

## ***DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION STRATEGIC PLAN***

**Background:** The Department of Speech Communication at Humboldt State has a history of commitment to providing knowledge of and skills in communication to all students at the University as well as to students choosing to focus in the discipline as majors or minors. Courses have been designed to serve students in a number of areas of the General Education program, those preparing to be teachers, and those in other majors (such as Business and Natural Resources Planning and Interpretation) who choose to enhance their knowledge and/or communication skills to increase their attractiveness for employment and advancement and to better serve their communities. The department provides a coherent major curriculum and flexible possibilities for student minors.

**Foundations:** While we do not wish to change our basic commitments, we recognize that circumstances have changed and will continue to change, probably at an accelerating pace. We must meet the demands of contemporary students in a changing university environment and a changed and changing world. We need to review our goals and objectives. We need to abandon any which are to be judged to be obsolete, further define and focus those which best meet current needs, add those which are not presently included but are necessary for the present and future, and develop strategies to best meet the goals and plans which will help to provide the resources necessary to realize the strategies. This will require review of the various department curriculums and improvements where necessary. We need to develop plans to maintain what has been and is now a very high level of teaching, scholarship, and service by the department faculty. It will be necessary to initiate plans to provide faculty development support for existing faculty. In those areas judged central to the best programs for contemporary students but for which present faculty do not have adequate expertise or demand exceeds our present faculty resources, we will certainly need to plan, define, and seek support for additional full-time tenure track faculty positions to meet the changing demands.

### **ASSUMPTIONS**

- Pressures to become “more efficient” (educate more students at a lower cost per student will continue).
- Pressures for the university to enroll a larger proportion of students at the upper division and graduate level (rather than as freshmen) will continue.
- Education for social responsibility, which has always been a concern in our discipline, will continue to be important and will probably result in more sub-disciplines in our field in specific applied areas.

- Diversity will continue to be a priority in the culture and on this campus. Communication will continue to be in a unique position to address the dynamics of diversity in individual relationships, groups, and public communication contexts.
- Accountability will continue to be required of and inside all educational institutions. Documented student learning will have to be demonstrated to justify costs. We believe that learning outcomes depend upon both faculty and students; the nature of education is clearly relational.
- The demand for and study of the effects of electronic technologies will increase. Our field has traditionally been the focus for the study of communication dynamics. We must address these dynamics in technologically mediated contexts, and to incorporate what we learn into the theory of the discipline.
- Students will continue to desire fields of study with clearly defined relevance to careers (majors, minors, or electives).
- Pressures for greater interdisciplinary teaching and learning will (and we believe should) continue. Human communication is an especially effective area in which to develop such offerings. The discipline exists as much or more in social science scholarship as in Arts and Humanities. It can serve as a bridge between scholarly areas as well as a network with many of the areas of the new college and with departments in outer colleges.

## **GOALS**

- A. Demonstrate our commitment to a student centered environment and our accountability for students' academic progress.
  1. Curriculum
    - Develop and continue to revise curriculums for majors, minors, and general students which best meet contemporary needs.
    - a. Majors: Program should reflect the discipline in the 21st century, including the basic principles of the discipline while offering a major which is unique to our campus environment and contrasts with other programs offered in the CSU system sufficient to attract students in competition with the other opportunities available to the California student.
    - b. Minors and General students: A variety of programs should be available that are designed to make the students as effective as possible in their chosen professions and as members of society. Systems should be designed to inform HSU students regularly about the options and of the benefits of effective communication to their future success (e.g. workshops, guest lecturers).
  2. Student-Faculty Joint Projects

Maintain a commitment to joint research and other projects. Success in this area will require a continued commitment of funds for the dissemination of such projects, expansion to community as well as scholarly efforts, and a development of the student base to accomplish even more quality work.

