

Interdisciplinary Studies--Professional Communications B.S.

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose

Institutional Mission Reference

The IDS program in Professional Communications offers both traditional and nontraditional undergraduate students a practical and well-rounded education, based in theory yet focused on application, in three primary areas: Interpersonal and Organizational communication, Professional Writing, and Marketing, Management and Public Relations. Designed especially for working adults and offered through the university's TELETECHNET system, the program seeks to meet the needs of organizations ranging from engineering and technical operations to human services and the needs of its students by producing highly qualified and experienced graduates capable of critical thinking, problem solving, and assuming leadership positions in organizations functioning across cultures.

Institutional Goal(s) Supported

The undergraduate IDS degree in Professional Communications supports the university goals of: (1) Ensuring quality undergraduate academic programs, (2) Supporting quality teaching, (3) Developing intellectual skills of critical thinking and problem solving, (4) fostering responsible citizenship, (5) Instilling a breadth of understanding needed for personal growth and achievement, (6) Encouraging appreciation of women, minorities and non-western cultures, and (7) Enhancing the educational experience through the application of emerging technologies. Additionally, the program supports the College of Arts and Letters goals of: (1) Developing skills in oral and written communication, (2) Encouraging critical thinking, and (3) exploring issues of culture, society and human values from historical and contemporary perspectives. Finally, the program directly supports the accomplishment of strategic objectives: 1.4 Continuing to enhance the writing skills of all students, 5.2 Improving the quality of distance learning programs, and 5.3 improving the writing skills of TELETECHNET students with demonstrated deficiencies.

Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes, Methods for Assessment, Criteria for Success, Assessment Results, and Use of Results

Intended Outcome 1

Students will communicate effectively in writing.

Method for Assessing Outcome 1 and Criterion for Success: Every third year, alternating with the other two assessments, a sample of compositions from English 327W, as determined by the English Department program advisor, will be evaluated in accordance with the current criteria of the Writing Exit Exam to ensure that the course is meeting student needs and that students are gaining the necessary writing skills. Successful accomplishment of this criterion shall be a pass rate of 90% of the sample compositions. Responsibility: English Department Program Advisors

Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 1:

For this assessment, the pass rate for compositions evaluated in accordance with the criteria of the Writing Exit Exam was 83.3%. This indicates that the one course which met the criteria for assessment did not achieve its assessment goal.

The sample population, however, was less than 4% of the available population within the major, and nine of the ten students whose work was evaluated for the assessment did, in fact, improve their writing skills over the course of the semester, as measured by the assessment and the grades assigned in class.

As a result of the findings of this assessment, the English Department will re-evaluate the appropriateness of the stated criterion - its definition of successful accomplishment of the goal that all students be able to communicate effectively in writing. Additionally, the program advisor will continue to informally collect and evaluate data to determine whether or

not the course is having its intended effect of helping students develop the skills to communicate effectively in writing. At least one method of data collection and evaluation will include determining the performance of IDS-Professional Communication degree candidates on the actual Writing Exit Exam. A detailed report of this assessment is available from the IDS - Professional Communication - Professional Writing emphasis advisor, Eugene M. McAvoy, 683-4015.

Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 1 to Improve Academic Program:

The program advisor will forward results of the assessment to all instructors of the course for their use in evaluating and modifying course requirements.

The program advisor will work with the Associate Chair and/or Composition Director of the English Department to develop more effective and efficient mechanisms for tracking and evaluating student performance.

The program advisor will continue to informally collect data to confirm or refute the findings of the assessment of this small sample population.

Intended Outcome 2

Students will demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving skills related to a specific communication topic.

Method for Assessing Outcome 2 and Criterion for Success: Every third year, alternating with the other two assessments, a sample of the culminating projects from COMM 302, as determined by the Communication Department program advisor, will be evaluated in accordance with the current criteria of the Communication Department to ensure that the course is meeting student needs and that students are gaining the necessary critical thinking and problem solving skills. Successful accomplishment of this criterion shall be a satisfactory rating of 90% of the sample projects. Responsibility: Communication Department Program Advisor

Intended Outcome 3

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the character and strengths of interdisciplinary work.

Method for Assessing Outcome 3 and Criterion for Success: Every third year, alternating with the other two assessments, a sample of the culminating projects in IDS 287, as determined by the appropriate instructor, will be evaluated by representatives of the English and Communication Departments in accordance with criteria established by both departments to ensure that the course is meeting student needs and that students are gaining a meaningful appreciation of the character and value of interdisciplinary pursuits. Successful accomplishment of this criterion shall be a satisfactory rating on 90% of the sample projects and unanimous agreement among the program advisors that the course, as represented by the culminating project, supports the desired interdisciplinary knowledge. The "desired interdisciplinary knowledge" should be identified or updated immediately prior to the selection of sample projects for each assessment cycle. Responsibility: English and Communication Department Program Advisors