

**Academic Program Review Self-Study: Department of Communication Studies**

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**Section A: Program Profile**

## **Brief Description of Program Mission, Including Goals, History, and Context**

### *Program Mission*

The stated mission of the Department of Communication Studies at IUPUI is: “As engaged citizens of a dynamic, urban university, we seek to create a learning environment that promotes diversity and inclusion and empowers students and faculty to collaborate with our local, state, and global communities to meet their changing needs through the use of effective and ethical communication.” We articulate this mission more specifically in the following goals.

### *Departmental Goals*

The department has identified the following goals related to teaching and learning:

1. Provide curricula at the BA, MA, and Ph.D. levels that meet program-level learning outcomes (identified in Section B).
2. Continue producing outstanding General Education courses in public speaking, interpersonal communication, media and society, etc. that are essential to IUPUI graduates.
3. Maintain enrollment in the department by providing teaching that is recognized as outstanding by students and faculty of the university.
4. Promote innovative and collaborative methods of teaching, including pedagogical uses of technology.
5. Continue support for student involvement in communication-centered extracurricular and co-curricular activities [e.g., debate & forensics (see [Appendix 1](#)), the [R110 Speech Night Competition](#), Curtis Memorial Oratorical Contest (see [Appendix 2](#)), student clubs (see [Appendix 3](#)), and student generated theatre productions (see [Appendix 4](#))].
6. Encourage faculty development of pedagogical strategies best suited for teaching our curriculum to students.
7. Assess teaching effectiveness by continued assessment of student instructor/course evaluations and a process of peer teaching evaluations.
8. Continue to gain approval to hire qualified faculty commensurate in number and areas to departmental enrollments.
9. Tailor student internships and capstone experiences to foster connections between communication theory and practice for our majors.

The department has identified the following goals related to research and creative activity:

1. Conduct research and creative activity of value to the discipline of communication studies.
2. Conduct research and creative activity of value within the specific sub-area of health communication.
3. Conduct research and creative activity with applications at the campus, community, state, national, and international levels.
4. Maintain and continue forming interdisciplinary collaborations within the IU system and with other universities that enrich our own research and creative activity and contribute a communication studies perspective to research in other disciplines.
5. Foster future growth of our discipline at large, and of our individual specialty areas, by creating an environment where undergraduate and graduate students participate in faculty research/creative activity, conduct independent research, and disseminate that research through appropriate academic and non-academic outlets.
6. Encourage and provide support for pursuing internal and external grants in support of research.

7. Continue to enhance the understanding within the university and community of the nature and value of research and creative activity within our discipline.
8. Increase the opportunity for dissemination of as well as exposure to research and creative activity in our discipline by encouraging preparation of research papers, manuscripts, and creative projects for journals and organizations in our profession.

The department has defined the following goals related to service and civic engagement:

1. Continue to collaborate across campus to meet the specific communication course and program needs of other schools and academic units.
2. Extend guidance, leadership, and assistance to the community by serving as organizational members, officers, judges, consultants, performers, and in other such capacities.
3. Provide guidance and leadership to the department, school, campus, and university by serving on governing bodies and committees.
4. Serve actively as members, officers, reviewers, evaluators, readers, editors, and consultants in professional organizations, publications, and creative activities within our discipline.
5. Continue expanding efforts in recruiting, retaining, and advising students in our programs, especially underrepresented students.
6. Continue to provide outstanding civic engagement opportunities to our students through curricular, co-curricular, and community-based learning.

### *Brief History of the Program*

Since its founding in 1969, the Department of Communication Studies (originally called the Department of Speech and Theatre) at IUPUI has evolved to meet the changing needs of students and to reflect the shifting nature of the communication discipline. During the past 50 years, the department has made substantial revisions to the undergraduate curriculum, shifting from a major that offered “tracks” in telecommunication, organizational communication, rhetoric & public address, and theatre to a single major in communication studies. [Appendix 5](#) provides a more complete timeline of these changes. More recently, departmental changes have focused on the expansion of graduate programs. The department launched an M.A. program in Applied Communication in 2004 and, in 2014, a Ph.D. program in Health Communication, the only program of its kind in Indiana and only the second doctoral program created in the School of Liberal Arts. Our most recent curricular initiatives include the addition of a 5-year BA/MA degree in Applied Communication, which already has enrolled 6 students in its first cohort for Fall 2020, and the development of an interdisciplinary major in Applied Theatre, Film, and Television, that was approved by the Indiana Commission on Higher Education in December 2020. The new major, which was a response to previous external reviews of programs in English and Communication Studies, provides clarity to the study of film, television, and theatre in the School of Liberal Arts. While this new major makes extensive use of courses housed in Communication Studies, it is an interdisciplinary degree and not solely a departmental program.

At this point in its history, the Department of Communication Studies offers the following programs:

- [BA in Communication Studies](#)
- Dual BA/MA in Communication Studies and Applied Communication (see [Appendix 6](#))
- [MA in Applied Communication](#)
- [PhD in Health Communication](#)
- Undergraduate minors in [Communication Studies](#), [Corporate & Organizational Communication](#), [Health Communication](#), [Media Arts & Studies](#), [Public Communication & Persuasion](#), and [Theatre](#)
- [Online Certificate in Human Communication in a Mediated World](#)

- [Health Communication PhD Minor](#)
- [Graduate Minor in Communicating Science](#)

In addition, the department contributes in a significant way – through both courses and faculty – to the following programs:

- [IUPUI General Education Core](#) -- COMM-R110: Fundamentals of Speech Communication is a required course for all IUPUI students. In addition, Interpersonal Communication, Mass Media & Contemporary Society, Introduction to Theatre, Communicating Queer Identity, and Experiencing Intergroup Dialogue are electives in the Gen Ed Core.
- [Certificate in Intergroup Dialogue](#)
- [Certificate in Theatre & Performance](#)
- [IU Online’s Graduate Certificate in Communication Studies](#)
- [Liberal Arts Pathways Minors](#) – Minors in Diversity & Inclusion, Liberal Arts Perspectives on Health & Human Culture, and Storytelling have already been approved. COMM-R110 is a foundational course in each interdisciplinary minor, and other COMM classes are included as electives.
- Interdisciplinary BA in Applied Theatre, Film, and Television (See [Appendix 7](#))
- IU Online’s BS in Digital Storytelling (currently in the approval process) (See [Appendix 8](#))

### Characteristics of Students

While the number of majors in the School of Liberal Arts (SLA) has decreased steadily since 2013, dropping approximately 25%, from 2,322 to 1,756 majors, the number of Communication Studies undergraduate majors has remained relatively stable, hovering between 220 and 240. The number of majors reported for Fall 2020 is 209, but this does not include the 6 undergraduates accepted into the new BA/MA program because BA/MA students are identified by the institution as a separate group for the purposes of headcount. [Appendix 9](#) provides the headcount in all of the undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the department.

Communication Studies students identify demographically as follows:

- They are predominantly female (see [Appendix 10](#)).
- 65% identify as White, 17% as African American, and 10% as Hispanic. This ethnic distribution is similar to other departments and programs in SLA (see [Appendix 11](#)).
- 80% of our undergraduate majors are under 25 years of age, compared with 69% for SLA overall (see [Appendix 12](#)).
- 69% of our majors are juniors or seniors, which is because most of our students transfer into SLA and the major from University College or other institutions. The class level distribution in Communication Studies is similar to SLA as a whole (see [Appendix 13](#)).
- 78% of our majors are full-time students. This number has been inching up over the past 7 years (see [Appendix 14](#)).
- Nearly all Communication Studies majors are Indiana residents (see [Appendix 15](#)).

