

USU Department of Communication Studies Master's Program

Program successes based on student response to the assessment Qualtrics survey

The survey received a 69% response rate (11/16 graduates). Each of the following received a 4.9-5.0 on a 5 points scale, with five being "strongly agree."

The students:

- Expanded their knowledge of the Communication Studies discipline
- Were Introduced to communication concepts and ideas
- Improved their ability to understand literature within the field of Communication Studies
- Improved written work over the course of the program
- Increased understanding of the different research methods used in the Communication Studies discipline over the course of the program.
- Improved their ability to explain communication concepts, theories, perspectives and principles
- Felt their thesis/Plan B chair wanted them to succeed in the program
- Received adequate pedagogical training before teaching a class
- Felt prepared to teach their own classes
- Felt they had support (or would have had support) from the program when/if a teaching problem arose
- Improved their ability to instruct students over the course of the program

Changes made based on student feedback and Qualtrics survey

Change 1: Streamlining teaching for first year graduate teaching assistants

- Over the past four years, our first-year graduate teaching assistants have taught different classes in their first and second semesters (typically serving as a TA for Public Speaking semester 1 and a graduate instructor of Interpersonal Communication semester 2). Students reported difficulty in having two new teaching experiences in their first year, and faculty noticed first year students struggling to complete thesis/plan B proposals by the end of their second semester. Accordingly, we made adjustments so that **students now spend their entire first year as a TA for public speaking before transitioning to teaching Interpersonal Communication their second year**. This change is designed to better support our students in their teaching and research.

Change 2: Reducing frequency of offering methods courses

- Initially, our program offered a methods course every semester, alternating between *Rhetorical Criticism* and *Social Science Research Methods*. Methods classes were thus small and taken only by first year students. To enable us to offer more of a variety of courses (a student request) and increase the size of these seminars, **we now offer each methods seminar every other fall**. Each fall,

we offer one methods course and ensure that our topics seminar uses the second research method so that students are introduced to both methods, albeit in different ways.

Change 3: Changing how we describe our program to more accurately reflect what we offer

- At the start of our program, we advertised ourselves as offering opportunities for community engagement and public facing research. As indicated in responses to our assessment survey of graduates of the program, students who entered the program expecting community engagement and practical application to be a strong area of emphasis were somewhat disappointed when the program focused more heavily on academic research and critical thinking. Accordingly, we took stock of what we can best offer students and **now much more accurately describe our program's offerings** while still offering opportunities for community engagement and public facing research via Plan B projects.

Change 4: Increasing emphasis on oral presentations

- Responses to our assessment survey indicated that many students graduated felt they did not receive useful feedback on oral presentations. Accordingly, we are aiming to place more emphasis on oral communication and presentations in our seminars. The faculty teaching Fall 2023 seminars have been informed of this feedback and are incorporating presentations, and this is an area we will continue to expand on in the future.