COMMUNICATION STUDIES

SELF-STUDY REPORT

OCTOBER 2000
Christian Orientation Standard

The Department of Communication Studies is committed to helping our graduates grow in Christian faith and knowledge. To this end, we currently incorporate into our courses scripture, devotional readings, assignments, and exercises, which we believe impact student lives in positive and meaningful ways. We do not believe, however, that we can begin and end this discussion in the classroom. Many of the most “teachable” moments occur in social settings outside the scope of classroom teaching. So it is important that we not only spend time socially with our students, but that we give them a lifelong goal and ability to integrate what they learn in our classes to their own social interactions.

A significant goal in all of our classes is to construct a Christian approach to communication. In several classes, students are presented with various ethical “models” in communication that derive from Scripture. Topics such as work and calling, and being peacemakers show the relevance of Christian thought to contemporary society. In all of our classes, the symbolic nature of human communication is stressed. The implications for being made in the image of God are explored, as are the biblical and church metaphors which structure much (if not most) of our understanding of God and our place in the world.

While no one class embodies all of the following, the well-rounded graduate of Communication Studies will have encountered the following fundamental issues in some or many courses:

- What is a Christian approach to communication? What does a Christian approach to organizing, living, thinking, worshpping, learning, negotiating, and persuading look like?

- What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself, whether in a public speaking situation or in the management of another human being or in interpersonal conversation? In several classes, students learn the importance of audience orientation, audience analysis, and viewing others as people in the process of becoming. This means having an incarnational view of rhetoric (Phil. 2), approaching conflict with the understanding that there is no such thing as “immaculate perception,” and understanding that meaning is created in interaction.

- How does a preoccupation with self, through conversational narcissism or media consumption, present barriers to loving one’s neighbors, truly knowing oneself, and serving Christ in our communication?

Granted, these are questions easily posed, less easily answered. To this end, we engage students in readings, discussions, and assignments which enable them to examine the questions posed and to discover the intersections with their own thinking and in their own living. We do not want them to be merely knowledgeable; we want them to cultivate habits of integrity, peacemaking, and the fruits of the spirit.

Our goal as a department is not just to pose these questions in our classes, but to pose them in our own research as well. We would like to be known as a center for Communication Ethics –
employing each of our strengths and commitments in the areas of media ethics, reconciliation, and the pursuit of justice.

Current Practice

Following are some examples of our attempts to develop a strong Christian orientation in our classes:

- In COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture), students read excerpts from Sissela Bok’s work on truth-telling and discuss the ninth commandment.

- In COM 101 and COM 102 (Theories of Rhetoric and Communication), students read Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine* as a primary source to build a foundation for a Christian rhetoric. Significant time is spent in understanding *inventio* as being inextricably linked with discernment (Hebrews 4). Ethos is viewed as the manifestation of virtue rather than the mere appearance of virtue. Students also read Pascal and discuss the limits of logic in discerning truth. In addition, students make connections between *memoria* and Henri Nouwen’s that we are living reminders of Christ. Devotional readings include excerpts from Annie Dillard’s *Holy the Firm*, Thomas Merton’s *No Man is an Island*, and Frederick Buechner’s *Telling the Truth*.

- In both COM 125 (Mass Communication) and 140 (Studies in Communication Ethics), students examine their own “objects of affection” and consider the pervasiveness of mass mediated messages. Students are challenged to examine the stewardship of their time and resources and to develop biblical ethics for cultural criticism. Students review the sanctity of truthfulness in relationship to the news, of motive in relationship to advertising, of representation in relationship to entertainment.

- In both COM 125 (Mass Communication) and COM 135 (Studies in Public Discourse), God’s people are understood as a force for change and as a group impacted by changes in communication. Particular attention is paid to the Protestant Reformation, Puritan rhetoric, the abolition of slavery, and more recent civil rights movements. These movements provide windows on the changing attitudes and practices regarding justice, human rights, freedom, war, and what it means to suffer.