3. Opportunities for Close Student-Faculty Contact in Classes.  
Maintain relatively low student-teacher ratios in appropriate classes (e.g. performance, seminars), and adjust enrollments in other classes to meet budget realities.
4. Assessment Procedures  
Develop procedures to assess student achievement in all parts of our curriculum (e.g., projects, portfolios, capstone courses, etc.).
5. Course Evaluations  
Revise procedures used by students to evaluate courses to reflect current research.

- B. Continue to reflect the content and principles of the Speech Communication discipline consistent with national and regional associations in the field.

The department needs to consider the following actions in light of this goal.

-change the name of the department to reflect more clearly the focus and scope of the discipline (e.g., Communication, Communication Studies, Human Communication).

-adjust the content of the basic courses to reflect the breadth of Communication Studies. (The courses should, of course, continue to fully accomplish their primary program purposes).

- C. Maintain and develop programs which make our major unique from those offered in other communication departments in the system and the state.
1. Consider the need to be different from other departments in specific elements of the major while remaining within the frameworks of the discipline.
  2. Consider proposing a distinctive program for advanced study with a focus not currently available at other CSU campuses. This program should be designed to best support the needs and strengths of the Humboldt State academic offerings and of the Humboldt County area. The department should consider an MA degree in applied communication (perhaps interdisciplinary) which supports local community needs and draws upon the strength of other departments in the college and university (e.g., communication in education, professional communication,

health communication, communication education, communication in the helping professions, communication in not-for-profit organizations).

- D. Develop emphasis programs which contribute to HSU's existing strengths by interdisciplinary links. Courses or programs in areas such as communication and technology, social advocacy, cultural studies, relational processes, and professional communication should be considered.
- E. Develop a range of minors for students which allows and encourages non-major students to graduate from Humboldt with communication skills and knowledge which can support the other strong departments on campus to have their students uniquely attractive for potential hiring organizations or for graduate schools.
- F. Maintain and develop a faculty which can accomplish these goals. This will require not only the careful hiring of new faculty to meet department and university needs, but opportunities for continued development of both new and present faculty.
1. Adjust faculty workloads, with the guidance of the dean, to balance productivity in research, teaching and professional activity.
  2. Make the necessary arrangements to schedule more of our classes during prime-time hours. Although we do our best, at this time faculty often have to teach the first and last class periods of the day. This not only puts our classes at a disadvantage in attracting students, it makes for very long days for faculty members, and almost precludes any open times for faculty to meet, either informally or for department business.
  3. Involve faculty, especially those assigned collateral duties, in the development of the department and college. For example:
    - establish a separate faculty development fund (for seed money for projects, travel to disseminate work, etc.) especially for untenured, permanent faculty.
    - establish a mentoring program within the department for new faculty.
    - establish a consistent outlet for sharing our achievements with each other. With current individual workloads and time commitments to personal projects, we rarely know what our colleagues are doing, which decreases the opportunity for collaboration and/or support. (e.g., portion of one faculty meeting a month devoted to a 20-30 minute report of current innovative teaching projects, research or creative activity).

## STRATEGIES

What immediate actions should the department take to move toward achievement of the goals as quickly and expeditiously as possible?

- A. Select those elements which are necessary pre-conditions to full achievement of the goals, (the following list is undoubtedly incomplete)
1. How do we recruit more students to provide the numbers necessary to offer classes on a regular basis?
  2. What kinds of expertise do we need to add to the faculty for the development and implementation of curriculum changes and maintenance of present curricular strengths.
  3. How can we develop sources of revenue beyond the regular operating budgets and accomplish the goals as quickly as possible (including funds to accomplish the items on this list (such as seed money for additional fundraising, pooling resources with other departments, etc.).
  4. How can we make changes immediately (or take other actions) to accomplish or move toward realization of the goals while the above two efforts are proceeding? (Simplified minor? Pilot Programs? Others?)
- B. Appoint or select working groups (or individuals) to develop proposals or narrow the available options or suggest an order of priority among action items.

Some of the issues could probably best be addressed by standing committees (such as the curriculum or personnel committees). Others could be considered by special ad hoc committees. Probably some reports could be prepared most expeditiously by an individual.