### Characteristics of Faculty

As of Fall 2020, Communication Studies had 19 “active” (defined as teaching one or more courses per year and providing service to the department) faculty who are employed full-time at IUPUI. Five of these full-time employees have split appointments (e.g., Director of General Studies, Executive Associate Dean of IUPUI Honors College, etc.), which means that only 14 of our faculty work full-time in the department. In addition, the department has 2 “affiliated” full professors with appointments in Communication Studies but whose salary

lines are not in the department and who do not regularly teach and provide service to the department. [Appendix 16](#) provides an introduction to the full-time faculty. The department also hires approximately 35 adjunct instructors each semester to teach sections of R110 as well as courses in media, theatre, and rhetoric that cannot be covered by our full-time faculty.

At IUPUI, all recruitments are conducted with a mandate to solicit applications from underrepresented populations. When searches are undertaken, the department, in keeping with this mandate, continues to prioritize diversifying the faculty. [Appendix 17](#) provides composite data for rank, gender, and ethnicity of the full-time faculty in the department.

Faculty have teaching loads that vary depending on their rank and their involvement in the Health Communication doctoral program. All tenure-track faculty members have a 3/3 load, with one course release for maintaining an active research program. Faculty with active involvement in the doctoral program, which is defined as teaching doctoral courses, having doctoral advisees, and serving on multiple doctoral committees, receive an additional one-course release. Lecturers and senior lecturers have a 4/4 load. While originally hired to teach multiple sections of our 100 and 200 level courses, lecturers are now being asked to take on more upper-level undergraduate courses to fill the need created by the hiring freeze, requiring many of them to teach multiple preps. Lecturers have service expectations as well. The public speaking course director and assistant director, the director of the theatre program, the debate coach, and the academic advisor are lecturers or senior lecturers who receive course releases for these administrative responsibilities.

This past year a new title was added to the lecturer ranks: Teaching Professor. This category is meant as a promotion from senior lecturer and mirrors the promotion from Associate to Full in the tenure-track ranks. One of our senior lecturers submitted his promotion dossier for promotion to Teaching Professor in Fall 2020 and is currently under review.

The strength of the Communication Studies faculty is evident in our research productivity (see [Appendix 18](#)), teaching innovation, and recognition through internal and external awards. Tenure line faculty in particular maintain robust programs of research in the areas of health communication, intercultural communication, organizational communication, rhetorical studies, and interpersonal communication. Our faculty regularly publish in top communication journals (e.g., *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Health Communication*, *Communication Quarterly*), and through the multidisciplinary teams that many faculty work with, they also publish in top journals outside of our field (e.g., *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *Qualitative Health Research*, *Vaccine*, *Journal of Safety Research*, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Academic Medicine*). Lists of the faculty's scholarship of discovery ([Appendix 19](#)), scholarship of application and engagement ([Appendix 20](#)), creative works ([Appendix 21](#)), and media appearances/interviews ([Appendix 22](#)) are provided in the Appendices. Many of our faculty also structure their programs of research to produce translational research (i.e., what we often call "applied" research) and as part of that mission, we maintain affiliations with a number of organizational and governmental agencies (e.g., World Health Organization, Indiana Humanities Council, Indiana State Department of Health, Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE), Indiana Immunization Coalition). Finally, while our faculty do maintain a steady flow of internal and external funding to support their research, one area where our department could improve is by better pursuing research funding opportunities. This would not only allow us to better support our work, but would also provide opportunities to fund graduate students as part of those projects.

## **Description of Program Resources**

### *Classroom & Laboratory Spaces*

**Classrooms.** Communication Studies offers between 100-125 sections of classes each semester. Some of these are offered online, but the majority require classroom space. The biggest demand for classroom space comes from R110: Fundamentals of Speech Communication, the basic public speaking course required by all IUPUI students, which schedules 85-100 sections each semester. Most classes are scheduled out of IUPUI's general classroom inventory. All classrooms are equipped with a computer, projector, webcam, and other instructional technologies. Faculty can request to have their classes scheduled in a room with additional technologies if needed for their classes. Classrooms can also be reserved for one-time use as needed throughout the semester. For the R110 Speech Night competition that takes place each semester, for example, 9 classrooms are requested on one designated evening for the semi-final round of the competition, and the University Tower Ballroom and Hine Hall Auditorium are reserved for the contest finals. In addition, faculty who want to meet for a single session in a computer lab can arrange to do so by contacting the registrar's office.

**Speaker's Lab.** The IUPUI Speaker's Lab is an on-campus resource facility that is located in Cavanaugh Hall Room CA-001G. The lab has 780 square feet of workspace for (5) computer workstations and (1) Computer/Scheduling Reception space. These stations are used by the 28-30 lab mentors to review outlines, prepare help videos, and conduct personal Zoom session consultations. It also includes (3) additional sound-proof recording and practice rooms of 180 square feet each. Each recording studio is equipped with video recording equipment and a computer and monitor to allow students the ability to digitally record and transmit their presentation to cloud-based services. The Speakers Lab employs Communication Studies graduate students and undergraduate workers from IUPUI campus academic disciplines. The lab follows all university policies related to hiring and diversity and provides a safe work environment. All technology needs are provided and maintained by SLA support services. In addition to being a physical resource on campus, the Speaker's Lab is an active virtual resource as well. See the Speaker's Lab Media Review ([Appendix 23](#)) for details.

**Digital Media Production Studio.** The Digital Media Production Studio located in Cavanaugh 446 is a 1200ft<sup>2</sup> space, roughly two typical classrooms, that houses a television studio and control room, post-production edit suites, voice-over booth, and an inventory of field production equipment available for checkout. The television studio includes a physical interview set and a single-camera backdrop wall for portrait photography or chroma key wall for virtual sets. The three HD studio cameras feed into the adjacent control room where those camera angles are combined with graphics, audio, and additional effects using a NewTek TriCaster. A much smaller 50ft<sup>2</sup> voice-over booth is used for high-quality voice recordings in video projects or even two-person audio podcasts. The post-production workstations are two Apple iMac computers that include a variety of professional video and audio editing software for students to gain experience assembling and refining their stories or productions. These production and post-production areas are utilized primarily for instructional coursework in video and audio production, but also used as a production workshop to support media services within the School of Liberal Arts.

**Theatre.** CA003, The Liberal Arts Theater, is a multiuse facility specifically serving the needs of the Communication Studies department and Film Studies program. It has also been used to provide performance space for theater courses from World Languages and Cultures, University College, and the Program in Intensive English. The School of Liberal Arts also uses the facility for special events. The theater is uniquely equipped with DMX lighting control network using an ETC Element 40 control console and redundant wall mounted controls for classroom activities. There are 24 Desire D40 PAR-style, and 10 Source Four LED instruments, and two external dimmer packs for "practicals." Audience and safety rail lighting is also LED. The media support is redundant. The classroom media cart with playback equipment can be removed, and media playback is then managed from the tech booth. The room is equipped with a motorized rear screen projection system using a 4K capable Epson

projector. The house sound system supports stereo-all, Dolby Surround, and DTS decoding playback through a JBL 7.1 playback system.

**Library Resources.** The [IUPUI University Library](#) provides a variety of resources and supporting mechanisms for faculty and students in Communication Studies. In addition to standard library materials (books, journals, aggregator databases, streaming video services, DVDs, and CDs) the library has developed a [research guide](#) for those unfamiliar with information sources in the field. The research guide also provides the opportunity for personal assistance from a dedicated librarian liaison to the department. The library supports and promotes 'books on demand' and 'article on demand' purchase request services as well as a long-existing interlibrary loan service. The library also actively collects digital versions of theses, dissertations, and faculty publications in its digital repository, ScholarWorks.

