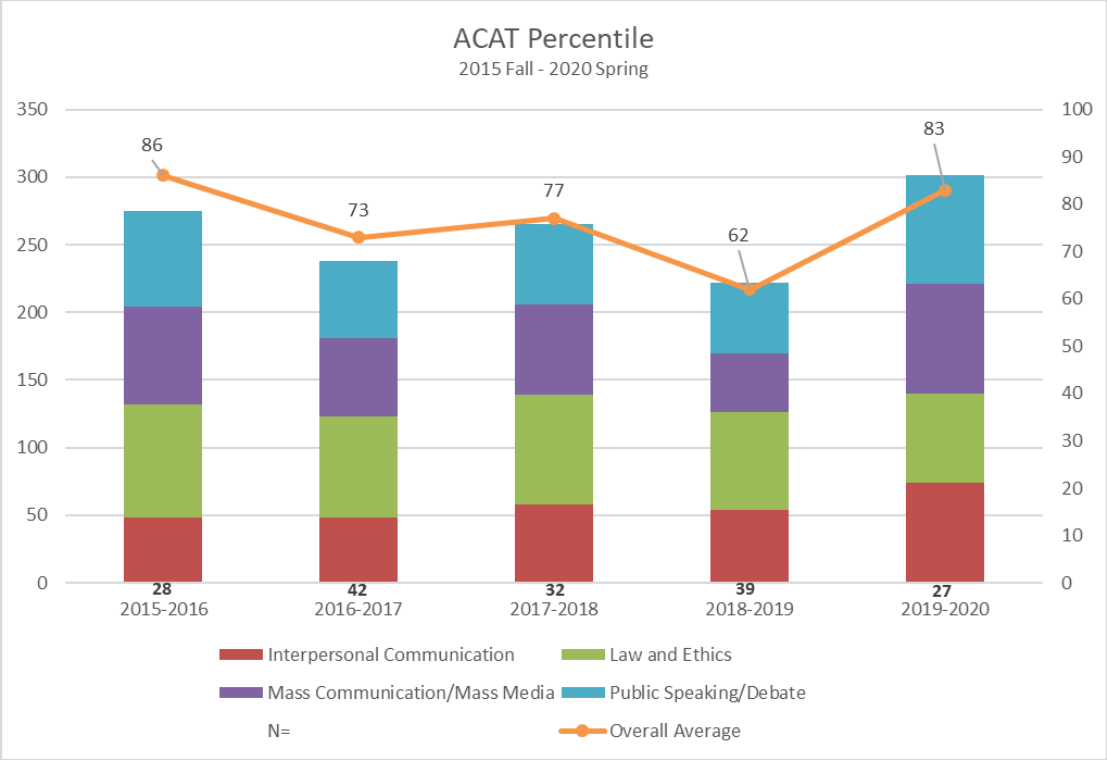
**http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/prca24.htm*

**Results:**

1. *Area Concentration Assessment Test (ACAT) for Communication*

Students take the Area Concentration Assessment Test (ACAT) for communication in the semester in which they plan to graduate or once they have completed coursework in their major. Since we began administering the test in fall 2010, our students have performed well. In the past five years, our overall average has been between the 62nd and 86th percentile.

For two of the past five years our scores on the Interpersonal Communication category dropped below average with 2014-15 scores in the 21st percentile and 2015-16 scores in the 48th percentile. We added an interpersonal communication course in 2016 to complement an existing advanced course and have seen scores improve to slightly above average since then. For two of the past five years, scores for the Mass Communication/Mass Media category dropped slightly below average. In 2014-15, the scores for this category were in the 46th percentile. In 2016-17, the scores were in the 48th percentile. We are modifying our communication theory course to include more mass communication theory in this senior-level course to reinforce material learned in the introductory mass comm course. Reiterating the mass comm material closer to when seniors take the test may improve scores. We will continue to monitor




that area of test and make curriculum adjustments as necessary.

Graduates continue to score above average overall for their reference group, which exceeds our expectations.

