

**PROPOSAL TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY****TITLE OF PROPOSAL:**

Proposal to rename the B.A. in "Speech Communication" to the B.A. in "Communication"

**RECEIVED**

JAN 31 2008

OFFICE OF THE SENATE

**SPONSOR:**

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**BRIEF DESCRIPTION:**

The Department of Speech Communication (in the process of being renamed Department of Communication) proposes to change the name of its Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in Speech Communication to the B.A. in Communication. The new name reflects the evolution of the teaching and research interests in the department as well as national changes within the discipline. The name change highlights these shifts and is necessary for the Department to attract students and faculty.

**JUSTIFICATION:**

The Department of Speech Communication at UIUC has a long and proud history. It is one of the oldest doctoral programs in communication in the country. Over the years it has attracted an exceptionally talented and diverse set of faculty, students, and staff. This tradition and a legacy of strong support from alumni and friends have built a solid foundation for the program. The department consistently ranks among the top 10 departments in the field of communication in the U.S. The most recent reputational study by the National Communication Association ranked our department sixth in the nation among comprehensive departments of communication and ranked several areas within our department in the top four in the nation.

The major areas of study in the department include **organizational** and **group** communication, **interpersonal** and **family** communication, communication **technology**, **political** communication, **rhetoric** and **public discourse**, communication in **cultural contexts**, and **mass** communication. The department's newest program initiatives are in communication and **health**, communication **technologies in the workplace**, and the **impact of the mass media** on children and adolescents. Faculty

members in these areas are engaged in cutting-edge research that is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Science Foundation, the National Cancer Institute, NASA, and private foundations such as William T. Grant. Faculty members also are creative and committed teachers who bring communication concepts and theories to the classroom. Because of our strong liberal arts approach to education, our program prepares students for employment as communication specialists in the private and public sectors. Graduates with B.A. degrees in speech communication have enjoyed great success in the corporate world, in the media industry, in law, in engineering, in government, and in education. Changing the name to Communication will be less confusing in those career paths, further enhancing the marketability of the major.

### **Rationale for Change**

The label "speech communication" does not accurately describe the range of scholarly and teaching activities carried out by the department. We do teach several public speaking courses but these skills-oriented classes serve students from all over the campus and constitute a very small component of our course offerings. Instead, our undergraduate and graduate programs focus more broadly on the humanistic and social scientific **study of messages**, some of which are spoken, but many of which are not. We also include the study of nonverbal communication, written communication, computer-mediated communication, and even communication that is mediated through technologies like television. In essence, our curriculum examines the production, dissemination, and effects of messages in a variety of contexts--in families, in the workplace, in health care, in intercultural settings, in the mass media, and in politics. Our goal is to teach students to become critical thinkers about the process of communication, avid consumers of information, and effective problem solvers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Given our broader focus, the term "speech" poses several difficulties for us. Several faculty members in the department, particularly those who study the impact of mass media and newer technologies, do not feel a strong fit with a department labeled as speech communication. In addition, the label restricts our ability to recruit students and even new faculty. Students and scholars alike who are looking for a department that focuses on family communication or on organizational communication would not necessarily look to a "speech" communication unit.

These problems do not stop at the borders of our campus. Representing the department to external funding agencies and to members of the public is made problematic by a name that does not reflect the true scope of the department.

### **National Trends**

Since the 1970s, our field has been moving along several fronts toward acknowledging this broader focus on communication rather than speech. For example, several of the professional associations in our discipline have dropped the term "speech" from their names (see Appendix A). So too have several of the major journals in our field (see

Appendix B). In fact, the vast majority of doctoral programs in the country have moved away from the term "speech" (see Appendix C). There are no longer any other speech communication departments in the Big Ten (we are the only such department left; the University of Minnesota and Pennsylvania State University were the last two to change away from Speech Communication, to Communication Studies and to Communication Arts and Sciences, respectively). And there are no speech communication departments left at 15 other campuses that are part of the Association for American Universities (AAU) and that have major doctoral programs in communication (see Appendix C).

