

**Texas A&M International University
Annual Institutional Effectiveness Review (AIER)
for Academic Programs**

Program: BA-Communication

Assessment Period Covered: January 13, 2009 to December 15, 2009

Program Coordinator (Preparer of Report): Lynda Brown

List Other Program Faculty:

Marcela Moran
Marie Flores

The Annual Institutional Effectiveness Review for Academic Programs is directed at Goal 1: Academics of the Texas A&M International University 2006-2010 Strategic Plan:

Develop, maintain, assess, and improve academic programs, administrative/educational support services and student services, to admit, retain, and graduate students who achieve established learning outcomes designed to prepare them for success in their chosen careers.

Institutional Mission

Texas A&M International University, a Member of The Texas A&M University System, prepares students for leadership roles in their chosen profession in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society ... Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service, Texas A&M International University embodies a strategic point of delivery for well-defined programs and services that improve the quality of life for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities.

Academic Program Mission

In unison with the institutional mission, this Department is dedicated to the promotion of intellectual and personal growth in students, with an emphasis on endowing them with flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing social, professional, economic, cultural, and political environments ushered in by this era of rapid technological change, information proliferation, and global interdependence. To achieve these aims, the Department is committed to the retention of a productive, professionally diverse and highly competent faculty involved in a wide range of academic endeavors.

Provide summary of the last cycle's use of results and changes implemented

Program faculty should evaluate the former cycle. This statement should specify if the outcomes addressed were a continuation of previous ones, new outcomes, or modified versions of previous outcomes. In addition, the statement should include a concise analysis of the assessment data collected during the previous year, a brief explanation of actions taken to address specific outcomes, an evaluation

of how these actions contributed to the improvement of the program, and any recommendations formulated. Assessment data—including actual samples of student work—must be viewed and discussed by program faculty during this process.

Last year senior thesis papers were evaluated again using the QEP rubric. The communication assessment team's average calculated a score of 1.93 which is below the minimum program benchmark of 2. We agreed that there were too many weak papers. The evaluation committee agreed that the program should continue to place a strong emphasis on writing as competent writing skills are critical for the majority of communication careers. We agreed that we need to include writing in some form in all communication classes and that we need to continue to evaluate and assess our students' competency in writing and critical analysis. Therefore, we will assess learning outcome 1 again next year.

Selected list of program-level intended student learning outcomes (*It is recommended that programs rotate through their entire set of outcomes over a multi-year period. Programs may focus on one or two outcomes each year, as deemed appropriate*).

1. Graduates will successfully write an essay that demonstrates their theoretical knowledge, research and writing skills while analyzing a communication phenomenon or professional problem.
2. Graduates will produce a portfolio consistent with professional standards.
3. Graduates will demonstrate communicative competence in public and social contexts.

Section I: Planning and Implementation

Outcome(s)

Identify the outcome(s) that will be focused upon this year.

1. Graduates will successfully write an essay that demonstrates their theoretical knowledge, research and writing skills while analyzing a communication phenomenon or professional problem.

***Yes+ Please indicate if the outcome(s) is (are) related to writing (QEP).**

Methods of assessment to be used: *The explanation should identify and describe the type of assessment(s) that will be used (e.g., survey, questionnaire, observation instrument, test, rubric to evaluate performance, standardized examination, action research, interviews, etc.), who will provide the information, and how the data will be obtained.*

Students will demonstrate their written communication skills and critical thinking abilities in their final thesis paper in the senior capstone course which is focused on analyzing a communication phenomenon through the lens of scholarly communication research.

Assessment will be done through the University QEP Analytical Rubric, where 4=Exceptional; 3= Better Than Avg.; 2=Average; 1= Poor Pass; and 0=Failing.

An essay will count as demonstrating the desired outcome if the average score is 2 or higher.

(2) Information will be provided by Lynda Brown from her senior capstone course, COMM 4360 Communication Theory and Practice. Once a year, a committee consisting of at least two communication professors will evaluate the degree to which the essays written by seniors accomplish the identified objective. Evaluation will be done using this QEP rubric.