- In COM 127 (Small Group Communication), students study current trends in the American small group movement (social support groups as well as Church and Bible study groups) and analyze the changing definitions of community and their implications for the sacred and the spiritual. Students also explore the concepts of dialogue, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, Martin Buber, and Reuel Howe, among others. Students learn what it means to be present, to achieve true meeting, to “love” and “encounter” the “other” in language.

- In COM 195 (Seminar: Reconciliation), students are called to the ministry and work of reconciliation, which is central to a Christian mission and orientation.
• In COM 195 (Senior Seminar), Communication majors are encouraged to see themselves as "preachers" of a gospel that can be seen as tragedy, comedy, and fairytale. In addition, students are urged to prayerfully consider their vocation and post-Westmont lives as Christians, to cultivate habits of integrity and self-reflection, to enjoy God and others.

Possible Improvements

We have specific goals in mind for strengthening this component of our students' educational experiences, some of which require a significant investment of time, money, or other resources.

We would like to develop regular, off-campus opportunities for our students to put into practice what they are learning in our classes; we'd like to create more opportunities for invitation and integration for students; and we'd like to be able to move toward a more "discipleship" oriented model of teaching and learning. Specifically:

• Develop an off-campus program (MayTerm) that centers on the work of reconciliation and peacemaking. Possible venues include Northern Ireland to visit and work in reconciliation centers, South Africa to observe the reconciliation taking place, and Jackson, Mississippi, to visit the Voice of Calvary Ministries.

• Launch a large-scale survey of Communication Studies graduates in which we find out from them how they are living their lives in light of what they learned during their time in our classes. Are their ethical, spiritual, and relational choices informed by what they learned in our classes? Where do they see our strengths and weaknesses?

• Make conscious efforts to incorporate chapel topics and issues in class and relate them to current coursework or general tenets of communication.

• Create the Westmont Center for Communication Ethics, a place where students and faculty come to study the role, value, and necessity for an ethical view of communication and work to apply these values to personal conflicts, group relations, the media, and large organizations.

• Team-teach courses with members from Religious Studies, Philosophy, etc. around the important moral and ethical questions in communication.
Critical & Interdisciplinary Thinking Standard

While Communication Studies has its own body of theory and literature, we strive to integrate the best of many other fields of study. Students learn elements and aspects of social science, literature, philosophy, and interpretation. We are also a department attuned to the need for critical thinking. In our teaching, we ask many questions and follow-up student responses with more questions. We realize that there are times when supplying the “answer” is not appropriate. We try to teach with a sense of humility and to model for our students that learning does not lead to complacency but to a hunger for more knowledge, more learning, more understanding.

In addition, when we seek to teach critical thinking, we must also teach that sometimes judgments need to be made about what is good, what is right, what is admirable, what is worth modeling. We seek to avoid the personalized, knee-jerk reaction to what we consider good or bad based upon what is considered “Christian” or based upon how something makes us feel in the moment. Students are challenged, in all classes, to avoid snap judgements—whether in viewing a film or deciding how to interpret another person’s actions. Furthermore, students are urged to extend their judgements to their own communication choices. In the COM 130 (Argumentation and Advocacy) syllabus, Giuliano writes: “With the right of free expression comes the responsibility to choose rightly between the myriad expressed ideas. In addition, once right ideas are embraced, the responsibility emerges to share those ideas in both an ethical and effective manner.”

We teach, in all classes, that there is no “immaculate perception” (Spencer), and that we always view communicative events through lenses. Sometimes our lens is metaphoric, always cultural, often gendered. Though we may arrive at a truth, we always engage in selective perception. We must learn to recognize our own authorship and stance in communication, and appreciate the various standpoints of others. This does not necessarily lead to the idea that “everything and everyone is right.” We might still make judgements about what is good or right or true—but even then we must be aware that our own lenses and stance may define in fundamental ways what our reason tells us must be good or right or true.

A discussion of nonverbal communication, for example, incorporates readings and discussions from experiments and knowledge gained in the social sciences regarding who-touches whom for what purpose and in what power relationship. Students also explore the poetic nature of touch and space and time. Furthermore, students explore what touch means to them, how it is often presented in media, and how our cultural lenses frame our ideas about what is nonverbally appropriate.