Furthermore, several of our professional associations have successfully lobbied the National Research Council (NRC) to include the discipline of communication in its current study of research doctorates. The communication area had not been included in past NRC surveys because of the misperception that doctoral degrees in communication were primarily professional in nature. NRC staff now appreciate that communication is an academic research/teaching degree that is distinct from professional training in journalism, broadcasting, or speech. The NRC is using "Communication" as its term for the field rather than "Speech Communication," reflecting the broad shifts in the field from the study of oral communication to all forms of human communication in a variety of contexts.

#### **BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS:**

The name change has no budgeting or staffing implications. We anticipate that our current major will grow somewhat, but we have anticipated that growth as a part of our current budgeting and faculty hiring plans.

- a. Additional staff and dollars needed

NONE

- b. Internal reallocations (e.g., change in class size, teaching loads, student-faculty ratio, etc.)

NONE

- c. Effect on course enrollment in other departments and explanations of discussions with representatives of those departments

NONE

- d. Impact on library, computer use, laboratory use, equipment, etc.

NONE

## GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION:

An undergraduate major in Communication is uniquely positioned to meet the three guidelines for undergraduate education identified in "An Academic Plan for the Urbana-Champaign Campus."

1. *"Every undergraduate should develop or have developed the basic ability to read and listen intelligently, write and speak coherently, observe and respond critically to a variety of forms of communication; think clearly, critically, and creatively; think quantitatively and qualitatively; and acquire an attitude which reflects curiosity, a desire to continue to learn, a respect for evidence, a tolerance of disagreement, and a positive acceptance of change."*

The goal for undergraduates in the Speech Communication course of study is to learn about the nature of effective communication across domains, develop effective communication skills, and gain knowledge of how to help others improve their skills. Students gain theoretical and practical knowledge of public advocacy and debate and the critical capacity to evaluate the face-to-face and mediated political and cultural information. Speech Communication courses also enable students to develop a familiarity with past and present communication concerns, to ask meaningful questions about the processes of communication and their consequences, to analyze the subtle and explicit significance of communication practices, and to understand and speak to the importance of national and global communication.

2. *"Every undergraduate student should acquire a deep understanding of our heterogeneous culture, acquire an acquaintance with most of our culture's basic aspects, and examine in some depth a culture foreign to him (or her)."*

Students also will achieve a sophisticated understanding of the political and social import of communication on all aspects of public and private life, from public policy and health care to cultural norms, personal interactions, and notions of race, class, gender, and sexual identity. Students will find these issues addressed across most of our courses, and specifically in topical courses such as Intercultural Communication; Diversity in Organizations; Race and the Mass Media; Communication and Culture; Gender and Language; Media and Society; Communication and Globalization; Screening Sexualities; Globalization and Empire; Gender and Rhetoric, Race, Class, and Gender in Organizations; and so on.

3. *"Professional preparation, to the extent that it goes beyond these basic abilities and attitudes, should be provided for those professions that are of interest to a sizable number of students, and that require the theoretical base provided by an institution of advanced learning. A professional education should train a student to advance with, and, at best, lead the development of her (or his) field. Undergraduate professional training should not be directed simply toward a contemporary job category, but should be sufficiently generalized to encourage this future development."*

The major is designed to give students the critical tools needed to assume careers in both the public and private sectors (e.g., business, law, politics, health care, media,

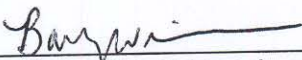
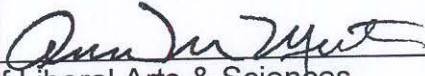
advocacy and nonprofit organizations, and so on). The Speech Communication major provides students a broad and deep critical awareness of the role of communication in building and sustaining a wide range of important relations in personal and professional life. Students will develop analytical skills, research abilities, and proficiency in interpreting, writing, and speaking about communication, media, and culture.

