

QEP Impact Report

Department of Communication

The following report highlights the Department of Communication's assessment of the following two outcomes: Communicate Effectively and Responsibly and Practice Civic Engagement

Communicate Effectively and Responsibly

While data are being collected at numerous junctures, four data points are highlighted here. First, students in their sophomore year are being required to submit an initial portfolio of work as part of COMM 296 Introduction to Professional Development. Second, students are required to complete a professional portfolio that showcases their communication competencies as part of COMM 496 Senior Seminar in Professional Development, which is taken in the last semester. The same faculty member (Betty Farmer) teaches both courses and is able to track the students' progress through the curriculum. Third, to provide a measure of external review, each senior student is required to identify a professional in the field to review his/her portfolio and to provide feedback to the student and the department in a short evaluation form. To date, feedback from the professionals regarding communication students' portfolios has been overwhelmingly positive. Given the choices of excellent, good, satisfactory, and not satisfactory, approximately 80 percent rated the portfolios as excellent; 15 percent good; and 5 percent satisfactory. No unsatisfactory ratings were received. These results were from the spring 2011 review cycle. Fourth, we are capturing data from internship evaluations. Internship employers are required to provide formal, written midterm and final evaluations. Students are also asked to reflect on the curriculum and to recommend changes. A common theme running through the internship reflection papers is the realization of the importance of writing, and specific styles of writing. For example, one student indicated that he thought all of the stress on AP style he had in class wasn't necessary—until he got on the job and realized the AP Stylebook was now his new bible. Other students--and employers, too--indicated they would like to see an even greater emphasis on writing. Another common theme is the emphasis on social media. Both students and employers noted the need for social media training. The department has offered a social media class, but due to the departure of the faculty member teaching it, the class is not currently being taught. Competency to teach in this area will be a top priority for the new faculty member to be hired in this position. These data capture points appear to be providing useful information for curriculum assessment and development. Given the professional focus of the communication department and its commitment to providing industry-ready graduates, the combined feedback from professionals and internship employers is especially vital.

Practice Civic Engagement

The Communication Department is a recognized leader in this area. Several Communication faculty members have received QEP grants to implement projects in the community ranging from public relations work in Dillsboro to radio recreations in the Fine and Performing Arts Center to television students' work with the Department of Athletics. These faculty members have received both internal and external national awards. Students are including these projects in their portfolios and professionals/internship employers are noting and applauding the department's real-world, engaged focus. The Department underwent program review in spring 2011, and the external reviewer cited our engagement work as a model for WCU and beyond.