SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY.

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): **Communication**	Department: **Communication**
Degree or Certificate Level: **M.A.**	College/School: **College of Arts and Sciences**
Date (Month/Year): **September 2023**	Assessment Contact: **Dan Kozlowski, Chair**

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? **2023**

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? **2019**

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization or subject to state/licensure requirements? **No**

If yes, please share how this affects the program's assessment process (e.g., number of learning outcomes assessed, mandated exams or other assessment methods, schedule or timing of assessment, etc.):

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please provide the complete list of the program's learning outcome statements and **bold** the SLOs assessed in this cycle.)

In the fall of 2020, our Department implemented a curricular revision. We decided to assess all program learning outcomes (PLOs) this year.

PLO 1: Students will communicate effective messages for scholarly and public audiences.
PLO 2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research.
PLO 3: Students will apply communication theories to address problems in a broader context.
PLO 4: Students will demonstrate intercultural communication competence.
PLO 5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement.
PLO 6: Students will analyze the ethical implications of communication and apply ethical principles.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail, identify the course(s) in which they were collected, and if they are from program majors/graduates and/or other students. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Each students' culminating project (thesis, applied project, or comprehensive exam) along with their responses during the oral defense of their projects served as the artifacts used to assess our PLOs.

Additionally, in May 2023, all M.A. students in our program who had completed the three new required courses for the program, as per the aforementioned recent curricular revision, were sent an exit survey gathering information about their perceptions of their learning across the program learning outcomes.

All of the courses required for our program are offered in-person. The Madrid campus does not have a graduate program, so they are not included in the learning assessment for the M.A. program.

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

Culminating projects (thesis, applied project, or comprehensive exam) and oral defenses for each graduating student were evaluated using the rubrics from our assessment plan (see assessment plan attached). All three committee members for each student jointly evaluated the culminating projects and oral defenses after a student's defense.

Committees submitted a single assessment of each student's project and defense to the graduate program coordinator. Seven students completed applied projects, theses, or comprehensive exams during AY 2022/2023. Seven committees completed assessment rubrics.

PERCEPTUAL ASSESSMENT DATA was collected through an exit survey of graduating M.A. students and used to assess students' perceptions of learning across all PLOs. Six students completed the survey.

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

DIRECT ASSESSMENT DATA

PLO 1: Students will communicate effective messages for scholarly and public audiences.
PLO 2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research.
PLO 3: Students will apply communication theories to address problems in a broader context.
PLO 4: Students will demonstrate intercultural communication competence.
PLO 5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement.
PLO 6: Students will analyze the ethical implications of communication and apply ethical principles.

4 = Capstone
3-2 = Milestone
1 = Benchmark

Student	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	PLO 5	PLO 6
1	2	1	2	3	3	2
2	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	4	4	4	4	4
4	3	2	4	4	3	3
5	3	3	3	4	4	3.5
6	4	3	3	4	3	3
7	4	4	3	3	3	4
Average	**3.29**	**3.00**	**3.29**	**3.71**	**3.75**	**3.36**

PERCEPTUAL ASSESSMENT DATA

Data was gathered via an exit survey on a scale of 1 to 5, 5=Strongly Agree.

Outcome Dimensions and Items	*M*	*SD*	Average Across Items
PLO 1 Students will communicate effective messages for scholarly and public audiences.			**4.29**
The program encouraged me to develop my written communication skills.	4.00	1.00	
I have writing skills that will allow me to communicate effectively and independently in a variety of situations.	4.50	0.50	
The program encouraged me to develop my oral communication and presentation skills.	4.33	0.47	
I have oral communication skills that will allow me to communicate effectively and independently in a variety of situations.	4.33	0.47	
PLO 2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research.			**3.96**
The program encouraged me to develop my research skills.	3.83	0.90	
I am able to gather information from multiple sources and make critical judgments about the value of that information.	4.17	0.69	
The program helped me understand the relationship between research paradigm and methodological choices.	4.00	0.82	
The program taught me the appropriate criteria for evaluating communication research.	3.83	0.69	
PLO 3: Students will apply communication theories to address problems in a broader context.			**4.17**
I am able to apply communication theory to explain and analyze everyday situations.	4.00	0.58	
The program consistently emphasized the importance of communication theory.	4.33	0.47	
PLO 4: Students will demonstrate intercultural communication competence.			**4.75**
The program consistently emphasized the importance of culture and diversity.	4.67	0.47	
I have an understanding of cultures other than my own.	4.83	0.37	
PLO 5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement.			**4.72**
The program consistently emphasized the importance of social justice.	4.83	0.37	
I recognize the various ways communicative practices contribute to and detract from justice in society.	4.67	0.47	

