



Academic Program Review

Program Name: Professional Communication- Master of Art

Academic Year 2025/2026

Recent Recommendations

Using your most recent review, please respond to all feedback and recommendations.

Response:

During the program review process, we have responded to all feedback and recommendations.

Student Learning Outcomes

Describe the assessment of your student learning outcomes (SLOs). Discuss your findings, changes you are making, and what you hope to see as a result.

Response:

SLO1: Students should understand and apply communication theories and perspectives.

Assessment results from COM F625: Communication Theory indicate strong theoretical understanding with an overall score of 90% on the embedded rubric. This supports our grad students effectively interpreting, applying and critiquing theoretical frameworks central to the COM discipline.

SLO2: Students should be able to design appropriate methods of communication inquiry.

Graduate students demonstrated competency across quantitative and qualitative lines of inquiry. In COMFF602, Communication Research Methods: Human Science, students achieved a 90% on research projects, demonstrating proficiency in designing and completing empirical studies. Further, with a 62% acceptance rate for COM students to a conference with an overall acceptance rate of 20% (National Communication Association), COM graduate students are producing quality scholarships that are relevant to the discipline. This is further supported by the proliferation of independent research and scholarship by our graduate students. Finally, as their evidence of their research, 100% of all MA students successfully defended their thesis or project without major revision. Graduate students also demonstrated competency in designing quantitative research proposals, which necessitated that they integrate their knowledge of experimental design and statistical analysis. Performance on these quantitative research proposals was excellent (95% correct).

SLO3: Students should be able to analyze and adapt messages to dyads, groups, and organizations.

Findings from COM F622: Interpersonal Communication indicate proficiency with an overall mean score of 72% on final papers. Results suggest that students can identify and analyze interpersonal communication, there is an additional need to support translating theory into applied strategic messaging across contexts.

SLO4: Students should be able to use communication effectively to inform, persuade, and deliberate.

In COM F625: Communication Theory, students achieved a mean score of 85% on the Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication written assignment, reflecting their ability to build functional messages that analyze, critique, and articulate nuanced relations concepts. For example, persuasion can be achieved through manipulation, gas lighting, and other dark side communication behaviors; however, the impact to meaningful relationships and the resulting harm may create toxic communication climates.

Graduate students also competed in the Three-Minute Thesis competition (3MT), underscoring their ability to inform and persuade others as to the significance of their research and contribution to the discipline.

Finally, as their evidence of their research, 100% of all MA students successfully defended their thesis or project without major revision. Collectively, assessment data for the MA in Professional Communication demonstrate COM majors consistently meet or exceed expectations in theoretical understanding, methodical application, and applied communication. This is evidenced by strong performance in both theory and methods courses, research and scholarly activity (14 faculty-mentored publications), and completion of the 3MT competition. As we plan for the next program review cycle, there needs to be additional focus on applied communication skills, emerging and non-western theoretical paradigms, and the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods to ground students in mixed-methods approaches.

Action items for next program review include the following:

Implementing co-grading and norming sessions across courses.

Integrated applied communication learning assessments in interpersonal, organizational, and other coursework.

Challenging students to engage in interdisciplinary research, broaden their understanding of communication across contexts and disciplines.

What you hope to see as a result

As we continue to improve our program assessment and implement changes, we move forward with the following goals:

Increased reliability and validity of assessment data.

Improved student understanding of expectations through integrated rubrics.

Implementation of collaborative scoring sessions using standardized rubrics to enhance interrater reliability. However, this approach may be limited as faculty specialize in different areas of the communication discipline, which may limit our ability to meaningfully assess performance outside of our areas of expertise.

Continue to explore indirect measures of assessment to further demonstrate mastery of SLOs.

Create additional opportunities for students to engage with emerging and non-Western theoretical traditions.

Did you make any curricular changes based on your most recent SLOA? If so, discuss what changes were made. If no changes were made, please discuss the strengths of your curriculum based on the assessment of your outcomes.

Response:

The number of SLOs has been reduced from nine (9) in 2023/2024 to four (4). Reducing the number of SLOs created a more focused and measurable approach to program review. The revised SLOs emphasize knowledge, skills, and abilities in line with best practices per the revised program revised process and central tenets of the communication discipline, i.e., theoretical understanding, message creation, inquiry, and critical analysis.

To strengthen the alignment between SLO and assessment, fewer assignments have been selected for evaluation. As recommended, the selected assignments include capstone projects, research methods assignments, and major course deliverables that demonstrate a student's mastery of SLOs. Moreover, additional measures have been added, such as student publications, conference presentations, and communication-focused projects, allowing additional evidence of learning.

Since our program review, faculty have voluntarily added rubrics to courses, addressing an additional recommendation to connect assignments with SLOs. The rubrics allow for stronger comparison across sections and instructors and transparency in grading practices.

As of 2017, all Baccalaureate programs are required to embed communication outcomes within their SLOA Plans. This is optional for non-Baccalaureate programs.

Communication outcomes in the SLOA plan are: **Embedded**

Check the checkbox to certify completion of the following tasks:

- ☒ Upload supporting documents to the Supporting Documents folder. This includes artifacts, rubrics, and other documents related to your SLOA.
- ☒ Upload your most recent SLOA to the Supporting Documents folder, even if no changes have been made since the last review.