	4/A	3/B	2/C	0/F
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prompt is completely & clearly addressed Clear, interesting central idea stated or implied so focus of the piece is evident or gradually revealed Writing appropriate for & clearly directed at a specific audience &/or for a specific situation or occasion. Well-developed, enticing opening leads to essay's central idea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prompt is clearly addressed Clear central idea, stated either explicitly or implicitly Writing demonstrates awareness of audience, situation, & occasion Effective, though less detailed opening leads to central idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prompt is addressed Central idea may not be immediately clear but is evident by the end of the piece Writing demonstrates occasional awareness of audience, situation, & occasion Adequate opening leads to central idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prompt is partially or unclearly addressed Unclear, ambiguous, or no central idea Little or no awareness of audience, situation, or occasion Rudimentary or no opening to writing sample
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently logical & effective ¶ing with smooth transitions between & within ¶s Consistently clear & logical structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually logical & effective ¶ing with mostly smooth transitions between & within ¶s Usually clear & logical structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical ¶ing with transitions between & within ¶s Organization is sometimes unclear or illogical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent problems w/ paragraphing & transitions Organization is often confusing
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body ¶s provide substantial detailed evidence and thorough discussion & explanation Effective, convincing discussion of topic Interesting, effective, insightful ending Sophisticated, effective, appropriate diction Consistently varied, sophisticated sentence length and structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent evidence, proof, discussion in body ¶s with only occasional lapses Mostly convincing, competent discussion of topic Ends paper effectively Sometimes sophisticated, mostly accurate diction Frequently varied sentence length & structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body ¶s contain adequate though sometimes inconsistent levels of evidence & examples General, occasionally convincing discussion of topic Final ¶(s offer sufficient closure Unsophisticated but generally accurate diction Some variety in sentence length and structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body ¶s lack adequate examples, details, & explanations Ineffective, unconvincing discussion of topic Missing, ineffective, dull, incoherent, or irrelevant ending Limited, imprecise

<p>Style & Sentence Structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and appropriate tone • Consistently smooth, clear, readable syntax • Free of errors in sentence structure, i.e., fragments, run-ons, and comma splices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually consistent and appropriate tone • Frequently smooth, clear, readable syntax • Infrequent errors in sentence structure, i.e., fragments, run-ons, and comma splices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasionally an inconsistent or inappropriate tone • Clear, relatively free of unidiomatic syntax & expressions • Occasional errors in sentence structure, i.e., fragments, run-ons, and comma splices 	<p>diction prevents communication of complex ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetitive, unsophisticated sentence length and structure • Frequently inconsistent or inappropriate tone • Distracting unidiomatic syntax & expressions • Frequent errors in sentence structure make meaning unclear, i.e. fragments, run-ons, and comma splices
<p>Grammar & Mechanics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of grammatical errors, i.e., errors in subject-verb agreement, verb & adjective forms, pronoun-referent agreement, etc. • Free of mechanical errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, use of numbers, etc. • No wordiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrequent grammatical errors, i.e., errors in subject-verb agreement, verb & adjective forms, pronoun-referent agreement, etc. • Infrequent mechanical errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, use of numbers, etc. • Little wordiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some grammatical errors, i.e., errors in subject-verb agreement, verb & adjective forms, pronoun-referent agreement, etc. • Some mechanical errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, use of numbers, etc. • Some wordiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A distracting number of grammatical errors, i.e., errors in subject-verb agreement, verb & adjective forms, pronoun-referent agreement, etc. • A distracting number of mechanical errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, use of numbers, etc. • Frequent wordiness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently uses reliable, relevant, appropriate sources • Consistently and correctly cites sources both in-text and parenthetically • Unfailingly uses appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently uses reliable, relevant, appropriate sources • Infrequent errors citing sources both in-text & parenthetically • No or few lapses in use of appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses sources, most of which are reliable and relevant • Occasional errors citing sources in-text &/or parenthetically • Occasional lapses in use of appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses frequently unreliable and/or irrelevant sources • Frequent errors citing sources in-text and/or parenthetically

