

**SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS  
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FORMS**

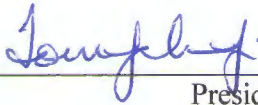
**Institutional Program Review  
Report to the Board of Regents**

Use this form to submit a program review report to the system Chief Academic Officer. Complete this form for all units/programs undergoing an accreditation review, nationally recognized review process, or institutional program review. The report is due 30 days following receipt of the external and internal review reports.

<b>UNIVERSITY:</b>	BHSU
<b>DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL:</b>	Arts and Humanities
<b>PROGRAM REVIEWED:</b>	Mass Communication
<b>DATE OF REVIEW:</b>	6/14/2017
<b>TYPE OF REVIEW:</b>	Institutional Program Review

**University Approval**

*To the Board of Regents and the Executive Director: I certify that I have read this report, that I believe it to be accurate, and that it has been evaluated and approved as provided by university policy.*



\_\_\_\_\_  
President of the University

9/22/2017

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**1. Identify the program reviewers and any external accrediting body:**

Alec R. Hosterman, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Communication Studies, Longwood University.

**2. Items A & B should address the following issues: mission centrality, program quality, cost, program productivity, plans for the future, and assessment of progress.**

**2(A). Describe the strengths and weaknesses identified by the reviewers**

*Program Strengths:*

- 1) The program offers a comprehensive plan of study for mass communication majors.
- 2) Program faculty are engaged in scholarship/creative activity and service relevant to the University, community, and discipline.

*Program Weaknesses:*

- 1) The program may be offering too many different emphasis areas/majors to be able to manage effectively with just six full-time faculty.
- 2) The program's mission statement is too vague and disjointed, given the major's growth.

- 3) The program lacks a required set of core courses that are required of all majors.

**2(B). Briefly summarize the review recommendations**

- 1) Consider changing the program's name to something more relevant and inclusive of the various emphases/majors offered.
- 2) Develop a more focused mission statement for the program, with particular emphasis on its primary purpose and functions.
- 3) Develop clear strategic goals for the program, and align the student learning objectives to those goals.
- 4) Increase the number of required core courses for all MCOM majors, to include requirements for public speaking, persuasion theory, digital and social media.
- 5) Revise the public relations emphasis (and maybe the corporate communication major, as well). Add a faculty member with a background in these areas.
- 6) Enlarge, upgrade and/or relocate studio facilities for television, photography and graphic design to encourage continued program growth.
- 7) Increase faculty diversity within the department.
- 8) Make MCOM 305: Sports Broadcasting a required course (rather than an elective) for sports media emphases.

**2(C). Indicate the present and continuous actions to be taken by the college or department to address the issues raised by the review. What outcomes are anticipated as a result of these actions?**

The Mass Communication Program reviewer offered several helpful suggestions for improving our offerings. The department has already begun to address some of his concerns, and this seems like an opportune time to rethink our program's mission and offerings overall.

- 1) The reviewer recommends that the program develop a clearer, focused mission statement, and then align its strategic goals and student learning objectives to that mission. Indeed, department faculty do need to discuss the unifying mission for a program with such diverse offerings as ours. Therefore, we propose the following action steps:
  - a. Department faculty will revise the program's mission statement. Part of this discussion should be devoted to the potential benefits/drawbacks of grouping MCOM emphases/majors into broad categories (such as integrated media, digital media, and professional media), that would make marketing program easier and more efficient.
  - b. Department faculty will revise individual MCOM emphases/majors to be sure their curricula are aligned with the program's new mission statement, strategic goals and student learning objectives.
    - i. BHSU will begin offering BFA degrees in photography and graphic design in Fall 2017, and will discontinue the BS in graphic design/communication at that time. Therefore, department faculty should consider how the existing MCOM emphases in photography and graphic design might be revised to be clearly distinct from these new degree programs, and how they might be marketed differently as a result (see also #2, below). The department must also decide whether students should be allowed to double major, with a BS-

MCOM in photography/graphic design and a BFA within the same area of study.

