



BA and MA in Communication Studies

2015 Annual Implementation Report

Submitted by: Jonathan Finn, Chair, Department of
Communication Studies

Date: June 1, 2015

Recommendations from 2012-2013 Final Assessment Report

Recommendation: discuss resource implications of an expansion of the MA program and the establishment of a PhD program.	
Responsibility: Department, in consultation with the Dean of Arts and the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.	Implementation Date: September 2014
<p>2013-2014 Actions:</p> <p>Unit Response: The Department formed a committee in late Fall 2013 to produce a feasibility study around the prospect of a PhD program and/or the expansion of the MA program. Part of that study will include a full analysis of resource implications.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: I look forward to receiving the results of this study and the decision of the program on whether to move forward with a doctoral program.</p> <p>PRS Comments: The committee looks forward to receiving an update on this in next year's report.</p>	
<p>2014-2015 Progress (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In Progress</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):</p>	
<p>Unit Comments: At the close of the 2013-2014 academic year the department decided to suspend discussion of a PhD program pending the results of the IPRM and the new funding model being proposed by the University. Since that time the Department has been identified as an area of existing strength and of future growth in Laurier's Strategic Mandate Agreement and in the transform with additional resources category of the IPRM. The very brief rationale given in the IPRM report is that the department should seek out the option to develop a School of Communication with consultation with Brantford (specifically Journalism). Dr. Finn contacted the 2 Co-Chairs of the PTF and the 2 Co-Chairs of the APT for further explanation. 3 of 4 people responded and all noted that no further explanation or clarification of the IPRM's recommendation could be given.</p> <p>The Department remains interested in the potential of developing a School of Communication and this could include the development of a PhD program. However, proper resourcing for such a School would be essential and the Department is not confident that it would be resourced properly within the current budget climate. Communication Studies lost 3 Full-Time tenured/tenure-track faculty in 2014-2015, none of which were replaced. Further, the Department has been told that the Faculty of Arts should not expect new hires at any time in the near future. This makes the development of a School and / or PhD highly problematic if not impossible. The Department intends to use its 2015 summer retreat to explore the idea of a School including the undergraduate and graduate programs that would be offered.</p>	

Arts Decanal Comments: As I read these comments, CS is saying that, while it came to the conclusion not to pursue an expansion of its graduate program given resource limitations, IPRM results have nudged it to continue the conversation in a summer retreat, in the context of a broader discussion about a "School" of Communication Studies. The incoming Dean, I'm sure, will be interested in the results of that retreat.

FGPS Dean: I look forward to hearing about the results of the retreat. It would be useful to make a decision about a possible PhD program, one way or another.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the status of the School of Communication Studies and the results of the faculty retreat in next year's report.

Recommendation: expand Department's multi-campus presence through discussions with Brantford programs, Journalism in particular.	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: June 2014
Additional Notes: Provide Dean of Arts with written account of discussions.	
2013-2014 Actions:	
<p>Unit Response: We have yet to formally meet with representatives from Brantford. The Department is concerned with the development of programs in Brantford that have obvious overlaps with Communication studies, such as the switch from Journalism to Digital Media and Journalism and the newly proposed BFA program and advertisement for a tenured position in Game Design and Development. Dr. Jonathan Finn has arranged for meetings with Dr. Sue Ferguson, Coordinator of Digital Media and Journalism and Dr. Kathryn Carter, Inter-Faculty Associate Dean and author of the Game Design and Development proposal for May 2014. There is no written account of the discussions to the Dean at this stage.</p> <p>Arts Decanal Response: There needs to be an explanation of why consultation has not as yet taken place. Also, the department needs to be clearer about the nature of its concerns. "Overlap" might be seen as an opportunity for collaboration- or might be the basis for a "protecting my turf" claim. Which is it here?</p> <p>PRS Comments: The committee acknowledges that these consultations may have taken place since the submission of this report and looks forward to hearing the outcome of the consultations and any subsequent action taken in next year's report.</p>	
2014-2015 Progress (check one):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):	
Unit Comments: Dr. Finn met with Dr. Ferguson and Dr. Werbin of the Digital Media and Journalism program in Winter 2014 to discuss potential collaboration. All parties were interested but couldn't see an easy, direct link between the programs. The primary problem was the geographic distance between campuses. Students could not realistically commute	

between campuses, making any collaborative degree complicated. It was noted that a joint graduate program could provide for such collaboration as the student numbers would be considerably smaller and there would be far fewer courses required.