Have changes been made to your SLOA document since your last review? **Yes**

If so, please summarize what changes were made.

Response:

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High Impact Practices

Please indicate which high impact practices are currently being implemented in relation to the program's student learning outcomes.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Capstone Courses & Projects | ☒ Graduate Level Research |
| ☐ Collaborative Assignments & Projects | ☒ Writing-Intensive Courses |
| ☐ Diversity/Global Learning | ☒ Publications |
| ☐ ePortfolios | ☒ Communications |
| ☐ First-Year Seminars and Experiences | ☒ Scholarly Activities |
| ☐ Internships | ☐ Studios |
| ☒ Service or Community-Based Learning | ☐ Practicum |
| ☐ Undergraduate Research | ☐ Other |
| ☐ Labs | ☐ None of these |

Discuss how the HIPs in the program are reflected in the SLOA. If you have identified HIPs that are not included in the SLOA, please consider an update.

Response:

High Impact Practices include the following: Service or community-based learning, graduate level research, writing-intensive courses, publications, communications, and scholarly activities.

Service or community-based learning: COM graduate students complete either a thesis or applied project. Students who complete the project option collaborate with community partners to address real-world issues through strategic communication. Projects often involve crisis management plans, training and development, and assessment of the effectiveness of an organization's communication effectiveness.

Research is a central component of the COM MA program. Graduate level research is included in qualitative and quantitative methods courses designed to develop our students' inquiry and analytical skills. Students also complete research projects in many of the required courses.

All required courses for COM graduate students are writing intensive, which helps students develop the critical skills needed for professional and scholarly communication.

Publications and scholarly activities are demonstrated through independent research projects, conference presentations, and the completion of a thesis or applied project that contributes knowledge to the communication discipline.

Student Success

Please reference the [Resources tab](#) for information on accessing the Student Success Data Dashboard and contacting your designated data liaisons.

Student Success Data Trends

Persistence: **Decrease**

Pass Rates: **Decrease**

Student Credit Hours: **Increase**

Majors: **Increase**

Degrees Awarded: **Increase**

Other Trends (if applicable):

These trends are descriptive vs. inferential. The data provided are aggregated averages, which limits our ability to perform significance testing, correlation analysis, or casual inference.

COM has significantly expanded its distance course modalities, reflecting an ongoing commitment to increase access and flexibility in course offerings. New online courses in Public Relations and Methods attracted students from across disciplines. As expected, the number of face-to-face course offerings decreased, reflecting the growth of the department's fully online asynchronous degree programs.

Graduate credit hours have increased due to rising enrollment from interdisciplinary and part-time working professionals who seek out the flexibility afforded by our program.

The gender gap in Annual Student Credit Hours (SCH) Load decreased significantly, achieving near parity (60% female, 40% male). Persistence and graduation rates for [REDACTED] students have improved, while [REDACTED] rates have remained stable.

SCH Load has increased notably for [REDACTED] students, reflecting greater engagement and retention, while rates for [REDACTED] students have remained consistent.

SCH Load among [REDACTED] has nearly doubled, suggesting increased access for economically disadvantaged learners.

Achievement Disparities

Discuss any achievement disparities identified in your disaggregated student success data and explain how you plan to address them.

Response:

These trends are descriptive vs. inferential. The data provided are aggregated averages, which limits our ability to perform significance testing, correlation analysis, or casual inference.

Race/Ethnicity

While overall SCH Load increased for white students, there was a decline for [REDACTED] students. These trends, however, mirror broader institutional demographic shifts at UAF between 2023 and 2024. The Department has expressed the need to hire an Indigenous Communication Scholar to strengthen representation and scholarship in this area; however, there is no funding available. COM faculty continue professional development in Indigenous pedagogy and assessment and integrate Indigenous and other non-western perspectives into course content.

Age

Enrollment and Persistence increased for students [REDACTED] and for those [REDACTED], reflecting dual-enrollment partnerships and program appeal to working professionals. However, engagement among [REDACTED]-year-olds remains low. Faculty will increase outreach through campus programming and promote the Accelerated BA/MA pathway to attract learners in this age group. Faculty also note the MA program requires a bachelor's degree, which naturally increases the age of our target population.

Gender & Course Pass Rate

[REDACTED] graduate students slightly outperform [REDACTED] students in course pass rates. However, this finding is skewed by a single case of academic misconduct in AY24/25, which resulted in a student failing out of the program. The department will survey graduate students to assess and support learner needs.

Ethnicity and Course Pass Rate

[REDACTED] student's course pass rates improved slightly while [REDACTED] rates decreased slightly. Given one year of data, conclusions are tentative. COM faculty will continue to collaborate with student resource centers across campus and monitor trends during the next program review.

Age and Persistence

Learners [REDACTED] have higher persistence rates than those [REDACTED]. Faculty will partner with campus student success initiatives to better support students [REDACTED]. COM is concerned, however, that younger students will enter our graduate programs at a higher rate as more learners under 18 enroll in classes and complete their BAs at a younger age. Faculty will continue to monitor this trend during the next program review.

Closing the Loop

Please discuss how your student learning outcomes are reflected in high impact practices and student success data.

Response:

COM SLOs for MA students emphasize a learner's ability to apply communication theories and perspectives, design and conduct communication inquiry, and create effective messages across contexts. Our SLOs are reflected in high-impact practices such as graduate research, community-engaged projects, and online asynchronous modalities that promote applied learning and improved access.