- 2) The reviewer recommends that the program develop a “core” of mass communication courses common to all the program’s emphases and majors, to include courses in public speaking, media writing, digital media and social media. Doing so would bring the program back into alignment with mass communication programs nationwide. It would also increase program cohesion across the emphases/majors and make it easier for us to market these to potential students. Therefore, we propose the following action steps:
  - a. Department faculty will reintroduce a required core of coursework common to all MCOM majors, reflecting the program’s revised mission statement, goals and student learning objectives (see #1, above). This core should include requirements for public speaking, communication theory, media writing, digital and social media, and communication law.
    - i. This action step would also simplify the department’s marketing efforts. In other words, a revised (and expanded) MCOM core within the existing photography and graphic design emphases would clearly distinguish the degrees from the new fine arts degrees being offered.
- 3) The reviewer recommends that the department consider changing the program’s name, to better reflect changes within the media industry. Therefore, we propose the following action steps:
  - a. Department faculty should consider alternate names for the program, in light of its revised mission statement (see #1, above). “Media Communication” or “Media Studies” seem like reasonable titles for a modern media program.
  - b. MCOM 151: Introduction to Mass Communication should also be renamed, for the same reason. Although MCOM 151 is a common course, we expect SDSU and USD faculty to be receptive to an updated name for this course.
- 4) The reviewer recommends revising and expanding the Public Relations emphasis, adding an “introductory” course, as well as courses in media writing and research. He also suggests hiring an additional faculty member to teach both Public Relations and Corporate Communication courses. Therefore, we propose the following action steps:
  - a. Renaming MCOM 373: Public Relations Case Study and MCOM 475: Public Relations to better reflect their research and field experience components, respectively.
  - b. Renaming MCOM 210: Basic Newswriting to better reflect its nature as an introductory “media writing” course. But this is a common course, and SDSU faculty would not agree to a name change. Therefore, we might consider creating a unique course to replace MCOM 210, or simply marketing the existing course more effectively.
  - c. The Public Relations emphasis’ curriculum already requires coursework in small group (SPCM 434) and/or organizational communication (SPCM 410). These courses are provided by the Speech and Theater department, so there is no need for the MCOM program to add them.
  - d. Hiring a full-time faculty member in Public Relations/Corporate Communication, as program growth and budgets allow.

- 5) The reviewer recommends that the program start a local chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), to work more closely with the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). But BHSU's public relations emphasis is too small to have the required minimum number of students to start a PRSSA chapter. Therefore, we propose the following action steps:
  - a. The BHSU Public Relations Club will continue to work closely with the Denver-area PRSSA on projects of mutual interest.
- 6) The reviewer recommended that BHSU invest in the program's facilities, and agreed with departmental faculty's suggestions. Therefore, we restate them here:
  - a. The university must invest in the program's aging television studio facility. This need was noted by our last program reviewer (in 2010), and the justification for doing so is even greater now. Area television station managers complain of a critical shortage of qualified television producers and TV journalists entering the field. As the only West River university offering degrees in television and journalism (Integrated Media emphasis, Telecommunication and Journalism minors), BHSU should provide students with training in fields offering immediate employment post-graduation.
  - b. The University should consider investing in a converged news facility, in order to train multimedia journalists from print, online, radio and television in one location. Multimedia journalists are also in high demand industry-wide.
- 7) The reviewer recommended that the program do all it can to recruit and hire a more diverse faculty, as positions become available. Therefore, we recommend the following action step:
  - a. Advertise new positions more widely. Continued program growth, combined with expected faculty retirements over the next few years, should offer multiple opportunities to hire minority faculty members.

