UCF Academic Program Review 2012-13
Consultant Undergraduate Program Review

Program: Interpersonal/Organizational Communication, B.A.

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Instructions: Please offer your assessment of each item below, considering when appropriate, your knowledge of other public research institutions. While a few items solicit an open-ended response, most ask you to rate a particular characteristic of the program under review as exemplary, appropriate, or needing improvement. At the end of each section, please elaborate on any items in that section identified as exemplary or needing improvement. Additional comments are optional. You may offer recommendations for improvement on the topics covered in each section at the end of the respective section and/or you may provide all recommendations for program improvement in item 8.3 at the end of this document.

Section 1   Program Goals and Planned Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Please evaluate the following:

1.1   Program goals and objectives, including those related to planned student learning outcomes (In addition to the program self-study, you may wish to consult the *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment* library in the UCF APR Web site.)

> *Please select only one option from the list below:*
> ☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

> ***Please elaborate if you identified item 1.1 as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.***
>
> ***Recommendations, if any, in the area of program goals and planned student learning outcomes:***
> As the faculty further develop their Human Communication program as well as their assessment plan, we encourage them to move beyond the embedded assessment technique that they have implemented. They could consider utilizing the internship course to assess students' behavioral learning outcomes.

Section 2   Program Coordination and Administration

Please evaluate the following:

2.1   Program administrative and management structures to effectively run program (e.g., effectiveness of program coordination, process for monitoring students' progress to degree, program handbooks, process for selecting preceptors/thesis advisors/research mentors/clinical supervisors)

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

2.2   Student access to resources to enhance student success (e.g., advising, faculty members, appropriate technology)

Please select only one option from the list below:
☒ Exemplary   ☐ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (2.1- 2.2) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.
The advising staff is outstanding. The advising center serves as a model for other programs in the College. Students have uniformly positive feedback regarding advising. They also have consistently positive feedback about access to faculty members, helpfulness of faculty members, and genuine concern for their academic progress shown by professional advising staff and faculty.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of program coordination and administration:
We recommend making the I/O (now Human Communication) website better articulate the value of the BA program and highlight not just the General Education Program on the home page but what the students will learn throughout the program.

Section 3   Program Demand and Productivity

Please evaluate the following:

3.1   Program's ability to meet student demand for the major

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

3.2   Program's curriculum contribution toward the General Education Program

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☐ Appropriate   ☒ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

3.3   Enrollment levels relative to faculty size and composition

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☐ Appropriate   ☒ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

3.4   Program's ability and responsiveness to meet the needs of other disciplines (e.g., program offerings that support other programs)

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

3.5   Program's ability and responsiveness to meet local, regional, and national needs

3.6   Student retention

3.7   Student time-to-degree in the program

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (3.1- 3.7) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.

Plans to reduce contributions of oral communication courses reflect a lack of understanding by decision-makers of skill sets desired by employers. Numerous employer surveys include effective oral communication as a key skill set desired and expected by employers across all career fields. Removing oral communication from general education and leaving it to individual departments to pt for requiring oral communication is antithetical to the legislature's goal of maximizing career preparation.

As indicated elsewhere in the reports of the consultant team, the student:faculty is extraordinairly high throughout the Nicholson School including in i/o communication.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of program demand and productivity:
1. Include oral communication in the general education core curriculum.
2. Additional faculty lines and resources should be added to i/o communication s soon as budgetary constraints allow.

Section 4   Program Quality

Please evaluate the following:

4.1   Criteria for program admission (if applicable)

4.2   Quality and rigor of student learning outcome targets (Refer to Academic Learning Compacts and student learning outcomes assessment plans located in the *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment* library.)

4.3   Evidence of student learning consistent with stated program goals (including planned student learning outcomes) and discipline standards

4.4   Student licensure pass rates (if applicable)

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☐ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☒ Not Applicable

4.5   Placement rates for graduates relative to disciplinary trends at other public research universities

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☐ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☒ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

<u>Student Perceptions of Program Quality</u>

Based upon your interactions with students in the program, please indicate how you believe students in the program view the program in the following areas:

4.6   Students' perception of the overall administration of the program

Please select only one option from the list below:
☒ Exemplary   ☐ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

4.7   Students' perception of advising and mentoring

Please select only one option from the list below:
☒ Exemplary   ☐ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

4.8   Students' perception of program quality and rigor

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

4.9   Students' perceptions of the academic and collegial atmosphere of the program

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (4.1- 4.8) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.
Students are uniformly positive regarding the program administration, the professional advising staff and resources, faculty advising and mentoring, and the general classroom and program climate. While students thought the rigor of classes was appropriate, they did express a desire for more course prerequisites. That request stemmed from a feeling that non-majors slowed the pace and interfered with the depth of curriculum coverage in some classes. Regarding item 4.5, the Nicholson School has only anecdotal data related to student placements. In addition, the student exchange and study abroad opportunities offered to students are a tremendous asset to the undergraduate program.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of program quality:
 1. Engage in more systematic efforts to collect placement data for graduates.