Our expanded distance course modalities reflect COM's commitment to accessibility, flexibility, and student success. Graduate credit hours have increased, providing evidence to support this finding. This growth demonstrates COM's responsiveness to diverse learner needs and the theory-to-practice model.

Equity and inclusion data also reflect positive trends. The gender gap in annual student credit hour (SCH) has narrowed substantially, nearly to parity. Persistence and graduation rates among male students have improved, while [REDACTED] rates have remained stable, underscoring more equitable outcomes across gender.

Additionally, SCH load has increased for [REDACTED] students, signaling progress toward greater engagement and retention, while [REDACTED] student trends remain stable. As evidence, SCH Load among [REDACTED] has nearly doubled, underscoring COM's commitment to distance modalities supporting access for economically disadvantaged students.

Collectively, COM has made gains in access, diversity, and degree completion. These descriptive trends provide evidence to support progress toward equitable and meaningful competency in SLOs.

Academic Program Profile

The following questions help show how your program supports the university's mission, connects with other UA programs, engages with the community, contributes through service courses, and supports student success after graduation. Please use this section to highlight the value your program brings to students, the university, and beyond.

UAF's Mission:

The University of Alaska Fairbanks is a Land, Sea, and Space Grant university and an international center for research, education, and the arts, emphasizing the circumpolar North and its diverse peoples. UAF integrates teaching, research, and public service as it educates students for active citizenship and prepares them for lifelong learning and careers.

In what ways does your program advance UAF's mission? Response:

UAF's mission fulfillment indicators include the following:

- Student success and degree attainment: Students are at the heart of UAF's mission. We are committed to the success of all students.
- Research: UAF is a Land, Sea and Space Grant University, and research is integral to our identity, mission and goals.
- Skilled workforce: UAF's mission include educating students for active citizenship and preparing them for lifelong learning and careers. We play a key role in preparing Alaska's workforce.
- Community and Belonging: UAF is committed to fostering a welcoming, respectful, and supportive community.
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 - Community and Belonging: UAF is committed to fostering a welcoming, respectful, and supportive community,

To promote student success and degree attainment across our campus community, COM directed the Communication Center, a student resource center guided by the mission to "[increase] the personal, professional, and civic impact of UAF by enhancing the communication competence of its community members" (Communication Center, Our Mission, n.d.). Communication centers play a pivotal role in supporting student success and facilitating degree attainment by providing an inclusive, structured space where learners can develop communication competence, build strategies to manage communication apprehension, and enhance overall academic performance (Staweser et al., 2020). Graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) serves as coaches along with Professor [REDACTED], Dr. [REDACTED], and Dr. [REDACTED]. To further support student success and degree attainment for COM MA students, the department created a new service position, the Director of Graduate Studies (Dr. [REDACTED] currently serving) in AY24=3. This position works directly with COM majors to ensure timely progress toward degree completion, access to research opportunities, and support during their first year before they transition to their committee chairs. These strategies collectively promote student success and degree attainment (Finley, 2021) Communication Center, (n.d.). Welcome to the Communication Center, <https://www.uaf.edu/speak/> Finley, A. (2021). How college contributes to workforce success: Employer views on what matters most, Association of American Colleges and Universities, <https://dgm8lphhvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Research/PDFs/AACUEmployerReport2021.pdf> Staweser, M. G., Apostel, S., Carpenter, R., Cuny, K. M., Dvorak, K., & Head, K. (2020). The centrality of the center: Best practices for engaging students on campus, Communication Center Journal, 6(1), 94-102, <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ccj/article/view/2130>

Faculty in the Department of Communication support UAF's mission to integrate research as it educates students. Faculty maintains an active research agenda focused on instructional design, student success, Indigenous studies, public relations, extremism in the military, and media studies.

Dr. Amy May's Research

Published 4 articles, 4 book chapters

Edited Volumes: 3

Conference Proceedings: 18

Dr. Tori McDermott's Research

Published: 6 journal articles, 6 book chapters

Edited Volume: 1

Conference Proceedings: 23

Concurrent Sessions: 5

Received: National Communication Association's Preston Award for Leadership, 2023, 2024

Received: Top 3 Competitive Paper Session ECA 2023, Undergraduates' perceptions of inclusivity in higher education classrooms

Dr. McDermott has also served as an URSA award reviewer and outside examiner through the Graduate School.

Dr. Kevin Sager's Research

Published: 1 article

Professor Nike Jacob's Research

Published 1 article, 1 book chapter

Conference Proceedings: 10

To prepare a skilled workforce, the MA program continues to transform as the needs of students and employers continue to evolve. To better align student interests with a curriculum that ensures a skilled workforce of competent communicators, the department adopted three tracks for COM Majors: Social Interactions, Science & Environmental communication, and Public Relations. Connecting with SLOs, students gain foundational knowledge of communication theories, perspectives, and central questions that define each track and their strategic areas of focus. For example, in the Social Interaction track, students apply knowledge and develop skills to understand relational dynamics, identity, and culture, including the diverse peoples of Alaska to promote community and belonging. In the Public Relations track, students gain the ability to design, implement, and evaluate messages that influence public perception and maintain organizational credibility. Finally, in the Science & Environmental Communication track students integrate research and applied communication to translate complex scientific issues for diverse audiences, fostering public understanding and engagement with science especially as it relates to the Circumpolar North and its diverse peoples. Additionally, the core curriculum has been updated to include a new research methods course that seeks to ground students in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research. As a result of this curricular update, students can now choose one of two final publications: a thesis (for students looking to enter a PhD program) or a project (for students looking to connect with the community and develop a strong portfolio for the job market).

