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A Study Following-Up on Master's Degree Graduates in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at Western Michigan University

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A STUDY FOLLOWING-UP ON MASTER'S DEGREE GRADUATES IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS AND SCIENCES
AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

by

David Louis Lau

A thesis
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Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
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David Louis Lau

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  UNIVERSITY.

  WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, M.A., 1978

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate is central to functioning in a
social environment. Samovar and Mills state: "We live and func-
tion in a society based on communication."[1] Moreover, Scott and
Powers state that: "people communicate because communication with
living things is a need every bit as important to our psychological
well-being as food and water are to our physical well-being."[2]

Part of the purpose of a speech communication program is to
meet student needs in helping them become more effective commun-
icators. And yet, speech communication educators do not always
know whether or not their programs are meeting those needs. Jepsen
writes, "Too little information is available about the feelings,
success and failure of college graduates. All too often the school
releases them and forgets them."[3] Jepsen goes on to add that only
as we analyze the graduates in action can we know what to do to
improve their education and the academic institution of which they
were a part.[4] This study, then, is an attempt to help overcome
such a lack of information within a speech communication department.

Statement of the Problem

Specifically, the purpose of this investigation was to conduct
a follow-up study of alumni from the Communication Arts and Sciences
Master's Program at Western Michigan University who had been graduated

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during the six year period of January, 1972 through December, 1977.[5]
Within this framework, the major functions of this study were to
examine Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Alumni to deter-
mine both current academic and employment status as well as to
evaluate the degree to which graduates felt the master's program
met their needs.

The study was made by sending questionnaires to all accessible
graduates from the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program
who finished the program during the designated time period.

Basic to this study is the notion that the educational back-
ground of alumni has a direct bearing on future experiences in their
vocation as well as in any further academic studies they might
pursue. This study can contribute to an improved education for
future students working to obtain their master's degree at Western
Michigan University.

<div align="center">Rationale</div>

All educational programs need to have their curricula assessed.[6]
As Lewy pointed out, curriculum came about to make education more
relevant to the needs of society and the learner.[7] English and
Kaufman wrote:

> Curriculum is a valued process for bringing about required
> and desired changes in learner skills, knowledge, and
> attitudes so that students can survive and contribute
> in the world of further schooling, work, family, and
> interpersonal relationships. . . . Curriculum is a tool
> to define and outline the steps to become responsive,
> accountable, and productive. Curriculum can only be
> assessed in view of what it was shaped to accomplish.[8]

Thus, students' needs must be identified and curriculum evaluated in terms of how well it meets those needs.

This need for curriculum evaluation can also be argued from a communication theory perspective. Education may be viewed as a consequence of the communication relationships established between those who administer an educational program and their students. According to many writers, a crucial element for effective communication is "feedback."[9] This term is perhaps best defined by Scott and Powers who indicate that feedback is made of "the external communication cues that occur during and following a communication attempt. You come to know whether your interpretation of informational cues is accurate and whether your strategy is appropriate by feedback."[10] The function of an assessment project is analogous to that which is meant by the term feedback; it serves as a link providing a necessary information flow back from the students to those who implement the program. With this feedback, educators can evaluate the extent to which their program strategies were appropriate.

In their book, Conceptual Frontiers In Speech-Communication, which was a report of the New Orleans Conference on Research and Instructional Development, Kibler and Barker indicate that one of the recommendations the conference adopted was to encourage development of scientifically based instructional programs in speech communication.[11] This recommendation included constructing instruments to examine the extent to which students meet specified objectives.[12]

In addition, part of the need for evaluation in the area of speech communication is due to the tightness of the job market for its graduates. La Ban reporting on the urgency of the situation states: "Opportunities other than in teaching must be found and promoted immediately."[13] La Ban goes on to say that speech communication is producing many more graduates at the masters and Ph.D. level than there are jobs.[14] Hall concurs, noting that the job market is very tight for speech communication majors; there are two people in placement service for every job listed.[15] Responding to the need that speech communication has for evaluation because of the tight job market, Arnold, Di Salvo et al., and King all state one important way to cope with this dilemma in speech communication is to find out what is happening to current graduating students.[16] As Weitzel and Kirk point out we need to seriously address the student question so often asked: "What can I do with a speech communication major?"[17]

Beside the general need that all curricula have for assessment and the strong need for assessment in speech communication, the impetus for this study came from the graduate director of the Communication Arts and Sciences Department at Western Michigan University who felt that a follow-up study would best meet the program's need for evaluation. To support his view, he cited the fact that soon the program would be reviewed as a part of a university-wide program evaluation; thus, it would be most helpful to obtain information regarding the relevance of the program to alumni.

Furthermore, it was stated that data regarding academic and employ-
ment status and initial needs for enrolling in the program of those
who graduated would be beneficial for future advisement. All in
all, feedback from alumni regarding specific program conditions
such as requirements, and program changes might prove to be a useful
aid in future departmental decision making. In addition, it should
also be noted that the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's
Program has never had a follow-up study done of its graduates.

Preview

To carry out this project an assessment survey was designed
and implemented. Chapter II contains a review of the literature
pertinent to this study. Chapter III describes the methods and
procedures that were employed to execute the project. Chapter IV
contains a presentation of data, including tables which were derived
from information provided by the questionnaire. Chapter V consists
of a summary and implications of the study.

Endnotes

[1] Larry A. Samovar and Jack Mills, Oral Communication: Message and Response, 3rd ed. (Dubuque Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co. Pub., 1976), p. x.

[2] Michael D. Scott and William G. Powers, Interpersonal Communication: A Question of Needs (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978), p. xv.

[3] Victor A. Jepsen, What About Our Graduates?" Collegiate News and Views, IV, No. 4 (1951), p. 11.

[4] Jepsen, p. 11.

[5] Follow-up study is defined in this project as the examination of previous action i.e. the study of persons after institutionalization.

[6] Curriculum is usually defined as an aggregate of courses of study provided in a school; however, in this study curriculum is used in a broader sense referring to all the components of an educational setting i.e. faculty, advisement, course content.

[7] Arieh Lewy ed., Handbook of Curriculum Evaluation (New York: Logman Inc., 1977), p. 4.