Section 5   Student Characteristics and Quality

Please evaluate the following:

5.1   Program's ability to attract high quality students

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

5.2   Incoming students' credentials

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

5.3   Student diversity

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

5.4   Quality of student accomplishments compared to similar programs at other public research universities (e.g., theses, creative works, papers presented; awards won; quality of subsequent graduate and professional programs entered; employment)

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

5.5   Program relationship with alumni

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☐ Appropriate   ☒ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (5.1- 5.5) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of student characteristics and quality:
Alumni records do not appear to be kept systematically. I/O communication should engage in more systematic efforts to gather, keep, and utilize alumni data.

Section 6   Curriculum, Course Offerings, and Student Engagement Opportunities

Please evaluate the following:

6.1   Current curriculum's alignment with program goals

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

6.2   Design of core courses' to provide students a solid foundation in the discipline

Please select only one option from the list below:
☐ Exemplary   ☒ Appropriate   ☐ Needs Improvement   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Not Applicable

6.3   Availability and timeliness of required courses

6.4   Adequacy of student professional development opportunities (e.g., research, clinical experience, student teaching, service learning)

6.5   Overall quality and rigor of current curriculum

6.6   Incorporation of appropriate pedagogical and/or technological innovations into the curriculum

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (6.1- 6.6) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.
The core course list includes SPC 3301 (Interpersonal Communication) and COM 3011 (Communication & Human Relations). These syllabi were not on the program review website, but upon looking at the course descriptions in the catalog, it's not clear how distinct these courses are.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of curriculum, course offerings, and student engagement opportunities:

Section 7   Comparative Advantage

7.1   If applicable, please identify features that distinguish the program from similar programs at other institutions (e.g., curriculum, faculty member expertise, student engagement opportunities)

The curricular emphasis on risk communication is somewhat unique. For example, very few communication programs offer courses in terrorism and communication. The risk communication thread to the curriculum runs throughout other courses as well, e.g., communicating health risks, at risk families, the role of public argument related to risk, and the like. We recommend that this unique opportunity/focus be more centrally highlighted in program materials (i.e., the website, the "Human Communication At A Glance sheets).

7.2   Does the program fit a disciplinary niche? If so, please elaborate.

The program both fits useful niches (e.g., organizational communication, health communication, and risk communication) and offers a comprehensive undergraduate curriculum.

7.3   Please discuss the program's potential for achieving discipline (re-)accreditation or (re-)certification, if available.

Section 8   Analysis and Recommendations

8.1   Please identify up to five areas of greatest program strength.

1. The quality of the academic advising staff and program.
2. The quality of the i/o faculty is a clear strength. They are well trained and their priorities mirror those of the college and university.
3. The commitment to UCF's undergraduate teaching mission strongly pervades the faculty, staff, and leadership. There is a student centered focus to every aspect of the i/o communication operation.
4. The overall quality of the students is a strength. They are effectively and exuberently engaged in the learning environment.

8.2   Please identify up to five areas of greatest concern for the program (e.g., program weaknesses, barriers, threats, unique vulnerabilities).

1. The student:faculty ratio is awfully unbalanced. That unbalance, combined with a College policy of waiting a year to fill faculty vacancies will create a very difficult learning environment in the upcoming academic year because of three impending faculty departures.
2. The University has increasing interest in promoting grant seeking and attracting extramural research funding.The I/O communication faculty would like to embrace grant seeking. Despite the excellent efforts made by the Director to assist the faculty, the faculty do not feel especially well prepared to seek or administer grants.
3. UCF is a research intensive university but the faculty workloads do not mirror those of communication faculty in other research intensive universities. Put simply, 3/3 teaching loads make research intensive productivity impossible. 2/3 or 3/2 teaching loads make research intensive productivity unlikely.
4. Over time the student:faculty imbalance and an emphasis on research productivity without workloads comparable to research intensive peer and aspirational institutions will create significant faculty retention issues for the very best scholars.

8.3   Please reflect on program centrality, cost, comparative advantage, demand, and quality. Keeping these factors in mind, please offer your recommendations for program improvement considering each of the following, as appropriate:
-    improvements necessary for successful continuation of program operation (if applicable)
-    improvements that are not resource intensive, but that are likely to enhance program quality
-    improvements that, if resources permit, could help take the program to the next level of prominence

Needed improvements center around faculty resources. The I/O communication program is in need of additional tenured and tenure track faculty. If the I/O communication faculty are to fully embrace and participate in efforts to increase research output the student:faculty ratio must be addressed. If the I/O communication faculty are to fully embrace and participate in efforts to increase research productivity then faculty instructional loads should mirror those of research intensive universities. If the I/O communication faculty are to fully embrace efforts to increase extramural research funding then a) extraordinary efforts made by the School leadership to prepare faculty must be continued and additional initiatives must be undertaken. If these issues are not addressed then the Nicholson School risks losing its brightest and most energetic faculty members.

Section 9   Executive Summary

In one to two pages, please provide your overall impression of the program, emphasizing key aspects of the review. As appropriate, contextualize your assessment in relation to best practices in the discipline of study, undergraduate education, the broader higher education landscape, and/or industry trends within the field.