- In COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture), the meta-language of language use is introduced and discussed, including the problems of questions, of definition, and of reification. These discussions help students understand something about epistemology.

- In COM 101 and 102 (Theories of Rhetoric and Communication), discernment is seen as a key virtue of rhetoric. Learning what is appropriate for a particular audience requires the ability to skillfully weigh their needs and to make rhetorical adjustments accordingly. All disciplines and spheres of life can be seen as useful resources for a communicator.
In COM 15 (Public Speaking) and COM 130 (Argumentation and Advocacy), students learn how central audience analysis is for critical thinking and arguments. The application by students of Aristotle's enthymeme and Toulmin's warrants depend on a fundamental understanding of the cultural assumptions of the audience. In addition, arguments and messages are often fallacious. Students are taught to identify fallacies and leaps in logic and to avoid these in their own speaking and writing. Also in COM 130, students are shown that there is more than one approach to understanding reason and argument. The Western European model of rationality is not the only route to truth. Narrative reasoning and non-linear paths to truth are also valid and, in some cases are superior avenues to good decisions and good judgments.

In COM 125 (Mass Communication), students learn that correlation is often confused with causality. Students are taught to recognize that just because events are correlated this does not mean that one causes the other.

In COM 140 (Studies in Communication Ethics), students learn criteria for thorough evaluations of art, criteria that go beyond the unreflective standards of profanity, sex, and violence. Students are challenged to defend their ethical choices with good reasoning.

In COM 145 (Organizational Communication), students learn to integrate interdisciplinary research in order to examine management practice and organizational structure.

Our department has helped to facilitate the Passion and Civility Debate Tournament, open to all students, which emphasizes content of argument over delivery.

Even our social event each fall involves critical thinking, as students solve five-minute mysteries in small groups.

Finally, we support Roderick Hart's comments in *Teaching Communication* (printed in the syllabus in COM 129, Persuasion and Propaganda: "I observe to my students that all persuaders ask to borrow just a bit of their minds, just for a little while...I tell my students that my course will return their minds to them. I tell them that the cups - full of themselves they willingly loan out to teachers and preachers and cheerleaders in the bleachers can lead to an empty cupboard. I tell them that if they keep giving portions of themselves away that there will be nothing left when they need themselves most - when confused, when frightened, when pressured for a decision. I tell them that persuasion is a science that moves by increments, that it happens most powerfully when it least seems to happen at all...I try to instill a kind of arrogant humility in my students, a mind set that gives them the courage to disassemble rhetoric but also the wisdom never to underestimate it."
Possible Improvements

Given our commitment to critical and interdisciplinary teaching, we need to model these qualities and to create experiential opportunities for students to test their own abilities. In this vein, some of our goals include:

- Attend the “Critical Thinking Conference” held at Sonoma State or other worthwhile seminars on this topic.

- Foster more interdisciplinary student research projects. For example, we often send students to the undergraduate conference on communication ethics. Perhaps we might explore additional collaborative efforts in this area.

- Help our students put into practice more holistic rhetorical approaches to negotiating, to conflict resolution, to debate, to media consumption through simulations, case studies, and campus-wide events or tournaments.

- Re-institute a “movie night” in which students, together with our faculty, view a film and then go to dinner/dessert in order to critique the film together.

- Encourage the campus to invite more off-campus speakers and to sponsor more roundtable discussions among faculty on how to incorporate more interdisciplinary and critical thinking in our own teaching, in our own research, and in our own lives.
Diversity Standard

"You find out who you are by meeting who you aren’t," (Anderson and Ross, p. 104). This quotation from our COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture) textbook best describes our attempts to fulfill the diversity standard. We feel that our discipline is especially suited to encourage an otherness perspective due to the centrality of audience in all aspects of the curriculum. Whether discussing the notion of dialogue and the other in COM 127 (Small Group Communication), the mandate to “see the face of God in the other” in COM 195 (Seminar: Reconciliation), or the “incarnational view of communication in COM 101 (Theories of Rhetoric and Communication), we consistently encourage our students to see the world from the perspectives of others, appreciate those perspectives in meaningful ways, and judge those perspectives carefully, thoughtfully, and with civility.

