

New Program Planning Summary

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY


REQUESTING TO OFFER A NEW PROGRAM

**MASTERS OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION,
TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY**

Submitted to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities
Department of Communication Studies
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New Program Proposal

This is a proposal for a new Master of Arts degree program in Communication, Technology and Society. The program's focus will be on the phenomenon of cyberorganizing, or how people use communication mediated by technology and the resulting cyberinfrastructure to pursue communication goals at the interpersonal, group, and organizational levels. The impact of cyberorganizing on social and cultural level variables will also be addressed.

Proposed Date of Implementation: August, 2009.

Justification of Need for Proposed Program

Communication skills are essential for success. As reported in *Business Week* (2/21/08), a Job Outlook 2008 survey recently conducted by the National Association of Colleges & Employers (NACE) indicated that of the top five skills employers seek in new hires, three of them are communication skills, including the ability to work effectively interpersonally and in teams. Increasingly, such collaborations are facilitated through the use of communication mediated by technology. According to *Business Week* (3/26/07) "Wikis, blogs, and other tools will arrive in the workplace whether companies are ready or not, as younger employees tend to develop their own self-organized networks that cut across traditional corporate divisions. Increasingly these employees will be capable of interacting as a global, real-time workforce."

In this manner, workers use forms of communication mediated by technology such as wikis, blogs, brainstorming software, telepresence, and so on to self-organize and in doing so, capture knowledge, stimulate creative thought and innovation, enhance diversity and foster collaboration. Given that these tools may be used in synchronous or asynchronous ways, they are ideally suited for use by members of multinational corporations or for international initiatives, which have and will continue to experience extremely rapid growth as we move toward a truly global economy. Maximizing the utility of these communication processes is the goal of the proposed program.

Figures provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov/oco/oco2003.htm, accessed 3/17/08) offer evidence that sectors of the economy utilizing communication tools such as those described above will experience explosive growth in the near future (i.e., through 2016). For example, the bureau is predicting 28.8% growth in the near term in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services Supersector: "Employment growth will be driven by the increasing reliance of business on information technology..." and will be "...spurred by the increased use of new technology and computer software and the growing complexity of business." Given these figures, it's clear there will be a need for the kind of communication specialist the proposed program will produce. The availability of these graduates will help to support South Carolina's emerging leadership role in international business initiatives and enhance the competitiveness of business and industry throughout the state and region.

Anticipated Program Demand and Productivity

A high level of interest exists among students and area professionals for a program of this kind. A recent survey of Communication Studies undergraduates indicated that nearly half (45.1%) were interested in pursuing a graduate degree in the same field. Given that there are nearly 300 undergraduate Communication Studies majors at Clemson and thousands more enrolled in similar programs in SC and the surrounding region (GA, NC), there is a large local pool of potential applicants for the program. Area industry professionals were also surveyed and indicated a high level of interest (40.6%) in a program such as the one proposed. Communication Studies graduate directors at Top-20 and peer institutions were also surveyed, 80% responding that there is a strong need for additional instruction at the Master's level in Communication Studies.

Seeking quality over quantity, we propose to limit the program to no more than 16 full-time students enrolled at any one time, along with additional part-time students. We project graduation of 8-10 students per academic year. Given the nature of the coursework we intend to offer, we anticipate students from related disciplines (e.g., Professional Communication, Marketing, Computer Science) will request seats in our classes. Given this, we anticipate that individual class enrollments will be healthy in both size and interdisciplinarity.

Extent to Which Proposed Program Duplicates Existing Programs in SC

While other programs in SC offer graduate instruction in communication, we believe our program's focus on cyberorganizing is unique. The National Research Council (NRC) distinguishes between communication programs as Telecommunications, Speech and Rhetoric, or Communication Studies programs. Existing programs at USC are in the former two categories. The two programs offered by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (i.e., MA in Journalism and Mass Communication, Master of Mass Communication) fall into the NRC's Telecommunications area with their goal of preparing students to enter the professional fields or education associated with journalism and mass media management. Some students in these programs (e.g., integrated marketing communications) learn how to produce mediated mass communications, but they do not focus on the process of interpersonal, group and social cyberorganizing as would students in the proposed program. USC's MA in Speech Communication and Rhetoric (offered through the English Department) falls into the NRC's Speech and Rhetoric area. According to the program's website, students use humanistic and critical approaches to study "rhetorical theory, textual interpretation and criticism, argumentation, critical social theory, visual, performance and cultural studies, and the philosophy of rhetoric." While there may be some common grounding in theory and method, the focus of the proposed program clearly differs significantly from that of USC's MA in Speech Communication and Rhetoric.

The MA in Communication at the College of Charleston could be argued to fall into the NRC's Communication Studies area. Their program concentrates on organizational and corporate communication. A review of the program's coursework does not reveal applications of communication theory (e.g., speechwriting, executive communication, impression management) focused on communication processes driven by communication

technology, per se, nor is there mention of cyberorganizing or cyberinfrastructure in their materials. Therefore, we believe that our program's unique focus would distinguish the proposed degree from the degree currently offered at the College of Charleston.

Relationship of Proposed Program to Existing Programs at Proposing Institution

We believe that the proposed program will complement—not overlap or duplicate—existing programs at Clemson University. The proposed program will help to secure Clemson University's emerging leadership of the study of communication technologies and the resulting cyberinfrastructure. The proposed program will add to the growing synergy in the College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities around communication research and pedagogy (e.g., Multimedia Authoring, Teaching and Research Facility; Ph.D. in Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design).

The most closely related program is the MA in Professional Communication (MAPC). As stated on their website, one goal of the MAPC is to prepare students for careers in fields such as technical writing, usability testing and website design, none of which would be principal foci for the proposed program. We worked with representatives from that program over several months to craft a proposal for a program that complements, rather than duplicates the MAPC. We believe that a focus on research and pedagogy about cyberorganizing would distinguish the proposed program from the existing MAPC.

Relationship of Proposed Program to Other Institutions via Inter-Institutional Cooperation

Given the flexibility of the program, there are many intriguing possibilities for inter-institutional cooperation. Each student in the proposed program will construct his/her own program of study incorporating coursework from Communication Studies, as well as from a variety of complementary disciplines. Some students may choose to integrate coursework from programs in other institutions in South Carolina as transfer work toward their degree. For example, the University of South Carolina offers some graduate communication coursework on-line or via interactive distance learning that would be accessible to students in the proposed program. In addition, interested graduate faculty from USC or other SC institutions could be involved in the program by offering intensive "Master" classes over the inter-semester holiday break or over the summer.

Total New Costs Associated with Implementing Proposed Program

We expect average annual costs to approximate \$410,000, as follows: administration (\$16,000), faculty (\$110,000), graduate assistance (\$240,000), library (\$5,000), professional development (\$14,000), and supplies/equipment/facilities (\$25,000). The majority of this funding is already in place. For example, Clemson University is investing over \$35 million building state-of-the-art research infrastructure, including grid computing structures, which will provide unique opportunities for research and pedagogy for participants in the proposed program. Graduate assistant support will come from conversion of existing faculty (i.e., lecturer) lines. Funds for library resources, professional development, and supplies/equipment/facilities will mainly be supported through the department's self-generated revenue, already in place. The sole "new"

expense will be for two new faculty lines to provide instructional support for the program. Our goal is for the proposed program to be lean and cost effective.