Curriculum

The undergraduate program includes fundamental content in the discipline as well as the niche courses in health and crisis communication. The curriculum includes courses to prepare students for both graduate studies and successful entry into the job market in a variety of fields. We believe that the strategic choices that have been made to include a risk and crisis communication thread throughout the curriculum (including in mass communication classes) is a significant asset to the program. Strategic choices have also been made to omit areas of study sometimes associated with communication but that would duplicate other campus curricula, e.g., rhetoric and performance studies. The curriculum across the Nicholson School reflects most of the major areas of the field.

Faculty

The curriculum is delivered by collection of very good faculty members. The upper division coursework is taught by PhD prepared faculty whose educational preparation is from strong programs. The faculty are committed to the undergraduate teaching mission. They routinely expand course enrollments to meet course demand. They meet frequently with students outside of classroom hours. They provide students with academic and professional development advice.

The faculty want to embrace UCF's identity as a research intensive university and its initiative to increase extramural research funding. A large portion of the I/O faculty are productive scholars within the constraints of a difficult work environment. Their teaching loads exceed typical loads for research intensive programs. The student:faculty ratio puts additional demands on faculty time that hinder research productivity. Most of the faculty were trained and hired before grant seeking was common in the field. Despite extraordinary efforts by Dr. Robert Chandler and Dr. Danielle Franco to assist in grant seeking efforts, the faculty do not feel well prepared to do so.

The faculty understand and appreciate community partnerships through co-operative learning and internships. Efforts to enhance those partnerships are hindered to some degree because of less than complete tracking of graduate job placement.

We are also pleased to see positive interactions between faculty members from the main and branch or satellite campuses. The faculty on the main campus understand and appreciate the critical role of the satellite campuses and their faculty.

Students

The I/O communication students were a bright, energetic, engaged, and engaging group. They appreciated the faculty and staff. They could articulate the value of the communication major and curriculum. The best students should be able to matriculate to graduate programs if they choose to do so. In the main, the students should have no problems integrating successfully into the job market. The students were uniformly and enthusiastically positive about their experiences in the Nicholson School. We asked directly why no students with less positive perceptions were included in our meeting. The feeling of the students was expressed by one who said "We don't know anybody that doesn't like the major." Because of the size of the School and the I/O major, students expressed a desire for more opportunities to

build community within the major. They expressed a desire for student organizations and additional networking opportunities.

Leadership and Staff

The I/O faculty and students are served by, and appreciative of, a hardworking, forward thinking, and talented staff. The advising staff and program is a model for the college. They profesisonal advisors see many more students than the national norm but believe their workload is manageable and that they are able to take on special projects if needed and steered to them by the Director. Students give high praise to their efforts. The Nicholson School Director, Dr. Robert Chandler is also a plus for the School. He is appreciated by the I/O faculty. He has a clear vision for the school and is working in ways that promote an interdisciplinary climate. He has made strides in building the exemplary advising center and welcoming gathering spaces for faculty, students, and staff. The undergraduate program is directed by Dr. James Katt. His work is appreciated by the faculty, staff, and students.

Jeopardies

For all of the positive things happening in the Nicholson School it does face significant jeopardies. Many of the concerns will require attention from the College and Central Administration to resolve. We are mindful of the difficult budgetary climate for higher education and understand that budget realities may preclude real progress related to the jeopardies that face the program. But we would be remiss if we let the budget climate mold this report.

1. Number of faculty--The student:faculty ration (36:1) is terribly out of balance. Additional faculty lines need to be added to I/O communication. Doing so will enhance the learning environment and pedagogy. It will allow the School to enhance the quality of its graduate program. Increased faculty lines will also have a positive effect on faculty morale and productivity.

2. Faculty workloads--UCF is a research intensive university. The teaching load for I/O communication is inconsistent with the loads at research intensive peer and aspirational institutions. The research productivity of most faculty members is laudable especially given that they teach 5 or 6 courses per year. We appreciate the 2/3 or 3/2 loads given to faculty members during their probatinary periods even though 5 course loads still are slightly higher than for most research intensive programs. Increasing loads for senior faculty members certainly results in decreased productivity and can contribute to faculty members being stuck in rank at Associate professor.

 While these issue are addressed and might best be left for the overall School report, they do have an impact on the undergraduate research mission. Decreased research productivity leads to less student involvement in research than would otherwise be the case. Larger class sizes limit the sorts of pedagogy that can be pursued and so on.

3. Faculty Morale and Retention--Budget issues and workload issues have not had extreme effects on faculty morale. Morale is higher than we expected it might be. Over time however, the negative effects of tight budgets, heavy teaching loads, and a wrongly weighted student:faculty ratio will have a negative impact. There are talented Assistant Professors and relatively new Associate Professors that may be difficult to retain.

Overall, we see an academic program, faculty, students, and staff that has achieved a great deal and with potential to achieve even more. The ability of the I/O program and its participants to maintain current strengths and build others will depend in large part on faculty size and workload issues.