

Communication Studies Department
Masters Degree Program Review
Final Response
July 2016

These remarks are focused on the report prepared by Dr. Nina-Jo Moore in her review of the Master of Arts program in Communication at Sam Houston State University in Spring 2016.

Faculty

The report notes the growing student population in the program and the strong graduate faculty. With those in mind, over the past year, the program conducted a successful search for an additional graduate faculty member, hiring Dr. Melinda Weathers to join the faculty in August 2016. The original search was for two positions, with over 40 candidates meeting the minimum qualifications. But the search committee felt that only Dr. Weathers was strong enough and a good enough fit for the department to warrant hiring. Thus, a new search is underway for the 2016-17 year, focused on a somewhat more quantitative teacher/scholar to join the faculty and contribute to the graduate program.

Admission Standards

A recommendation was made to consider changes in admission practices, particularly using the Miller Analogy Test. This change has already been implemented. Previously, applicants could submit either a resume' or GRE scores. That was changed to give the option of submitting either GRE scores or the Miller Analogy Test scores. We agree that this is a better indicator of analytical skills and potential graduate school success.

Transfer Credit

The report recommended considering acceptance of credits from Graduate Certificates in Communication programs. Some graduate program certificates consist of as many as 18 hours. TSUS rules allow transfer of up to 12 hours from Masters Certificates in Communication. However, SHSU academic policies allow a maximum of 9 transfer hours for masters programs containing 31-36 hours. The program would comply with the transfer of a maximum of 9 hours from an accredited Certificate program.

Graduate Assistantships/Student Financial Support

Resources are always a concerning issue. The CHSS Dean's office continues to provide support for half of the Graduate Assistantships for Communication Studies faculty members, with the department covering their share through Distance Learning monies. Stipends for assistantships are constantly reviewed to assure that they remain competitive with those of similar universities in the region. At present, our program competitively awards graduate assistants stipends of \$4923 each semester.

In an attempt to monitor the competitiveness of our program's GA stipends, peer institutions, both in the TSUS system and in the Southeast US region were surveyed as to the amounts of their stipend awards. The following reflects the results:

TSUS & Texas Schools

Texas State, San Marcos:	\$7200 per semester
Angelo State	\$4025 per semester
Stephen F. Austin State	\$4000-6000 per semester

Regional Peer Universities

University of Louisville	\$6000 per semester
Appalachian State	\$4000-4500 per semester
Univ. of Alabama-Birmingham	\$10,000 per semester

While Sam Houston State's stipend falls within the range of the peer institutions surveyed, the amount is nearer the lower end of the range. This is cause for concern and needs to be addressed if the program will continue to be competitive for high-quality graduate students.

Program Curriculum

Since the program's inception, the two seminar courses (Seminar in Interpersonal Communication and Seminar in Family Communication) have been used fairly extensively to offer various courses and new topics as new courses were developed. The program has reached the point, however, that several new courses are currently in the university's curriculum review/approval process which were originally offered using the Seminar course. With new faculty members joining the graduate faculty, new courses will continue to be developed commensurate with their expertise and interests. The two Seminar courses will continue to be used as rotating topic courses.

Also, several new courses are working their way through the university curriculum approval process. Following is a list of the new courses proposed. All have been approved through the college curriculum committee level and are proceeding to the university curriculum committee as of this writing. We anticipate these will begin to be introduced into the program beginning Fall 2017.

Coms 5350	Computer Mediated Communication
Coms 5361	Dark Side of Communication
Coms 5362	Advanced Intercultural Communication
Coms 5381	Intergenerational Communication
Coms 5382	Dark Side of Family Communication
Coms 5395	Social Support and Well-Being
Coms 5396	Risk Communication
Coms 5397	Persuasion & Social Influence

Respectfully submitted,

Terry M. Thibodeaux, Department Chair

Frances Brandau, Graduate Director