Current Practice

- In COM 10 (Interpersonal Communication), students learn about the formation of self and how it is shaped by culture, parents, neighborhoods, time, place, peers, and the media. We talk about multiple perspectives and interpretations of actions and communication.

- In COM 15 (Public Speaking), students are introduced to the importance of audience analysis in preparation for public speaking. They read chapters on ethical speaking and are reminded that diverse audiences require diverse approaches—one cannot assume that others are necessarily like us. They also learn that some kinds of communication considered admirable in U.S. culture may be considered offensive in other cultures.

- In COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture), we discuss the importance of lenses that we bring to communication events. We encourage students to encounter difference first with the “believing game,” then later to play the “doubting game.” We include sections on Gender and Communication, and Race and Communication. Included in a unit on the “political correctness movement” is the idea that language and the curriculum of the academy really were created by “white males of European descent,” and this authorial power does impact our perceptions of the world. In addition, several non-Western sources are used in this class, among them an article on wu-wei ethics, and an article on the meaning and value of African names.

- In COM 127 (Small Group Communication), students read selections from Bonhoeffer, Howe, Bakhtin, and Buber on dialogue and the other. Students discuss the differences between sympathy and empathy. For example, while most people think that more empathy is the answer, Bakhtin argues that empathy can be the height of arrogance. Since we can never really understand the other, empathy can falsely assume that we can be “one” with the other. Of course, the emphasis in a “small group” course demands an appreciation and respect for others and multiple points-of-view if students to be successful in reaching agreements and building consensus.
• In COM 195 (Seminar: Reconciliation), students are challenged to see others, especially those with whom they disagree, in a new and transforming light. They are encouraged to deal with conflict through a new set of lenses, such as: a) “We must come into the presence of our fellow human beings with a sense of awe and gratitude;” b) “civility requires that we listen to others with knowledge of the possibility that they are right and we are wrong;” c) “civility requires that we sacrifice for strangers, not just for people we happen to know.” In addition, the students are reminded that the work of reconciliation is central to our calling as people of God. In personal journals, students are encouraged to think through what it means to be agents of civility and reconciliation.

• In COM 101 and 102 (Theories of Rhetoric and Communication), students have their “chronological snobbery” challenged as they consider great thinkers in the past. Good rhetoric is presented as “loving appropriately through speech,” a concept that features adapting to others for their sake.

• In COM 125 (Mass Communication), students examine society, culture, and media in light of orality and literacy, and the role of mass communication in shaping cultural perceptions. Students are reminded that what counts as knowledge in a literate society is vastly different in an oral society. Students conduct research in which they examine the media for messages regarding race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, age, and what is “normal.” They also work to discern what messages are not privileged to the media.

• In COM 130 (Argumentation and Advocacy), students are encouraged to embrace the principle that “those who do not know their opponent’s arguments do not completely understand their own.” Students begin to understand that this is not only good advice when attempting to argue successfully for truth, but that it is also a vital admonition for discipleship. To that end, the notion of the other as an “opponent” is debunked. Argument is not war; argument is journey. To aid in that journey, students are exposed to individuals with views that are different from their own. For example, five gay Christians came to class to add their reflections and concerns as the class explored the issue of homosexuality.

• In COM 145 (Organizational Communication), students learn that women and minorities have experienced business and organizations in very different ways compared to most white males. Students learn how oppression and hegemony occur in many organizations and shape the experiences of discrimination, sexual harassment, the glass ceiling, etc. Students read and present seminars on gendered views of organizations, and on the “corporate colonization” of the lifeworld.

• In our everyday conversations with students (in the office, “take a Prof to lunch” program, in our homes), we attempt to challenge their ways of seeing by simply telling our stories. Whether it is the challenge of growing up in an alcoholic home, the experience of being a woman in the academy, or the struggle of raising African American kids in our society, we hope our stories help them to be more sensitive to different experience.
Possible Improvements

We believe that Westmont in general as well as the Communication Studies department in particular could do much more to get students together with those who are unlike them. Our commonality of purpose and belief is our strength—it is also our weakness. We must find more ways of bringing our students into meaningful contact with otherness.