# A REVIEW OF THE MASS COMMUNICATION PROGRAM AT BLACK HILLS STATE UNIVERSITY

Reviewer: Alec R. Hosterman, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Communication Studies  
Longwood University

This review will follow the major sections of the 2017 Self-Study Report. I will comment on areas that I see are strengths of the Mass Communication program at Black Hills State University as well as areas I feel could be strengthened in the future.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Overall, I feel the program is in line with others in its same tier: non-R1, small liberal arts colleges and universities. As shown in the report and on the university website, the program offers a comprehensive program for students studying mass communication, is adequately staffed, and mostly offers courses current within the field.

One trend I have seen in the field is the move away from the term “mass communication” towards something more inclusive of our industry. Programs are moving to something along the lines of Digital Communication, Digital Media, Media Communication, or just a broad-based description like Communication Studies in case they grow in new areas in the future. My recommendation would be to consider an update to the program’s name to better align it with the current and future aspirations of the department.

The faculty seem to be engaged in both scholarship and service relevant to the university, community, and discipline. This includes advising university media outlets, relevant publications in peer reviewed journals, and service with professional associations. I feel this will benefit the students who are looking for practical experience in the communication field.

One question I had was whether seven full-time faculty are enough to manage the diverse course offerings of the department. Can they sustain six areas with only seven faculty members? I feel the addition of another full-time position might help balance out the coursework (see my recommendations for the public relations track).

## II. MISSION CENTRALITY

### Mission Statement

As it’s presented, I’m concerned that the mission statement is moreover disjointed and may be serving too many disciplines effectively given the number of full-time faculty on staff. As stated, you prepare students for nine different career fields (e.g., journalism, multimedia, etc.). But from an organizational perspective, a mission statement is more about the program’s values and principles that guide the curriculum. There are usually three basic components that are written in the broadest terms:

1. what the program is: provide a clear description of the purpose of the program and its primary functions
2. who it does it for: identify the parties the program serves
3. what the program does: contain a description of how the program will contribute to the development and careers of the students participating

With your statement, I understand the second and third aspects, but I can't see the first: what is the purpose of your program? You seem to be putting the general outcome first before defining what guides you in that process. I think the program might benefit from more time and work spent on a comprehensive mission statement.

One way you might work on that statement is to revisit the nine different disciplines (noted in the mission statement) and divide them into several overarching categories. For instance, integrated media could cover journalism and sports media, professional communication could encompass corporate communication and public relations, digital communication could entail multimedia and science communication, and creative endeavors could be graphic design and photography. By breaking your mission down to these fundamental areas, you've essentially established areas of expertise you can market to the community as being the mission of the program.

#### Mass Communication Strategic Goals

This section doesn't seem to set out goals per se. In terms of an academic program, goals are broad statements that provide guidelines on what students should learn, understand or appreciate as a result of their time in the program. Goals give the department a way to accomplish the mission statement. In other words, what do you want your graduates to walk away from BHSU knowing or being able to do?

From what I can gather, as presented in this section, the goals of the program are to explore the different areas of communication, take a combination of mass communication and business courses, have a minor, and engage in either an internship or experiential learning. I would recommend working on developing sound goals for the program. Ironically, the SLO section contains all of the requisite information needed to flesh out the goals.

Once completed, I would also encourage the department to publish the mission statement, goals, and SLOs on their program's website. After a cursory look, I could not find this information. Doing so may help students understand how you're approaching their academic development, but moreover it keeps the department's faculty and staff accountable to one another for the success of the program.

#### SLO

Another point that you might consider revising is your discussion of critical thinking. In this you note: "students will develop critical thinking skills." How will that happen? I think it would be prudent to expand that to not just developing but also applying those skills? Developing implies a cognitive understanding while applying takes it further to talk about critical thinking in action.

### **III. PROGRAM QUALITY**

#### Curriculum

As laid out, the BHSU Mass Communication program has six emphases that students can choose from, however there is only one required class everyone must take: MCOM 151 Introduction to Mass Communication.

