

2003-2004
Quality Enhancement Program Summary
Office of Institutional Research,
Planning and Effectiveness



Department: Communication **Award Amount:** \$10,000 **Award Recipient:** Dr. Nancy Harrington

Project Focus:

The Department of Communication used QEP funds to develop a mastery exam for upper-division majors. Curricular concentration areas were developed along four broadly defined career paths for majors.

Assessment Method:

Assessment modules related to these options were to be developed and piloted. Along with assessment questions in the core theory and method areas, these new modules should be used to assess learning outcomes for all Communication majors

Results as of Fall 2004, provided by Dr. Enid Waldhart:

As a first step, course syllabi and objectives were obtained for upper-division courses. The objectives were reviewed and modified to reflect the most recent course content. [Some additional minor revisions of the course descriptions were also made and subsequently approved by the faculty, although this was not a primary purpose of the project.]

Based on the objectives, test items were developed for each of the nine courses that provide the core of elective courses students take to complete their major requirements. Since they are elective courses, no student will take all of the courses. Certain sets of these courses are grouped to make recommended Career Paths within the major. As a result, it was decided to create a separate set of test items for each course such that ultimately when students actually take the Mastery Exam, they would take only those items from the courses they had actually completed.

The test items that were developed, reviewed, and revised to produce a bank of questions. We had intended to test all items individually at the end of the fall 2004 term (except for COM 581 which is only offered in spring terms). However, testing was delayed and will be done in spring 2005. Based on test results, additional modifications will be made for additional testing in summer and fall 2005 in regular classes. In spring 2006 the test will be given to the Honors Seminar students in a form such that students will receive questions only for courses they have completed.

Future Plans:

It is our plan to have a complete mastery exam finalized by summer 2006. Beginning with that academic term, it is our intention to regularly administer the Mastery Exam to the Honors Seminar students each spring term until we believe the test is reliable. At that point we would hope to begin requiring completion of the exam as part of graduation requirements. At some future point, we would anticipate requiring a set score as part of graduation requirements, but that obviously cannot occur until we have a reliable test bank and testing system.

This Mastery Exam will serve, along with the current test in place for the two required courses (COM 351 Introduction to Communication Theory and COM 365 Introduction to Communication Research Methods), as part of our continuing assessment for SACS.

The Curriculum Committee will be charged with monitoring test results, making needed modifications, and also adding additional items yearly.