*2. California Critical Thinking Skills Test*

On the California Critical Thinking Skills Test, communication students have scored higher than the campus and national averages for three of the past five years in which data were available. However, in the past two years, communication students have scored lower than both the campus and national averages for which data are available. In the current testing period, data were miscoded. Our department moved to the College of Interdisciplinary Studies in the 2019-20 academic year. Because of this organizational change, the data for communication majors were coded as data for interdisciplinary studies majors. The two majors share a college but are distinct, separate majors.

We have added courses in teamwork and event planning that involve application of communication principles. We expect experiences in hands-on learning such as these to improve critical-thinking skills of our graduates.

We will continue to monitor our students' performance on this test.

Attached below is a chart of scores for communication students compared to the campus and national averages for a five-year time frame in which data were available.

| | (N) | Comm Students | Campus Avg | National Avg |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2013-2014** | | 17.9 | 17.7 | 17.1 |
| **2014-2015** | 25 | 18.5 | 17.3 | 17.1 |
| **2015-2016** | 11 | 19.6 | 16.9 | 17.1 |
| **2016-2017** | 41 | 16.1 | 17.1 | 16.2 |
| **2017-2018** | 22 | 15.9 | 17.6 | 16.2 |
| **2018-2019** | 27 | 16.2/75 | 16.8/76 | 15.4/74 |
| **2019-2020** | 25 | 14.6/73 | 16.1/75 | 15.4/74 |

*3. General Education Learning Outcomes Assessment of Oral Communication*

The General Education Learning Outcomes Assessment includes the following oral communication outcomes/competencies of students enrolled in the COMM 2025 Fundamentals of Communication course: A. Analyze and evaluate oral and/or written expression by listening and reading critically for elements that reflect an awareness of situation, audience, purpose, and diverse points of view. B. Distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement and order and develop major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose. C. Use appropriate rhetorical genres and technologies to address intended audiences. D. Demonstrate that writing and/or speaking processes include planning, organizing, composing, revising, and editing. E. Compose written and/or oral presentations employing appropriate technology, format, diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics. F. Manage and coordinate information gathered from multiple sources for the purposes of problem solving and decision making. G. Evaluate the use of evidence, analysis, and persuasive strategies, including basic distinctions among opinions, facts, and inferences. Scoring is as follows: Exceptional=4; Exceeds Expectations=3; Meets Expectations=2; Unacceptable=1. The goal of the COMM 2025 class is to ensure that students as a whole are meeting a minimum score of 2 or higher on each outcome.

The Public Speaking General Education Assessment is designed to measure how well the students demonstrate their ability to meet the goals of Tennessee Tech's General Education outcomes for Communication. This measure is conducted in the Spring of each academic term. The instructor of the classes uses the rubric to evaluate the students on each of the outcomes in their final individual speech.

The goals of the COMM 2025 class is to ensure that student as a whole are meeting a minimum of a score of 2 or higher on each of outcome. Students in the 2019-20 academic year scored an overall average of 3.4 and a 3.3 or better on each competency area.

In the years prior to 2019, the following competencies were evaluated: 1. Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement; 2. Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose; 3. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition); 4. Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics; and 5. Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.

This assessment was discontinued after the 2017 reporting period at the request of the Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences. We reinstated it and collected data for part of the year in 2018-19, so we have fewer participants in the current reporting period (N=99) than in previous years. We plan to fully reinstate the assessment in 2019-20.

Scores in 2018 were higher than in 2017, perhaps because of the smaller number of participants, with only two students scoring in the unsatisfactory category. The data indicate that students enrolled in *COMM 2025* continue to meet or exceed outcome goals in excess of 98%.

Review and analysis of the statistical data from 2017 indicates that the majority of students included in the assessment scored as either superior, with percentages varying between 65% and 77%, or, as satisfactory varying between 21% and 32% in each category. The percentage of students assessed as unsatisfactory generally ranged between 0.9% and 7.16% on any given outcome. This means that, on the average, no more than 8 students out of 100 performed unsatisfactorily in any of the five categories. The overall scores for each outcome appear to be about even, with the category (E) “use of sources and research” being slightly weaker. The data indicate that students enrolled in *COMM 2025* continue to meet or exceed outcome goals in excess of 92%.