Dr. Finn consulted with Dr. Ferguson again in Spring 2015 about forming a School of Communication and that topic will be the main issue for discussion at the Communication Studies summer retreat. Dr. Ferguson will communicate with Dr. Werbin (the incoming Chair of Digital Media and Journalism). It is hoped that the Department will emerge from Summer 2015 with a clear plan forward in terms of its undergraduate and graduate programs and their links to Brantford programs and to a proposed School of Communication.

Arts Decanal Comments: Clearly this recommendation, like the previous one, awaits decisions made during the 2015 summer retreat. Preparations will need to be made to ensure that the retreat covers all the key points.

FGPS Dean: Multi-campus graduate programs are possible. Cultural Analysis and Social Theory has provided a good model. It would be useful to speak to the graduate coordinator for that program as to the challenges and opportunities. Again, I look forward to hearing about the results of the retreat.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the progress made on this recommendation in next year's report.

Recommendation: discuss possible expansion of fund-raising initiatives.

Responsibility: Department, in consultation with Development and Alumni Relations.

Implementation Date: June 2014

Additional Notes: Provide written report to the Dean of Arts.

2013-2014 Actions:

Unit Response: The Department discussed this after the release of the cyclical review report and while we are happy to assist people from Development and Alumni, we will let their office take the lead in this area as we failed to find evidence that identifies fund-raising as part of our job. The written report to the Dean is attached to this document.

Arts Decanal Response: The CA does not prohibit faculty from fund raising, and so of course the recommendation is legitimate. Generally, all departments need to take a more active role in fundraising and I would recommend that the Department be asked to report on their fund raising initiatives annually.

PRS Comments: The committee encourages the Department to communicate directly with the Dean with regard to this recommendation. Please provide an update in next year's report.

2014-2015 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Comments: Dr. Finn met with Rob Donelson and Harry Froklage from Alumni and Development in the spring of 2015 to discuss this particular recommendation in the cyclical review. All three agreed that the formation of a school would provide for a unique fund-raising opportunity such as the naming of such a school or financial support for building an undergraduate media lab. Smaller initiatives were also discussed such as seeking support for special 'capstone' classes in the 4th year. Dr. Finn agreed to work with Harry Froklage and go on some donor visits over the summer and / or fall.

It was also agreed that building contact with alumni is just as important as fund-raising and the three discussed examples of how this has been done in other programs and what might be done for Communication Studies. Dr. Finn left the meeting with a series of questions / ideas that will be taken up at the summer retreat in conjunction with the discussion of a School of Communication.

Arts Decanal Comments: On this topic Jonathan will be in close contact with Harry throughout the summer, working for the Faculty at large on Development issues. A report back in early Fall might be advised.

Aggressive (and necessary) fundraising targets for CS, in my view, need not await a decision to possibly transform the department into a school. The possibility of creating a School of Communication Studies would have a significant impact on the rest of the Faculty. Should CS decide to proceed in this direction after its retreat, the next step would be discussions with other academic units in Arts, and the Dean. Given the complications, I would suggest disentangling some of the recommendations to some extent at least from the decision to form a School or not, since that decision will take some time in coming.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on any progress made toward the implementation of this recommendation in next year's report.

Recommendation: revise undergraduate orientation materials and expand initiatives in the areas of marketing and recruitment for the graduate program.

Responsibility: Department, in consultation with Recruitment and Admissions and FGPS.

Implementation Date: June 2014

Additional Notes: Provide written report to the Dean of Arts.

2013-2014 Actions:

Unit Response: We are participating in the Faculty of Arts various 'Think' campaigns and have also been active in contacting prospective students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (via phone, mail and e-mail). The Department also developed the position of Social Media Officer – held by one of our MA students – to create and populate a Communication Studies Facebook Page and Twitter account. These are both now active. The written report to the Dean is attached to this document.

Arts Decanal Response: The department has indeed cooperated and collaborated with the Dean's Office in developing the Faculty's new branding campaign. As well, setting up and maintaining a Facebook Page and Twitter account for CS students is an important step forward, and something that can serve as a model for other departments.

FGPS decanal response: We have not received a request for assistance with marketing and recruitment for the graduate program. The FGPS communication coordinator would be pleased to meet with the graduate coordinator.

PRS Comments: The committee recommends that the Department meet with the Communications Coordinator in the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Please provide an update on these initiatives in next year's report.