Specifically, here are some ways that we as a department and as a college may improve in better meeting this standard:

- Be more deliberate about bringing people into the classroom who embrace different points-of-view. Perhaps a staff member could keep a list of outside speakers.

- Involve students in the local community, interacting with local youth (especially the Hispanic community) on a more regular basis. The Daniel Webster Project could be a good model.

- Educate ourselves in diversity and communication. For example, we need more training in communication through the eyes of non-European cultures.

- Solicit more funds for faculty travel abroad. For example, the Cuernavaca project of the 80’s seemed to impact the participants deeply.

- Encourage our students to become proficient in two languages.

- Diversify the reading lists in our courses.

- Encourage the administration and the admissions office to continue to take seriously the challenge of diversifying our student body.

- Seek funds to start our own reading group on this topic.
Technology Standard

As a department, we are doing a fairly good job of encouraging our students to consider the impact of new technologies on individuals and on society, but we are not doing so well in encouraging them to use new technology to accomplish their goals.

While we hope to improve in our own use and teaching of the uses of new technologies, we also believe that the rhetorical perspective favors human contact. We would like our department and our college to be known for not fearing technology but also for not fearing to support the importance of physical presence in communication.

Current Practice

• We expect our students to be proficient in word processing skills. Inaccurate pagination, margin sizes, etc., result in grade reductions.

• In a few courses, students are urged to learn how to use the computer to make pie charts, bar charts, histograms, etc.

• In COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture), we discuss the pros and cons of new technologies, including newer techniques such as home virtual reality machines. Students read competing articles dealing with the values of Internet use.

• In COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture) and COM 135 (Studies in Public Discourse), students are required to use Comm Index, an important computer database in our discipline.

• In COM 15 (Public Speaking), students are required to spend a class period in the library and are given extensive instruction in using on-line databases, CD-ROMs in the library, and news sites on the web. Students are given in-depth instruction regarding the difference between the "Internet" and on-line database sources. Occasionally, students are given one-on-one instruction in PowerPoint, computerized searches, Excel, and outline formatting in Word.

• In COM 125 (Mass Communication), students participate in discussions in class and via a listserv for the class. Students also learn how religion, politics, education, communication, etc. are affected/eффected by technology. Special attention is given to the influence of the Internet. They read articles on the Digital Divide and its influence on class distinction.

• In COM 127 (Small Group Communication), students discuss emerging technologies and their impacts on group decision-making and group decision support systems, as well as the impact of virtual teams and new ways of communicating.

• In COM 130 (Argumentation and Advocacy), students learn about the difficulty in evaluating certain electronic source material.
• In COM 140 (Communication Ethics), students discuss the consequences of the Internet, especially access to pornography and “hate” sites. In addition, students are encouraged to consider that: a) technological innovation is not always an “advance.” At times more is lost than is gained; and b) techniques need to be evaluated for their impact on community values.

• In COM 145 (Organizational Communication), students operate as a virtual group in the computer lab. Students also examine how email and new technologies impact organizations, churches, society, teamwork, etc. Discussion occurs concerning surveillance and control implications.

• In COM 195 (Seminar: Reconciliation), students must peruse and report on the key web sites that deal with the areas of reconciliation, conflict resolution, and negotiation. This coming fall, students will join on-line with other students from sixteen different universities in eight different countries. They will discuss and report on key regional conflicts in the world, and they will work on an on-line group project with suggestions for resolution to these conflicts.

Possible Improvements

As mentioned earlier, we believe that our department is strong on analysis of technology, but not consistently as strong in utilization of these new technologies. Specifically, here are some ways that we as a department and as a college may improve in better meeting this standard:

• Finish our department web site that will include extensive sections on how to use various electronic resources.

• Require a library workbook in either COM 15 (Public Speaking) or COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture). Through this workbook, students would have to demonstrate a competency in electronic and library research methods.

• Develop an entire course in research methods.