I have concerns that the program is lacking a few classes that would no doubt strengthen the curriculum. These include:

- public speaking
- persuasion theory
- digital and social media

Presentational speaking is something students will be able to not only use in their communication classes but elsewhere in the university. Offering one will also help to diversify your offerings to other departments/majors on campus. Persuasion theory is a course that will give majors the tools necessary to communicate effectively in any of the six emphases. Finally, given the interconnectivity of digital natives, I would encourage a course in digital/social media for everyone.

In terms of the required courses for majors, I think most of your emphases provide a solid curriculum that provides students an introduction to field, intermediate coursework to develop their knowledge, and advanced classes that prepare them for the technical fields in which they want to work. These include Graphic Communication, Integrated Media, Photography, and Science Communication. I do have questions about the other tracks which I will address here, with most of my attention paid to public relations given the fact this is my area of expertise.

### *Public Relations*

Specifically, I find several courses lacking in the track. Students need as much research and writing courses as possible. After speaking with numerous organizations in both the Richmond, VA and Lynchburg, VA areas, our department found employers are looking to hire students that graduate with the following skills:

- able to write well
- able to research problems
- communicate effectively

These components seem to be lacking in the curriculum as presented in the program review.

Likewise, with the other emphases there seems to be an introductory course in that discipline. Why is there no introductory course in public relations? Also, there seems to only be two specific public relations classes: case study and one just labeled public relations. These seem to be nebulous classes based on their elusive course descriptions on the website. I would recommend developing and integrating a set of courses that progress students through skill sets associated with the profession:

- introduction to public relations (overview of the field)
- public relations writing (press releases, social media posts, blogs, newsletters, etc.)
- public relations research (introduces surveys, focus groups, etc.)
- public relations campaigns (a hands-on practicum in developing a campaign)

Personally, I find public relations students respond better to something more practical than theory-based, especially in a discipline that is about solving organizational problems. I encourage BHSU to talk with area organizations to see what they require of graduates and then refine their course offerings to parallel that need.

In terms of the Public Relations Club, I would recommend taking it one step further and look into getting a chapter of Public Relations Student Society of America at BHSU. This not only provides students with access to the national society (e.g., conference, membership, scholarships, etc.) it is also a good way to attract and retain majors into the program. The BHSU PRSSA chapter could also work in tandem with other professional organizations on campus to hold events, speaker series, or fundraisers.

Finally, based on what I read in the report and online, there really is only one dedicated faculty member that teaches the public relations courses. In my professional opinion, I think adding a tenure track line with an emphasis in public relations, corporate

communications, or the like will strengthen the program's curriculum. They could then augment the teaching in other areas but would bring a specialty in that could inevitably grow the majors in that emphasis.

#### *Sports Media*

This is something minor, but why is Sports Broadcasting an elective for the Sports Media emphasis? I would encourage this to become part of the required course track simply because of the focus itself.

#### Advising

From what is presented here, the student advising seems to be handled effectively and appropriately. The connection majors have with their department comes, in part, from quality advising sessions and accessibility of faculty. BHSU appears to encourage this well with their faculty and students.

#### Facilities and Equipment

Given the technical nature of what the Mass Communication program entails, I find their equipment, space, and software to be on par with what other universities are using to teach digital media courses.

#### Future Plans for the Department

As a program grows, its growth should parallel changes in the field as well as pedagogical changes in the university. I find that BHSU is self-aware of their strengths and needs for the coming years and has a well thought out plan, especially in regards to needed upgrades to the equipment and software requirements, to go forward into the future.

I also find that they are aware of the need to include more diversity in their faculty in the future. Diversity will not only bring new, fresh ideas to the table but it will also be a way to market the program for future majors.

I would encourage the program to follow through with their plans on creating a marketing plan for the department. Perhaps this could be done in conjunction with the public relations classes. Student groups could do focus groups and surveys of alumni for background research. From there, they could put together the foundation of a marketing plan which the program could then refine with input from the university. This would be a learning environment for the students to show them not only how this process occurs but also it would show the department as being transparent in being receptive to their feedback on improvement.