Research	documentation style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete absence of plagiarism • Thoughtful, insightful synthesis of writer's ideas with info from sources 	documentation style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete absence of plagiarism • Often insightful synthesis of writer's ideas with info from sources 	documentation style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete absence of plagiarism • Some effective synthesis of writer's ideas with info from sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent lapses in use of appropriate documentation style • Evidence of plagiarism • Attempts to synthesize writer's ideas with info from sources but rarely succeeds
Discipline-specific Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates exceptional creativity and/or higher order critical thinking skills appropriate for discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates frequent creativity and/or higher order critical thinking skills appropriate for discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates adequate creativity and/or higher order critical thinking skills appropriate for discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrequently demonstrates creativity and/or higher order critical thinking skills appropriate for discipline

Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:

Fall 2009

Criteria/Benchmark(s): *[Specify, if deemed appropriate to assess outcome(s). Criteria/ benchmark(s) may be optional, especially if qualitative measures are used for data collection.]*

The benchmark for 2 or higher using the QEP rubric indicates that the student can: cogently describe a particular communication topic or problem, (b) identifies, analyzes and synthesizes communication theory to illuminate understanding of the topic/problem, and (c) demonstrate cogent writing skills.

Section II: Analysis of Results

What were the results attained?

Describe the primary results or findings from your analysis of the information collected. This section should include an explanation of any strength(s) or weakness(es) of the program suggested by the results.

Senior thesis papers were evaluated according to the University QEP analytical rubric.

Average score= 1.93; which is below the minimum 2.

Overall result= not satisfactory

What were the conclusions reached?

Should include a brief description of the procedure used for reaching the conclusion(s) based on the evidence collected and describe the process used to disseminate the information to other individuals.

For example, if the discussion took place during the annual spring retreat, include a summary from those deliberations using the Meeting Minutes template found on the Project Integrate web page at <http://www.tamtu.edu/integrate/docs/Minutes-Template.doc>. Once completed, submit the minutes to assessment@tamtu.edu.

The average of the student thesis papers is 1.93. This is below the program minimum. The committee agreed that too many academic papers were poorly done and that the entire program needs to address how to improve writing. Since writing well and effectively is inherent and necessary for most communication careers, the committee agrees that this needs to be address across the program.

Describe the action plan formulated. (The plan may be multi-year in nature.)

Based on the conclusion(s), describe the action plan to be implemented to improve or maintain student learning, including a timeline for implementation.

1. Continue to incorporate some form academic writing in all communication courses.
2. Require Writing Center assistance for all major papers.
3. Mentor students for participating in student academic conferences and publicly communicate student recognition for excellent researching and writing as evidenced by quality senior thesis papers. Suggestions ranged from continuing the Communication Program newsletter to continuing the Facebook page for the communication degree program that the public relations students created. Students can also be recognized through the communication list serve that is regularly used to communicate program events, internship and career opportunities, class and schedule information, and other note worthy news.
4. Offer a research writing workshop for seniors who are enrolled in the senior capstone course to reinforce the basics of how to write a research paper.
5. Look for learning community opportunities to give students more experience in writing.

Section III: Resources

Resource(s) to implement action plan:

Describe the resources that will be needed to implement the action plan. Also indicate if the resources are currently available, or if additional funds will be needed to obtain these resources.

Funding

- New Resources Required
- Reallocation of current funds

Physical

- New or reallocated space

Other

- + **Primarily faculty/staff time**
- University/rule procedure change only

Provide a narrative description and justification for requested resources (include linkage to Strategic Plan)

The communication program, which currently has around 110 majors, also provides instruction (3 courses) for the Communication Disorders program, which has about 100 majors. In addition the communication program offers around 30-34 speech courses a year. We are understaffed. We have two PhD communication professors who teach the majority of the communication classes. The other professor in the program has a MFA and specializes in photography, film-making and film studies. We are currently in the process of hiring two speech instructors which helps with the speech classes but doesn't help provide instruction for the communication major classes. Since we are spread so thin, we are unable to offer additional classes which could focus on writing and communication scholarship.

Identify proposed outcomes for the next assessment cycle:

Continuation of present outcome(s) – (Indicate reason for continuation):

We need to continue to evaluate the Capstone Senior Thesis Papers since this outcome was not satisfactory.

New Outcome(s) – (List outcomes below):

Enter text here

Modification of present outcome(s) – (Indicate reason for modification):

Date Completed: March 13, 2010