[8] Fenwich W. English and Roger A. Kaufman, Needs Assessment: A Focus for Curriculum Development (Washington DC: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1975), p. vii, 11.

[9] John C. Condon, Interpersonal Communication (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1977), pp. 144-147; Charles T. Brown and Paul W. Keller, Monologue to Dialogue: An Exploration of Interpersonal Communication (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1973), pp. xiii, 46-47; Samovar and Mills, pp. 10, 66, 73; Scott and Powers, pp. 49-50.

[10] Scott and Powers, pp. 49-50.

[11] Robert J. Kibler and Larry L. Barker, Conceptual Frontiers In Speech-Communication: Report of the New Orleans Conference on Research and Instructional Development (New York: The Speech Association of America, 1969), pp. 27-28.

[12] Kibler and Barker, pp. 27-28.

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[13] Frank K. La Ban, "Graduate Degree Programs in Speech Communication: Description and Assessment," ACA, 20 (1977), 41.

[14] La Ban, p. 41.

[15] Robert N. Hall, "Job Placement: Another Year," ACA, 20 (1977), p. 44.

[16] William E. Arnold, "Career Placement in Speech Communication," ACA, 13 (1975), p. 3; Vincent Di Salvo, David C. Larsen, and William J. Seiler, "Communication Skills Needed by Persons in Business Organizations," Communication Education, XXV (November 1976), p. 275; Corwin P. King, "Developing Non-Academic Employment Prospects In Organizational Communication," ACA, 21 (1977), p. 64.

[17] Al R. Weitzel and Wayne Kirk, "A Survey of Speech Communication Alumni Vocations," ACA, 19 (1977), p. 43.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the literature most pertinent to this

study. The purpose of this review of the literature is to establish

(1) the importance of evaluating curricula, (2) the ability of the

follow-up study to function as a viable evaluative tool, (3) the

kinds of information such a follow-up evaluation should ask for,

(4) the techniques best suited for conducting a follow-up study,

and (5) the studies of a similar nature that have been done in

the Communication Arts and Sciences Program.

Importance of Evaluating Curricula

Evaluations are a necessary component in the development of

effective curricula. Unruh and Turner report that instructional

programs have a great need for new and different evaluative informa-

tion. These programs should be constantly evaluated against specified

criteria such as the adequacy and relevancy of the program for

national, community, and individual needs.[1] Wick and Beggs state

that evaluative measurements have made substantial contributions

in the past and will continue to do so in the future.[2] Stufflebeam

et al. exclaim that as educators "We must plan for evaluation.

We must budget for it. . . . It will be easy to procrastinate.

It is easy to say that there is so much we still don't know. It

will be easy to be discouraged. The questions remain: Can it be

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done? Will it be done?"[3]

This thinking is borne out by the innumerable evaluative studies done of curricula in the general field of education. Some of the best and most recent studies have been done by (1) Scott who evaluated a Home Start Program (an auxiliary education program at the pre-school level as well as during the first years of elementary school),[4] (2) Noeth and Hanson who did an evaluation of a community's career planning program,[5] and (3) McMahon and Peregoy who evaluated a college health science program.[6]

In addition, specifically in speech-communication, evaluations were done by Costigan who did an evaluative study of a public speaking course.[7] Lohr who evaluated a Fundamentals of Speech Course,[8] and Weitzel and Kirk who did an evaluation at the undergraduate and graduate level of a college speech-communication program.[9]

The Follow-Up Study as an Evaluative Tool

Review of the literature revealed that the follow-up study was one of the tools commonly used for program evaluation. A few of the many follow-up studies reviewed were conducted by (1) Jambeck and Reynolds who collected evaluative information about a college English program by following-up the program's graduates,[10] (2) Crooks who reported a follow-up study of alumni that evaluated business graduate programs,[11] (3) McMahon and Peregoy who evaluated a collegiate health science program by surveying the program's graduates,[12] and (4) Weitzel and Kirk who published a follow-up study which evaluated an undergraduate and a graduate speech-communication program

by collecting information from alumni.[13]

Information That Follow-Up Evaluations Ask For

Review of the literature provided insight into the type of information follow-up evaluations should look for. Many of the follow-up studies had two basic purposes in common for collecting data: one, to find out what alumni think in retrospect about their program, and two, to assess alumni employment or educational status.[14]

Specifically, Drummond's evaluative study asked graduates for information regarding (1) the adequacy of employment preparation provided by the program, (2) the changes alumni would make for themselves if they were to begin the program again, (3) the courses which were both most valuable as well as least valuable, (4) the adequacy of advisement and guidance, (5) the competencies that were lacking in the first year out of the program, and (6) the changes alumni would recommend making in the program.[15]

Morrison's evaluative study of the Business Education Program at Western Michigan University asked alumni questions concerning employment location, type of employment, perceptions regarding the profession, retrospective evaluation of the master's program, and suggestions for curriculum improvement.[16]

Weitzel and Kirk conducted a follow-up evaluation of an under- graduate and graduate speech-communication program. The kinds of questions the researchers asked alumni dealt with (1) employment status, (2) the extent to which speech-communication skills were helpful in current occupations, (3) the relevancy of a vocational

background in speech-communication, and (4) any miscellaneous advice for students in preparation.[17]

Techniques Best Suited For Follow-Up Studies

The literature revealed that follow-up studies were typically conducted using three different methodologies. A paper and pencil testing instrument was employed in different studies by Scott and Valine.[18] The interview technique was implemented by both Marcia and Timmonds.[19] And, the questionnaire survey was the methodology used in most of the follow-up studies reviewed. A few of the more recent studies employing the questionnaire were conducted by (1) Christensen, Birk, and Sedack, (2) Noeth and Hanson, (3) Drummond, and (4) Jambeck and Reynolds.[20]

Studies in the Communication Arts and Sciences Program

Van Hoeven, Ratliffe, and Dunleavy conducted the only similar study in the Communication Arts and Sciences Department at Western Michigan University.[21] In essence, this project was a follow-up survey of alumni who were involved in the undergraduate teacher preparation area of the Communication Arts and Sciences Program. The purpose of this follow-up was to provide information regarding the job market, attitudes toward current jobs, curricular and co-curricular teaching responsibilities, pursuit of graduate work, and recommendations for improvement. The method employed was a questionnaire which was mailed to alumni who had (1) graduated between 1969 and 1974, (2) taken a speech communication methods course for secondary

teachers, and (3) majored in the department of CAS.

