

INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS CURRICULUM DESIGN

FOR A BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAM

A CREATIVE PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIEMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: Integrated Communications Curriculum Design for a Bachelor's Degree Program

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This creative project outlines the course sequencing, curriculum requirements, course descriptions, and learning outcomes for an Integrated Communications Bachelor's Degree program. The curriculum meets the accreditation standards of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. It also incorporates a new, blended set of tactical skills required by current entry-level positions in the fields of public relations, communication, and marketing.

The curriculum is designed in three sections so students will gain specific skill competencies while advancing through the degree. The 120 credit hour degree program is divided into foundation courses, advanced theory courses, and professional practical courses.

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Higher education exists to prepare students for careers. In order for students to begin careers after completing their degrees, they need to spend their education acquiring the skills required by entry-level positions in their industry. Therefore, the needs of the industry should inform the curriculum being taught in higher education. It has to, as a necessary function of its existence. Academic institutions need to maintain high alumni employment rates, both as a recruiting tool and as a service to the students who have invested in their education. If academia does not keep up with industry, both sides will suffer. As career requirements change, education should evolve to match the job market.

In public relations and communication degree programs, the academic curriculum no longer matches the realities of the job market. The current skill set being taught exists within a silo, but the industry requires integration. The fields of public relations, communication, and advertising and graphic design are starting to overlap with increased frequency. Students who graduate with the knowledge of only one of these fields are at a disadvantage in a highly-competitive job market. All three industries require the skills to “identify wants, interests, needs, and expectations of key groups of people, and structure ways to interact and communicate with them” (Smith, 2009, p. 5). Organizations and public relations firms are starting to realize the efficiencies gained when employees have a blended knowledge of public relations, communications, advertising, and graphic design.

This blended reality is reflected in the results of the annual survey *Where Shall I Go to Study Advertising and Public Relations*, which states that 26 percent of all undergraduate programs studying public relations study an integrated approach. The first publication of this study in 2005 noted only two integrated programs (Ross & Richards, 2008). With more professional environments encouraging teamwork, flattened organizational structures, and tighter

budgets, it is likely that the demand for professionals with a wide range of skills will increase and the number of integrated programs will continue to grow.

In public relations positions specifically, entry-level positions are tactical, but the tactical skills required are varied beyond the writing-intensive skills enforced in most undergraduate public relations programs. Strong writing skills continue to be the most requested (and therefore most necessary) skill of entry-level communication and public relations positions, but the educational offerings have not adapted to include the other skills required by many of these entry-level positions. These positions require high-level strategic and critical thought, and entry-level technicians need to understand how their particular skills fit into a greater strategy, but if they are not taught to put their written content on a website, no employer will give them a chance to practice strategic planning. Public relations and communication students need to leave their educational experience with the technical skills required by entry-level jobs.

A new type of bachelor's degree program will solve the discrepancy between industry expectations and higher education realities: integrated communications. An integrated communications bachelor's degree program will prepare graduates for the requirements of current entry-level positions by teaching the skills required by the job market. This kind of degree does not have to sacrifice the theory or research courses that stimulate critical thinking, or forgo the academic rigor required by institutional accrediting bodies.

This project outlines the core of an integrated communications bachelor's degree program, with specific curriculum requirements, course sequence, course descriptions, and learning outcomes. The degree program requires 120 credit hours (CH), 72 CH of which are general education, as required by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass

Communication (ACEJMC) (ACEJMC, 2006, para. 9). Course selection for this creative project relied on a content analysis of job requirements in current entry-level public relations, communications, and marketing positions. The ratio of job requirements informed the establishment of course requirements. Many of the courses are those currently required by public relations or communications programs, as the curriculum was designed to be easily adopted by any four-year liberal arts institution. The new integrated courses, and a refocusing of current courses to incorporate a study of digital media and graphic design, distinguish this new program from traditional public relations or communication degree programs.

Literature Review

The State of Public Relations Education

Several institutions have helped shape both the professional public relations industry and public relations and communications higher education degree programs. The Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) is an industry leader in researching public relations education. The organization's "reports and recommendations on curricular standards are widely used in the US and abroad in university-level public relations education" (Institute for Public Relations, 2011). The CPRE's work is referenced by the Institution for Public Relations (IPR), the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), and the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). The CPRE (2013) "seeks to establish benchmarks for teaching public relations that are current, research-based, sensitive to culture and language and applicable to preparing public relations students for a career in practice, research or teaching" ("About the Commission," 2012, para. 3). The integrated communication curriculum design will partially rely on research done by these organizations, so as to fit within the research-driven professional standards already established by the industry.

In 2006, the CPRE released *The Professional Bond*, a report that provides a comprehensive view of the state of Public Relations education, with the goal "to demonstrate, facilitate, and encourage the kind of linking of public relations education and practice that is the hallmark of any profession" (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006, p.5). The report opens with the recommendation that public relations education put more emphasis on "ethics and transparency, new technology, [and the] integration of communication messages and tools" (CPRE, 2006, p. 6). Ethics and transparency will always be an important part of public relations education, but it is important to note that the second and third mentions of what needs to be

updated in public relations education are the exact issues that an integrated communications program would help clarify.