**Partnerships.** The Department of Communication Studies has established partnerships with numerous nonprofit, theatre, and arts organizations locally and internationally, including Gleaners Food Bank, WFYI Public Media, Special Olympics of Central Indiana, Exodus Refugee International, Re-Generation Indy, United Way of Central Indiana, Susan Komen Race for the Cure, the World Health Organization, and Christamore House. These symbiotic partnerships enhance our programs and benefit the community. Some of the projects implemented through these partnerships are described in more detail in the next section.

## Section B: Program Quality and Viability

As indicated in the previous section, the Department of Communication Studies offers several degrees, certificates and minors; is a significant part of the General Education core; and supports several other interdisciplinary programs. For this review, we will focus primarily on assessing the program quality and viability of our three core programs: the BA, MA, and PhD.

### Undergraduate Programs

#### *Student Learning Outcomes at the Program Level and Assessment/Improvement Processes*

After the National Communication Association (NCA) launched the [Learning Outcomes in Communication](#) (LOCs) in 2015, the department carefully reexamined its undergraduate curriculum with the goal of aligning it with the LOCs. The department agreed that students graduating with a BA in Communication Studies from our department should have at least **moderate competencies** in all of learning outcomes in communication (LOCs) identified by NCA as well as a 10<sup>th</sup> learning outcome that was added by the department. In addition, students graduating from our department should have a **high level of competency** related to the four LOCs that align most closely with the strengths of our department as well as with university priorities (indicated with asterisks in the list below). Specifically, students completing our program should be able to:

1. Describe the communication discipline and its central questions
2. Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts\*
3. Engage in communication inquiry
4. Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context\*
5. Critically analyze messages
6. Demonstrate the ability to accomplish communicative goals (self-efficacy)
7. Apply ethical communication principles and practices
8. Utilize communication to embrace difference\*
9. Influence public discourse\*

## 10. Apply skills and knowledge needed to collaborate with others

Once the programmatic learning outcomes were identified, the department faced the challenge of assessing whether graduates of the program are attaining the desired learning outcomes. As a department, we chose the ePortfolio as the tool to help the department assess student learning and the degree program. In 2017, we introduced a [“Gateway to Capstone ePortfolio” initiative](#). In the Gateway class, students are introduced to CN ePortfolio. They participate in workshops in which they set up their ePortfolio and create folders in which they can archive their learning related to each of the 10 LOCs throughout their program of study. In the required core classes in the major, instructors have earmarked an ePortfolio assignment that students are required to upload into their ePortfolio. In electives in the major, students are encouraged to upload assignments into the relevant LOC folders. Finally, in the Capstone, students focus on consolidating the archived evidence of learning into Showcases that demonstrate to themselves, future employers, and the department what they know and can do because they completed the program. Baseline data tracking learning related to each of the LOCs has been collected, and as the ePortfolio initiative continues, the data trends will be used in ongoing program review.

### ***Curriculum Structure/Mapping***

The curriculum for the BA in Communication Studies consists of 4 required core class: Introduction to Communication Studies (G100), Communication Theory (G201), Communication Research Methods (G310), and Capstone in Communication Studies (G480). In addition to these core classes, students select 21 hours (7 courses) of electives, in keeping with the student’s personal and professional goals and in consultation with an advisor. The department offers courses in a wide range of communication sub-specialties, including rhetoric, organizational communication, intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, health communication, media criticism, and media production. Because of the design of our curriculum, the four core classes and R110: Public Speaking, which is a required general education course for all IUPUI students, play a particularly important role in ensuring that students are provided with the learning opportunities needed to attain the learning outcomes spelled out in the previous section. Elective courses can and will help students attain higher and deeper levels of competency related to specific LOCs, but to ensure that a student cannot graduate without meeting a particular learning outcome, all of the desired learning outcomes are embedded in the core. [Appendix 24](#) provides a curriculum map of the learning outcomes associated with each of the required classes. The assumption is that any faculty member teaching these core classes will utilize instructional materials, activities, and assignments that provide students the opportunity to achieve each of the competencies associated with the class.

### ***Reinforcing IUPUI’s Profiles of Learning for Undergraduate Success in the Major***

The [Profiles of Learning for Undergraduate Success](#) represent what IUPUI students are expected to achieve through their curricular and co-curricular activities. The departmental learning outcomes have been mapped to the Profiles (see [Appendix 25](#)). In course syllabi, faculty are expected to introduce the Profiles and articulate the ways in which the course reinforces them.

### ***Experiences that Support Student Learning***

Since our last review, the department has focused extensively on ensuring both majors and non-majors have authentic and high-impact experiences in communication courses. The primary goal of all of these activities is to support student learning by giving students opportunities to apply what they have learned in their classes to real world scenarios, be that with our community partners (service learning), places of employment (internships), or



through self-reflection about their own communication (via ePortfolios, which was recently added to the list of High Impact Practices, or HIPs).

**HIPs in Communication Studies' General Education Classes.** HIPs have been integrated into R110, the Gateway Public Speaking course required of every student at IUPUI. The Director of the Basic Course, Steven Overbey, attended the 2019 HIP Course Design Institute to transform the R110 curriculum to include these practices. Additionally, Overbey, along with another R110 adjunct, Janice Bankert-Countryman, attended the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) Institute offered by the IUPUI Center for Teaching and Learning in 2018. The department-authored textbook edition for the fall of 2021 will include new assignment descriptions designed to provide students with additional clarity based on TILT recommendations.

HIPs are also integrated into the other COMM courses included in the Gen Ed core. For example, COMM-C299: Communicating Queer Identity and some sections of COMM-C180: Interpersonal Communication make use of digital narratives, which provide a useful, inherently reflexive self-assessing opportunity to engage in and reflect upon factors influencing one's communication practices.

**Authentic and Engaged Learning in Courses in the Major.** Students who pursue the undergraduate major in communication also experience a high-level of engagement and application opportunities in their coursework. In this self-study, we highlight three HIPs that are emphasized in our department: global learning, ePortfolios (which was already described in a previous section), and service learning. These initiatives were strategically and intentionally embedded into the curriculum. Decisions related to these endeavors are made by the department. An online discussion forum is used to facilitate conversation, and time is set aside at faculty meetings to discuss practice and policy related to their implementation. Other "best practices" for teaching are shared at departmental "brown-bag discussions" in which faculty share their most effective teaching strategies.

Media production (see [Appendix 26](#)) and theatre courses (see [Appendix 27](#)) offered by the Department of Communication Studies provide students with rich opportunities for engaged learning. In the spring of 2020, the Video Production Workshop course partnered with the IUPUI Athletics to produce a 15-minute sports highlight program called [JAG SPORTS ZONE](#). This workshop challenges students to organize, collect, write, and even produce their own sports stories on a weekly basis. A student news anchor appears on virtual sets to maximize the look of the show without the resources of a larger physical set. At the end of each week, the recorded show is delivered back to IUPUI Athletics and is posted publicly on YouTube and the Athletics webpage. Future partnerships are in the works to provide even more production opportunities. The School of Music Technology has offered their semester schedule of musical performances as a multiple camera live production with a student crew. The IUPUI Theater and Speakers Lab schedule regular performances each semester which could also be covered as live video production opportunities.