To promote community and belonging, the MA program offers a variety of courses that challenges students to communicate across differences. Courses such as Communication and Diversity in the Professional World and Political Media & Discourse of the American Right invite students to critically examine how identity, power, and representation inform public discourse. These courses in addition to others create space for students to engage with diverse perspectives, recognize the impact of communication on marginalized communities, and apply communication practices to strengthen relationships.

To further promote community and belonging, COM adopted the following communication action statement (McDermott & May, 2023): “We recognize and make space for the communication norms and values of the Indigenous People and their ancestors who care for these lands. Although we acknowledge the communication norms we know and practice are based in white supremacy and western knowledge systems that uphold white supremacy and heteronormativity, we invite learners to share with us their language, Elder wisdom, and communication practices so that we may grow together as a community.” This statement promotes community and belonging by acknowledging historical exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from white, western, and heteronormative frameworks that define higher education. By inviting learners to share their language, cultural traditions, and Elder wisdom, COM honors that all voices and knowledge systems are equal.

Dr. [REDACTED] also serves as the faculty sponsor for the Generation Action Club, a national network of young activists that advocate for reproductive freedom.

Dr. [REDACTED] also served as the co-chair of the Committee on the Status of Women, a faculty senate committee devoted to identifying and addressing gender-based challenges across the university.

McDermott, V., & May, A. (2023). Challenging the positionality of western mainstream English through the implementation of communication action statements. *Journal of Communication Pedagogy*, 7(1), 165-180.
<https://doi.org/10.31446/JCP.2023.1.11>

How is your program related to others in the UA system?

Response:

The Department of Communication has partnered across the UA system to build the communication competence of our community.

Communication Center (COM Center)

Under the direction of Professor Nike Jacob, the COM Center served as a strategic resource for student learning and public speaking support for students in the COM GERs and other oral intensive courses across our campus community. During the review period, the COM Center supported 471 students over 566 service hours.

To modernize the student experience and offer more accessible, integrated support, the COM Center under the direction of Professor [REDACTED] moved its physical location to the Student Success Center. As part of this transition, all operating and administrative systems were migrated to new platforms and integrated with the general Student Success Center. Dr. [REDACTED] and professor [REDACTED] served on the interdisciplinary Student Success Center Advisory Committee where standard operating procedures and further best practices for the new SSC were developed.

The COM Center also participates annually in the selection of the UAF Commencement Speaker and coach the Commencement Speaker in public speaking best practices and speech writing to help them prepare for their stage appearance.

NOTE: Upcoming program reviews will not include the COM Center as CLA shifted its focus away from student resource center administration. In AY25/26, the COM Center is fully administered by the Student Success Center (SSC).

3MT

To support students across the UA system, COM faculty facilitate a series of workshops to prepare students for the 3MT competition, an international academic competition where graduate students present their research in a compelling three-minute presentation to a non-specialist audience, using only one static slide. In addition to workshops, faculty met one-on-one with competitors to refine their presentations and delivery. Dr. [REDACTED] and Dr. [REDACTED] also developed an asynchronous 3MT Canvas resource shell that graduate students can access 24/7 filled with step-by-step instructions and key resources to develop, refine, and successfully present a 3MT presentation.

Intensives

For some students living in rural communities, access to needed courses remains a persistent challenge for degree completion. One strategy employed by UA remote campus sites, e.g., Nome, KuC, is to offer summer intensives, shortened versions of semester-based courses facilitated by visiting faculty. Dr. [REDACTED] facilitated an intensive at KuC during the review period, bringing the UAF Troth Yedha Department of Communication to Indigenous learners pursuing their teaching credentials.

Campus Workshops & Educational Outreach

In Spring 2024, the COM Center collaborated with Conner Philson from the University of Exeter, UK, to teach a virtual Science Communication Workshop for the Alaska Center for Energy & Power (ACEP). The workshop introduced participants to science communication for the public, how to utilize storytelling in their science communication and overviewed best practices to communicate complex concepts to political stakeholders.

In Spring 2024, Dr. [REDACTED] and Dr. [REDACTED] taught a workshop about interview preparation at the Alaska Center for Native Health.

The COMCenter offers in-person and virtual outreach for classes with an oral intensive component. For example, Dr. [REDACTED] taught a public speaking workshop for a 100-level Writing in the Sciences class in Fall 2024.

Professor [REDACTED] taught Networking Best Practices workshops for EPSCoR Student Ambassadors in Spring 2025 and as part of the Career Services Career Day Workshop series in Spring 2024.

Professor [REDACTED] developed a module about healthy discourse and team communication that was integrated into the newly developed ASUAF officer online training course.

Dr. [REDACTED] is also an affiliate faculty member with the Content Creation Certificate program, a Title III Grant funded project that seeks to prepare students to grow their skills in video storytelling, blogging and social media, and digital business development. From 2023-2025 Dr. [REDACTED] completed three trips to the Chukchi Campus to build further relationships in Kotzebue and surrounding communities and to get students engaged in the Content Creation program.

Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies

To extend the reach of our courses and attract students outside of the major, COM crosslists courses with other departments, including Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS). Dr. [REDACTED], Dr. [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] maintain faculty affiliations for WGSS.

Honors College

Dr. [REDACTED] and Professor [REDACTED] facilitate Honors sections of COM 121 to assist Honors College students in their degree completion.

Impact of COM GERs

The Department of Communication offers four courses as part of the General Education Requirements (GERs) curriculum. These include the following: COMF121: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication, COM131: Fundamentals of Oral Communication: Group Context, COMF141: Fundamentals of Oral Communication: Public Context, and COMF300: Communicating Ethics. These courses impact every single student pursuing an Associate's or Bachelor's degree at UAF. COM Grad Teaching Assistants (TA) facilitate these courses as part of their degree programs.

INDS

Dr. [REDACTED] and Dr. [REDACTED] also serve as committee chairs and committee members on INDS committees across campus, broadening the reach and partnerships of the Department of Communication.

Who are your key community or external partners?

Response:

The Department of Communication is committed to partnering with professional organizations that further our discipline and community-based agencies that benefit from their expertise to address social, health, and justice issues locally and nationally.

In support of furthering our discipline, COM faculty are active in professional organizations such as the National Communication Association (NCA), the National Association of Communication Centers (NACC), and Western States Communication Association (WSCA). Dr. [REDACTED] and Dr. [REDACTED] serve in leadership roles within the respective organizations to include the leadership circle of the Indigenous Caucus, Communication Centers Division, Women's Caucus, and Military Division. Dr. [REDACTED] contributions to discipline leadership has been recognized by NCA where her efforts were awarded with consecutive Preston Awards for Leadership (2023, 2024). Dr. [REDACTED] also served as the co-chair of the IDEA+ committee within the Organization of Biological Field Stations to build interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships.

Dr. [REDACTED] serves as a board member for the Interior Community Health Center, a health center located in the Fairbanks North Star Bureau committed to providing medical, integrated behavioral health, and dental services to all community members. As a health communication scholar, Dr. [REDACTED] has supported their strategic planning efforts to better understand and address the health disparities that continue to plague not only Fairbanks but the state of Alaska.

Dr. [REDACTED] and Dr. [REDACTED] are active in larger efforts to support people traditionally excluded from higher education. Specifically, these two scholars devote service hours to delivering communication-based instruction to people who are incarcerated and committed to achieving their academic goals to help promote successful reentry to their communities and reduce recidivism.

Dr. [REDACTED] supports community based efforts to promote civic engagement and democratic participation. Communication is essential to a healthy and vibrant democracy, and Dr. [REDACTED] advocates for nonpartisan voting by volunteering as a poll worker and encouraging her students and peers to engage in civil public discourse. Through critical media literacy, students are encouraged to make informed decisions, engage respectfully across differences, and contribute in meaningful ways to the democratic process.

Dr. [REDACTED] also partners with Alaska Center ICE through grants and seeks to connect students in the Public Relations track with Alaskan business and organizations identified in the Alaska Center ICE network to build and develop their public relations skills and knowledge while working with real businesses and clients.

Dr. [REDACTED] has repeatedly served as a paper reviewer and judge for the Alaska Statewide Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (JSJS). He has also been a faculty advisor to the UAF Student Chess Club. Dr. [REDACTED] ties to professional associations have included membership in the Association of American Educators, Association for Business Communication, National Communication Association, and the Texas Computer Education Association.

What role do your services courses play, if any?

Response:

COM faculty recognize the value of service-based learning in a comprehensive communication curriculum, serving a critical bridge between theory and practice. COM faculty further acknowledge the opportunity to integrate service-based learning projects into courses such as:

- Health communication to examine and respond to issues of equity, access, and representation.
- Organizational communication to help students gain experience in ethical and effective leadership.
- Interpersonal, public relations, and oral communication to ensure students gain practical experience in message design, audience analysis, and campaign development.

One challenge we continue to address is the nature of our online asynchronous program. Students choose to earn their COM degree from across the globe. As such, service opportunities are difficult to identify.

How do your graduates succeed after leaving the program?

Response:

Collectively, the discipline of communication prepares students to succeed in many different industries and occupations. Undergraduate majors in communication consistently demonstrate strong employability. Specifically, data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025) demonstrates Media and Communication Occupations have a median annual wage of [REDACTED] in May 2024. No Alaska specific data were available on income and occupations, which is a noted limitation.

Future trends from UA's Impact on Alaska's Workforce: An In-depth analysis of 11 Key Industries, underscore the importance of communication in growing areas such as administration, education, health, hospitality & tourism, and information communication technology, and law & public safety. Moreover, across industries, communication remains one of the most in-demand skill sets for employees (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023).

UAF COM MAs work in a variety of positions within higher education (academic advising, public relations, sports marketing, alumni relations, and adjuncting), outside of academia in a variety of marketing, public relations, public information officer, and website design roles, human resources, international business; moreover, some students choose to continue their education, enrolling in PhD programs both in communication and related fields. One of our MA graduates was recently elected mayor of Fairbanks.

One identified opportunity for improvement resulting from the 2025/2026 program review is the need to develop a tracking system for our MAs to better analyze employment data and income in future program reviews.