Conclusions from the study indicate that most alumni found employment but not necessarily in their desired field, those with a communication/English major/minor combination seemed to have obtained jobs more readily, the teacher preparation course was seen as valuable, there seemed to be a desire for more preparation for directing debate and forensics, those who obtained positions other than in teaching found the communication program relevant, and nearly half pursued graduate studies since graduation.[22]

Summary

In conclusion, the review of the literature indicated that (1) evaluations are necessary to the development of effective curricula, (2) the follow-up study is an appropriate method of program evaluation, (3) the information usually sought in such follow-up studies pertained to alumni academic/employment status and alumni program evaluation, (4) the methodology most often used was a questionnaire, and (5) that the Communication Arts and Sciences Program had only one similar study done and it was addressed to those involved in the undergraduate teacher preparation area of the program.

Thus, it was decided that a program evaluation employing a follow-up questionnaire of graduate alumni from Western's Communication Department was warranted. In connection, it was decided that this evaluation should seek information regarding alumni academic/employment status as well as alumni program evaluation.

Endnotes

[1] Adolph Unruh and Harold E. Turner, Supervision for Change and Innovation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970), pp. 276-279.

[2] John W. Wick and Donald L. Beggs, Evaluation For Decision-Making in the Schools (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971), p. 254.

[3] Daniel L. Stufflebeam, Walter J. Foley, William J. Gephart, Egon G. Guba, Robert L. Hammond, Howard O. Merriman, and Malcolm M. Provus, Educational Evaluation and Decision Making (Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock Pub. Inc., 1971), p. 351.

[4] Ralph Scott, "Home Start: Third-Grade Follow-Up Assessment of a Family-Centered Preschool Enrichment Program," Psychology in the Schools, 13 (1976), 435-538.

[5] Richard J. Noeth and Gary Hanson, "Research Report: Occupational Programs Do the Job," Community and Junior College Journal, 47, No. 3 (1976), 28-30.

[6] Joan D. McMahon and Stephen Peregoy, Follow-Up Study of Health Science Graduates (ERIC ED 148 785), pp. 2-13.

[7] James Costigan, "College Graduates Evaluations of the Value of Training in Speaker-Audience Communication," The Speech Teacher, 21 (1972), 226.

[8] James W. Lohr. "Alumni use of Communicative Activities and Recommended Activities for the Basic Course: A Survey," The Speech Teacher, 23 (1974), 248-251.

[9] Al R. Weitzel and Wayne Kirk, "A Survey of Speech Communication Alumni Vocations," ACA, 19 (1977), 43-51.

[10] Karen Jambeck and Richard Reynolds, English Majors: A Career Survey of Graduates 1968-1976 (ERIC ED 147 857) pp. 2-37.

[11] Louis A. Crooks, "Personal Factors Related to Careers of MBAs," Findings, ETS, 4, No. 1 (1977), 4-8.

[12] McMahon and Peregoy, pp. 2-13.

[13] Weitzel and Kirk, 43-51.

[14] Drummond, pp. 2-20; McMahon and Peregoy, pp. 2-13; Jambeck and Reynolds, pp. 2-37.

[15] Drummond, pp. 2-20.

[16] Jane Gustafson Morrison, "A Follow-Up Study of the Master's Degree Graduates in the Department of Business Education and Administrative Services At Western Michigan University," Specialist Project Western Michigan 1976, pp. ii-88.

[17] Weitzel and Kirk, pp. 43-51.

[18] Scott, pp. 435-538; Warren J. Valine, "A Four-Year Follow-Up Study of Underachieving College Freshmen," Journal of College Student Personnel, 17 (1976), 309-312.

[19] James E. Marcia, "Identity Six Years After: A Follow-Up Study," Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 5 (1976), 145-160; Frank R. Timmons, "Freshman Withdrawal From College: A Positive Step Toward Identity Formation? A Follow-Up Study," Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 7 (1978), 159-173.

[20] Cathleen C. Christensen, Janice M. Birk, and William E. Sedlacek, "A Follow-Up of Clients Placed on a Counseling Center Waiting List," Journal of College Student Personnel, 18 (1977), 308-311; Noeth and Hanson, pp. 28-30; Drummond, pp. 2-20; Jambeck and Reynolds, pp. 2-37.

[21] Shirley A. Van Hoeven, Sharon A. Ratliffe and Sheila Dunleavy, "A Survey of Recent CAS Graduates Who Were Enrolled in CAS 562," Unpublished research project prepared for the teacher preparation area of the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at Western Michigan University, 1974, pp. 1-4.

[22] Van Hoeven, Ratliffe and Dunleavy, pp. 1-4.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter presents a description of how this study was
implemented; more specifically, this description is comprised of
the methodological and procedural aspects that were employed in the
project.

Methods

This section describes the methodological aspects of the present
investigation. The aspects explained in detail are initial question-
naire development, final questionnaire development, and the cover
letter.

Questionnaire development

In September 1977, under the direction of the graduate director,
a memo was sent to all departmental faculty (see Appendix A) that
(1) indicated the nature of the study to be done, (2) stated the
specific kinds of information the department was interested in obtain-
ing, and (3) asked for additional suggestions regarding the construc-
tion of the questionnaire. There were several responses to the
memo all of which affirmed the need for the assessment, but none
of which made any specific, concrete suggestions concerning the
construction of the questionnaire.

In the following months, a trial questionnaire was designed and

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submitted to the graduate director for editing. The result was
a six-page, primarily open-ended survey designed to examine alumni
opinions focusing on four areas: one, occupational concerns, two,
academic concerns, three, personal concerns, and four, recommenda-
tions for specific program conditions. The first three sections
(occupational, academic, and personal) each had questions pertaining
to (1) the relevance of the curriculum and any suggested changes
for improvement, (2) the relevance of the faculty-student relations
and suggested changes for improvement, (3) the adequacy of advisement
and suggestions for future advisors, (4) the most beneficial aspect
of the program, and (5) any additional comments. The fourth section
contained "yes/no" questions regarding recommendations for specific
program conditions i.e. thesis or terminal project requirements
and increase in program required credit hours. Also, this section
included a question asking the respondent whether he/she would
recommend the program to others.