Another HIP that is emphasized within Communication Studies is global learning. The showpiece of the global learning opportunities provided to our majors is the summer study abroad trip to Poland. Approximately 20 undergraduate students per year complete a two-week study abroad course in Intercultural Communication in Wroclaw, Poland, making it the largest study abroad program of its kind in the School of Liberal Arts. Students learn skills designed to question the narratives used to make sense of experiences and social environments. They consider the multiple forms of communication posited in coordinated management of meaning theory (CMM) and apply those forms to the social and historical context in Poland and the US. The course is a partnership with the University of Wroclaw Institute of Sociology, where students interact with master's students in the [European Union-sponsored Erasmus Mundus Intercultural Mediation](#) (MITRA, Médiation interculturelle : identités, mobilités, conflits) program. The MITRA program recruits students from all over the world interested in using communication and sociology to solve some of the world's most complex programs. It

offers an ideal opportunity for our students to apply CMM theory to their interactions with students from the Erasmus program who are considering many of the same questions, through a sociological lens. This course has been taught at IUPUI for nearly 20 years and has supported more first-generation students and students of color than any other study abroad in the IU system. In addition to this study abroad opportunity offered by the department, faculty in Communication Studies make a point of integrating global learning into their classrooms on campus as well (see [Appendix 28](#)).

One of the first HIPs integrated into Communication Studies is service learning, beginning with a department-wide initiative that began in 2005. With the support of a 3-year grant from the Center for Service and Learning, the department set out to create a culture of civic engagement within the department and integrated service learning throughout the curriculum. That commitment to civic engagement continues and is embedded in the undergraduate and graduate curricula. Here are some examples of recent civic engagement learning opportunities provided in COMM classes:

- In COMM-G100, the required Gateway course to the major, students are introduced to the concept of civic engagement and to the roots of engagement in the discipline. In addition, all students participate in a civic engagement project centered on a community issue. The specific nature of the civic engagement project varies from section to section. Sometimes students are invited to create and implement their own project about an issue they are passionate about. In other sections of the class, all of the students work with a community partner on an assigned topic. Some community organizations G100 students have partnered with include Gleaners Food Bank, WFYI Public Media, Special Olympics of Central Indiana, Exodus Refugee International, Re-Generation Indy, United Way of Central Indiana, the Susan Komen Race for the Cure, Catholic Charities Refugee & Immigrant Services, and Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE).
- In COMM-M150, students complete a social action project. Organizations students have worked with include Coburn Place and Julian Center domestic violence shelters, GirlsRock! Indy, To Write Love on Her Arms International, The Pour House Indy, Eskenazi Center for Hope, and WFYI Public Media.
- In COMM-C325: Interviewing Principles and Practices, students work in teams to design and present an interviewing workshop to present to our community partners.
- In COMM-C328: Advanced Topics in Group Communication, students partner with community organizations to design strategic communication plans for meeting a need defined by the community partner.

The department's civic engagement initiatives have been recognized by community partners. In 2019, the department was recognized by Refugee and Immigration Services at a World Refugee Day event for projects completed in COMM-G100. In 2012, the instructor of COMM-C328, Beth Goering, was named the Distinguished JP Morgan Chase Near Eastside Legacy Initiative Faculty Partner because of civic engagement activities in her class.

**Co-Curricular Learning Experiences.** The authentic and engaged learning opportunities offered by the Department of Communication Studies are not limited to in-class experiences. We offer a variety of co-curricular learning opportunities as well. These include the competitive debate/forensics program and the Curtis Memorial Oratorical Contest described in Section A as well as internship opportunities (See [Appendix 29](#)).

### ***Research, Creative and Engagement Activities, and Our Academic Programs***

In addition to the civic engagement and creative activities emphasized in our curriculum, Communication Studies majors are encouraged to engage in research. Students regularly present their scholarly work at local and regional conferences and frequently collaborate with faculty on research projects (see [Appendix 30](#))

### ***Outcomes for Students Completing Undergraduate Programs in Communication Studies***

[Appendix 31](#) provides an overview of the number of students graduating with a BA in Communication Studies since our last review, placed within the context of the total number of degrees awarded in the School of Liberal Arts. Communication Studies is the department in SLA that routinely graduates the highest number of majors, typically by a substantial margin. Our alumni go on to pursue graduate studies or find employment in a variety of sectors. As an indicator of the success of our alumni, we offer the following alphabetical list of selected alumni currently employed and exhibiting strong leadership in the following areas: Marketing, Publishing, Media, Law, Sales, Fundraising, and Nonprofits (see [Appendix 32](#)).

### **Graduate Programs**

The Department of Communication Studies offers two graduate degree programs ([MA in Applied Communication](#), which includes a 5-year BA/MA program, and [PhD in Health Communication](#)) and two graduate minors ([PhD Minor in Health Communication](#), [Communicating Science Minor](#)). In addition, the department participates in IU Online's collaboratively built [Graduate Certificate in Communication](#). Initiated in 2004, the **MA in Applied Communication**, which was awarded the Outstanding Master's Degree Program Award by the Master's Education Section of the National Communication Association in 2012, is designed to provide students with the competencies and skills necessary to address specific communication issues and problems that are socially relevant and to suggest or implement change. The primary intellectual goal of the program is to increase our students' understanding of the theoretical implications of discipline-specific knowledge and to enhance their ability to understand and predict human interaction relative to realistic, applied outcomes associated with contemporary social problems. The MA in Applied Communication program grew exponentially from 2004 to 2012; however, the program saw the beginning of a significant downward shift in applications after the PhD in Health Communication was launched in 2013. Prior to 2013, we had an average of 13 new students admitted to the MA program; between 2013 and 2020, that average dropped to 8. While there are several possible explanations for the decrease in enrollment, including changing attitudes towards higher education and the cost of education, the main reason for the decline was likely the lack of financial resources available to MA students. When the PhD program was launched, available funding for assistantships was channeled to PhD students, limiting the MA to self-funded students for several years. More recently, the School of Liberal Arts has offered some teaching assistantship funding for MA students that will also offset the cost of tuition, fees, and health insurance. Through increased support from the School of Liberal Arts and continued funding from the university, we are now able to offer support for some MA and for full-time PhD students. In 2020, a **5-year BA/MA** degree program in Communication Studies was approved and instituted. This program makes it possible for students to complete both their BA in Communication Studies and their MA in Applied Communication in 5 years. We believe this 4+1 program will benefit students and boost enrollment in our graduate courses. Another recent change that should benefit both the MA and PhD programs is the appointment of separate Graduate Directors for the MA and for the PhD programs.

The **PhD in Health Communication** was launched in 2013. Our PhD program in Health Communication, the first in the nation, allows students to gain specific knowledge and background in the sub-field of Health Communication by working with and learning from our faculty as well as other faculty across the campus. Since IUPUI is located on the campus of a large medical center, PhD students have accessible relationships with the

academic medical center to participate in ongoing research projects as well as access for their own independent research. Graduates of this program, which first enrolled students in Fall 2014, have gone on to work in non-profit organizations, accepted post-doctoral fellowships, and serve in faculty positions. The program has seen a small, but consistent growth in the number of new students throughout the years (see [Appendix 9](#)). Students who wish to attend full time have access to teaching and research assistantships, although a number of current and former students chose part time enrollment given their full-time working situations.

In 2019, both the [Health Communication PhD Minor](#) and the [Graduate Minor in Communicating Science](#) were introduced. Students from other PhD programs may elect to complete the 12-hour Health Communication PhD Minor. Graduate students engage in multiple learning experiences when designing their individual plan of study. The health communication graduate courses relate to one another by highlighting key core communication concepts in multiple health contexts such as interpersonal interactions, health organizations, government entities, community outreach, and media messaging. The Graduate Minor in Communicating Science is a 12-credit hour minor designed to help masters and doctoral students in the sciences and health professions develop audience-centered communication, distill scientific concepts into meaningful narratives, and connect effectively with collaborators and funders.