A review and analysis of the statistical data based on the scores received in Spring 2016 indicate that the majority of students included in the assessment scored as either superior, with percentages varying between 65% and 79%, or as satisfactory, varying between 18% and 29% in each category. The percentage of students assessed as unsatisfactory generally ranged between 1.8% and 4.7% on any given outcome. This means that, on the average, no more than five students out of 100 performed unsatisfactorily in any of the five categories. The overall scores for each outcome appear to be about even, with the category (E) “use of sources and research” being slightly weaker. The data clearly indicate that students enrolled in *COMM 2025* continue to meet or exceed outcome goals in excess of 95%.

| Number of Students | Public Speaking Gen Ed Assessment COMM 2025 | | | | | | | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | |
| 273 | 3.45 | 3.48 | 3.45 | 3.32 | 3.30 | 3.36 | 3.45 | 3.40 |

| Tennessee Tech General Education Outcomes for Communication | |
|---|---|
| A. | Analyze and evaluate oral and/or written expression by listening and reading critically for elements that reflect an awareness of situation, audience, purpose, and diverse points of view. |
| B. | Distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement and order and develop major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose. |
| C. | Use appropriate rhetorical genres and technologies to address intended audiences. |
| D. | Demonstrate that writing and/or speaking processes include planning, organizing, composing, revising, and editing. |
| E. | Compose written and/or oral presentations employing appropriate technology, format, diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics. |
| F. | Manage and coordinate information gathered from multiple sources for the purposes of problem solving and decision-making. |
| G. | Evaluate the use of evidence, analysis, and persuasive strategies, including basic distinctions among opinions, facts, and inferences. |

| Rubric | | |
|---|---|---|
| Exceptional | = | 4 |
| Exceeds Expectations | = | 3 |
| Meets Expectations | = | 2 |
| Unacceptable | = | 1 |

*5. Internship Extra-Curricular Experiences*

The journalism program has offered internship opportunities for decades, and the communication studies program has offered internships since fall 2013. The attached chart shows the number of students who have participated in the past five years, the number of credit hours they completed, and the grades they received. We have averaged about 20 interns a year for the past five years with most students earning As.

Faculty oversight is maintained by interns supplying written monthly summaries of their internship work with employment supervisors recommending a grade for their performance.

| 3-hour Int. | 2019-2020 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONC | A | B | C | D | F | W |
| Comm Studies | 8 | | | | | |
| Journalism | 16 | | | | | |

| 6-hour Int. | 2019-2020 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONC | A | B | C | D | F | W |
| Comm Studies | | | | | | |
| Journalism | | | | | | |

| 3-hour Int. | 2018-19 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONC | A | B | C | D | F | W |
| Comm Studies | 4 | | | | | |
| Journalism | 17 | 1 | | | | |
| Total | 21 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| 6-hour Int. | 2018-2019 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONC | A | B | C | D | F | W |
| Comm Studies | 1 | | | | | |
| Journalism | 1 | | | | | |
| Total | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| 3-hour Int. | 2017-2018 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONC | A | B | C | D | F | W |
| Comm Studies | 1 | | | | 1 | |
| Journalism | 19 | 1 | | | | |
| Total | 20 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

| 6-hour Int. | 2017-2018 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONC | A | B | C | D | F | W |
| Comm Studies | | | | | | |
| Journalism | 2 | | | | | |
| Total | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*6. National Survey of Student Engagement*

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is administered every two years at TTU to a sample of freshmen and senior students. The assessment of oral communication skills is based on the student's response to the statement "Made a class presentation." Response categories include, "Very Often, Often, Sometimes, or Never," and these responses are converted to a mean score. The assessment of written communication skills is based on the student's response to the statement, "Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources" or "Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments." The same response categories as above are used.

