This report focuses on our first program-learning goal. See Appendix A for a our five year assessment plan, which is scheduled this year to be reviewed and revised by faculty.

(1) Student learning goal(s) addressed this year:

One of our three learning goals was the focus of our assessment this year.

A. understand and engage in applied communication research

(2) Learning outcomes/objectives for the goal addressed this year:

A. understand and engage in applied communication research

• Focuses on relevant communication theory and concepts
• States a thesis that clearly articulates a position on issues in the case
• Argument includes relevant examples, references & theories
• Apply communication theory to case that enhances understanding of the case

(3) Courses & activities where assessed:

• Comprehensive exam-embedded in final seminar course

(4) Methods used:

• Comps are coded for blind review by three or more faculty.
• A comp exam involves completing two case analyses using appropriate theoretic frames introduced in the program
• A rubric is used in the review process (Appendix B) that mirrors the major learning outcomes for this program goal
• Overall pass/fail rates are examined. Students either pass both case analyses, or if they fail one, they have the chance to revise it. If the fail both, they have to wait a year to retake the comps.
• We examine overall mean data on individual rubric items, and examine patterns across a five year period rather than focusing on a single year. Faculty responses to open ended questions are all summarized by the graduate coordinator and shared for discussion with faculty.
(5) What are the assessment findings? How did you analyze them?

- Overall, these data indicate students met learning objectives related to our first major program goal. Eight of the nine students passed. However, we did have four students who had to revise one of their comprehensive essays. The fact that there was a high number of revisions is reflected in overall lower mean averages this year than last. Table 1 and Graph 1 provide average responses for faculty evaluations for the past five years. A "2.0" indicate that students have achieved competency in the area; a 3.0 a perfect score; and a 1.0 is non-passing.

- Averages for each rubric criteria for 2014 range from 2.4 to 2.7 in contrast to the 2013 range of 2.7 to 2.96. As mentioned, our analysis involves evaluating patterns across time. Consistent areas of strengths over the last five years include: Responds fully to question- 2.70 to 2.96 with a mean of 2.82; Clear thesis-2.48 to 2.97 with a mean of 2.74, Clear writing- 2.55 to 2.88 with a mean of 2.77, and Well organized- 2.58 to 2.83 with a mean of 2.68.

- The lower scores on several criteria for 2014 also reflect five-year patterns; yet also reveal a wide range of scores for each item. Overall, our students are passing yet are not as strong in these areas: Support for arguments – 2.35 to 2.9 with a mean of 2.6; Accurate use of concepts- 2.32 to 2.81 with a mean of 2.57; Developing suggestions- 2.08 to 2.97 with a mean of 2.5.

Table 1: Five Year Means on Comp Exams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010; N=7</th>
<th>2011; N=15</th>
<th>2012; N=6</th>
<th>2013; N=13</th>
<th>2014; N=9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responds to Questions</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Thesis-Position</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument Supported</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate Concepts</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions-Argument</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Writing</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well Organized</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summary, the focus this year was on five years of comprehensive exam data. Average scores indicate that students are being successful (2.0 or above); however, we were able to pick up on patterns of strength as well as areas that merit attention. We drew several conclusions.

(6) What conclusions were drawn and what decisions were made as a result? How were stakeholder groups involved?

First, students demonstrate the ability to “understand and engage in applied communication research” in their comprehensive exams. Despite the overall lower performance on scores in 2014, the five-year pattern indicates a consistent pattern with averages all above 2.5. This consistent pattern grows from our efforts to continually improve our focus on deep learning. Students are introduced to a case study approach in the first semester and then in the following semesters, they take courses that each include a case analysis. Our process also involves students drafting a final M.A. Project proposal with their faculty advisor who then prepares the student for a proposal defense with a committee. Upon completing the final project, students defend their paper before their advisor and two faculty committee members and refine their paper based on shared criteria. We will be reviewing data from student projects next year. This year, however, this focus on case studies throughout the program reveals a pattern of reaching the program learning outcome and associated learning objectives.

Second, we are making adjustments to first year classes to aid students in improving their ability to conduct a credible, and strong case analysis. In particular, faculty discussions and written comments on the assessment rubric concerning
these data agreed that we could do more to aid students across the three areas identified: (a) Support for arguments; (b) Accurate use of concepts; and (c) Developing suggestions.

In particular, in the Spring of their second year, the two faculty teaching their required courses that semester are collaborating to ensure clearer coverage in terms of methods, integration of concepts in analysis, and developing solid, theory and data based suggestions. This involves sharing common language about the goal of the process, practice in using common methods (textual analysis, observations, interviews) as well as the process of thematic analysis.

**Third, stakeholders are involved in several significant ways.** Alumni return to discuss their projects in classes. In addition alumni host students for “field trips” that involve tours of organizations, simulations, and discussions of how applied communication theory is being used in a given organization.

In addition, an alumnus has developed a “LinkedIn” site that we will begin using to assign students to an alumni mentor. Our plan is then to involve these mentors as way to engage stakeholders in reflecting on our assessment plan and data. Our assessment plan also includes the use of stakeholder focus groups every three years. Finally, our assessment plan is scheduled for revision this year to find improved ways to gain data from stakeholders in the organizations that serve as sites for their final projects.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where Assessed/Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Cycle</th>
<th>Report Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection: M.A. Project &amp; Presentation Evaluations, Comp Exam, Misconception Survey</td>
<td>Yearly/Data collected</td>
<td>Every year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Comp Exam Data</td>
<td>Every Year</td>
<td>Every Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Misconception Survey Data</td>
<td>Every third Year Data Evaluated</td>
<td>2016; 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course level: Individual faculty collect data on teaching strategies and specific learning outcomes (part of Professional Growth Contract)</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>2013 &amp; 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting of faculty to discuss assessment data</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>Every year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey and/or focus groups of alumni</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2015 &amp; 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss assessment plan and make improvements</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2012 &amp; 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Assessment Rubric for Comprehensive Exam
MA-Applied Communication

Direction for Rubric:

Please use the following rating scale with the understanding that the rating will not be viewed by the students, but will help guide our assessment. I encourage you to fill this out after a student defends the final paper. Again, the students will not see your actual ratings.

Please type in your responses on the electronic excel sheet that I provide.

- 0 = criteria is not addressed
- 1= criteria is addressed, but not developed
- 2= criteria is clearly addressed

____ 1. Focuses on relevant communication theory and concepts
____ 2. States a thesis that clearly articulates a position on issues in the case
____ 3. Argument includes relevant examples, references & theories
____ 4. Apply communication theory to case that enhances understanding of the case
____ 5. Accurate use of concepts, terminology, and theory
____ 6. Practical implications drawn from argument in an ethically appropriate manner
____ 7. Write in a manner that is clear (relatively free of grammar and spelling problems)
____ 8. Well organized (intro, previews, clear main points, summary that restates position)

Comments:
1. What was missing or not adequately developed in the drafting process?
2. What possible patterns of learning strengths emerged?
3. What possible patterns of learning needs emerged?
4. Other comments/assessment insights?