### ***Student Learning Outcomes at the Program Level and Assessment/Improvement Processes***

**Master of Arts in Applied Communication.** The department has identified the following program-level learning outcomes for the MA. Students completing the M.A. curriculum will:

- communicate both orally and in writing for professional and academic audiences
- synthesize, critique, and apply theoretical constructs in communication studies
- select and evaluate appropriate methodologies for conducting communication research
- propose and justify solutions to real-world communication problems
- design and conduct guided communication research

Two alternative forms of assessment are available to the MA student: thesis or ALP. A Master's thesis is an original contribution of research to the study of communication. The thesis is a major project that will usually entail a minimum of one semester of research and another semester of writing. The Applied Learning Project (ALP) is a theoretically driven project that identifies, analyzes, and/or seeks to redress a "real-world" communication problem "emanating from the personal, social, cultural, global, and professional areas of society" (JACR website). The ALP is a major project that will usually entail a minimum of one semester of research and another semester of writing.

**PhD in Health Communication.** The department has identified the following program-level learning outcomes for the PhD. Students completing the PhD in Health Communication curriculum will:

- describe and distinguish the areas scholarship in interpersonal relationships, intercultural health, and mediated communication in healthcare including campaign development
- identify ethical issues in health care delivery
- initiate, participate, and develop competency in research on health and medical issues
- develop skills in recognizing and understanding clinical problems affected by communication
- develop the capabilities to translate research on communication related clinical problems into practice

PhD students are assessed in two steps. First, the Ph.D. comprehensive examination is designed to show that students have the abilities necessary to function successfully as independent scholars of health communication.

Students complete take-home written exams that assess their general communication knowledge, specialized knowledge in health communication, and competence in research methods. Students submit their exams to be read and evaluated by the Advisory Committee and then participate in an oral defense of the exam questions. Once the student successfully completes the oral defense, s/he is admitted to candidacy. Second, a PhD dissertation project is completed and evaluated by the Dissertation Research Committee. The dissertation consists of a fully documented written analysis of a problem that extends the knowledge and/or theoretical framework of the field, and reflects the student's creativity and competence in independent, interdisciplinary research using an appropriate research methodology.

### ***Curriculum Structure/Mapping***

**The Accelerated BA/MA in Communication Studies and Applied Communication.** The accelerated BA/MA is available only to Communication Studies majors who meet the admission requirements for the program and allows students to complete a BA and an MA in five years instead of six. The program consists of three years of undergraduate coursework, a fourth year of combined undergraduate and graduate coursework, and a fifth year of exclusively graduate coursework. A more detailed description of the program is provided in [Appendix 6](#).

**The MA in Applied Communication.** The curriculum of the MA in Applied Communication consists of 30 credit hours of course work that includes one required course in theory, two research methods courses, 18 credits of other courses approved by the advisor of which 2 may come from outside the department, and a capstone that is either a thesis or applied learning project. Because this is an student-driven program, each student may have a different focus and set of courses outside of those required. The intent of this design is to assure that the student take a coherent set of courses aimed at learning outcomes suited to their individual needs.

**The PhD in Health Communication.** The PhD includes an 18-credit hour core, consisting of courses in communication theory, qualitative and quantitative research methods, and required courses in health communication, and 12 additional credit hours in elective health communication content areas. Students are also required to choose a complementary minor area of emphasis, which includes 9-12 credit hours. They complete comprehensive examinations and 6-9 credit hours of research fieldwork before embarking on at least 12 credit hours of dissertation work.

### ***Experiences that Support Student Learning***

In both the MA and PhD courses, students can engage in service learning, applied research projects, and in one PhD course in particular, collaborative projects with healthcare experts in the area. Because the MA is in Applied Communication, almost every course includes a major applied research project, as do many of those same courses offered to PhD students. Because much of the areas of research expertise of the PhD faculty lies in public health, students are often working in applied research, health campaigns, and with local healthcare agencies.

### ***Research, Creative and Engagement Activities, and Our Academic Programs***

Faculty research and engagement activities directly relate to both classroom projects and collaborative scholarship between faculty and students and among students. As mentioned previously, most courses in both the MA and PhD programs include an applied research project, and many of these projects are presented at

conferences and/or published in appropriate outlets. [Appendix 33](#) provides a list of recent graduate student scholarship and faculty/student collaborations.

### ***Outcomes for Students Completing Graduate Programs in Communication Studies***

**MA in Applied Communication.** Of the 42 admits to our MA program between 2014-2019, 10 (24%) have graduated, 18 (43%) are still in the program, and 14 (33%) withdrew. Clearly, there needs to be more efforts directed at recruiting, retaining, and graduating MA students. We think that having separate directors for the MA and PhD programs (a change recently approved by the Dean's office and put into effect in August 2020) will help with this. The director of the MA program has already developed a recruitment plan that includes: hosting a mid-semester information session, sending individual email invitations to high-achieving BA students, participating in the campus-wide graduate program fair, subscribing to Gradmatch.com, sending brochures to advisors at regional institutions, subscribing to and advertising in the national association's listserv, creating and distributing testimonials from graduates to the department website and social media sites, and spotlighting a graduate or current student quarterly on website and social media. In addition, practices were put into place in January 2020 that should aid in retention, including having the MA director contact each student once per semester, establishing regular communication between faculty advisors and the program director, hosting a mid-semester graduate student meeting, and conducting a graduate faculty review of the progress of each student each semester.

Graduates from our MA program have used their degree as a springboard to PhD study or communication-related employment in private industry, education, information technology, and sales. Since our program's inception, at least 15 students have gone on to earn Ph.D.'s from prestigious departments, including Texas A & M, Bowling Green State University, University of Pittsburgh, Purdue University, and University of Maryland. All are now gainfully employed by universities, think tanks, and in industry. Three recent graduates from our MA program are currently enrolled in PhD programs, and a fourth is enrolled in an MSW program at U. of Chicago.

**PhD Alumnae.** Because our PhD program is relatively new, we are just seeing the first students complete the program. As of Summer 2020, seven PhD students have successfully defended their dissertations. All of them are employed in faculty positions, hold post-doc research appointments, or work in health-related organizations [Appendix 34](#) provides a partial list of how alumni of our graduate programs are using their degrees.

### **Feedback from Program Stakeholders**

Although we recognize that our programs have multiple stakeholders, for this particular self-study, we focused our attention to one specific stakeholder group: our undergraduate majors. We chose this focus because our previous self-study emphasized alumni and employer feedback, so we agreed it was time to systematically seek feedback from our majors. In addition, many of the changes we implemented as part of the 5-year strategic plan that we created after our last review were related to the undergraduate curriculum, so it makes sense to focus on feedback of our current majors.

The method we chose for eliciting feedback from majors was interviews of students conducted by students to encourage more open and honest responses than we might have gotten if faculty had conducted the interviews. Students in a Research Methods class who were learning to conduct and analyze qualitative interviews assisted with data collection and initial analysis. Each student interviewed 2 current COMM majors using a standard interview guide (see [Appendix 35](#)) and transcribed the interviews. Then, in 7 groups of 3-5 students, they content analyzed the transcripts from the interviews done by group members and wrote a composite summary

and thematic analysis of their findings (see [Appendix 36](#)). The instructor of the research methods course assessed the quality of their work from a qualitative research methods perspective, and two faculty collaboratively analyzed the themes across groups. In all, 54 interviews were completed and analyzed, representing more than 25% of our majors.