In the most recent testing periods for which data are available (2014, 2016, 2017, 2020), Communication students performed as well as or better than their campus and Carnegie peers from freshman to senior years for both categories except for the freshman oral and written communication categories in 2016 and freshman oral communication category in 2017 as well as the senior written

communication category in 2020. Communication students have shown strong gains in both categories for all the testing periods except the senior written communication category in 2020. We will continue to monitor student performance on this assessment.

| | | Oral Communication | | Written Communication | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Freshmen | Seniors | Freshmen | Seniors |
| 2020 | TTU Communication | 3.50 | 3.57 | 3.13 | 2.86 |
| | TTU Total | 2.40 | 2.70 | 2.50 | 2.90 |
| | Carnegie Peers | 2.31 | 2.70 | 2.60 | 2.90 |
| 2017 | TTU Communication | 2.00 | 3.29 | 3.00 | 3.43 |
| | TTU Total | 2.24 | 2.70 | 2.44 | 2.93 |
| | Carnegie Peers | 2.31 | 2.59 | 2.57 | 2.90 |
| 2016 | TTU Communication | 1.75 | 3.45 | 1.75 | 2.55 |
| | TTU Total | 2.20 | 2.70 | 2.50 | 2.90 |
| | Carnegie Peers | 2.30 | 2.70 | 2.60 | 3.00 |
| 2014 | TTU Communication | 3.00 | 3.50 | 3.25 | 3.50 |
| | TTU Total | 3.00 | 3.30 | 3.10 | 3.50 |
| | Carnegie Peers | 2.70 | 3.10 | 2.90 | 3.30 |

*7. QEP/EDGE Participation*

We did not participate in Tech's QEP/EDGE program in 2019-20. However, two faculty members have been awarded grants for the 2020-21 academic year. We will continue to pursue EDGE opportunities when appropriate to strengthen our students' critical-thinking skills.

*8. Senior Exit Survey*

Students are asked to complete the senior exit survey immediately after completing the ACAT test, during the same testing appointment time. Most students in the journalism concentration plan to work after graduating, and many have already accepted jobs. Others plan to go to graduate school or law school upon graduation. They chose their major because of their interest or ability in writing and because of the importance of these skills for their chosen career path. They chose Tech's journalism program because of its size, friendly atmosphere, affordability, proximity to home, broad curriculum that employs a hands-on approach to learning and opportunities on the student media. Some suggestions for improvement include more instruction in digital, electronic and social media, more coursework in broadcasting, additional courses in public relations and graduate coursework in communication. Students reported being pleased with the academic and career advising they received and would recommend the program to others. They reported being pleased with their progress on journalism program learning objectives and outcomes. Students in the communication studies concentration report that they are planning to work or attend graduate school upon graduation. Some students said they chose communication studies as a major because of their own interests or prior

experience in public speaking. Others commented that they majored in communication studies because they recognize effective communication skills as an attribute potential employers seek in graduates. Students said they chose Tech's program because of its breadth of courses and small class size. Comm studies students recommend that the coursework include theory but remain focused on practical application. Comm studies graduates report high satisfaction with the advisement they received and said they would recommend the program to future students. They report high satisfaction with progress on the learning objectives of the program. We recently added a public relations writing course and two multimedia storytelling courses to meet student expectations. In the 2019-20 academic year, we expanded our broadcasting opportunities by acquiring the Volpe Library TV studio. We also added graduate concentrations in corporate communication and in media and strategic communication under the existing professional studies master's degree through the College of Interdisciplinary Studies.

*9. Speech and Debate Team and Student Media Extra-Curricular Experiences*

All program goals and student learning outcomes are evaluated on an ongoing and systematic basis. Students are evaluated through coursework, internships, and other extra-curricular experiences each semester on their performance of effective written and oral communication skills in various settings.

Students enter extra-curricular competitions throughout the academic year through work on the student media or clubs associated with their major in order to get external assessment of their performance and skills. Our award-winning speech and debate team gives students competitive forensics experience to strengthen their oral presentation skills and debate and persuasion techniques. Students also compete nationally and regionally through clubs associated with their major.

For the past several years student media productions have been entered in various college media contests. The number of various awards received by our students provides a measure of success in achieving the learning objectives. The chart in the attachment below summarizes the categories in which we were judged and the awards received at the regional and national levels since 2012.

Debate and Forensics team experience offers students training and application opportunities for their public speaking skills in argumentation and persuasion. While participation on the team is open to all students, communication studies majors are required to participate. The team travels to 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 and has grown each year.