The Professional Bond's section on "undergraduate curriculum" details necessary knowledge, skills, and curriculum content and topics for undergraduate public relations programs. It lists twenty-two specific skills that undergraduate students should learn. Of those twenty-two skills, several allude to and three specifically reference skills that would be enhanced by a basic understanding of web, digital technology, and graphic design skills: technological and visual literacy, message production, and public speaking and presentation (CPRE, 2006, p. 32). Six of the report's nine sections specifically reference the use of technology, web and/or design skills. It also provides examples for integrating public relations with different models of education (i.e. journalism, communication, business) (CPRE, 2006, p. 48). The models listed come from an understanding that public relations undergraduate programs are often "housed" under different schools of study, and that the academic requirements of accreditors or the institutions themselves might shape the public relations programs. The integration of web, digital technology, and graphic design skills would be most easily addressed by institutions where the public relations/communication program is housed by the same school that houses the advertising or graphic design programs, though public relations programs housed under schools of journalism, business, or mass communication would not have problems integrating digital literacy into their curriculum.

The "location" of public relations programs has been part of the issue in determining curriculum. Different administrators, based on their background or accreditor's requirements heavily influence what is actually being taught. Public relations programs are most often under mass communication, journalism, or liberal arts schools, and each type of school shifts the focus

of the program (Guiniven, 1998, McInerney, 1995; Professional Bond, 2006). This is problematic because the public relations industry should determine the public relations curriculum. Instead public relations students are being taught skills required by the journalism or mass communication industries.

A 1998 report in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* by John Guiniven asked public relations senior executives what skills they were looking for in entry-level employees. Good writing and oral communication skills, and the ability to understand strategies and goals were the most important. Using the Internet and being able to desktop publish were listed second (p. 53). The report quotes one executive who says web and desktop publishing skills are less important because “it’s their commonness that makes them less important” (Guiniven, 1998, p.54). However, as individual use of web, design, and social media technology become more commonplace, training for professional and organizational use becomes more important, not less. For example, American public relations courses teach verbal communication skills even though most students know how to speak English. Professional communication requires more than the ability speak; social media management requires more than the ability to use Facebook. Professionals understand how to practically apply tested theories, and education teaches professionalism. If newly-hired public relations professionals are being asked to create web and design content, they need be trained to use those tools as professionals.

The PRSA lists 273 higher education institutions with undergraduate public relations programs. Of those 273 programs, 26 percent provide an “integrated” experience (providing three or more courses with specific graphic or web design skills being taught) and 33 percent provide one or two courses where design is the focus (i.e. desktop publishing, design for non-majors, etc.). By comparing the research review of the PRSA institutions and the CPRE’s

Professional Bond report, the dearth between what educational research says public relations curriculum should be teaching and what is actually being taught becomes obvious.

Integrated Communications

For the purposes of this research and creative project, integrated communication refers to a blended approach to education that incorporates different skills from the fields of public relations, communications, and advertising and graphic design. There are several different terms used to describe the combination of these similar fields, but “integrated communications is one of the least complicated names used by professionals to address the combining of disciplines” (Smith, 2009, p. 6).

Public relations, graphic design, and advertising all “attempt to create awareness, change attitudes, and influence behavior” (Moody, 2012, p. 204). Though each field has its own specific advantages, if used together, they can achieve more. For instance, public relations often relies on the media to broadcast messages, but the media landscape is quite crowded and it’s easy for a story to get missed or a press release to get ignored all together. The advertising industry’s use of creativity can make messaging more attention-grabbing, which can translate as more interesting or informative, and therefore more persuasive than public relations messages picked up by the media (Salmon, Reid, Pokrywczynski, & Willett, 1985).

Blending public relations with other disciplines is the source of some controversy, in part because the practice of public relations has a broader scope than traditional marketing and advertising. There is some fear about public relations getting overwhelmed by marketing functions to the detriment of the overall strategic function of most organizational public relations. Instead, several studies have found that integrating the public relations and advertising

functions of business increases effectiveness and allows the public relations professional to be more strategically focused (Ewing, 2009, p. 107; Griffin & Pasadeos, 1998, p. 5; Miller & Rose, 1994, p. 14). Patricia Rose and Debra Miller, in a *Journalism Educator* study (1994) surveyed employers and top corporations in both advertising and public relations fields, and found that employers preferred employees with both advertising and public relations experience, and that this was especially true in the nonprofit sector (p. 53).

Employees with diverse skill sets have multiple advantages. Understanding the entirety of an organization's communication efforts allows the public relations professional to think more strategically about using all of the relationship building tools and resources available. As entry-level communicators enter the field, a diverse set of skills will help them thrive because "it is the communication practitioner who is faced on a daily basis with the growing responsibilities and expectations created by today's increasingly complex business environment" (Rose & Miller, 1994, p. 53).

If public relations professionals are truly to function as part of the management team, then it behooves public relations practitioners to develop an understanding of the entire business of communication and all of the tools required to communicate effectively. The Public Relations Society of America acknowledges in its *Careers in Public Relations* report (2000) that marketing communications is a necessary element of practicing public relations, and understanding basic graphic design is important because "background knowledge of the techniques are needed for intelligent planning and supervision of their use" (p. 3).