2014-2015 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Comments: The Department has gone through a substantial review of its undergraduate and graduate programs (including their promotion and recruitment). At the undergraduate level, and under the direction of Dr. Peter Urquhart, the Department submitted a substantial curriculum change in the Winter of 2015 which made the program considerably more open and flexible for students (by removing some of the area-specific requirements in the curriculum). The proposal also introduced 6 options available to students in the program reflecting the unique strengths of the Department: Media and Communication History; Media and Cultural Theory; Visual Communication; Global Communication; Cultural and Creative Industries; Digital Studies and Social Media. The proposal was held back at Senate Academic Planning, pending a review of Options as they are offered at Laurier. In addition to this larger change, the Department has developed new courses in Internet Studies, Social Media, and Cultural and Creative Industries, areas that are of particular relevance and importance in contemporary Communication Studies and that are in high demand from students. These courses have passed Senate and will be on offer for 2015-2016. We plan to market the revised undergraduate program in the coming year and have already provided Recruitment and Admissions with information on the new courses and areas of strength in the Department.

The Department also merged with the Cultural Studies program in 2014-2015. The merger

was largely the work of Dr. Alexandra Boutros (the outgoing Coordinator of Cultural Studies) and has had the effect of making the programs more complementary. The undergraduate curriculum changes that were developed in Communication Studies took this merger into account and provided greater collaboration between the programs, one result of which is that Cultural Studies now features prominently in the Communication Studies curriculum.

At the graduate level, the current graduate coordinator, Dr. Greig de Peuter, has lead an extensive marketing and recruiting campaign. This included several items: a review of existing course offerings and solicitation of new course proposals to keep the curriculum cutting edge and relevant for incoming students; the removal of the existing 'streams' of the program to make it more reflective of the Department and more open for prospective students; the production of a digital booklet about the program, including several 'alumni profiles' that highlight the research projects and current employment of our graduate students; and active Twitter and Facebook pages dedicated to the graduate program, showcasing the work of students and faculty in Communication Studies at Laurier. Dr. de Peuter consulted widely with FGPS and CPAM throughout this process. The 'student profiles' material received high praise from both FGPS and CPAM and is being used as a model by other programs. We understand that the web team will be adding the alumni profiles to the website for our MA program.

In addition to these specific and targeted initiatives, the Department continued to participate in the marketing and recruitment initiatives of the Dean's Office and other areas of the University during 2014-2015. One such initiative was the creation of a PR video for the Communication Studies program, which is now posted to the Department's page on the Laurier website.

Arts Decanal Comments: These are all excellent steps forward. At the undergraduate level CS continues to attract students; at the MA level it is still lagging, e.g., the projected number for 2015-16 (June count) is 8 students. For a department with ca. 1000 majors, and some superb researchers, this number is noticeably low. Yes, the box can be ticked as Completed, but I would encourage the department to keep working on graduate enrolments. Perhaps introducing applied components would make a difference.

FGPS Dean: I am pleased to see the effort put into marketing and recruitment for the graduate program.

PRS Comments: The committee considers this recommendation to be completed and there is no need to report on it further.

Recommendation: develop at least two online courses per year for the next three years.	
Responsibility: Department, in consultation with the Dean of Arts.	Implementation Date: September 2014
Additional Notes: Some courses should be courses required for CS majors. Interim report on progress to Dean of Arts by June 2014.	
2013-2014 Actions:	
<p>Unit Response: In a follow-up meeting with Dean Carroll, it was agreed that the Department should work towards developing one on-line course during the 2013-2014 year. Dr. Jeremy Hunsinger has been developing this course as a 300-level course on Internet Studies. That course will go through the formal curriculum committees of the Department, Faculty and Senate during the 2014-2015 year. The Interim report is attached to this document.</p> <p>Arts Decanal Response: My recollection is a bit different. I did say that if two courses/year was too much of a jump, we could slow things done for now and develop 1 course/yr for the first few years. I did expect, though, that one course would have been developed and finished in 2013-14 (and so by now) and that another would be underway by Fall 2014. I recommend that the department embrace a renewed commitment to online learning and commit to have 2 online courses developed and approved in time for Fall 2015, and another 1 or 2 developed and approved in time for Fall 2016.</p> <p>PRS Comments: We look forward to an update on the progress made on this recommendation in next year's report.</p>	
2014-2015 Progress (check one):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):	
<p>Unit Comments: Dr. Jeremy Hunsinger has developed CS 353 Internet Studies as identified in last year's report. That course was passed by Senate this year and Dr. Hunsinger will teach it as an in-class course in 2015-2016 and intends to develop it as an on-line course after that. In addition, Dr. Hunsinger plans to develop two on-line courses for Cultural Studies (KS215 Game Cultures and KS220 Networked and Digital Cultures) that will be available to Communication Studies majors. Due to the merger with Cultural Studies, Communication Studies students are now encouraged (and incentivized) to take the existing (KS 205) and future (KS 215, KS 220) on-line course in Cultural Studies. These courses are included as core courses in the new Options proposed by the department (see above response) but that are awaiting SAPC approval. Together with CS 353, the Cultural Studies courses will add 4 new on-line courses to the Communication Studies curriculum. We expect this process to be complete by the end of 2016-2017.</p>	
<p>Decanal Comments: Good progress. I don't understand why a full-time faculty member needs to be assigned to develop these courses—other departments hire sessional instructors, who have the support of two faculty advisors—and why the department can't be developing a wide range of online courses, including some of its required courses. But</p>	