In addition, the trail questionnaire sought demographic informa-
tion. At the beginning of the questionnaire were items regarding
age, marital status, educationl background, current employment
and academic status, employer sponsored reimbursement programs
for graduate education, and the graduate's initial need for enrolling
in the program. Also, demographic data were collected elsewhere
in the questionnaire pertaining to (1) job description, title, and
nature of industry, (2) length of time required to find employment,
(3) master's program emphasis and whether current job was related
to that emphasis, (4) description of academic situation and eventual

occupational goal, and (5) whether or not graduates had received

financial assistance during degree process and, if so, a description

of that assistance.

In Feburary 1978, the tentative survey instrument was sent to

all Communication Arts and Sciences Faculty asking for suggestions.

The response indicated that many changes needed to be made. The

suggested changes fell into three groupings. One, the deletion of

questions pertaining to the relevancy of the program in regard to

the management of one's personal life. Two, the reduction of the

number of open-ended questions because of the problems they pose

in tabulation. Three, the truncation of the questionnaires's length

because of the reluctance of respondents to fill out long surveys.

Final questionnaire

With the assistance of Communication Arts and Sciences Faculty,

a revised questionnaire was developed. Three basic changes were

made. First, many items of a demographic nature were deleted.

Second, items concerned with a respondent's personal life were

deleted. Third, Likert-type items were added in place of many of the

longer open-ended questions. All of these changes reduced the overall

length of the questionnaire to two pages.

The revised questionnaire was brought into final form through

further editing by the graduate director, and more suggestions from

the faculty. After the graduate director's editing, the survey

was re-submitted to the chairman of the department, the administra-

tive assistant, and selected faculty for further scrutiny. As a

result, with the addition of these last modifications the question-
naire reached its final form.

In terms of the basic structure and content, the final question-
naire consisted of five parts (see Appendix B). Part one consisted
of a Likert-type rating of various program aspects. The ratings
were "extremely relevant," "somewhat relevant," "neutral," "somewhat
irrelevant," and "extremely irrelevant." The various program aspects
were course content, relations with faculty, freedom to design one's
curriculum, advisement, and relations with other students.

Part two consisted of relevancy ratings of the master's program
to specific post-graduate concerns. These Likert-type relevancy
ratings were identical to those used in part one. The specific
post-graduate concerns rated were job functioning, securing employ-
ment, further academic studies, goal clarification, and an open-ended
respondent supplied concern.

It should be noted at this point that "relevancy" was intended
to mean the same as the word effective. Thus, "How relevant were
the following aspects of our M.A. Program to your needs?" was
designed to mean: "How effective were the following aspects of our
M.A. Program in meeting your needs?"

Part three consisted of specific program recommendations.
These took the form of "yes," "no" marked responses to questions
concerning (1) higher admission standards, (2) increased degree
credit hour requirements, (3) requiring a Masters Thesis or terminal
project, (4) higher course requirements and standards, (5) greater
number of course offerings, and (6) more emphasis on communication

research methods and theory.

And in part three, there was another item that was not a specific program recommendation but was an item asking whether or not the respondent would recommend the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program to one considering admission.

Part four consisted of demographic items. The structure of these items varied. There were (1) "yes," "no" questions concerning employment status while enrolled in the master's program, (2) an open-ended question providing space for the names of employers who financially supported one's graduate education, (3) a forced choice question concerning one's initial need for enrolling in the program, either because of occupational needs or needs other than occupational, (4) a forced choice question regarding the length of time it took to find satisfying, permanent employment--within one month, between one and four months, within a five to eight month period, between nine to twelve months, within a one to two year period, between two to three years, more than three years, and still haven't, (5) a forced choice question concerning the extent of current employment and schooling--employed full-time, part-time, unemployed, attending school full-time, and part-time, and (6) an open-ended item asking for a current job description or current description of one's specific degree program.

Part five consisted of two open-ended items. The first was a request to state the most beneficial aspect of the program. The second item provided space for any recommended changes or additional comments.

Cover letter

To accompany the questionnaire a cover letter was designed with the purpose of explaining the survey, assuring respondent confidentiality, and encouraging subject response. Confidentiality was assured with the promise "All the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential; in no way will we make any attempt to find out who you are." Moreover, space was not provided on the questionnaire for signatures, and except for a few exceptions the questionnaires were returned without names or return addresses. As with the questionnaire, the cover letter was also submitted to the graduate director for editing and to the faculty for suggestions resulting in its final form (see Appendix C).

Procedures

This section describes the procedural aspects of the present investigation. Aspects explained in detail were subject selection, data collection, and data analysis.

Subject selection

The selection of subjects consisted of three steps. The first step was deciding through discussion with the graduate director that graduates in the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program from the past six years (1972-1977) would be the best alumni grouping. The decision for this time span was based on the thinking that this

grouping would provide enough respondents, that the records for this group would be the most convenient, and that this group would provide the greatest number of functional addresses.

The second step was to acquire the names and addresses of all the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Graduates for the six year span from the director of records in the graduate college. The director of records was able to provide a complete list of names for all 202 master's graduates but only an out-dated and partial list of addresses. As a result, the third step was to contact the alumni office to request current addresses for as many of these graduates as possible. The alumni office responded with a name and address computer read-out listing 144 Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Alumni who had graduated sometime between 1972 and 1977.

Data collection

The actual mailing was completed March 21. The mailing package consisted of an alumni addressed envelope that contained a two page questionnaire, a cover letter, and a self-addressed, postage paid, return envelope to promote a higher response rate. Returned questionnaires were accepted until May 10.

Of the 144 questionnaires that were sent out, two were returned due to insufficient addresses, and 77 were returned in time to be tabulated yielding a response rate of 55 percent.

Data analysis

All responses were numerically coded for computer computation. To better eliminate researcher bias, the actual coding of the open-ended questions was done by a trained outside source. Throughout the questionnaire, where there was no response, "0" was the computer code. However, this "0" was not figured in the computation of data. In other words, given a total sample of seventy-seven, if five people failed to respond to a given item, five "0's" were coded for the computer but when calculations were performed this total sample size was appropriately reduced (by five to seventy-two in this case).