A 1998 study in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* explains the "splintering" and specialization of mass communication outlets and the increase in technology to

access more information has made individual and public outreach even more difficult.

Strategically unifying business communication functions can “yield a result greater than if each functional area had selected its own targets, chosen its own message strategy, and set its own media schedule and timing” (Griffin & Pasadeos, p. 5). According to research completed by the Pew Research Center, individual daily use of the Internet among adults has reached 88 percent and the number of adults who own a digital smart phone has increased to 55 percent (Smith, 2014, para. 7). As adults’ use of varying technologies increases, and they consume more information from more sources, unity and clarity of communication will become even more important.

As entry-level public relations jobs are often tactical in nature, it is important that public relations education keep up with the tactical skills required by the industry. Right now, very little of public relations education provides skills instruction outside of written and verbal communication. Researchers Karla Gower and Jung-Yul Cho explain (2001) public relations professionals need to know the “language” of technology. They need to learn how the technology works, and be able to “analyze and evaluate” the communication tools available so they can incorporate them into strategic plans (p. 82). Public relations education curriculum has fallen behind the industry on teaching students how to use communication technology that is specific to public relations and not just journalism or mass communication.

Methodology

Public Relations Curriculum Review

As a sample of convenience, this project relied on the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) higher education institutional partner listing to establish an integrated communication curriculum. The PRSA lists 273 undergraduate public relations, mass communication, and communication studies programs. Of those 273 programs, 72 programs provide an "integrated" curriculum. Here, integrated refers to programs that offer at least three graphic design or web skills courses. These programs have not been individually reviewed to see if institutions have integrated advertising or graphic design into their traditional public relations or communication courses, which is the goal of this project. In order to be included, programs had to require public relations or communication theory courses. The following list is a content analysis compilation of what is being emphasized in the 72 "integrated" public relations and communication bachelor's degree programs.

Learning Outcome	Frequency
Theory Courses	41
Writing	40
Design	33
Media Studies	30
PR Techniques	30
Research	27
Tools (AV, Social Media, Web)	27
Ethics/Law	19
Public Speaking	17
Journalism	13
Sociology	12
Internship	10
Small Group Communication	8
Org. Communication	7
Management	7
Diversity	7

Global Communication	6
Broadcast	5
Events	4
Theatre	1

These learning outcomes reflect information printed or displayed on department and/or admissions websites, not information listed in the institution catalog. Instead, this list provides insight into what these degree programs were communicating as the most important highlights of their programs. These skills were being marketed as the most important courses and/or skill sets in collateral likely to be seen by prospective, new, or transfer students.

This learning outcome information was found presented in one of two ways: in an abbreviated or highlight course list, with names and descriptions, or as a list of generic “learning outcomes,” in which individual courses were not listed, but rather presented in a “When a student has completed the requirements of this degree, he will be able to…” format. The information was collected, sorted into the above categories, and used to inform the curriculum outlined in the bachelor’s degree for this creative project.

Entry Level Positions Review

This degree program needed to reflect the realities of the job market. What follows is a content analysis of current job postings. Previous research suggested that the nonprofit sector would most benefit from an employee with a background of public relations, graphic design and digital technology skills. Therefore, this list uses data from the nonprofit sector as a way of focusing and limiting the results. Most of these jobs were found by using CareerBuilder.com to search for all nonprofit postings within 150 miles of Fort Wayne, Indiana (chosen for proximity to the institutions that might adopt this curriculum). To be included, the job had to require a bachelor’s degree in public relations, communication, or marketing, and fewer than three years of experience. There were 25 positions that met these criteria.

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Six additional jobs were added to this data. These additional jobs were sent directly to the Program Director in Communication at the University of Saint Francis. These six positions require a diverse skill set, and employers were not receiving qualified applications by posting the job online or through a search site. Instead, employers found more success going straight to those with direct access to potential employees with the right skills (in this case, professors). The data below provides reference for both sets of skill requirements. Rank changes made after adding the additional jobs have been highlighted in the first data set.

Skill Listed – All (31)	Frequency
Writing	31
Verbal Communication	22
Web	20
MS Office	16
Design, Layout, Photography	16
Teamwork	14
Interpersonal Communication	13
Social Media	12
Database Management	8
Attention to Detail	6
Relationships	5
Strategy	5
Event Planning	4
AP	4
Video	4
Time Management	3
Media Monitoring	5

Skill Listed – Only online (25)	Frequency
Writing	26
Verbal Communication	20
Web	18
MS Office	16
Teamwork	14
Interpersonal Communication	13
Design, Layout, Photography	11
Social Media	8
Database Management	7
Attention to Detail	6
Relationships	5
Strategy	5
Event Planning	4
AP	4
Time Management	3
Media Monitoring	3

These specific skills were listed under the “job requirement” heading on each individual job posts. Design, layout, and photography knowledge is in the top third of the most frequently listed items. Not surprisingly, the ability to manage web content is the third most requested skill.

If basic HTML and the ability to navigate online content management systems aren't taught in public relations and communication programs, students are going to be at a disadvantage.