• Require a PowerPoint presentation in COM 015 (Public Speaking), although we are resistant to the subtle current suggestion that communication acts are always better when supplemented with computer enhancements.

• Become better skilled at our own use of on-line research.

• Pursue the construction of an Experiential Learning Center (ELC) as a vitally needed addition to our teaching resources.

• Encourage the use of Group Decision Software Package (GDSS) in COM 127 (Small Group Communication) and COM 145 (Organizational Communication).
Written and Oral Communication

Westmont publications consistently state that oral competence is highly valued and taught at the college. Yet entrance and curricular requirements suggest otherwise. The official introduction to the self-study standard continues this trend by suggesting what does not appear to be true: that incoming students possess satisfactory competence in oral communication. No first year examination is given and no remedial study is required. In addition, students are not required to complete upper division coursework in oral communication. The minimal standards that exist for written communication are not paralleled for oral communication achievement. Should we make some changes in our basic requirements or change the language of the standard (as well as Westmont publications) to reflect what in fact occurs?

Current Practice

The standards suggest that students’ speaking and writing skills should demonstrate various thinking skills, evidence rhetorical effectiveness, display intellectual virtues, reveal historical and cultural awareness, sincerely represent the Christian faith, and be the result of mature self and peer assessment.

As might be expected, our courses provide significant content and require assignments that focus on communication. The content ranges from classical rhetorical theory to contemporary mass communication research. Though we want our students to become better thinkers, writers and speakers, we highlight theory and criticism over communication technique. Still, by graduation, our students will have practiced communication in many different ways.

All of our courses require written work. These assignments range from short reflection essays to developed research papers. We mark the papers extensively on content, organization and mechanics. Although not all communication courses require oral presentations, all courses attempt to raise the standards for articulate student participation. In some courses (COM 101, 102, and 130, for example), students’ oral contributions might be constructively evaluated on the spot, moving students toward better, less cliché arguments. In all student discourse, we encourage audience-centered rhetorical competence. One by-word for this discourse is “passion and civility;” another is sapientia et eloquentia (wisdom and eloquence). Each saying argues that good communication possesses a combination of virtues.

The following are examples of the variety of writing assignments:

- COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture): a five-page analysis of Graham Greene’s *The End of the Affair*, focusing on how selective perception influences intra- and interpersonal communication. Students are asked to see Greene as a rhetor.

- COM 10 (Interpersonal Communication): several self-reflection papers, in which students are asked to apply communication theory. Students also critique various theories.
• COM 15 (Public Speaking): graded outlines of all speeches. These assignments require students to use various organizational approaches, ranging from an emphasis on creativity to uses of logical evidence. A research paper requires students to perform analysis in addition to research.

• COM 101 and 102 (Theories of Rhetoric and Communication): eight theory-application papers, in each of which students must refer to three readings in the unit. Other papers include a summary of arguments for and against rhetoric by various classical authors (Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, Augustine, etc.), and an analysis of cliches that asks students to consider the standards of thoughtful speech.

• COM 125 (Mass Communication): in-depth social science research paper, exposing students to quantitative and qualitative social science research methods.

• COM 130 (Argumentation and Advocacy): public controversy papers that ask students to describe their opponents’ views in a fair and respectful manner.

• COM 135 (Studies in Public Discourse): two significant rhetorical analyses of orators (for example, Martin Luther King, Jr.) and rhetorical situations (for example, the Civil Rights Movement).

• COM 140 (Studies in Communication Ethics): three ethical analyses of the media, requiring students to defend their conclusions from principle. Students also examine the influence of technology by responding to Don DeLillo’s vision in White Noise.

• COM 145 (Organizational Communication): a written analysis of case study analyses.

The following are examples of speaking assignments:

• COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture): a short, creative group presentation of communication concepts.

• COM 15 (Public Speaking): five speeches, ranging from oral interpretation to persuasion.

• COM 127 (Small Group Communication): significant group presentation, including emphasis on peer assessment. Students’ group work is also video-taped and reviewed.

• COM 130 (Argumentation and Advocacy): public debates. Students are asked to prepare for both sides of an argument.