Tushar, H., & Sooraksa, N. (2023). Global employability skills in the 21st century workplace: A semi-systematic literature review. *Heliyon*, 9(11), e21023.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e21023>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, August 28). Media and communication occupations.
https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Workforce Development. (2025). UA's impact on Alaska's workforce: An in-depth analysis of 11 key industries. <https://www.alaska.edu/research/wd/reports.php>

Submitter and Collaborator Names:

Written by Amy May (project leader and primary content developer and author) with contributions from Kevin L. Sager (revised Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) table and collaborated in the data analysis of the SLOs and student success trends), Victoria (Tori) McDermott (data contributor), and Nike Jacob (data contributor), Laura Foor (proofreading)

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Committee Review

Program Name: Professional Communication- Master of Art

Academic Year 2025/2026

Overall Recommendations

The college or school committees set the tone for helping each program feel seen during this process. We have provided you with feedback tags to attach to this program review. Please select as many as applicable.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☒ Insufficient Narratives | ☐ Report Incomplete |
| ☐ Address Achievement Gap | ☐ Consider Curricular Revisions |
| ☐ Develop Online Offerings/Options | ☐ Improve Time to Degree |
| ☐ Increase Enrollment | ☐ Increase Graduates |
| ☐ Increase Retention/Persistence | ☐ Strengthen Advising Practices |
| ☐ May be asked to share Effective Practices | ☐ Recommendation to University-Wide Committee |

Explanation of Overall Recommendations

Response:

The program has worked to address mid-cycle feedback. A few areas of potential improvement are noted here: 1) It is not entirely clear how SLOs are assessed by the items identified as assessing them. Two example rubrics were provided, but other assignments or projects are identified as SLOAs; more information is needed about how the assessments evaluate the SLOs. In the supporting documents, the only data provided for the SLOAs were means on a given assignment. While these show the majority of students appear to meet the SLO, knowing more about how the range of scores score distribution, it is difficult to interpret those means. 2) The program has increased from 6 students to 18 from 2021 to 2025, which is excellent. Also noteworthy is that as students numbers have increased, so has student diversity. The % of students identifying as White decreased from 81.1 % to 61.1 % in 2025. The incorporation of multiple course modalities by the program in order to meet student needs is commendable, and the increases in student numbers and SCH show that students are making use of the expanded options for enrollment. 3) Some of the student success data and data referenced in "closing the loop" appear at times to be data for communications as a whole rather than for the MA Professional Communication program. This obscures some of the strengths of the MA program and makes consideration of areas that could be targeted for improvement more difficult. For example, the SCH of [REDACTED] students is reported as having doubled, but there are no [REDACTED] eligible students indicated for the MA. Enrollment and persistence were noted as improved for students under 20, but there are no students under 20 enrolled in the MA program. The trend in degree recipients was marked as increasing," but the dashboard shows the highest number in 2021. The report indicates that SCH for [REDACTED] students decreased, but the MA program has a slight increase in this metric (although we note that the number of students is small, making interpretation of this difficult). The dashboard shows that in most years, [REDACTED] students in the MA program carry a higher average SCH than [REDACTED] students, and male students also have a slightly lower pass rate; might this suggest that students would benefit from advising on how many courses to take at once? Our point here is to highlight that it would be useful for the program to work with someone on disambiguating the MA data from the departmental data in order to better assess both strengths and areas to focus on for improvement. 4) The program has integrated several valuable HIPs that provide students with opportunities to develop valuable skills and experience. Further, the HIPs appear to have been designed to support a broad diversity of students in meeting their post-degree goals.

Student Learning Outcomes Feedback

- ☐ Strong ☒ Developing
☐ Requires Minor Revision ☐ Requires Major Revision

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Feedback

- ☐ Strong Alignment with SLOA Plan ☐ Clear, Concise Presentation of Findings
☒ Compelling Learning Story ☐ Missing a Direct Measure
☐ Missing Active Verbs ☐ Missing Curricular Connection
☐ Missing Collaboration within Department

SLOA Feedback Narrative:

For the sake of focus and streamlining, the number of previous SLOAs has been reduced to 4. Current SLOA's take the form of course gradings, and student success rates in publications and presentations. It is not clear if the Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition is mandatory to all students and could thus be consider a SLOA. A few areas of SLOA improvements and inclusions are postponed for the next review cycle: applied communication skills and integrated applied communication; increased reliability and validity of assessment data; integrated rubrics; indirect assessment methods; and inclusion of Non-Western theoretical traditions. So are efforts to encourage interdisciplinary research.

We are warned that collaborative scoring sessions might be curtailed by the faculty's different areas of specialization.

Spelling out how presentation and publication success (and maybe 3MT's) are sufficient SLOA's, and if so, how do they articulate with the next review cycle SLOA promised would have helped these reviewers.

Student Success and Equity Feedback

Narrative:

Developments in this area are overall positive. The gender gap has decreased to 2/3 female and 1/3 male, which is closer to parity (when one considers two genders: male and female). Engagement and retention of [REDACTED] students has also increased. [REDACTED] data appear to be for Communications students as a whole, not the MA program (which currently has no [REDACTED]).