I understand my civic responsibilities as a local and global citizen.	4.67	0.47	
PLO 6: Students will analyze the ethical implications of communication and apply ethical principles.			**4.42**
The program consistently emphasized the importance of ethics.	4.33	0.47	
I am able to make ethical judgments and take action based on broad knowledge.	4.50	0.50	

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you? Address both a) learning gaps and possible curricular or pedagogical remedies, and b) strengths of curriculum and pedagogy.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT DATA

The direct assessment data collected this year suggests students' capstone projects (theses, applied projects, and comprehensive exams) are, overall, appropriate artifacts for assessment. Students' final capstone projects appear to demonstrate the knowledge they acquired in the program with regard to the PLOs. Additionally, the data suggests that, on average, students demonstrate learning at the advanced intermediate or capstone level across PLOs. In the past, some committees suggested that some capstone projects were not appropriate artifacts to assess PLO 5. However, that was not the case during this assessment process. Given the limited data since implementing curricular changes in fall of 2020, we cannot draw firm conclusions about whether this shift is due to curricular changes or the nature of the work of the graduating cohort.

PERCEPTUAL ASSESSMENT DATA

Data from the exit survey provided perceptual data on all six PLOs. Results suggest that, overall, students agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them achieve knowledge associated with each PLO. The PLOs that students perceived that the program most strongly achieved were PLO 4 and PLO 5. The lowest average was with regard to PLO 2.

The curricular changes our Department made in 2020 were partially intended to enhance learning associated with PLO 2 and PLO 5. The time period during which the curricular changes were implemented was unusual due to pandemic circumstances, therefore it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about whether the changes in the curriculum achieved the intended purposes from the data collected since the changes were made. However, the direct assessment data is encouraging.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss the results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

These assessment results were collected in late spring/early summer of 2023. They will be shared with the department's Graduate Committee and faculty this academic year. We will discuss the results at a faculty meeting.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

Our Department implemented a revised graduate curriculum in fall of 2020. As such, we have direct assessment data for two cohort of students and perceptual data from three cohorts of students who have completed the required courses since the curricular revision. While this data is informative, it is a small amount of data collected during a uniquely challenging time for graduate study. Given the findings from the assessment were generally positive, no additional changes at this time seem prudent. We plan to collect assessment data for all PLOs for the next year and analyze the direct and perceptual data over the time period since curricular changes were implemented.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years **as a result of previous assessment data**?

We revised our curriculum and implemented curricular changes in the fall of 2020 as a result of assessment findings.

B. How has the change/have these changes identified in 7A been assessed?

We are presently assessing these changes, as described in this report.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

This is the second assessment we have conducted since revising and implementing a new M.A. curriculum in the fall of 2020. The data collected so far suggest that the curricular changes have enhanced learning with regard to PLO5. However, additional assessment data is needed to draw conclusions about the impacts of the curricular changes.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

After gathering assessment data from students graduating in Spring 2024, we will have additional information to review the effects of the curricular changes on learning outcomes and accordingly make needed adjustments to our curriculum.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., artifact prompts, rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted/appended into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document. Thank you.

Graduate Program Rubrics

PLO 1: Students will communicate effective messages for scholarly and public audiences.

Capstone 4	Milestones 3	 2	Benchmark 1
Demonstrates a masterful understanding of context, audience and purpose. Uses quality, relevant and compelling content, including rigorous, credible sources to illustrate mastery of the subject. Uses graceful and concise language that conveys meaning to the reader/viewer/listener.	Demonstrates a highly competent understanding of context, audience and purpose. Uses appropriate, relevant and compelling content, including the use of quality, credible sources to illustrate in-depth understanding of the subject. Uses graceful and concise language that conveys meaning to the reader/viewer/listener.	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience and purpose. Uses appropriate and relevant content and credible sources to illustrate a proficient understanding of the subject. Demonstrates the use of fluent and concise language that conveys meaning to the reader/viewer/listener.	Demonstrates consideration of context, audience and purpose. Uses appropriate, relevant and compelling content to explore ideas. Consistently uses relevant sources to support ideas and uses clear and concise language that conveys meaning to the reader/viewer/listener.

PLO 2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research.

Capstone 4	Milestones 3	 2	Benchmark 1
Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between research paradigm and methodological choices. Makes sophisticated decisions about methods of inquiry that expertly address a particular research purpose/question/hypothesis. Demonstrates an expert understanding of the appropriate criteria for evaluating communication research. Provides a sophisticated explanation of ethics associated with research practice.	Demonstrates a skillful understanding of the relationship between research paradigm and methodological choices. Makes knowledgeable decisions about methods of inquiry that skillfully address a particular research purpose/question/hypothesis. Demonstrates a knowledgeable understanding of the appropriate criteria for evaluating communication research. Provides a knowledgeable explanation of ethics associated with research practice.	Demonstrates a more than basic understanding of the relationship between research paradigm and methodological choices. Makes decisions about methods of inquiry that address a particular research purpose/question/hypothesis, with some skill. Demonstrates a more than basic understanding of the appropriate criteria for evaluating communication research. Provides a more than basic explanation of ethics associated with research practice.	Demonstrates a basic understanding of the relationship between research paradigm and methodological choices. Makes decisions about methods of inquiry that address a particular research purpose/question/hypothesis. Demonstrates a basic understanding of the appropriate criteria for evaluating communication research. Provides a basic explanation of ethics associated with research practice.