Written and verbal communication skills receive a lot of important emphasis in public relations education, presumably because the job market demands it. It seems unusual that there is almost no emphasis on web instruction when the demand for web skills is nearly as high.

Further job research might indicate even more emphasis on digital skills. Several "job function" lists (separate from the "requirement" list provided above) included items that might be made easier with graphic design or web knowledge, but those skills were not specifically listed as a job requirement. For instance, several fundraising jobs mentioned creating presentation and presentation materials for donors, but the ability to design those materials were not listed in the job requirements.

Body of the Project

Course Listing: Degree Requirements

Integrated Communications Core: 48 CH	
Foundational Knowledge	LO
Public Speaking	V
Public Relations Foundations	T
Media and Mass Communication	T
Writing for the Media	W
Business Communication	IN
Advanced Theory	LO
Media Law	T
Public Relations Campaigns	W
Professional Presentation	V, W
Group Communications	T, V
Integrated Visual Communication and Design	IN
PR and AD Digital Media	T, IN
Professional Practice	LO
Integrated Media Campaigns	W
Writing and Design for Electronic Media	IN
Multimedia Communication	IN
Persuasion and Debate	V
Internship	IN
Required Targeted General Education (GE): 15 CH	
Management Course - Introductory	
Marketing Course - Introductory	
International Business	
Ethics	
Sociology (Gender, Culture, etc.)	
Degree Total: 120 CH	
Core	48 CH
Targeted GE	15 CH
Other GE	57 CH

LO KEY:	
V	Verbal
T	Theory
IN	Integrated
W	Writing

Curriculum Map: Suggested Sequence

Freshman Fall	Freshman Spring
Public Speaking	Management - Introduction
Business Communication	GE
GE	GE
GE	GE
GE	GE

Sophomore Fall	Sophomore Spring
Public Relations Foundations	Writing for the Media
Media and Mass Communication	Marketing - Introduction
GE	Ethics
GE	GE
GE	GE

Junior Fall	Junior Spring
Public Relations Campaigns	Integrated Visual Communication and Design
Group Communication	Media Law
PR and AD Digital Media	Professional Presentation
Sociology (Gender, Culture, etc.)	GE
GE	GE

Junior Summer
Internship

Senior Fall	Senior Spring
Writing /Design for Electronic Media	IM Campaigns
International Business	Persuasion and Debate
GE	Multimedia Communication (AV)
GE	GE
	GE

Course Descriptions and Learning Outcomes

This degree course is separated into three sections: Foundational Knowledge, Advanced Theory, and Professional Practice. Students will move through courses in each learning outcome before advancing. Students will learn foundational public relations skills before learning to apply them in advance theory courses, and creating their own public relations programs in the

professional practical courses. By having the professional practical courses at the end of the degree program, students will have a foundation of knowledge from which to pull, and they will graduate with a well-developed portfolio to use in their job search.

Section I: Foundational Knowledge

The first set of courses will introduce students to basic concepts and theories of communication, public relations, advertising, and mass communication. Students will gain basic competencies in research techniques and verbal and written communication. They will begin to learn the role of public relations, advertising and mass communication, and how those fields work together and interact with modern society. The importance of ethics and cultural diversity will be highlighted throughout.

Fundamentals of Communication

This introductory course provides students the skills to communicate effectively in personal and professional environments. Students will learn foundational communication theory and basic individual and group presentation skills. Instruction includes using technology and visual aids to communicate, understanding nonverbal communication, persuasion techniques, using audience demographic research, critical listening, and peer evaluation.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Write speeches and verbally complete the following presentation types: informational, persuasive, entertaining, and group.
- Discuss basic communication theories, including interpersonal, group, and mass communication.
- Explain the difference between types of communication (nonverbal, mass, group, interpersonal).
- Use technology to create print and digital materials to enhance verbal presentations.

Public Relations Foundations

Students will examine the history and trends of public relations to gain a working understanding of public relations principles. This course includes introduction to the importance of strategy, ethics, intercultural communication, traditional models of public relations, and the variety of models and outlets for public relations (business, government, nonprofit, community, crisis, etc.). Instructor will use case studies to help students gain basic public relations research and writing skills.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain what public relations is, its role in society, and how organizations use public relations to achieve strategic goals.
- Demonstrate the importance and role of ethics and diversity of thought in practicing public relations.
- Research and analyze a case study.
- Write a press release and compile information for a media kit.

Media and Mass Communication

This survey course covers history and theories of mass communication, and the role of media in society. Students will study the evolution and modern practice of various print, broadcast, and digital media. This course will help students understand how to use mass communication outlets in professional communication roles. Instruction will focus on the role of advertising and technology, economic structures, and ethics of mass communication. This is a research and writing intensive course.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and evaluate mass media messages.
- Explain the role of mass communication in society.
- Discuss the economic drivers of mass communication.

- Discuss how public relations and advertising work within the fields of mass communication.