The trends regarding [REDACTED] students appear to be for Communications as a whole. In the MA program, there has been consistency in the number of [REDACTED] students (1 student in 2023, 2024, and 2025). We note that the small number of students makes it difficult to read too much into trends about specific student demographic groups, although we do note that the percentage of [REDACTED] students has increased from 19.2% to 39.9%. The programs notes they hope to request to hire an Indigenous Communication Scholar, which would support program goals.

High Impact Practices Feedback

Narrative:

HIPs are effectively incorporated into the program. The program's choices of HIPs appear crafted to support a diverse student body and provide them with the skills and experience needed to succeed in their post-degree goals. The inclusion of community and service based learning opportunities in which students collaborate with community partners to address real-world issues as well as more "traditional" academic endeavors such as research, publication, and scholarly activities is valuable, as it helps support the students with diverse goals, interests, and backgrounds. The ability to apply communication skills and produce work with a wide range of academic, community, and public audiences provides students with valuable experience as they pursue their degrees. It would be interesting to see data included on how many students pursue the academic thesis option vs the applied project option, and how the evaluation of these two types of projects illustrates student achievement of key SLOs.

Profile Feedback

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Mission-Centric to College and/or UAF | ☐ Unique within UA |
| ☒ Collaborative with other UA Programs | ☐ Provides Job Placement for Graduates |
| ☐ Strong Post-Grad Success for Students | ☒ Strong Service Teaching Component |
| ☐ Strong Ties to Community or Industry | |

Financial Feedback

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ High Tuition Revenues | ☐ High Grant Revenues |
| ☒ Operates at Low Cost | ☒ Productive Faculty |
| ☐ Opportunities to Increase Revenue | ☐ Low Enrollment |

Reviewer Names:

Eduardo Wilner, Denise Kind, Jeremy Speight

Dean Review

Program Name: Professional Communication- Master of Art

Academic Year 2025/2026

Dean Feedback

Overall feedback narrative:

I agree with the committee's careful and thoughtful review of the Communication MA program. I commend the tremendous faculty effort that has gone into curricular revisions and program rebuilding following the decoupling with Journalism. The Department of Communication has seen a strong increase in MA student numbers (18 currently) and faculty should continue its recruitment efforts towards further growing the number of students in the MA program. I recommend department faculty work closely with our PIO team to facilitate advertising and recruitment for the program, specific courses, and outreach activities.

Recommendation to University-Wide Committee **No**

Vice Provost Review

Program Name: Professional Communication- Master of Art

Academic Year 2025/2026

Vice Provost Feedback

Overall feedback narrative:

The review comments for the BA in Communication and MA in Professional Communication are similar given the relatedness of the programs and their full-program reviews. Please submit a revised SLOA; none was included in the supplementary documents folder, and the version on the UAF website is outdated with 9 SLOs. The program noted reducing SLOs from 9 to 4, which is a positive change for assessment purposes, but the updated SLOA with these 4 SLOs must be provided and posted online. While rubric tools were included and the narrative overview of SLO assessments was good, the absence of an updated SLOA makes it difficult to determine assessment procedures and the implementation plan. For the 2027 mid-cycle review, include assessment data as evidence and document how curricular changes improved student success following the Communication/Journalism split. Closing the loop on assessment is essential for NWCCU expectations and should include evidence for each SLO to demonstrate continuous improvement and meaningful, evidence-based changes that enhance program quality and student learning.

The program noted enrollment growth from 6 students in 2021 to 18 in 2025, increased representation from 19.2% to 39.9%, and a narrowing gender gap. Persistence appears stable, and degree completions are increasing. Graduate research, applied projects, publications, and community engagement support professional skill development, and expanded online and asynchronous offerings have improved accessibility for part-time and working students. However, some trends (SCH by age, student data) were aggregated at the department level, limiting program-specific conclusions. Students aged show lower engagement, and only one student is consistently enrolled. Low MA numbers make statistical significance difficult, and there is no formal tracking of graduate employment or further education outcomes. Separating MA metrics from departmental data and implementing systematic outcome tracking would strengthen future reviews.

There were no additional HIP comments provided by the review committee.

Department Name: Professional Communication

Department Profile and Financial Data

Confirmation of Review

☒ I have reviewed the Financial Template for updates and accuracy.

1. Stacking BA and MA courses to include Quantitative Research Methods in Communication (COM401/601), Communication Research Methods (COM403/603), Interpersonal Communication (COM422/622), Communication Theory (COM425/625), Political Media & Discourse of the American Right (COM435/635), Organizational Communication (COM445/645), Communication in Health Contexts (COM462/642), Applied Communication in Training & Development (COM475/COM675), Communication Seminar (COM492/682).
2. Accelerated BA/MA capitalizes on stacked course offerings, reducing the time to degree completion for students and associated teaching load for faculty.
3. Shared Administrative Assistant who supports three CLA Departments, including the Department of Justice, Department of Communication & Department of Science & Environmental Journalism.
4. Reduced resource utilization, i.e., eliminated individual faculty phones, relocated to shared office space housing the Department of Communication & Department of Science & Environmental Journalism.
5. As a fully online asynchronous program, we have adopted cloud-based storage and resource sharing, significantly reducing our dependence on paper products.
6. To save course preparation time and promote a consistent student experience, the COM GERs (COM121/131/141) have standardized curriculum, assignments, assessment, and course materials.
7. Many of our courses have adopted open educational resources (OERs), reducing costs for students and eliminating the time consuming process of textbook adoption.
8. To extend the reach of our courses and attract students outside of the major, COM crosslists courses with other departments, including Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) the Honors College, and the Content Creation Certificate Program. Dr. [REDACTED], Dr. [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] maintain faculty affiliations for WGSS. Dr. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are affiliate faculty with the Honors College. Dr. [REDACTED] is an affiliate faculty with the Content Creation Program.
9. Dr. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have collaborated with OneHealth Master's students to meet their Communication course requirements through COM680: Communication and Diversity in the Workplace and COM602: Communication Research Methodologies: Human Science.
10. Dr. [REDACTED] generated additional tuition revenue by offering doctoral students in chemistry and biochemistry the opportunity to take COMF601: Quantitative Research Methods in Communication.
11. Adjuncts teach many of GER courses, which reduces the cost of instruction.