In sum, the Speech Communication major prepares 21<sup>st</sup> century students to become critical thinkers, avid consumers of information, and effective problem solvers in both their personal and professional lives. Speech Communication is an appropriate major for:

- students seeking a general liberal arts education;
- students preparing for professional study in law, medicine, business, or human resources;
- students preparing for graduate work in areas such as communication, media studies, public policy, or public health;
- students preparing for careers in many different fields involving communication skills (for example, law, business management, sales, public relations, media-related fields, human resources, consulting, or politics).

Students majoring in Speech Communication have been very successful in finding employment and placement in graduate schools. The revised major should further strengthen their career opportunities.

**CLEARANCES:**

	11/20/07
Department/Unit Head	Date
	1/22/07
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences	Date

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** On approval

Appendix A: Name Changes of Professional Associations in the Field of Communication in the Last 30 Years

Original Name	Year Changed	New Name
The Speech Association of the Eastern States	1973	Eastern Communication Association
Southern States Speech Association	1988	Southern States Communication Association
Central States Speech Association	1989	Central States Communication Association
Western Speech Communication Association	1990	Western States Communication Association
Speech Communication Association	1997	National Communication Association

Appendix B: Name Changes of Journals in the Field of Communication in the Last 30 Years

Original Name	Year Changed	New Name
Speech Teacher	1976	Communication Education
Speech Monographs	1976	Communication Monographs
Today's Speech	1976	Communication Quarterly
Southern Speech Communication Journal	1988	Southern Communication Journal
Central States Speech Journal	1989	Communication Studies
Western Journal of Speech Communication	1992	Western Journal of Communication

Appendix C: Name Changes of Departments in the Field from Speech to Communication

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FORMER DEPARTMENT NAME YEAR OF CHANGE CURRENT DEPARTMENT NAME

**Big Ten Institutions**

Indiana University	Arts and Sciences	Speech Communication	1982	Communication and Culture
Michigan State University	Communication Arts & Sciences	Speech	1980	Communication
Northwestern University	School of Communication (formerly School of Speech)	Speech	1972	Communication Studies
Ohio State University	Social and Behavioral Sciences	Speech Communication	2004	School of Communication
Penn State University	Liberal Arts	Speech Communication	1997	Communication Arts and Sciences
Purdue University	Liberal Arts	Speech	1969	Communication
University of Iowa	Liberal Arts & Sciences	Speech and Dramatic Arts	1984	Communication Studies
University of Michigan	Literature, Science, and the Arts	Speech Communication & Theater	1982	Communication Studies
University of Minnesota	Liberal Arts	Speech Communication	2001	Communication Studies
University of Wisconsin	Letters and Science	Speech	1970	Communication Arts

**Other Association of American (AAU) Universities**

Stanford University	Humanities and Sciences	Speech and Drama	1983	Communication
University of Arizona	Social & Behavioral Sciences	Speech Communication	1987	Communication
University of California, Davis	Letters and Science	Rhetoric and Communication	1987	Communication
University of California, Santa Barbara	Letters and Science	Speech	1985	Communication
University of Colorado, Boulder	Arts and Sciences	Speech and Drama	1983	Communication
University of Kansas	Liberal Arts & Sciences	Speech Communication	1984	Communication Studies
University of Maryland	Arts & Humanities	Speech and Drama	1980	Communication
University of Missouri, Columbia	Arts and Science	Speech and Dramatic Arts	1987	Communication
University of Nebraska	Arts & Sciences	Speech Communication	1993	Communication Studies
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	Arts & Sciences	Speech Communication	1997	Communication Studies
University of Oklahoma	Arts and Sciences	Speech Communication	1977	Communication
University of Pittsburgh	Arts and Sciences	Speech	1984	Communication
University of Texas at Austin	Communication	Speech Communication	2000	Communication Studies
University of Washington	Arts & Sciences	Speech Communication	2002	Communication
Texas A & M University	Liberal Arts	Speech Communication	2002	Communication