*10. Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)*

On the PRCA-24 assessment, communication apprehension (CA) total score showed a reduction in communication apprehension, $t(276) = 7.2$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.43$, with an overall reduction of 5.72 in the mean. This is important to note since prior research has found that high levels of CA have a negative effect on student assertiveness (McCroskey et al., 1985), and student ability to recall lecture material if they are expected to interact in class (Booth-Butterfield, 1988). Going beyond the classroom, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) state that oral/written communication, teamwork, and professionalism/work ethic are essential requirements for new college graduates (2015). The description of these requirements all pertain to communication skills. The results suggest that the COMM 2025 class increases students' confidence in their ability to interact with others, which will have an affect both on their academic and employment goals.

Additionally, the public speaking apprehension portion of the measure showed the most substantive decrease with a reduction of *1.96* in the mean of the pretest posttest. Since public speaking anxiety is the primary concern for the COMM 2025 course, these results show that there is a reduction in speech anxiety, $t(276) = 7.03$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.42$. Previous studies have shown that speech anxiety affects avoidance and withdrawal behaviors (Beaty, 1987), and speech duration (Beaty, Forst, & Stewart, 1980). This implies that students who complete COMM 2025 will be better prepared to present information in their other classes and in their future careers. The full analyses can be seen below.

| **PRCA-24 Contexts** | **Fall 2019[1]** | | **Spring 2020[1, 2]** | | **Academic Year 2019-2020[2]** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Reduction in the Mean** | **Results** | **Reduction in the Mean** | **Results** | **Reduction in the Mean** | **Results** |
| **Public Speaking** | 1.69 | $t(228) = 5.75$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.38$ | 3.721 | $t(47) = 4.22$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.61$ | 1.96 | $t(276) = 7.03$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.42$ |
| **Meeting** | 1.39 | $t(228) = 4.3$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.28$ | 1.54 | $t(47) = 6.60$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.36$ | 1.42 | $t(276) = 4.93$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.3$ |
| **Interpersonal** | .98 | $t(228) = 4.9$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.32$ | -.396 | $t(47 = 6.20$, $p < .05$ $d = -0.08$ | .8 | $t(276) = 3.59$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.22$ |
| **Group** | 1.54 | $t(228) = 4.9$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.33$ | 1.88 | $t(47) = 6.19$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.47$ | 1.6 | $t(276) = 5.81$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.34$ |
| **Comm Anxiety** | 5.6 | $t(228) = 6.61$, $p < .05$ $d = .44$ | 6.3 | $t(47) = 8.93$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.42$ | 5.72 | $t(276) = 7.2$, $p < .05$ $d = 0.43$ |

1. Ding's classes (N=132; 6 classes) did not submit data and were not included in this analysis.
2. COVID-19 Pandemic: During spring 2020 semester students switched from face-to-face classes to online classes after Spring Break. We think this change decreased our normal response rate and skewed the results.

References:


Beaty, M. J. (1987). Communicaiton apprehension as a determinate of avoiance, withdrawal and perormane anxiety. *Communicaiton Quarterly*, 35, 202-217.

Beaty, M. J., Forst, E. C., & Stewart, R.A. (1986). Communication apprehension an motivation as predictors public speaking duration. *Communication Education*, 35, 143-146.

Booth-Butterfield, S. (1988). Inhibition and student recall of instructional messages. *Communicaiton Education*, 37, 312-324.

McCroskey, J. C. (1982). *An introduction to rhetorical communication* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

McCroskey, J. C., Beatty, M. J., Kearney, P., & Plax, T. G. (1985). The content validity of the PRCA-24 as a measure of communication apprehension across communication contexts. *Communication Quarterly, 33*, 165-173.

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2015). *Job outlook 2015: Spring update*. Bethelem, PA.

Rubin, R. B. (2009). *Communication research measures: a sourcebook. Volume II*. New York: Routledge.

On the PRCA-24 assessment 2018-19**,** communication apprehension (CA) total score showed a reduction in communication anxiety $t(447) = 12.0$, $p<.05$ $d=.57$ with an overall reduction of 7.23 in the mean. Additionally, the public speaking apprehension portion of the measure showed the most substantive decrease with a reduction of 2.26 in the mean of the pretest posttest.