Business Communication

This practical skills course introduces students to the written and verbal communication skills required in standard business settings. Students will study various forms of professional written communication, including e-mail etiquette, professional letters, proposals, resumes and job request letters. Instruction will focus on encouraging professional development and using standard computer software to write, layout and present business communication.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe professional etiquette and business correspondence practices.
- Communicate with professionals in professional settings.
- Write a variety of successful business communication pieces.
- Use Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher to create business communication pieces.

Writing for the Media

Students will practice the various basic writing formats used by public relations and advertising professionals, including news releases, professional letters, headlines and advertisement copy, journalistic formatting, and internet/social media writing. Students will learn to differentiate messages between different audiences and media types. Instruction will provide context for cultural and ethical constructs for communication. There will be a heavy focus on writing and rewriting, so students can practice editing and become familiar with Associated Press style rules. This is a research and writing intensive course.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Write to print, broadcast, public relations and advertising outlets.

- Explain differences in writing for auditory versus visual communication outlets.
- Use demographic information to write targeted messages.
- Use Associated Press style comfortably.

Section II: Advanced Theory

Before taking these courses, students should be familiar with the fields of public relations, communication and advertising, and have basic written and verbal communication competencies. They will use those skills and context to delve deeper into communication theories and the relationship between public relations and visual communication. During this set of courses, students will develop greater understanding of the role of communication in society, and the importance of ethics and professionalism.

Media Law

Students will review first amendment and legal principles pertaining to freedom of speech, the press and other types of mass communication. They will also study the role of the regulatory bodies that govern commercial speech like the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission. By analyzing historic and modern cases of media and copyright law, students will study laws pertaining to print, broadcast, and digital media communication outlets. Group presentations will increase verbal fluency in complex legal terms and ideas. Instruction will focus on the ethical constructs and societal ramifications of communication and media law.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the different components of the First Amendment, and how they relate to communication and media laws.
- Describe the role of the various government agencies that regulate communication law.
- Analyze the ethical and practical implications of communication and media law.

- Discuss the role of communication law in practicing public relations, journalism, and business.

Public Relations Campaigns

This writing-intensive course reinforces the importance of research, strategy, ethics, diversity, and relationships in organizational public relations. Students will study public relations theory to learn how to use public relations to shape public opinion, manage issues, and build strategic relationships with an organization's publics. Students will analyze and critique case studies to practice the strategic process and develop writing skills. Throughout the course, students will be taught to recognize the relationship between public relations and advertising. Students will write their own strategic campaign as a final project.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe various public relations theories and organizational public relation techniques.
- Describe the relationship between traditional public relations and advertising.
- Explain the difference between goals, strategies, objectives, and tactics.
- Research, plan, and write a complete strategic plan.
- Articulate the importance of managing relationships using communication and mass media tools.

Professional Presentation

This course develops student knowledge of the communication, public relations, and advertising industries while also building public presentation and verbal communication skills. Using knowledge gained in fundamental communication courses to research and write various presentations, students will use audience demographics to shape informational and persuasive messaging. Presentations will require the use interactive technology. This course aims to increase student professionalism and understanding of modern business frameworks, and prepare students for interacting and speaking in a variety of everyday business settings that require presentation

skills. Students will prepare speeches and presentations for training events, business meetings, and networking events. Instruction will also focus on creating supplemental printed and digital presentation materials.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Effectively present themselves in a variety of professional settings.
- Work within a professional space to present information to a variety of audiences.
- Manage technology to enhance verbal presentations.
- Use critical listening and constructive criticism to analyze others' verbal presentations.

Group Communications

Students will work as a group throughout the semester to study group communication theory and leadership skills. Using principles of leadership, problem-solving, and negotiation, students will learn how to overcome group communication issues like “group think,” and stimulate creative thinking and creativity in group settings. The course will prepare students to lead meetings in a professional environment and engage in effective teamwork. Students will learn how to work with various personality types and people from varying cultures.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply group communication theory to effectively communicate in small groups.
- Describe the differences between group communication and other types of communication.
- Describe common group communication issues and options for overcoming those issues.
- Lead a productive small group discussion or meeting.

Integrated Visual Communication and Design

This technology-intensive course introduces students to design theories and software that will help them use photography and design to enhance written communication materials and verbal presentations. Students will learn the basics of composition and layout, both in print and

digital media. Students will learn how to use a variety of design software and online content management systems. Students will also practice copywriting for print and digital media.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Use a variety of design software to produce printed communication pieces.
- Create materials according to the standards of layout, composition, and design.
- Publish online content through a content management system.
- Differentiate between printed and online copywriting.

Public Relations, Advertising and Digital Media

Students will analyze and critique digital messages to help them understand digital media. They will study the relationship between digital media, public relations, and advertising; how digital media has interacted with and changed traditional print and broadcast media; and how technology has impacted how people interact with the media. Students will review case studies that showcase how organizations have used digital media, public relations, and advertising to successfully manage relationships and issues. This is a research and discussion intensive course.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe how public relations and advertising make use of new media forms.
- Describe how technology has changed traditional print and broadcast media.
- Identify and analyze digital media messages.
- Use digital media as part of a strategic public relations or advertising campaign.

Section III: Professional Practice

In this set of practical application courses, students will showcase the skills and knowledge gained in the previous two course sections. Each course focuses on encouraging professional skill development in speech, writing, design, and the use of digital technology.