Items in part one of the questionnaire (relevancy ratings for five aspects of the Communication Arts and Sciences Program) were coded: "1" for extremely irrelevant, "2" for somewhat irrelevant, "3" for neutral, "4" for somewhat relevant, and "5" for extremely relevant. These ratings were read in as the first five computer variables (columns).

Items in part two (relevancy of the Communication Arts and Sciences Program to various post-graduate concerns) were coded the same way as in part one. However, the last item was coded differently because it was an open-ended item to which the respondent provided his or her own post-graduate concern. This open-ended item was coded by first creating groupings that reflected trends in the responses such as "'self' awareness," "teaching effectiveness," "ability to adjust or cope," " job effectiveness," and "miscellaneous

or other" which were assigned numerical values "1," "2," "3," "4," and "5" respectively. Then an outside source was brought in to give each response a numerical value on the basis of its perceived category. The items in this section were read in the computer as variables six through ten.

Since part three (recommendations for specific program aspects) consisted entirely of "yes," "no" questions, each response was coded "1" or "2" accordingly. These questionnaire items were read in the computer as variables eleven through seventeen.

Because part four (demographic data) consisted of items with varying structures, most of the items in this section were coded differently.

This section of demographic data dealt with the respondents' employment status while enrolled in the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program. The first question, variable eighteen, was a "yes," "no" question regarding employment while in graduate school; it was coded "1" for "yes" and "2" for "no." Continuing down the questionnaire, variable nineteen was a follow-up question asking if employment was full or part-time; thus, "1" was the designated code for full-time and "2" was the code for part-time. Variable twenty pertained to whether or not one's employer supported the respondent's graduate education; "yes" was coded "1," and "no" was coded "2." Variable twenty-one was an open-ended follow-up item inquiring as to who was the employer who aided in the respondent's educational expenses. This open-ended item was coded by creating four groupings that reflected trends in the responses: "public

school systems," "Western Michigan University," "hospitals," and "miscellaneous or other." These groupings were respectively assigned values of "1," "2," "3," and "4."

Variable twenty-two in the demographic section was orginally designed to isolate two different needs for initially enrolling in the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program: either "occupational needs," or "needs other than occupational." But upon tabulation of the responses it was noticed that many respondents marked both possible answers. Thus, it became apparent that there might be a third population with unique characteristics; consequently, it was deemed useful to make a third category: "those who had enrolled because of both occupational as well as needs other than occupational." This item was coded by assigning a "1" if the respondent only marked occupational needs, a "2" if the respondent only marked needs other than occupational, and "3" if the respondent marked both occupational as well as needs other than occupational.

Demographic variable twenty-three provided time period groupings pertaining to the amount of time in months it took to find either satisfying, permanent employment or acceptance at the school they hoped to attend. This item was coded by assigning a "1" for the zero to one month grouping, "2" for the one to four month category, "3" for the five to eight month grouping, "4" for the nine to twelve month category, "5" for the one to two year grouping, "6" for the two to three year grouping, "7" for the three or more year category, and "8" for the still haven't grouping.

There were two items that provided categories for the extent of

the respondent's current employment and schooling. Variable twenty-four dealt with the extent of employment: "1" was assigned if employment was marked full-time, "2" if part-time was marked, and "3" if unemployed was marked. Variable twenty-five dealt with the extent of schooling; it was coded with "1" if attending school full-time was marked, and "2" if part-time was marked.

The demographic section provided an open-ended item regarding descriptions of employment and schooling. Variable twenty-six pertained to job descriptions. This variable was coded by creating nine categories that reflected patterns in the responses: "teaching on a university level," "teaching on a secondary or elementary level," "social service," "politics," "nursing," "media," "administrative," "business related," and "miscellaneous or other." These groupings were assigned respective values of "1," "2," "3," "4," "5," "6," "7," "8," and "9."

Variable twenty-seven pertained to descriptions of schooling. This variable was coded by the creation of two groups that reflected response patterns: "those pursuing a Ph.D." and "those pursuing another master's or specialist degree." These groupings were assigned respective values of "1" and "2." As with the other open-ended responses, an outside source assigned a numerical value for each response.

Part five consisted of two open-ended items concerning the most beneficial aspect of the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program and suggested changes and comments about the program.

Variable twenty-eight pertained to what respondents wrote in

as the most beneficial aspect of the program. This variable was coded by creating nine groups with corresponding values which reflected response patterns: "the faculty" was assigned 1, "the flexibility of the curriculum" was assigned 2, "interpersonal courses" was assigned 3, "helping students develop 'self' awareness or awareness of their relations with others" was assigned 4, "a general approval of the whole curriculum" was assigned 5, "specific course listings (listings of one or two classes)" was assigned 6, "a wide range of course listings" was assigned 7, "the applicable or practical aspects of the program" was assigned 8, and "miscellaneous or other" was assigned 9. Then, on the basis of the perceived group patterns, numerical values were designated for each response.

The last item on the questionnaire was of an open-ended nature providing space for any suggested changes or additional comments the respondent might have. Variable twenty-nine pertained to the suggested changes alumni made. This variable was coded by creating nine categories with corresponding values which reflected response patterns: "more career counseling" was assigned 1, "more extensive course offerings" was assigned 2, "requiring a Masters Thesis" was assigned 3, "more research and theory" was assigned 4, "more business related courses" was assigned 5, "more classes applicable to the outside world" was assigned 6, "more directed toward helping teachers cope" was assigned 7, "higher standards" was assigned 8, and "miscellaneous or other" was assigned 9. All responses were then given numerical values on the basis of perceived group patterns. Variable thirty pertained to comments alumni made. This variable

was coded by creating four categories with corresponding values which reflected response pattern: "keep the program the same" was assigned 1, "thanks for the program" was assigned 2, "condemnation of the program" was assigned 3, and "miscellaneous or other" was assigned 4. Then, on the basis of perceived grouping patterns, numerical values were designated for each response.

Computer analysis was performed by using the "STDES" command on the computer "BANK" program. This "BANK" command provided full page descriptive statistics for each questionnaire item consisting of value percentages and an overall mean score which were displayed on a lino-typed bar graph. In addition, "STDES" analyses were also done on each separate population grouping provided by the demographic data (i.e. initial needs for enrolling in the program and job descriptions).