• COM 135 (Studies in Public Discourse): fifty minute group presentation and twenty minute individual presentation.

• COM 145 (Organizational Communication): fifty minute training seminar, twenty minute consultation report.
• COM 195 (Seminar: Reconciliation): negotiation exercises.

Possible Improvements

• Establish an Experiential Learning Center. This ELC would greatly facilitate public speaking and group exercise assignments. We have researched ELCs, visited USC’s building, and spoken with a potential donor about the project.

• Ensure that over the whole of the major, students are required to write in a variety of styles. One concern is that they need to write more research papers so as to be better prepared for graduate school.

• Encourage more students to do the kind of research that would be appropriate to be displayed in the Student Research Symposium.

• Create a link to a Communication Studies style manual on our department website. This link could also include aids to research.

• Re-institute a writing course within the major: Communication Criticism.

• Develop a stronger tutorial orientation in Public Speaking. Smaller classes here and elsewhere would permit this improvement as well as foster more intensive review of written work.

• Become more of a public presence on campus for the importance of effective rhetorical communication, especially oral presentation. Sponsor more public speaking events. Serve the campus with at least one “Passion and Civility” forum a year. We could ask Student Life about the most significant controversy on campus.
Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement

Current Practice

Issues in this category include interpersonal competence, sensitivity to human and environmental suffering, responsibility for learning, tools for learning, a sense of Christian vocation, and preparation for social involvement.

We spend considerable time with students outside of class. These meetings often include conversation about communication issues, a passion for learning, or attitudes about social involvement.

Many of our courses require the kind of group work that fosters negotiation, empathetic listening, and cooperation.

Many of our courses use a dialogic teaching strategy that models intellectual engagement. Students are encouraged to participate in discussion and will often be asked follow up questions after they make their initial contribution. By our passion for truth, we hope to support and respect the students' quest for understanding.

- COM 006 (Messages, Meaning, and Culture) teaches students that communication is larger than skill-development and that it takes considerable intellectual involvement to be a good student of communication situations. Peter Elbow’s “doubting and believing game” provides a paradigm for openness to learning.

- COM 10 (Interpersonal Communication) and COM 127 (Small Group Communication) focus entirely on content pertinent to interpersonal competence and teamwork.

- COM 15 (Public Speaking) introduces lower division students to the kinds of rigorous research that helps equip students to be lifelong learners. Many other courses continue this pattern.

- COM 101 & 102 (Theories of Rhetoric and Communication) inspires discussion of what we know, how we know, and how we can improve our rhetorical resources. Students are challenged to become more personally committed to their education, to be truth-seekers more than grade-seekers. Students learn that classical rhetoricians often argued that a true rhetor’s purpose is to make a positive contribution to society.

- COM 125 (Mass Communication) and COM 140 (Studies in Communication Ethics) teach that students need to consider the influence of the media and their response to it. COM 125 emphasizes the stewardship of consumers. COM 140 suggests we can be “ethical consultants” in society.

- COM 145 (Organizational Communication) describes how power can be used and abused in institutional structures. Sexist practices receive attention.
• COM 195 (Seminar: Reconciliation) presents models of social engagement such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation commission. These models also engender compassion for those who have suffered injustice.

• COM 195 (Senior Seminar): Under the heading “Work, Calling and Communication,” students discuss ways to remain intellectually alive after graduation. Students also team-teach a unit on biblical content about communication.

Possible Improvements

• Re-establish “Mars Hill at the Movies,” an event in which a faculty member takes students to view and critique a contemporary film playing at a local theater.

• Under the auspices of Lambda Pi Eta (the Communication Studies honor society) re-institute “Thursday Tea at Four,” an informal discussion group that would meet to discuss various topics from course concepts to spiritual issues. Activities would range from visiting art galleries to doing exercises that enhanced understanding of communication concepts.

• Create off campus programs that center around reconciliation through communication.

• Get more involved with the local community. Perhaps we could have a storytelling group in the elementary schools, public speaking tutors in high school, or mediation consultants in the community.

• Offer more out-of-class seminars for our students, ranging from lectures by scholars to discussion groups about occupations.