After taking these courses, students will have a professional portfolio that provides examples of their writing, design, and digital media works.

Integrated Media Campaigns

Students will spend the semester planning and executing communication pieces for different publics, and exploring the differences in writing and designing for printed versus electronic materials. Students will practice persuasion techniques and develop branded communication materials for integrated strategic plans that incorporate advertising, direct marketing, and public relations. This course will help students use theory and practical skill together as they create an organization's strategic plan, and write and design the materials to supplement the plan they create.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain how to use public relations, publicity, mass communication, and advertising together to achieve strategic goals.
- Write and create targeted communication for both print and electronic media.
- Design branded communication materials to meet the needs of a strategic plan.

Writing and Design for Electronic Media

In this project based course, students will create communication messages using a variety of electronic media including photography, digital video, online blogs, and websites. Students will explore various journalistic and advertising copywriting styles. Students will create an online digital portfolio of previous work. Instruction will focus on encouraging digital interaction and analyzing various electronic media to learn established industry techniques.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Write clearly and concisely using established principles for electronic media.

- Maintain an interactive blog that incorporates writing, photography, design, and video.
- Establish a personal writing style that reflects industry standards for electronic media.
- Explain the ethics of using new and electronic media.

Multimedia Communication

Students will learn the equipment and technology of video production. This course includes introduction of the theoretical background of film and editing, and practical knowledge of lighting, sound and post-production editing techniques. Small groups of students will work together to create a variety of digital video projects. Instruction will cover video use in journalism, marketing, advertising, and online media.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Effectively use camera, lighting, and sound equipment.
- Plan, write, shoot, and edit a short video project.
- Use a variety of industry standard video editing software.
- Work together as a production team to solve issues, and manage time, talent, and resources.

Persuasion and Debate

Students will study theories and techniques of persuasion to learn how to shape attitudes through written and verbal communication. Using critical thinking, logic, and an understanding of audience demographics, students will participate in individual and group presentations to debate current media, communication, public relations, and advertising trends and topics. Instruction will focus on presentation skills to build students' professionalism.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Use critical thinking and logic to clearly debate one side of an argument.
- Describe various theories of persuasion and apply them through practical skills.
- Write persuasive messaging as part of a public relations or advertising campaign.

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Problem-solving and Negotiation	x			x			x	x	x					x	x		7
Management of Communication	x	x		x			x	x	x			x	x	x			9
Strategic Planning		x					x					x					3
Issues Management							x		x			x					3
Audience Segmentation	x		x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x		11
Informative and Persuasive Writing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x		x		11
PR Practice Areas (Consumer, Employer, etc.)		x					x		x			x					4
Technological and Visual Literacy	x		x	x				x		x	x	x	x	x			9
Managing People, Programs and Resources							x		x	x		x	x	x			6
Sensitive Interpersonal Communication								x	x						x		3
Critical Listening Skills	x					x		x	x	x					x		6
Fluency in a Foreign Language																	0
Ethical Decision-Making		x			x	x	x		x						x		6
Participation in the Professional Community				x				x	x							x	4
Message Production	x				x		x	x			x	x	x		x		8
Working with Current Issues			x					x		x	x	x	x		x		7
Environmental Monitoring		x							x		x	x	x				5
Public Speaking and Presentation	x			x	x			x	x	x					x		7
Cross-Cultural and Cross-Gender Sensitivity		x					x		x								3

Conclusions and Suggestions

This degree program was designed to give public relations and communications students an advantage in their job search process. The goal was to create a degree program with a truly integrated experience, and to show how such a program could be created without losing the research-established standards that produce high quality public relations and communication graduates. The digital technology, graphic design, and web skills were emphasized throughout, though the program builds on a strong foundation of traditional communication and public relations courses.

The literature review highlights how both industry and academic public relations and communication professionals have recognized the need for an integrated approach to public relations and communications education. By directly reviewing the skills being sought out by job descriptions, this project eliminates some of the tension surrounding academic preferences for education versus industry needs for skilled employees.

With more time, the collection of career research could be improved. This research used primarily non-profit job descriptions on a national job search site. It is likely that smaller non-profits do not have the resources (either knowledge or capital resources) to post on national sites. A thorough review of local websites or surveying additional higher education career services representatives may have yielded an even more heightened reality of the job market's need for employees with the skills this program would provide.

This project received two outside reviews, and each person commented on the bulk of traditional public relations coursework. Each course description discusses the integration of new skills, though course names and learning outcomes could be re-emphasized to highlight the various ways the new tactical skills have been integrated into the traditional public relations and

communication courses. Both reviewers also commented on the lack of advertising or marketing theory courses. The job skill research shows a desire for tactical design and web skills in the public relations industry. The literature review and a few of the course descriptions were re-emphasized to avoid confusion regarding the difference between advertising and the graphic design/digital literacy emphasis of this new program (while still providing enough advertising theory to create context for these skills). This curriculum relied on CPRE curriculum standards for knowledge and skills, but it could have also incorporated more of the design industry's standards as established by its own professional communities.