having been in two Arts departments where the introduction of online courses was initially controversial, I can guess at the reasons. Like the previous Dean, I would encourage swifter movement on this front, if at all possible.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on online course offerings in next year's report.

Recommendation: review of elective courses offerings.

Responsibility: Department

Implementation Date: June 2014

Additional Notes: Provide written report to the Dean of Arts.

2013-2014 Actions

Unit Response: The Department Curriculum Committee does this annually and has completed its examination of our elective offerings. The CS Curriculum Committee is developing a substantially revised list of electives to ensure that the courses listed are regularly offered and closely affiliated with our curriculum. The revisions will be put forward to the FoA Curriculum Committee in Fall 2014.

Arts Decanal Response: Hard to evaluate until I see the suggested revisions.

PRS Comments: The committee views this recommendation as "in progress" rather than completed and would like an update in next year's report.

2014-2015 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Comments: As part of the undergraduate curriculum review (identified above) the Department removed the entire list of electives, simplifying our degree structure and making it easier for students to complete the degree without sacrificing the quality of our program. Our existing curriculum requires that students take 2.5 credits from a list of elective courses from Arts, Music, Business, and Science. Under the proposed curriculum, students take 10 credits in Communication Studies courses with no specific elective requirements. As these changes were part of a larger package of curriculum changes that included the development of new Options, these changes are on hold but we hope they will go to Senate in Fall of 2015. Even if the specific Options are turned back, the Department will proceed with the elimination of the electives in favour of a more flexible and open curriculum.

Decanal Comments: Done.

PRS Comments: The committee considers this recommendation to be completed and there is no need to report on it further.

Recommendation: discuss establishment of a peer mentoring program.	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: June 2014
Additional Notes: Provide summary of conversations to the Dean of Arts.	
<p>2013-2014 Actions:</p> <p>Unit Response: The Department noted that we do have a peer mentoring program (though not formalized) through the use of 4th year Instructional Assistants in our large first-year courses. A more formalized approach could be combined with a Residence Learning Community; however, after extensive discussion the Department has decided to suspend the RLC until we can address several problems with it that were identified over the past year. During the 2014-2015 year we will look to develop a more formal peer-mentoring program as possibly combined with a reimagined RLC.</p> <p>Decanal Response: I don't think that IA's are what the Reviewers had in mind in suggesting that the department establish a peer mentoring system, and would encourage the department to bring forward a proposal that is independent of IA's and a Residence Learning Community (which at best reaches only a very, very small percentage of CS Majors).</p> <p>PRS Comments: Please provide an update in next year's report.</p>	
<p>2014-2015 Progress (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In Progress</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):</p>	
<p>Unit Comments: The Department remains uncertain about this recommendation. Our students are well-served by the Department Undergraduate Advisor, our informal mentoring programs (described below), as well as the Advisors in the Dean's Office. Further, given the tremendous and increasing amount of support and mentoring offered by the University, we do not see the benefit of adding yet another mentoring program.</p> <p>The Department continues to use IAs in the 100-level courses with tremendous success. The evaluations for the IAs are very high, students respond very positively to having peers as their IAs, and our IAs have a high rate of acceptance into Communication Studies graduate programs in the country and internationally. Although not a formalized peer-mentoring program, we feel that this extensive peer-to-peer contact in the first year of the program is adequate in addressing the spirit of the recommendation in the cyclical review.</p> <p>The Department is also running a new RLC in 2015-2016 called 'digital media and culture,' under the direction of Dr. Finn. This is a highly unique RLC in that it is a collaboration between the Department and Communications, Public Affairs and Marketing (CPAM) and seeks to engage students interested in the critical study of digital culture as well as those interested in careers in digital media. It is planned that this group will liaise with the</p>	

Communication Students Association (CSA) to develop some programming / workshops that will be available to all Communication Studies majors. Again, although not a formal peer-mentoring program, we feel that this works to effectively complement the numerous existing mentoring programs available to Communication Studies majors.