The findings from these interviews indicate that majors are generally quite satisfied with the program, with five themes repeated frequently in the students' responses:

- Majors see Communication Studies as an important and significant field of study. They see it as a major that equips them to “make positive change in the world” and “to see the complexity of every situation.” In addition, they see it as a major that will open up “a wide range of job opportunities.”
- They value their Communication Studies classes. Respondents expressed appreciation for both the content of their classes in the major and the atmosphere professors create in those classes. In particular, they appreciate the wide range of classes offered in the department and the degree to which what they learn is useful outside the classroom. In addition, they emphasized the value of the “rich discussions” that take place in COMM classes.
- Students were overwhelmingly positive in their comments about the instructors in the department. Only 1 of the 54 interviewees had anything negative to say about the faculty, and most affirmed that the professors are “the best part of the department” and “the reason why they enjoy the major.” Some of the specific qualities students appreciate in the COMM faculty are that they are: student-centered (e.g., “Faculty are very involved in the work that the students do and how successful they are in their classes;” “they are all concerned with providing students with the tools that will help their students to succeed”), knowledgeable, credible, dedicated to the field, and passionate about teaching. Students also repeatedly noted that they value the opportunities they have had to form relationships with individual faculty members.
- Students also had very positive things to say about their fellow students. Several mentioned the “connectedness” and “camaraderie” they feel as COMM majors. They attributed this to the “talkative aspect” of the classes which encourages “deeper conversations” and “open dialogue” as well as the group work that is common in COMM classes.
- Students appreciate the climate within the department. They described the climate as having “a family kind of feel,” and being “inclusive” (e.g., “everyone feels welcomed and supported”), “diverse,” “fun,” and “versatile.” Several emphasized the “open-mindedness” that is both a value and a practice that is “implemented in all classes.”

Although the students were overwhelmingly positive about the program, they did identify several areas for improvement. Some of these are not areas we have direct control over. For example, academic advising was the most frequently mentioned concern, with students noting that it was hard to get appointments with the advisors and questioning whether the advisors “really understood what the students are going through.” Some expressed a preference for the old faculty advisor system that was replaced with centralized advising a few years ago. Other complaints were related to baccalaureate requirements within the School of Liberal Arts (e.g., the requirement that students complete 2 years of a foreign language) or the location of COMM classes (e.g., that they are spread all over campus and not all in Cavanaugh Hall). These concerns are issues the department has limited and only very indirect control over. Nonetheless, three themes emerged in the feedback that suggest areas for improvement:

- Students reported feeling stressed by the workload in Communication Studies classes. Several students mentioned the amount of writing that was required in COMM classes (although one admitted that s/he “is a better writer because of it.”). Students also mentioned that many classes require major semester-long projects and managing multiple high-stakes assignments in the same semester can be

overwhelming, particularly if they are group projects that require coordinating schedules for multiple groups.

- Students expressed concerns about the scheduling of classes. Some noted that they would like to see more classes offered during the “central times” (e.g., “in the middle of the day”). Others asked for classes to be offered at more varied times. Some students requested offering more “practical courses,” which implies that perhaps we need to be more vigilant about making the practical application of our classes more transparent to students.
- The concern that was expressed most frequently in the interviews is related to the image the major has outside of the department. While the respondents see value in the major, they were “disheartened” because “outsiders don’t support, comprehend, or appreciate the field of Communication Studies.” Students see COMM as being “undervalued on campus,” and suggested/requested that the department “do more to make it stand out.”

Overall, this stakeholder feedback suggests that the department is having a positive impact on students and that students recognize and value that. This conclusion is reaffirmed by the summaries of the students who assisted with the data collection and initial analysis. One group concluded, “The department overall has had a positive impact on students’ lives and will ultimately cause success in lives after graduation,” and another summarized their interviews as follows: “It is clear the department is strong when it comes to pushing their students to be the best they can be.” Nonetheless, the feedback also identifies areas for improvement which we will take into consideration through our ongoing process of program and curriculum review.

### **Enrollment Management Plan**

The enrollment management strategy of the Department of Communication Studies consists of strategically managing enrollment caps and course offerings, maintaining open channels of communication with advisors, engaging in ongoing program review to ensure the quality of courses and programs, and collaborating with the Degree Completion Office to minimize obstacles that can interfere with degree completion for returning students.

While we acknowledge the importance of growing enrollments to the School of Liberal Arts and the university as a whole, the Department of Communication Studies recognizes that “managing” enrollment does not necessarily mean growing enrollments. In fact, by many indicators, our department is currently operating at capacity. The department sets pedagogically informed enrollment caps in its courses. For performance-based classes, such as R110, that cap is typically around 25. For non-performance classes, the caps have been raised to 35 at the request of the Dean’s office. The department offers the number of classes each semester that it can fill given our teaching resources. Decisions about which courses to offer are made using a course rotation that is managed by the department’s curriculum committee. The rotation is designed to ensure that students can stay on track for completion of all of our undergraduate programs (e.g., required core courses for the minors, certificate and major are regularly scheduled, electives are rotated to allow timely completion of any of our programs). Generally our classes are filled at close to capacity. In Fall 2020, for example, the non-R110 undergraduate courses being offered by the department are filled to more than 90% capacity. In R110, the largest enrolling course in the school, 95.5% of the 1993 seats being offered in 81 sections are filled.

A second element of our enrollment management plan is to maintain open communication with the SLA advisors. This is facilitated by the fact that our department is one of the only departments with a faculty member (Mike Polites) who also serves as an advisor. The department works closely to create curriculum maps for new programs and to keep the maps up to date. Advisors inform the department when the demand for



required core classes is exceeding our offerings, which allows us to make adjustment (e.g., in Spring 2020, we added another section of the Capstone class because the advisors informed us of the need).

A core element of our enrollment management plan is to ensure program quality and to make sure that students see the value in what the program offers. Therefore, we see initiatives such as the ePortfolios and the emphasis placed on assessment as integral parts of our enrollment management strategy. A final element of our strategy is our collaboration with IUPUI's Degree Completion Office. Communication Studies is one of only two programs associated with this office. Through our collaboration, we have worked to decrease barriers to degree completion for returning students. In 2017, we used a \$10,000 grant to create hybrid or online versions of required core classes in the major and to assess the specific needs of returning Communication Studies students.

### **Fiscal Health**

In the model of responsibility-centered budgeting used by IU, the fiscal responsibility center is the School of Liberal Arts, not the department. [Appendix 37](#) provides an overview of the department's allocation from the school. We have responsibly managed the funds that have been allocated to us, funding the initiatives and activities described in this self-study with the moneys we are given.

### **Adequacy of Facilities**

The classroom spaces provided by the university are generally appropriate for meeting the needs of this program. In addition, since our last external review, some noteworthy improvements have been made to the facilities available within Communication Studies. For example, we have added space dedicated to graduate students and created a small conference room in CA 309. Nonetheless, the sections below identify some areas where enhancement of facilities would allow the department to better serve students and meet our goals.

