

New Academic Program: MA/MS Communication

BACKGROUND

Program Proposed Start Date

Fall 2019

Program Description

MA/MS in Communication. The full program proposal is available at:
<https://secure.oregonstate.edu/ap/cps/proposals/view/99706>.

This Master of Arts/Master of Science (MA/MS) in Communication provides a discipline-based, integrated study of communication and rhetoric structured around a core of fundamental theories, methodologies, and applications. While speech communication departments at some universities in the United States feature only rhetoric (such as public address, argumentation, persuasion, or media) or only communication (communication in personal contexts such as intercultural, small group, organizational, or family) in their graduate degrees, this program follows a more comprehensive model that combines both rhetoric and communication under the umbrella label of Communication. In keeping with the discipline of Speech Communication, this MA/MS program addresses the means, functions, and goals of symbolic human interaction. The range of approaches to course offerings within this MA/MS program includes theoretical, pragmatic, epistemological, and critical perspectives.

Students pursuing this degree will combine advanced study in a selection of topics including but not limited to persuasion and argumentation, conflict management and resolution, cultural (family, sex and gender, relational) and intercultural communication, and organizational and group issues, thus preparing students for doctoral study in communication and rhetoric or for careers as communication professionals. Students who do not continue to doctoral level study can pursue careers in law, training and development, advocacy, human resources, mediation and facilitation, group and organizational consulting, politics, community leadership and development, post-secondary college instruction, public relations, and other areas.

Having each type of degree available at OSU (both the MA and MS in Communication) provides graduate students the opportunity to tailor their degree appropriately to career goals. In the communication discipline, both MA and MS degrees are offered. The MS in Communication indicates a greater specialization in research methods, with greater knowledge and proficiency in undertaking and evaluating research in the social sciences. The MA in Communication allows graduate students recognition for completion of the foreign language requirement and gives students more flexibility in learning about areas of theory and research within the communication discipline.

Program Context

Currently the area of speech communication has no graduate programs, instead being an active member in the Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) degree through the Graduate School. We have several graduate students every year who specialize in rhetoric and/or relational communication, along with being teaching assistants for the area. However, this interdisciplinary degree does not completely prepare students in specific methodological training, as well as possible preparation for future graduate work in communication. The proposed MA/MS adds a

communication-specific graduate program to Oregon State University, allowing students the opportunity to receive specific graduate training in theory and research that will prepare them for careers in academia or other communication professions.

Program Purpose/Relationship to University Mission and Strategic Plan

This graduate program drives Oregon State University's commitment to "sustain human well-being and improve the quality of human life." This program engages personal well-being, the public life of Oregon, the critical issues of the nation, and the pressing concerns of the global society because communication and oral rhetoric make up the heart of the "human system." Producing experts in oral argument who excel in promoting effective interpersonal and small group processes provides a citizenry with the means and tools for grappling with complex, intractable, and fractious issues at all levels. More specifically, specializations in the department will include elements like environmental communication, health communication, and science communication – elements that strongly align with the strategic plan of the university.

Need for the Program

In March 2014, the College of Liberal Arts hired Riley Research Associates to conduct a needs assessment for a masters in speech communication. The full assessment is in the online proposal. In general, they reported a strong need for the program, both in terms of valuable skills based on employer feedback and in terms of the topics of persuasion and crisis management. They also noted that there were few options for this degree in the Northwest, establishing Oregon State University as one more attractive option for prospective graduate students.

The closest program to this one in the state of Oregon is the graduate program in communication at Portland State University (PSU). While the departments at PSU and OSU share some concentrations, each has developed unique curricular areas. For example, OSU's focus on rhetoric is unique in the state, as is some of our recent seminar classes in the MAIS program such as Family Communication and Early Pragmatism. Overall, the strengths of the program at OSU in rhetoric, health communication, and environmental communication has set it apart.

Program Financials

Costs here refer to the cost of changing the job descriptions of faculty to account for graduate advising and mentoring activities. Specifically, the costs refer to the portion of the faculty FTE that will be put into additional graduate advising. These are not actual new costs; there are no new monies being spent on faculty with the changed job descriptions. The Speech Communication faculty have long been active in the MAIS. Therefore, Communication master's students will replace the MAIS students. The new graduate courses added will replace some courses taught at the undergraduate level. As graduate teaching assistantships are added to the new master's program, they will teach undergraduate level courses. The expected additional faculty cost covers a one-course release per year for the graduate coordinator. The \$4,174 amount covers the cost of an instructor to teach that one-course per year. In terms of support staff, one office specialist (OS) I staff will devote 0.25 FTE, \$6,441 in year one, to support the new Communication master's degree.

The proposed budget is summarized in the table below.

	Academic Year 2019	Academic Year 2020	Academic Year 2021	Academic Year 2022
Personnel				
Program Coordinator Stipend	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
BSPP Advisor (.5 FTE)	\$24,000	\$24,960	\$25,958	\$26,996
OPE	\$14,752	\$15,330	\$15,929	\$16,440
Personnel Subtotal	\$43,752	\$45,290	\$46,887	\$48,536
Other Resources				
Supplies and Services	\$2,500	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Resources Subtotal	\$2,500	\$0	\$0	\$0
GRAND TOTAL	\$46,252	\$45,290	\$46,887	\$48,536

RECOMMENDATION

All appropriate university committees and the OSU Faculty Senate have positively reviewed the proposed MA/MS program. The Provost recommends that the Academic Strategies Committee approve the establishment of a MA/MS in Communication, effective fall 2019, pending support of the statewide Provosts Council and the approval of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.