Summary

This chapter has provided an explanation of the methods and procedures employed in the present investigation. The assessment questionnaire was described in terms of its development, structure, and content. The criteria for selecting the mailing subjects were discussed, and the procedures for data collection and analysis were explained.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the results
obtained from the present study. These results will be presented
in two major sections. The first section contains a description
of the sample provided by demographic data. Included in this
section is information pertaining to (1) employment status, (2)
academic status, and (3) the alumni's initial need for enrolling
in the program. The second section describes the evaluative data
pertaining to alumni opinion about the Communication Arts and
Sciences Graduate Program and discusses (1) the relevancy of
specific graduate program areas to student needs, (2) the relevancy
of the graduate program to specific post-graduate concerns, (3)
the recommendations for specific aspects of the Communication
Arts and Sciences Curriculum, (4) the most beneficial aspect of
the program, and (5) the suggested changes in and comments on the
graduate program.

Demographic Data

The purpose of collecting demographic data in a study of this
nature was to provide descriptive information about graduates which
could be useful in advisement of future master's applicants and
students and to provide meaningful groupings to detect possible
differences among segments of the population. Descriptive information

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provided by the demographic data revealed characteristics about the sample related to the respondent's employment status, the respondent's academic status, and the respondent's need for initially enrolling in the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program.

Employment status

This section contains demographic results pertaining to the extent of current employment, the type of employment, the length of time it took to acquire employment, and the employment situation while in the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program.

Extent of employment

Feedback from the survey indicated that most graduates were fully employed. Of the seventy-six master's graduates who responded to this item (one did not respond), 82 percent reported that they were fully employed, 13 percent reported that they were partially employed, and 5 percent reported that they were unemployed.[1]

Type of employment

Independently grouped job descriptions provided by the alumni fell into nine general classifications: the most prevalent being elementary and secondary teachers. Of the sixty-five responding to the questionnaire who reported their job description, 28 percent (18 people) were elementary or secondary teachers, 15 percent (10 people) were in some form of business, 14 percent (9 people) were teaching at the college level, 14 percent (9 people) were in

social service, 11 percent (7 people) were in a media related occupa-
tion, 8 percent (5 people) were in administrative positions, 5 percent
(3 people) were in nursing, 2 percent (1 person) were in politics,
and 5 percent (3 people) were put in a miscellaneous category.

Time acquiring employment

The length of time after graduation necessary for the alumni
to find permanent, satisfying employment or acceptance at the
school they were attending was divided into eight sections: seven
time periods plus one category for those who still had not found
satisfying, permanent employment or been accepted at the school
they hoped to attend. Results showed that of the sixty-nine who
responded to this item (eight did not respond), 42 percent (29
people) said that they found satisfying, permanent employment or
school acceptance within one month of graduation, 19 percent (13
people) obtained it during a five to eight month period, 14 percent
(10 people) still had not found it, 9 percent (6 people) obtained
it within a one to four month period, 7 percent (5 people) found it
within a one to two year period, 6 percent (4 people) found it within
a two to three year period, and 3 percent (2 people) obtained it
after more than three years.

Employment while in school

The results on employment status while enrolled in the Communica-
tion Arts and Sciences Graduate Program includes the portion of
respondents who were employed, the extent of their employment,

the portion of employers who financially supported respondents'

schooling, and the names of those employers who provided that aid.

While enrolled in the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate

Program most alumni were employed. Results showed that of the

seventy-one who responded to this item (six did not respond),

sixty-seven or 94 percent said that they were employed while in the

program, 67 percent were fully employed leaving 33 percent partially

employed. (It should be noted here that this high percentage of

employed may be related to the high percentage who reported having

acquired satisfying, permanent employment within one month of

graduation.) Also, nineteen or 28 percent of the sixty-seven alumni

who said that they were employed reported that while enrolled in

the graduate program they received financial support from their

employers. Results of a follow-up open-ended question revealed

that descriptions of these 19 employers who provided aid fell into

four groups led by public school systems with 58 percent, followed

by Western Michigan University with 26 percent, hospitals with 5

percent, and the miscellaneous category with 11 percent.

Academic status

Results on academic status were described in terms of the

portion of respondents who were pursuing further education, the

extent of this schooling, and descriptions of the type of schooling.

Descriptive data indicated that 18 percent or fourteen of the

seventy-seven respondents reported that they were pursuing further

schooling. Of those fourteen continuing their schooling, 65 percent

indicated that they were attending part-time and 36 percent indicated
that they were attending on a full-time basis. Also, in answer to
an open-ended item asking for descriptions of the degree the alumni
were pursuing, twelve responses were provided. These responses
were placed into two categories with those pursuing a Ph.D. with
83 percent and those pursuing another master degree or specialist
degree with 17 percent.

Need for program enrollment

The assessment questionnaire was orginally designed to isolate
two different needs for initially enrolling in the Communication
Arts and Sciences Graduate Program: "occupational needs," and
"needs other than occupational." But upon tabulation of the results,
it was noticed that many respondents marked both responses. Thus,
it became apparent that there might be a third population with
unique characteristics; consequently, it was deemed useful to make
a third category: "those who had enrolled because of occupational
as well as needs other than occupational." Of those seventy-five
who responded to this item (two did not respond), 51 percent initially
enrolled most often because of occupational needs. There were 28
percent who enrolled because of both occupational needs and needs
other than occupational. And 21 percent who enrolled because of
needs other than occupational.

Evaluative Data

The purpose of collecting evaluative data in this investigation

was to assess what alumni think (with the benefit of hindsight) about the Communication Arts and Sciences Program. Important to the study of any curriculum are the perceptions of students who have graduated and are already in the labor market or in school pursuing further degrees. This type of feedback is crucial to college administrators, faculty, and staff if they are going to make meaningful modifications in curricula, to better meet student needs.

Presentation of evaluative data provided by alumni respondents are divided into five sections: (1) the relevancy of program specifics, such as, course content, relations with faculty, freedom to design one's own curriculum, and relations with other students, (2) the relevancy of the graduate program to post-graduate concerns, such as, job functioning, securing employment, further academic studies, clarifying goals, and respondent provided concerns, (3) the recommendations for program requirements and emphasis, and course offerings and requirements, plus, a response in regards to program endorsement, (4) the respondent's provided view of the most beneficial aspect of the program, and (5) the respondent's provided suggested changes in and comments on the graduate program.