Arts Decanal Comments: I can see the value of the recommendation, and the department's response. On this issue, given the many other concerns faced by CS, I would support the department's wisdom on this issue.

PRS Comments: The committee considers this recommendation to be completed and there is no need to report on it further.

Additional Comments (Unit): 2014-2015 was a difficult year for the University and for Communication Studies. The contentious-nature of the IPRM combined with contract negotiations, unannounced staff cuts, a freeze on hiring, and dropping enrollment numbers in the Arts meant that Communication Studies faculty and staff were frequently called on to 'do more with less' (which includes trying to fulfill all the recommendations of the cyclical review and the production of additional reports to the Dean). And we have done more with less. Three faculty members received SSRHC Insight Grants in 2014-2015. One faculty member took over the Presidency of the Canadian Communication Association and another the role of Secretary of the same association. We merged with the Cultural Studies program and developed a new undergraduate curriculum proposal that heightened the flexibility of the degree. We significantly revised and strengthened the course offerings and marketing and recruitment materials for the graduate program. We developed a new RLC in collaboration with CPAM. We developed three new undergraduate courses in areas of high student demand. We have begun exploring the possibility of proposing a School of Communication. We welcomed our first SSHRC award-winning MA student and three of our undergraduate students received OGS or SSHRC awards to pursue graduate studies. One of our recent MA grads was awarded a prestigious Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship to support her PhD research at Carleton. And as identified in the IPRM our undergraduate program produces between 2.5 and 3 million dollars profit annually. By every conceivable measure we have been a productive Department and made sustained, substantial contributions to the University during 2014-2015.

Despite the many challenges of 2014-2015, the Department is encouraged that it is identified both as an area of current strength and as one of four "proposed program areas of growth" in Laurier's Strategic Mandate Agreement. And it is encouraged that it is identified in the category of 'transform with additional resources' in the findings of the IPRM. However, it is discouraged that the recognition of Communication Studies as a strong and in-demand program has not had any concrete impact 'on the ground.' Communication Studies continues to be the largest and most popular program in the Faculty of Arts (with over 1000 majors) and one of the largest at the University. And our total number of majors has grown each year over the past three years when enrollments in Arts have declined substantially. Despite this, we have relatively few faculty members (16 full-time for 2015-

2016) and we have had our administrative staff reduced. We had three full-time faculty members leave the Department this year with no promise of replacement.

The reason for Communication Studies' continued success is two-fold. First, is the relevance of studying communication and media in the contemporary world. Our graduates are in high demand from a wide range of institutions, professions and schools that recognize their talents as skilled researchers, thinkers and communicators. Second, the Department boasts an extremely impressive and energized group of faculty. We have numerous teaching and research award winners. Nearly all of our faculty have had or currently hold SSHRC grants and many are regarded as leading experts in their fields. Most importantly, and despite the unique trajectories of our scholarly and work profiles, Communication Studies faculty and staff are committed to making Laurier the premier site for the study of Communication in this country. It is unfortunate that, from our perspective, our biggest challenge is the continued lack of concrete support at our own institution. We have the talent and energy to become the top program in the country but with our present resources we can barely maintain our undergraduate program, let alone try to innovate or grow.

Additional Comments (Dean(s)):

Arts Dean: CS's closing comments are apt. The only thing I would add is that adding more faculty members to this department is not the only way to proceed; I encourage CS to propose innovative new approaches and directions that will make it easier for the university to support.

FGPS Dean: We are all doing more with less. As noted, the department has achieved notable success, and in my opinion is well poised to develop a doctoral program.

Additional Comments (PRS): The committee was impressed by the thoroughness of the updates provided for each of the recommendations and acknowledges the completion of several important initiatives during this past year. The committee echoes the comments of both the unit and the deans regarding the quality and success of the existing programs offered by the department, which form a solid foundation for cross-disciplinary connections and future programming.