The full analyses can be seen below.

| PRCA-24 Contexts | Fall 2018 * | | Spring 2019* | | Academic Year 2018-2019 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Reduction in the Mean | Results | Reduction in the Mean | Results | Reduction in the Mean | Results |
| **Public Speaking** | 2.62 | $t(194) = 8.06$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.58$ | 2.26 | $t(253) = 8.592$, $p <.05$ $d= 0.54$ | 2.41 | $t(447) = 11.8$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.56$ |
| **Meeting** | 2.17 | $t(194) = 6.49$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.47$ | 1.92 | $t(253) = 6.60$, $p <.05$ $d= 0.41$ | 2.03 | $t(447) = 9.25$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.44$ |
| **Interpersonal** | .99 | $t(194) = 4.95$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.35$ | 1.07 | $t(253) = 6.20$, $p <.05$ $d= 0.40$ | 1.03 | $t(447) = 7.93$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.38$ |
| **Group** | 1.84 | $t(194) = 6.00$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.43$ | 1.67 | $t(253) = 6.19$, $p <.05$ $d= 0.39$ | 1.74 | $t(477) = 8.62$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.41$ |
| **Comm Anxiety** | 7.62 | $t(194) = 8.02$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.57$ | 6.92 | $t(253) = 8.93$, $p <.05$ $d= 0.54$ | 7.23 | $t(477) = 12.0$, $p < .05$ $d= 0.57$ |

* Dr. Ding's classes (N=139; 7 classes) did not submit data and were not included in this analysis.

Tennessee Tech's COMM 2025 class average reduction from the pretest to the posttest on Communication Anxiety score for the previous 5 years is 7.42 (n = 2343) and on public speaking score is 2.53 (n = 2343) (See table below for all average mean reductions). Research has shown that the general education communication course does reduce student anxiety (Rubin, Rubin, Jordan, 1997). The threshold for concern for the results of the Communication Anxiety reduction in the mean is 4.25 and the goal should be at or above 6.5.

| Year | 14-15 | 15-16 | 16-17 | 17-18 | 18-19 | Average Reduction |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Public Speaking** | 3.42 | 2.82 | 1.537 | 2.46 | 2.41 | 2.53 |
| **Meeting** | 1.57 | 2.19 | 0.301 | 2.24 | 2.03 | 1.67 |
| **Interpersonal** | 2.17 | 1.48 | 0.939 | 0.6 | 1.03 | 1.24 |
| **Group** | 2.48 | 5.61 | 1.582 | 1.82 | 1.74 | 2.65 |
| **Comm Anxiety** | 9.64 | 8.73 | 4.359 | 7.12 | 7.23 | 7.42 |
| **Year** | **14-15** | **15-16** | **16-17** | **17-18** | **18-19** | **Total** |
| **Participants** | 494 | 591 | 461 | 350 | 447 | 2343 |

Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., & Jordan, F. F. (1997). Effects of Instruction on Communication Apprehension and Communication Competence. *Communication Education, 46*, 104-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529709379080

**Modifications for Improvement:**

*Internship Extra-Curricular Experiences*

For the past five years we have averaged about 18 interns a year with most students who participate earning an A for the course. We will encourage participation with a goal of averaging at least 20 majors a year enrolling in the internship program and most earning a "B" or better.

Modification: More consistent promotion of the internship program through the academic advisors.

While our enrollment, and enrollment across campus, has decreased in the past few years, we will maintain the goal of 20 students participating per academic year. We will make a concerted effort to promote our internship program through academic advisors to make students more aware of the program's value to their career preparation. The department's public relations intern will develop promotional materials for the academic advisors to use.

*National Survey of Student Engagement*

We have recently hired new full-time faculty in the journalism program where the students get most of their writing instruction. The full-time faculty will be able to focus on improving students' writing skills, more so than adjuncts did.

Communication students have shown strong gains in both categories for all the testing periods except the senior written communication category in 2020.

*QEP/EDGE Participation*

We will continue to pursue EDGE opportunities when appropriate to strengthen our students' critical-thinking skills. While no faculty participated in the EGDE program in 2019-20, two faculty have been awarded EDGE grants in 2020-21. We expect these student experiences to improve their critical-thinking skills.