#### ***Digital Media Production Studio***

The Digital Media Production Studio does include an inventory of field production equipment to be used for instruction, demonstration, and creative productions. However, much of this audio and video equipment has not been upgraded in close to 10 years or was initially purchased on the cheapest budget possible. Therefore, teaching with consumer-grade equipment, such as small handycams, is more difficult because they are lacking the physical controls seen on professional tools of the media industry. The field light kits were recently upgraded from inefficient incandescent lights to more versatile, battery powered LED light panels, which will be more appealing to students. Some of the audio equipment has been upgraded, but even more upgrades are needed to fully support the popular trend to remote podcasting. Many of the production tools are still behind the times of those offered by local high schools limiting students' production quality and creativity. The 1200ft<sup>2</sup> studio and post-production space is enough to teach current coursework; however, additional space will eventually be needed to accommodate any increase in student interest for production courses. The current control room is a small space where classes have to be split into small groups to train or demonstrate vital equipment. There is no space currently available to provide training and instruction for an entire class on post-production software. In other media programs of comparable size, this is accomplished by a separate editing lab with 6-8 edit stations. This also allows for students' access to an edit lab after hours to continue to work on their projects after the main studio is closed. Also, the current voice-over booth that is used for podcasting can only accommodate two people, and students have already requested to have a panel discussion with 2-4 guests. Therefore, a medium-sized conference room would be ideal to convert to a comfortable pod-casting studio that is large enough for

instruction and demonstrations. All the spaces combined into one central Production Studio area provides a good foundation to grow the program, but once growth starts to happen, we will likely outgrow that space and need to acquire additional spaces. A complete list of equipment upgrades, and space needed to bring the studio to “contemporary and competitive standard” was compiled into a 2025 Master Plan.

### ***The Challenge of Dedicated Research Space***

Since implementing the Ph.D. program in health communication, the lack of dedicated research space is a real impediment. Currently, research faculty and graduate students must find available space in the building (e.g., conference room spaces shared with all SLA faculty and staff; empty classrooms) or somewhere else on campus (e.g., reserving a private room at the library). The planned renovation in the basement of Cavanaugh Hall promised increased research lab space for graduate programs, but that has not happened. We need to find ways to garner research space in order for our faculty to be competitive and do rigorous, large scale research. Further, the current culture that prioritizes space to funded research creates a hardship to faculty who are building a program of research that has not yet attracted external funds. To be competitive in obtaining grants, our faculty need to be collecting data continuously. Without dedicated lab space for the faculty in Communication Studies, we are at a competitive disadvantage. Lack of research space is already affecting our graduate students as well. We have students who are poised to collect thesis or dissertation data but are unsure about the availability of space to conduct the data collection. As we bring in doctoral students, who will be under significant pressure to build their own research programs, this problem will be exacerbated. Related, when faculty do bring in grant funding for research projects, we have no dedicated RA space. Finally, the lack of research space is a serious impediment to attracting new faculty to our department. Peer departments typically have dedicated lab and research space, and this reflects badly on us when we are interviewing potential faculty.

### ***Theatre***

While a significant number of students are interested in participating in theatre performances, the lack of a functional performance space that can seat one hundred or more audience members limits those aspirations. A functional performance space is required to mount a fully realized production, which would include sets, lights, sound, dressing rooms, and storage spaces for sets and costumes. If we have the personnel to build sets and costumes then the space would also need scene and costume shops. Currently, this seems unfeasible. However, we have one space, a black box theatre -- one that can adapt to a variety of staging styles such as proscenium, arena, and thrust. This theatre seats 35. The department has mounted productions there for the past five years (one per year). When the major in Applied Theatre, Film, and Television is implemented, with a soft-launch possible in Spring 2021, we anticipate growth in this program. In anticipation of that growth, the department has partnered with Africana Studies and Africana Repertory Theatre Initiative (ARTI) to develop a strategy for maximizing the potential of the [Madame Walker Theatre](#), a community partner of Indiana University.

### **Assessment of Human Resources**

The department’s primary human resource is our faculty. As evidenced in Section A, our faculty is a highly productive, engaged faculty. The degree to which individual faculty are active and connected within their areas of specialty is evident in [Appendix 38](#). Nonetheless, there are some faculty-related concerns. Foremost is the decline in the number of faculty. Because of the financial situation of the School of Liberal Arts, hiring has been frozen or highly restricted since 2014. As a result, the size of our faculty has decreased by approximately 25% since our last external review in 2013. This high loss of faculty is particularly troubling because since 2013, we

have added a doctoral program and maintained approximately the same number of undergraduate majors. The challenges this creates are intensified by the fact that, as noted above, 5 full-time faculty have split appointments or administrative responsibilities in other units, further decreasing our ability to adequately staff our courses or to be able to offer the range of courses needed to adequately represent the discipline and accomplish our mission and goals. Communication Studies has substantially more majors than any other department in the School of Liberal Arts, and is one of only two departments to offer a doctoral program. However, the number of faculty in the department lags behind 5 of the 12 departments in the School of Liberal Arts (see [Appendix 39](#)).

Another essential human resource is the administrative support staff. Several years ago, the School of Liberal Arts switched to a system of centralized administrative support; therefore, the department no longer has direct control over administrative support services. In some areas, such as scheduling, budget, and coordinating our graduate programs with the Graduate School, the needs of the department are served better through the new centralized system. However, there are still issues that are challenging. One is that the complicated process of requesting administrative support is a roadblock to using support. In addition, there is little support for some key activities such as marketing and recruitment, particularly for undergraduate programs. These are issues the school is aware of and is trying to work on. For example, this summer, the job duties of the person who provides administrative support for our graduate programs were redefined to include marketing for the graduate programs she serves.

### **Section C: Program Strategic Priorities**

#### **Program Contributions to IUPUI's Strategic Plan**

The Department of Communication Studies' programs are well-aligned with and contribute to all of the priorities, goals, and objectives identified in the [IUPUI Strategic Plan](#). [Appendix 40](#) highlights in table form the alignment between specific activities within the department and each strategic plan goal. Here we will highlight three initiatives within Communication Studies and demonstrate how they support the strategic plan in multiple ways.

#### ***Interdisciplinary Certificate in Intergroup Dialogue***

A "strong commitment to diversity" is a key component of IUPUI's mission statement, and promoting diversity and inclusion is integrated into IUPUI's strategic plan. The Department of Communication Studies has contributed to this goal through its involvement in the [Certificate in Intergroup Dialogue](#) (IGD), a 12-credit hour certificate for students enrolled in any degree-seeking program. The certificate is housed in the schools of Liberal Arts, Public and Environmental Affairs, Social Work, and Engineering and Technology. The curriculum consists of one general education course, one course focused on leadership development and communication skills, one course to demonstrate proficiency in a specialized topic, and a capstone. Students completing the certificate gain transferrable skills for work, personal, and professional life in intercultural communication, conflict resolution, civil discourse, and leadership. Kim White-Mills and Ron Sandwina have both been active in developing and implementing this certificate. In addition, they have received internal grant funding to support their efforts in this area.

#### ***Programs in Health Communication***

One of the three priorities delineated in IUPUI's strategic plan is "advances in health and life sciences." The department's growth in the sub-discipline of health communication directly supports this priority. The PhD in Health Communication, the health communication "track" in the MA in Applied Communication, the PhD Minor in Health Communication, and the Graduate Minor in Communicating Science offered by the department fit perfectly with this priority. In addition to supporting the advancing health and life sciences priority of the strategic plan, these programs also support additional another strategic plan goals, to "increase capacity for graduate education," a priority that is also supported by the Dual BA/MA program described in the next section.

### ***BA/MA Graduate Program***

The BA/MA program developed by the Department of Communication Studies is one of the first accelerated MA programs developed in the School of Liberal Arts. These programs help in recruiting well-qualified undergraduates to IUPUI by giving them an opportunity to obtain an advanced degree with only one additional year of study. Consequently, the program not only supports strategic plan goals related to increasing capacity for graduate education; it also contributes to the goals related to recruitment and retention of undergrads. This accelerated program offers students a way to complete an MA degree with less time and less cost, creating greater appeal for students and helping make IUPUI competitive with other MA programs in the state that are able to offer funding to MA students. The opportunity to earn an MA in Applied Communication in just one extra year also poises students to be more competitive in an increasingly competitive job market.