Both of the outside reviews for this project provided very good suggestions for improving the quality of the curriculum. In the overall development of the curriculum and learning outcomes, there could be more reliance on educational scholarship. Educational research could help structure the courses and learning outcomes, and ensure the learning outcomes match the course content level (professional application courses focusing on evaluation, for instance). This project relied more heavily on practical skill and industry research over education research, which has resulted in some inconsistency in the progression of learning outcomes. Several learning outcomes have been rewritten to reflect the suggestions of the reviewers.

To work towards improving the curriculum itself, there should be more discussion of graphic design and digital communication theories, greater differentiation between traditional communication and public relations courses and truly integrated courses, and a clearer rationale for how each course will directly benefit the career skills of the student.

There are two courses that could be reworked. There should be an "evaluation" type of course that allows students to use all of their skills in conjunction. The "Writing and Design for Electronic Media" and "Integrated Media Campaigns" courses are already very similar, and

could be combined to make room for a “Senior Capstone” course without going over the 120 CH limit. The “Professional Communication” course was designed to build on skills developed in “Fundamentals of Communication,” but one reviewer questioned the differences between the two, and another reviewer suggested a course on leadership. To further differentiate the advanced course from the introduction course, and to maintain consistency as a “professional development” course, the “Professional Communication” course description and learning outcomes could be updated to add an emphasis on leadership, which is a professional skill.

Overall, this creative project has met its goal to provide a career-focused approach to public relations and communications education that integrates the digital and design skills required by the job market. The improvements suggested above help clarify this program’s intentions for any educators who might wish to incorporate one or more of these classes into their existing public relations or communications programs.

Outside Reviews

Evaluation for Kristin Jones Creative Project

Evaluator: Debbie Davis ABC, APR

Brief discussion of evaluator's credentials (knowledge and experience of the subject area)

As an evaluator for this project, I bring a unique set of skills, education and experience. Currently, I am the leader for the public relations program at Ball State University. As part of my role, I will be leading our team through a curriculum review this year and have begun research of my own and have examined requirements/recommendations by ACEJMC and Commission on Public Relations Education. This is my fourth year teaching full time in higher education; previously I taught adjunct courses at two other institutions. Currently, I am a doctoral candidate in an Ed.D. program; specializing in higher education pedagogy and advising. I have also earned a certificate in college and university teaching.

Professionally, I have more than 20 years in communications including leadership roles at Fortune 100 and Fortune 150 companies. Part of my responsibilities included hiring and mentoring interns and staff. I am also one of less than a 100 people who have earned accreditation by both the International Association of Business Communicators (ABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (APR)

Relationship to the student and subject matter

Kristin was an online student in the PR 664 class on evaluation that I taught. I am also a member of the graduate faculty in the department of journalism.

Evaluation of the topic as appropriate for the creative endeavor

This is a very appropriate topic for a creative project in the public relations graduate

program. In public relations education, there continues to be a strong debate over the future of the communications profession. Should public relations and advertising remain as separate majors, or should they be combined to form a strategic communication major? Kristin has chosen to research this topic and make recommendations for an institution which is debating this very issue.

Evaluation of the student's approach

Kristin has clearly defined three sections of the curriculum: foundational, advanced theory, and professional practice. While the intent was to provide an integrated program, it still heavily relies on public relations and general communications studies while less on advertising. For example, there is a course on Public Relations Foundations, but not on advertising foundations. One of the outcomes is a press release and press kit. However, I couldn't find a similar introductory assignment for advertising. There is a course on Writing for the Media, which is heavily skewed toward PR. The outcomes are focused on PR writing. I am not sure what writing to advertising outlets means. I would also argue that writing media materials are no longer solely for the media only, press releases are read by lay publics as well. Thus, the name of the course may need to change as well.

I teach the ad/PR law & ethics course at Ball State. I would also argue that the law course should have outcomes, which more specifically address commercial speech and the role of regulatory bodies such as the FTC, FCC, FDA, etc.

Is professional presentation a three-hour course? It is not clear how this will be substantially different than the Public Speaking. How does the Group Communications course truly advance the skills of integrated communications students?

Why is there a PR Campaigns course, but not a similar one for Advertising before the Integrated Media Campaigns course, where do students learn strategic planning for advertising? How are the digital media and the writing/design for electronic media different? It feels as if there is some overlap.

The Knowledge and Skill Chart requirements by CPRE is excellent, but is also dated (2006) and only includes PR. How might you add to this list so that it is current and includes an integrated communications approach? What does PRSA look for? Does AAF or AEF provide any sort of recommendations/requirements?

Evaluation of the body of the project: Quality, Depth of Treatment, Coverage

a. Quality

Kristin's work is extensive and well researched from a PR and communications studies approach. The number of hours within the program complies with ACEJMC standards.

b. Learning Outcomes

Her approach recognizes the need to build a series of skills then apply them. However, in some places, there is often a jump to comprehension or application based outcomes without mention of knowledge based outcomes. Additionally, while the later courses are focused on advanced skills, the learning outcomes are more focused on the middle ones (application, analysis) rather than higher ones (synthesis, evaluation).