Amy May

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Financial Data

Department Name: Professional Communication

Academic Year 2025/2026

	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	For Data Entry Staff	For Programs and Review Committees
Total Student Credit Hours (SCH)	3995	2985	3901	Provided in SCH tab in the student success data provided by PAIR.	
Service SCH				Sum rows labeled as "In unit, outside department, Service" and "Outside unit, Service" in the SCH tab of the data provided by PAIR.	
Department FTEs	6.475	7.7125	7.85	FTE = Full-time equivalent employee. This field will auto-populate from the FTE Worksheet below.	
Total SCH per Department FTE	616.99	387.03	496.94		
Service SCH per Department FTE	0.00	0.00	0.00		

Majors in Programs				Sum for all programs from the Majors Total tab in the data provided by PAIR.	
Department FTE's	6.475	7.7125	7.85	This field will auto-populate from the FTE Worksheet below.	
Majors per Department FTE	0.00	0.00	0.00		

Total Unrestricted Expenditures				Total Expenditures made from budgets with an F1 or F7 fund type designation, from provided cycle report data filtered by Data Liaison	
Total Restricted Expenditures				Total Expenditures made from budgets with revenue of the F2 or S2 fund type designation, from provided cycle report data filtered by Data Liaison	
Total Unit/Central Support Allocated to Program(s)				Expenses incurred for direct support of instruction within orgs identified as central or academic support, if applicable	
Total Expenditures					

Tuition Revenue				Receipts to college from tuition generated by the department/program (F1). NOTE: under the current 80/20 percent tuition distribution model generating units receive 80%. PLEASE USE PAIR REPORTED SCH.	Receipts to college from tuition generated by the department/program, based on the campus's active tuition distribution model, which determines how much the unit receives of their generated tuition, and how much the campus keeps (in addition to the out-of-state surcharges) to support central offices/functions. The current distribution model is 80/20, where the unit/college receives 80% of their generated in-state tuition.
State Appropriation Revenue				Appropriations for current funds operation of the university from the general fund of the State of Alaska through the annual budget cycle. This category also includes TVEP and State Mental Health Trust funds, if allocated to the department. (F1)	Appropriations for current funds operation of the university from the general fund of the State of Alaska through the annual budget cycle.
Restricted/Sponsored Project Revenue				Revenue from external sponsors; includes grants, contracts, sponsored projects & restricted (grant) accounts funded by UA Foundation funds (F2/S2)	Revenue from external sponsors; includes grants, contracts, sponsored projects & restricted (grant) accounts funded by UA Foundation funds
Fees				Course Fees (9159)	
Other UA Receipts/Revenue				e.g. Performance and Sales Receipts, Space Rental Revenue, Indirect Cost Recovery (F1/F7); NOTE: COURSE FEES (9159) REPORTED ABOVE	
Total Revenue					

Workload Allocation	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	
Teaching Units	60	83.5	91.5	Department faculty's workload units assigned to teaching
Service Units	15	16	20	Department faculty's workload units assigned to service
Research Units	15	14	13	Department faculty's workload units assigned to research

Full-Time Equivalent Worksheet*	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	
Faculty FTEs	2.25	3	3	Base assumption: 12-month full-time = 1.0 FTE. 9-month = 0.75 FTE. Split appointments are multiplied by the % of effort assigned to this department. Part-time are multiplied by the % of effort assigned. P9 faculty on sabbatical count as 67% of one 9-month 0.75 FTE (or 0.50 FTE).
Adjunct FTEs	2.1	2.5875	2.725	Base assumption: 40 units/credits = 1.0 FTE. Total # of credits taught by adjuncts in a year divided by 40 = the FTE of adjuncts in that year.
Staff FTEs	0.25	0.25	0.25	Base assumption: 12-month full-time = 1.0 FTE. 9-month = 0.75 FTE. Split appointments are multiplied by the % of effort assigned to this department. Part-time are multiplied by the % of effort.
Graduate TA/RA FTEs	1.875	1.875	1.875	Base assumption: 40 hours/week for 12 months = 1.0 FTE. 9-month = 0.75 FTE.
Total Department FTEs	6.475	7.7125	7.85	Sum of all employee FTEs

*Note: FTE definitions and calculations for the purpose of Academic Program Review are different than for other institutional reporting processes (e.g. OMB or IPEDS reporting)

Information last updated by: Data Entered 10/12/25 Cecelia Chamberlain; Reviewed Amy May 10/21/25

Date: 10/21/25