We had a few very straightforward goals heading into 2007:

- Hire Professor
- Finalize and Operationalize Departmental Mission Statement
- Develop & Begin Working with Rubric for Writing
- Continue to Collect Student Research Paper Samples for Later Assessment (see goals for methods courses from previous report)

We successfully hired a new professor, Dr. Lesa Stern, to teach interpersonal and methods courses, to develop a new course in her area of specialty and expertise, and to help us develop service learning and student research projects. We also finalized our mission statement for the department and began investigating ways to operationalize the stated goals into learning outcomes for our students. We developed a rubric to assess student writing, which led to some interesting differences of opinion and convinced us that this was a worthwhile use of our time. Finally, we collected several research papers from students in an upper division course for future evaluation by an outside reviewer.

To begin, our mission statement is:

* Sapientia et Eloquentia. * In this timeless phrase promoted by Cicero, St. Augustine and others, the Department of Communication Studies finds its mission, to educate students toward the union of wisdom and eloquence, recognizing the limited impact of wisdom without eloquence and the social harm that comes from eloquence without wisdom.

We are committed to helping students become wise analysts regarding the techniques and structures of human influence in a globally-oriented, media-saturated culture. We intend for our students to be informed by Scripture and able to draw upon resources in the historic discipline of Communication Studies.

We are committed to helping students become eloquent in mind and heart and speech, articulate and compassionate implementers of their wisdom. We intend for our students to be able to present ideas well, in simple and complex circumstances, and to imitate Christ by practicing reconciliation.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

*Communication Studies graduates will, upon graduation:*

- Understand the fundamentals of human symbolic activity, including:
- the fundamentals of classical rhetorical thinking and history
- the fundamentals of contemporary rhetorical theory
- the fundamentals of contemporary communication theory

- Understand the role of ethics in varied communication situations, specifically:
  - able to identify ethical principles, including Biblical ethics
  - able to discern appropriate communicative responses

- Be able to present ideas well in simple and complex circumstances.

- Be able to find and make use of resources appropriate to the discipline of communication studies.

In 2006-2007 we focused on students being able to “present ideas well in simple and complex circumstances.” To this end, we did two things: 1) we developed the writing rubric; and 2) we sought ways to assess this ability in oral contexts. While this is a specific goal for our department, it also dovetails nicely with the communication student learning standard adopted by the college.

**Assessment Methods Used & Data Collected**
As mentioned previously, we used the rubric to evaluate student essays and papers. We liked nearly all aspects of the rubric; it helped us think clearly about what we want from our students in writing. We also appreciated the discussions that ensued, especially when we disagreed about what grade a student paper deserved. Our final “conclusions” were more about the rubric itself than about whether or not we could effectively assess the learning outcomes, but we are optimistic about using this tool in the coming year.

In our discussions about assessing public speaking and oral communication outcomes, we deferred to “experts” in the area and obtained an assessment package from the National Communication Association. We acquired this tool in 2006-2007, but we will not actually implement it until 2007-2008.

**Results**
We do not have much in the way of results just now. We did most of this work in the fall, presented to WASC in the early spring, and then formulated plans for “next year’s work” (hence the acquisition of the NCA tool).

**Next Steps**
1. We will refine the rubric, use it again and actually systematically record “results” in tracking student progress individually and corporately.

2. We will implement the assessment program we now have for the public speaking component.
3. We will design a review process and bring in an outside reviewer to look at the student papers collected. This relates to an earlier goal, to see if research papers “get better” after we begin enforcing the research course as a pre-requisite for upper division, advanced courses.

4. We will continue to operationalize our mission statement such that we can begin to assess “wisdom.”

5. We will develop our alumni survey (building on the success of the pilot survey of a year ago).