### **Program Contributions to Unit-specific Plans/Priorities**

Because the plans and priorities of the School of Liberal Arts are aligned with IUPUI's Strategic Plan, the previous section also illustrates program contributions to unit-specific priorities. One additional SLA priority that we are contributing to in significant ways is worth highlighting: the [Liberal Arts Pathway Minors program](#). A Pathway Minor is a 15-credit program of study intended to add depth to the learning experience in the general education core by integrating knowledge around themes of relevance to the students' college experience from the perspectives of the humanities and the social sciences. Pathway Minors are grounded in existing Liberal Arts general education courses, grouped together in meaningful categories. They add value to their education as majors in other schools while encouraging students to deepen their knowledge with upper-level course work, beyond general education. The program encourages students to take their general education competencies in Liberal Arts disciplines. To date, Pathway Minors have been approved in Diversity & Inclusion, Health & Culture, and Storytelling. Because the minors build on general education and all students are required to take R110, the department is playing an important role in designing and implementing these minors. Steve Overbey, director of R110, and Beth Goering both serve on the Pathway Minors Implementation Taskforce.

### **Summary of Program's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats**

The following table provides a summary of a SWOT analysis completed by the faculty.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High research productivity of faculty</li> <li>• Strong community engagement</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary and inter-institutional connections (see <a href="#">Appendix 41</a>)</li> <li>• High quality of teaching</li> <li>• Strong R110 program</li> <li>• Active Speaker’s Lab and Online Speaker’s Lab</li> <li>• Well-established and successful Poland Study Abroad program</li> <li>• International connections and collaborations</li> <li>• Quality and quantity of online offerings</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of a system for tracking alumni</li> <li>• Lack of clear linkages between the major and job/workforce needs in the city/state</li> <li>• Low percentage of students who complete internships</li> <li>• Faculty feel stretched too thin</li> <li>• Limited marketing/recruitment support from the school and campus</li> <li>• Funding of graduate students</li> <li>• Lack of systematic structural support of graduate programs in SLA</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leveraging of interdisciplinary appointments</li> <li>• Collaborate with career development office to link curriculum more directly to workforce needs in the city/state</li> <li>• Recognized value of communication competencies in higher education that could be leveraged through collaboration with other disciplines and schools</li> <li>• Strengthening enrollments in COMM classes through new major</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of clarity around administrative support and increases in enrollment caps have increased faculty workload</li> <li>• Changes to the Gen Ed core have decreased enrollments in C180 and M150</li> <li>• Proliferation of dual-credit courses offered by high schools and competition from state institutions with lower tuition (i.e., Ivy Tech) threaten demand for undergrad courses</li> <li>• Our model for supporting graduate students isn’t competitive with other institutions</li> <li>• Students in Purdue PhD programs at IUPUI cannot use their funding to take our courses</li> <li>• Grad students graduate with limited teaching experience, making them less competitive on the academic job market</li> </ul>

**Changes and Challenges Addressed Since the 2013 External Review**

External reviews are an important part of our efforts towards continuous improvement as a department. The recommendations made by the 2013 review team prompted us to make several changes.

- We developed a strategic plan based on the review team’s feedback to guide our activities for the five years following the review (see [Appendix 42](#)). Many of the objectives identified in that strategic plan have been met (see highlighted priorities in [Appendix 42](#)).
- As recommended, we created a separate director for the PhD program.
- In response to the recommendations related to the role of theatre and media in our curriculum, we collaborated with English to create a separate degree in Applied Theatre, Film, and Television.

- As recommended, we developed standards and guidelines for master's theses and doctoral dissertations, comprehensive exams, and the administration of independent studies.
- We appointed an Internship Director (Mike Polites), to ensure consistency in the internship experience.
- As recommended, we placed emphasis on promotion of faculty. Since our last review, three associate professors were promoted raising the total number of active full professors in the department from 2 to 5. In addition, all of the promotion dossiers submitted for promotion to the associate rank with tenure were successful.
- We have established more interdisciplinary collaborations, as evidenced elsewhere in this self-study.

### **The Program's Future Directions**

After completing this year-long self-study, the Communication Studies faculty met to discuss the program's future direction in light of what the self-study revealed to us. The following points summarize our vision of where we would like our programs to be in 5-10 years.

- We see teaching as a strength of our department and are committed to continuing to offer learning experiences that engage, motivate, and inspire our students at all levels. We recognize that this will require ongoing faculty development and see ourselves offering faculty development opportunities within the department, such as our Brown Bag series, and participating in opportunities provided by the school or campus.
- We envision that COMM-R110 will continue to flourish as the gen ed "core communication competency" class required of all IUPUI students and look forward to celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> installment of R110 Speech Night. Plans to update our collaboratively authored R110 textbook are already underway. Steve Overbey has been providing exceptional leadership to the R110 program, but he is nearing retirement. We think it would be beneficial to hire a tenure track faculty or Teaching Professor as the next director of the program and to create a more stable R110 teaching faculty, with more TAs and full-time lecturers and less reliance on part-time faculty.
- Given the fact that it is unlikely that we will be allocated substantial additional resources in the next few years and 90% of our undergraduate courses are already full to capacity, we don't envision trying to grow our undergraduate major. Instead, we will seek to maintain enrollments at the undergraduate level and grow our MA and PhD programs. This will require securing funding for graduate students, which we hope to provide through a combination of assistantships and support provided through external research grants.
- One thing our self-study revealed to us is that a common theme running through our department is applied and translational communication. This is evident throughout our curriculum, from our emphasis on service learning in our undergraduate courses to the applied emphasis of our MA and the translational focus of our PhD. In addition, many of our students are using their degrees in translational ways. We would like to brand ourselves as the department and program of choice for students interested in approaching real-world problems from a communication perspective.
- One area we would like to emphasize as a growth opportunity in the next few years is connecting communication degrees with specific careers. We would like to see clearer and more well-developed career paths for our undergraduate and graduate students. Achieving this goal could entail collaboration with Career Services offices on campus, promotion of internships, development of a 100-200 level exploratory internship class, revision of the career unit in COMM-G100 (the gateway course), and fostering partnerships with businesses and health organizations in the region.
- While individual faculty in our department are productive researchers, we would like to continue to work at creating a "research culture" that would permeate our department more broadly. For example, we

talked about leveraging campus resources that support undergraduate research to involve students interested in the 5-Year BA/MA in research projects with faculty early on.

- Finally, we will continue to work on increasing visibility of the department and promoting recognition of the value of a communication perspective and degree by our students and colleagues.

### **Specific Questions for the Review Team**

The specific questions we would like feedback on from the review team are:

1. We welcome an outside perspective on our vision for the future and advice for getting to where we want to be in 5-7 years. Is our vision appropriate and realistic in light of the findings of our self-study? What advice would you give for making this vision a reality? What words of warning would you offer?
2. How do we best support faculty research?
3. How do we balance the needs of a growing graduate program while continuing to support our undergraduate students, particularly in tight financial times?
4. IUPUI's location in a major metropolitan area provides us access to numerous corporate, governmental, health, sports, and nonprofit organizations. How can we do a better job of maximizing the potential of the urban context in which we are situated?
5. How do we address the disparities in teaching load among graduate faculty?
6. Assuming the hiring freeze on faculty will thaw at some point soon, what do you see as our greatest need in terms of faculty hiring?
7. We would welcome recommendations about how we can leverage creatively the space that already exists in the school and strategies we could use to convince the school of the need for research space.