C. Curriculum

Kristin makes a solid attempt to combine public relations, advertising and communications studies into a strong program. While it is hard to tell from course descriptions and learning outcomes, there is a strong focus on ethics, research and theory. There could be

more emphasis on writing, strategy and evaluation.

Evaluation of the student's work as contributing to the field (e.g., body of knowledge)

Kristin's project balances the many forces at work in higher education; established institutional courses, accreditation requirements, and student needs before they enter the professional world. Many institutions are struggling with how to balance these and have yet to make it this far in the planning. Her project can serve as an example for other institutions who struggled with this very issue.

Evaluation for Kristin Jones Creative Project

Evaluator: Jane Martin, MFA

Professor, Program Director in Communication, University of Saint Francis

Brief discussion of evaluator's credentials (knowledge and experience of the subject area)

She has served in a leadership capacity in both the Academic Council of the University and in the General Education Committee. She has received the Teaching Excellence and Campus Leadership Award, the LeePoxy Teaching Award and the Club Advisor of the Year Award for both the Public Relations Society and the USF Film Club.

Relationship to the student and subject matter

Jane Martin has 21 years of teaching experience in Communication, Public Relations and Film at the University of Saint Francis. She designed the current communication curriculum and has designed, taught and assessed all the courses in the current curriculum.

Martin served as Ms. Jones academic advisor and professor during her 3 years at the University. She continues to be a supportive colleague of Ms. Jones.

Evaluation of the topic as appropriate for the creative endeavor

The current job market and the explosive of social media and web communication is requiring a major overall of most Communication curricula in all areas. Many jobs in Public Relations are beginning to have descriptions that read much like graphic design, beginning film and marketing positions. Graduates are being asked to have more breadth in their skillset and frankly less depth. I have referred to this often as a “jack of all trades” position. Jones has entered this project with that information and is doing research that is required to develop a program which will allow students to be both marketable and successful. This degree template is an excellent endeavor and one I hope many faculty will consider implementing.

Evaluation of the student’s approach

The division of the degree courses into three sections is an effective method of breaking this down not only to describe the skillset but to make this more easily understood by the student. Transparency in curriculum design is one of the best ways to ensure that students understand how they are being assessed and how they should be developing.

Incorporating ethics, writing and diversity across the curriculum is a much more effective process than just focusing on these in specific courses, this is a good practice.

The explanation of each course is a helpful approach and the course outcomes are essential to allow for assessment, this is an effective process.

The inclusion of the Knowledge and Skill chart is excellent for assessment and for communicating the curriculum to the students

Evaluation of the body of the project: Quality, Depth of Treatment, Coverage

a. Quality

This overview is clearly designed and easy to understand. The Course descriptions are thorough, yet still provide some ability for the class to take on the needs of changing work environments. The traditional “Comm” curriculum is effectively maintained and given support while integrating new media developments and programs. Theory and practice are both well addressed. The program effectively meets the skill requirements for the Commission on Public Relations Education.

Please consider moving Persuasion and Debate to the Sophomore or Junior- course level. The skillset developed here is needed for upper division courses and the internship.

Please consider moving Group Communication to the sophomore year to help build skillsets for group work in the curriculum for the Junior and Senior Practice years.

The project is effectively written in language that meets the needs of an academic program. Precision and clarity are utilized to present the information.

b. Depth of Treatment

The depth of treatment is effective and thorough. There are a few considerations I would like to suggest.

Please consider designing situations or perhaps even developing a course in leadership. In a recent publication, “Leadership Education in the Public Relations Curriculum: Reality, Opportunities, and Benefits” by Elina Erzikova, Ph.D., and Bruce K. Berger, Ph.D., the authors address the need for training as most PR practitioners are members of the Management teams of organizations and need to be aware of the challenges and needs of leadership as well as the ability to lead.

I would also consider developing a Senior Portfolio Class to develop the final portfolio, a social media presence, a final senior project and the necessary skills for a job search.

Please describe the Advanced Theory course a little more clearly, specifically which theories will be covered-just for a bit more clarity to those who might need to teach the course.

c. Coverage

Excellent overall coverage of the skillsets and practice needed to be successful in the discipline as well as to meet the needed outcomes of the Commission on Public Relations Education.

A few final questions/comments to consider:

- More defined integration of Social media, particularly in the course description for Media Lab and the PR courses.
- Should event planning be more integrated throughout the curriculum or should a course be developed for this skill.
- Writing and Design for Electronic media might be more clearly understood as Digital media-excellent course, one that is needed for all programs,
- Excellent course in Multimedia Communication which should and does include basics of nonlinear editing programs such as iMovie or Adobe Premiere.

Evaluation of the student's work as contributing to the field (e.g., body of knowledge)

The development of the Integrated Communications Curriculum is a much needed asset for the Public Relations discipline as well as the Communication field. Media is changing so rapidly that it is challenging for Higher Education to maintain a management of the job market changes. Many businesses are writing job descriptions that are intentionally vague and overbroad in the hopes of finding individuals who can fulfill needs in web, PR, Marketing and Graphic Design. This curriculum captures these needs and provides the flexibility for change in the coming years while maintaining an integrity for theory and practice.

This is a much needed project and one that I have been fortunate to read. I will be considering the courses that this curriculum presents.

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