PLO 3: Students will apply communication theories to address problems in a broader context.

Capstone 4	Milestones 3	 2	Benchmark 1
Gives a sophisticated summarization of a theory that displays a nuanced understanding of the concepts and assumptions of the theory and its connection to research in the field. Applies a theory to broader contexts in unique ways that yield new knowledge and contributions. Shows expert understanding of a theory's implications and limitations and possibilities for expanding or enriching the field.	Gives a thoughtful summarization of a theory that displays an understanding of the concepts and assumptions of the theory and its connection to research in the field. Recognizes implications of theory in a way that articulates possibilities for differing contexts and applications of the theory.	Gives an adequate summarization of a theory that displays a basic understanding of the concepts and assumptions of the theory and its connection to research in the field. Chooses appropriate, relevant examples to demonstrate a theory's applicability and explains the relationship between theory and examples, with more analysis.	Gives a summarization of a theory with some understanding of how it relates to research in the field. Locates and explains relationships between theory and relevant examples.

PLO 4: Students will demonstrate intercultural communication competence.

Capstone 4	Milestones 3	 2	Benchmark 1
Demonstrates a masterful understanding of multiple worldviews, power structures and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in contemporary contexts. Engages in critical reflection about one's own culture, interacts in respectful ways with other cultures, and asks sophisticated questions about other cultures. Attempts to seek multiple answers to complex social, cultural, political questions, and uses mastery in disciplinary specific theory and practice, to be at the forefront of efforts to solve relevant contemporary problems.	Demonstrates a highly competent and critically focused understanding of multiple worldviews, power structures and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in contemporary contexts. Engages in reflection about one's own culture, interacts in respectful ways with other cultures, and asks sophisticated questions about other cultures. Attempts to seek multiple answers to complex social, cultural, political questions, and uses proficiencies in disciplinary specific theory and practice, to be part of the effort to solve relevant contemporary problems.	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of multiple worldviews, power structures and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in contemporary contexts. Engages in reflection about one's own culture, interacts in respectful ways with other cultures, and asks deep and insightful questions about other cultures and attempts to seek multiple answers to complex social, cultural, political questions.	Demonstrates a substantial understanding of multiple worldviews, power structures and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in contemporary contexts. Engages in reflection about one's own culture, interacts in respectful ways with other cultures, and asks deep questions about other cultures and attempts to seek answers to complex social, cultural, political questions.

PLO 5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement.

Capstone 4	Milestones 3	 2	Benchmark 1
Gives a sophisticated summarization of social justice and civic engagement that displays a nuanced understanding of how they relate to communication scholarship and practice. Analyzes both broad and specific communicative practices in unique ways that yield new ways of thinking about just societies. Shows expert understanding of the principles of social justice and civic engagement and can imagine novel possibilities for expanding or enriching the world.	Gives a thoughtful summarization of social justice and civic engagement that displays an understanding of how they relate to communication scholarship and practice. Recognizes the various ways communicative practices contribute to and detract from justice in society, in a way that articulates possibilities for strategic civic engagement.	Gives an adequate summarization of social justice and civic engagement that displays a basic understanding of how they relate to communication scholarship and practice. Chooses appropriate, relevant examples to explain social justice and injustice and explains the relationship between communication and civic engagement.	Gives a summarization of social justice and civic engagement, with some understanding of how they relate to communication scholarship and practice.

PLO 6: Students will analyze the ethical implications of communication and apply ethical principles.

Capstone 4	Milestones 3	 2	Benchmark 1
Gives a sophisticated summarization of communication ethics that displays a nuanced understanding of ethical principles and their application. Applies (and critiques) ethical principles to broader contexts in unique ways that yield novel opportunities for ethical action. Shows an expert understanding of ethics, action, and possibilities for expanding or enriching human communication.	Gives a thoughtful summarization of communication ethics that displays an understanding of ethical principles and their application. Articulates (and critiques) ethical principles and their applications across differing contexts.	Gives an adequate summarization of communication ethics that displays a basic understanding of the ethical principles and their application. Chooses appropriate, relevant examples to demonstrate ethical principles and explains how they play out, in context.	Gives a summarization of communication ethics with some understanding of ethical principles and their application.