**QEP/EDGE program participation:**

**COMM 4430, Advanced Interpersonal Communication**
Fall 2020: Review of Literature Poster Project - this creative inquiry allowed students the opportunity to expand their knowledge of interpersonal communication more specifically to an area they were interested in pursuing. By exploring and evaluating research and summarizing and synthesizing this information into a final poster project, students effectively demonstrated their ability to engage in creative inquiry.

**COMM 2090 – Interpersonal Communication**
Spring 2021: Research Comparisons Project - this creative inquiry allowed students to have more engagement with critical thinking activities as they located and summarized information found on the web and compared this to information obtained from the textbook. This unit helped students critically think about information obtained from the web as they synthesized the information into a final creative project that demonstrated the similarities and differences between two different types of information.

In fall semester 2020, the **JOUR 3460 Introduction to Public Relations** class received a QEP/EDGE program grant to research best practices for establishing a student-run public relations agency at Tech. They reviewed scholarly literature, collected descriptions of successful agencies at peer institutions, and observed professional agencies to create a plan for establishing an agency at Tech.

In spring 2021 semester, the **JOUR 4460 Public Relations Cases and Practices** course participated in a QEP/EGDE program to simulate activities of a professional agency by developing a promotional campaign for an off-campus client. The class researched the product, set objectives, created programming and promotional materials, and organized an event to introduce the client's product to the campus community. They will present their results to the client during the last week of the semester.

**Appendices**

1. Curriculum Map

**Appendix 1: Curriculum Map**

| Course Number | Course Title | CS/J/ Both | Learning Outcome 1: Ability to write and edit for news media and public relations settings | Learning Outcome 2: Knowledge and critical-thinking skills to be discerning consumers of media | Learning Outcome 3: Effective oral presentation skills and oral and written evaluation skills | Learning Outcome 4: Understanding of communication theory and research and their application to various communication environments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| COMM 1020 | Foundations of Comm | CS | | | | X (I) |
| COMM 2025 | Fundamentals of Communication | Both | | | X (I, A) | |
| COMM 2075 | Organizational Comm | CS | | | X (I) | X (I) |
| COMM 2090 | Interpersonal Communication | Both | | | X (I, A) | X (I, A) |
| COMM 3100 | Communication Theory | Both | | | | X (M) |
| COMM 3200 | Research Methods in Communication | Both | | | | X (M) |
| COMM 3620 | Intercultural Communication | Both | | | X (R) | X (R) |
| COMM 3630 | Discussion & Parliamentary Procedure | CS | | | X (R) | X (R) |
| COMM 4620 | Advanced Public Speaking | CS | | | X (M, A) | |
| COMM 4630 | Persuasion | CS | | | X (M, A) | X (M, A) |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| JOUR 2200 | Mass Comm in a Changing Society | Both | | X (I, A) | | |
| JOUR 2220 | News Reporting & Copy Editing | J | X (I, A) | | | |
| JOUR 3350 | Newspaper Production & Design | J | X (R, A) | | | |
| JOUR 3370 or 3400 or 3500 | Photojournalism or Intro to Broadcasting or Multimedia Storytelling | J | X (R, A) | | | |
| JOUR 3460 | Intro to Public Relations | J | | X (R, A) | | |
| JOUR 3470 | Public Relations Writing | J-PR | X (R) | | | |
| JOUR 3740 | Advertising Copy & Layout | J | X (R) | | | |
| JOUR 3750 | History of Journalism | J | | X (R) | | |
| JOUR 3770 | Law of Journalism | Both | | X (R, A) | | |
| JOUR 4360 | Magazine Production & Design | J | X (R, A) | | | |
| JOUR 4460 | Public Relations/ Cases and Practices | J-PR | X (M, A) | X (M, A) | | |
| JOUR 4710 or 4830 | Literary Journalism or Feature Writing | J | X (M, A) | | | |
| JOUR 4820 | Advanced Reporting | J | X (M, A) | | | |
| JOUR 4930 | Advanced Copy Editing | J | X (M, A) | | | |

***"I"=Introduced; "R"=reinforced and opportunity to practice; "M"=mastery at the senior or exit level; "A"=assessment evidence collected.***