As mentioned earlier, part of the purpose of collecting demographic information was to enable an examination of the data for differences exhibited by the various groups within the surveyed population. However, since most of the groups contained an insufficient number of respondents, tests for assessing statistical significance were not conducted. Instead, tables are provided

showing the comparative responses for the various groups.[2]

Relevancy of program specifics

Presented in this section are results of relevancy ratings for five program aspects: course content, relations with faculty, freedom to design one's own curriculum, advisement, and relations with other students. As mentioned in Chapter III, these program specifics were given numerical ratings according to their relevancy: "5" signifying "extremely relevant," "4" for "somewhat relevant," "3" for "neutral," "2" for "somewhat irrelevant" and "1" for "extremely irrelevant." Also, note that Table 1 contains the comparative average ratings of each demographic group for each of the program aspects.

Evaluative data described most alumni as having found course content relevant to their needs. For the seventy-five (two did not respond) who responded to this item, there was an average score of 4.43 with 52 percent responding "extremely relevant."

Most alumni found their relations with faculty relevant to their needs. For the seventy-six (one did not respond) who responded to this item, there was an average score of 4.61 (the highest average score of any aspect of the program) with 71 percent marking "extremely relevant."

Most alumni found the freedom to design their own curriculum relevant to their needs. For the seventy-six (one did not respond) who replied on this item, there was an average score of 4.59 with 71 percent responding "extremely relevant."

TABLE 1

Average (mean) Relevancy Ratings of
Various Master's Program Aspects

Program Aspects	Course Content	Faculty Relations	Curriculum Freedom	Advisement	Student Relations	Combined Aspects
Groups:						
Fully Employed#62*	4.44 (61)**	4.56	4.56	3.79 (61)	3.84	4.22
Continuing Schooling#14	4.64	4.71	5.00	3.93	4.00	4.46
Occupational Needs#38	4.34	4.42	4.45	3.63	3.45	4.06
Other Needs#16	4.53 (15)	4.81	4.63	3.81	4.00	4.36
Combined Needs#21	4.52	4.81	4.90	4.30 (20)	4.33	4.56
College Teachers#9	4.78	4.56	4.78	3.56	3.56	4.25
El. and Sec. Teachers#18	4.39	4.78	4.50	4.00	3.83	4.30
Social Service#9	4.89	4.78	4.78	3.56	4.22	4.45
Nurses#3	4.33	4.67	5.00	4.33	4.33	4.53
Media#7	3.71	4.29	4.43	3.43	3.00	3.77
Administra-tors#5	4.40	4.40	4.40	3.75 (4)	4.20	4.23
Business#10	4.22 (9)	4.50	4.70	3.80	3.70	4.23
Total Sample#77	4.43 (75)	4.61 (76)	4.59 (76)	3.83 (75)	3.79 (76)	4.25

*this number indicates the number of respondents in each group.

**number in parentheses indicates the base figure for computation if the number was different from the total group number marked in the left hand column.

Most alumni found advisement to be only slightly relevant to their needs. For the seventy-five (two did not respond) who responded to this item, there was an average score of 3.83 with the most frequently marked category being "somewhat relevant" with 33 percent.

Most alumni found their relations with other students as having been slightly relevant. For the seventy-six (one did not respond) who replied on this item, there was an average score of 3.79 (the lowest average score of any aspect of the program) with the most frequently marked category being "extremely relevant" with 36 percent.

The relevancy of each of the program aspects was combined to provide an average of all listed program categories. The combined average revealed that alumni found the various aspects of the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program relevant to their needs with an average rating of 4.25.

Relevancy to post-graduate concerns

Included in this section are results of the relevancy ratings of the program to areas of post-graduate concerns: job functioning, securing employment, further schooling, goal clarification, and student provided concerns. Each of these concerns was given numerical ratings according to its perceived relevancy to alumni: "5" signifying "extremely relevant," "4" for "somewhat relevant," "3" for "neutral," "2" for "somewhat irrelevant" and "1" for "extremely irrelevant." In addition, it should be noted that Table 2 provides group breakdowns concerning each area of post-graduate concern.

TABLE 2　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　37

Average (mean) Relevancy Ratings of CAS Program
to Various Post-Graduate Concerns

Post-Graduate Concerns	Job Functioning	Securing Employment	Further Studies	Goal Clarification
Groups: Fully Employed#62*	4.24	3.28 (61)**	3.37 (59)	3.80
Continuing Schooling#14	4.57	3.46 (13)	4.07	4.38 (13)
Occupational Needs#38	4.13	3.11 (37)	3.14 (35)	3.54 (37)
Other Needs#16	4.25	3.63	3.88	4.00
Combined Needs#21	4.43	3.40 (20)	3.30 (20)	4.43
College Teachers#9	4.78	4.38 (8)	3.78 (8)	3.88 (8)
El. and Sec. Teachers#18	4.22	3.06	3.33	3.83
Social Service#9	4.44	3.00	2.67	4.11
Nurses#3	5.00	2.67	3.33	4.33
Media#7	2.86	2.57	3.17 (6)	3.57
Administrators#5	4.00	3.60	3.50 (4)	3.80
Business#10	4.10	3.11 (9)	3.10	3.60
Total Sample#77	4.22 (76)	3.28 (74)	3.35 (72)	3.85 (75)

*this number indicates the number of respondents in each group.

**number in parentheses indicates the base figure for computation if the number was different from the total group number marked in the left hand column.

Alumni found the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program relevant to job functioning. For the seventy-six (one did not respond) who responded to this item, there was an average rating of 4.22 with 57 percent responding "extremely relevant."

Most alumni found the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program only slightly better than neutral toward securing employment. For the seventy-four (three did not respond) who responded to this item, there was an average rating of 3.28 with the most frequently marked category being "neutral" with 28 percent.

For those alumni who were continuing their formal education, questionnaire data showed that the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program was relevant toward their further academic studies. For those fourteen who replied on this item, there was an average rating of 4.97 with the most frequently marked category being "extremely relevant."

The Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program was slightly relevant toward helping alumni clarify their goals. For the seventy-five (two did not respond) who responded to this item, there was an average rating of 3.85 with the most frequently marked response being "somewhat relevant" with 37 percent.

The questionnaire provided space in which respondents could indicate how the graduate program had been relevant to them. In analyzing the results there were nineteen alumni who responded to this item and in each case they rated their own response as "extremely relevant." These responses roughly fell into four categories.

The greatest number of responses, 58 percent, fell into the "'self' awareness" group. These responses are listed below:[3]

"Understanding of my personal life and adapting to people as they are."

"The development of 'self' acceptance."

"The ability to reach out to others as a consequence of my 'self' knowledge."

"The growth of 'self' awareness and actualization."

"The acquisition of a sense of 'self' fulfillment."

"The ability to accept an intellectual challenge without having my sense of 'self' greatly threatened."

"The capacity to understand myself."

"The understanding of the relation of myself to all aspects of living."

"The maturing of my 'self' concept."

"The development of 'self' motivation and 'self' concept."

"The development of 'self' understanding and growth."

There were 21 percent of the responses that fell into the "ability to cope or adjust" category. These responses are listed below:

"The capacity to manage my own personal survival."

"The knowledge to make effective decisions and know why they were made."

"The ability to adjust to life situations."

"The intelligence to cope with a world that has never read Wendell Johnson."

The category of "teaching effectiveness" comprised 11 percent

of the responses. These responses are listed below:

"The ability to individualize my classroom teaching."

"The ability to teach communication to others."

The grouping "job effectiveness" accounted for 11 percent of the responses. These responses are listed below:

"The improvement of job functioning."

"The ability to land a production job in media."

Specific program recommendations

This section contains results from "yes/no" questionnaire items primarly designed to elicit alumni opinion about program conditions. These items consisted of questions regarding admission standards, credit hour requirements, thesis or terminal project requirements, emphasis on research and theory, course offerings, course requirements and standards, and program endorsement.

Questionnaire data showed that most alumni felt that graduate academic admission standards should not be higher. Of the seventy-one (six did not respond) who responded to this item, 68 percent of the population marked "no" academic admission standards should not be higher. Comparative group breakdowns regarding admission standards can be found in Table 3.

Most alumni felt that Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Program requirements should not be increased to thirty-six credit hours. Of the seventy-one (six did not respond) who responded to

TABLE 3

"Should graduate academic admission standards be higher?"

Groups:	YES	NO	
Fully Employed	27%	73%	100%(59)*
Continuing Schooling	23	77	100%(13)
Occupational Needs	41	59	100%(37)
Other Needs	40	60	100%(15)
Combined Needs	6	94	100%(18)
College Teachers	50	50	100%(8)
El. and Sec. Teachers	22	78	100%(18)
Social Service	25	75	100%(8)
Nurses	0	100	100%(3)
Media	29	71	100%(7)
Administrators	20	80	100%(5)
Business	50	50	100%(8)
Total Sample	32	68	100%(71)

*The figures shown in parentheses indicate the number of responses from which the percentages were derived.

NOTE: difference in reported group sizes in this table and in the subgroup sizes in Tables 1 and 2 were due to the 6 people who did not respond to this item.

this item 59 percent answered "no" the credit hour requirements should <u>not</u> be increased. For percentage breakdown for each of the identified groups in this study see Table 4.

Alumni were essentially balanced in their opinion regarding whether or not a Masters Thesis or terminal project should be a Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program requirement. Of the seventy-four (three did not respond) who responded to this item, 51 percent marked "no" a Masters Thesis or terminal project should <u>not</u> be a program requirement. Results of statistical group breakdown concerning thesis or terminal project requirements can be found in Table 5.

Most alumni felt that the Communication Arts and Sciences Program should <u>not</u> pay more attention to communication research and theory. Of the seventy-three who responded to this item (four did not respond), 62 percent felt the program should <u>not</u> pay more attention to communication research methods and theory. Comparative group breakdowns regarding emphasis on research and theory can be found in Table 6.

Most alumni felt that course offerings were sufficient to graduate in the length of time they intended. Of the seventy-five who responded to this item (two did not respond), 77 percent answered "yes" course offerings were sufficient. See Table 7 for group breakdown concerning course offerings.

Most alumni felt that specific Communication Arts and Sciences course requirements and standards were high enough so that graduates felt their education was worthwhile. Of the seventy-four who

TABLE 4

"Should our degree requirements be increased to 36 credit hours?"

	YES	NO	
Groups: Fully Employed	38%	62%	100%(61)*
Continuing Schooling	36	64	100%(14)
Occupational Needs	46	54	100%(35)
Other Needs	44	56	100%(16)
Combined Needs	26	74	100%(19)
College Teachers	57	43	100%(7)
El. or Sec. Teachers	22	78	100%(18)
Social Service	50	50	100%(8)
Nurses	0	100	100%(3)
Media	43	57	100%(7)
Administrators	60	40	100%(5)
Business	33	67	100%(9)
Total Sample	41	59	100%(71)

*The figures shown in parentheses indicate the number of responses from which the percentages were derived.

NOTE: difference in reported group sizes in this table and in the group sizes in Tables 1 and 2 were due to the 6 people who did not respond to this item.

TABLE 5

"Should a Masters Thesis or terminal project be a requirement?"

	YES	NO	
Groups: Fully Employed	42%	58%	100%(60)*
Continuing Schooling	57	43	100%(14)
Occupational Needs	55	45	100%(38)
Other Needs	60	40	100%(15)
Combined Needs	25	75	100%(20)
College Teachers	33	. 67	100%(9)
El. or Sec. Teachers	29	71	100%(17)
Social Service	50	50	100%(8)
Nurses	67	33	100%(3)
Media	57	43	100%(7)
Administrators	60	40	100%(5)
Business	50	50	100%(10)
Total Sample	49	51	100(74)

*The figures shown in parentheses indicate the number of responses from which the percentages were derived.

NOTE: difference in reported group sizes in Tables 1 and 2 were due to the 3 people who did not respond to this item.

TABLE 6

"Do you feel the CAS Program should pay more attention
to communication research methods and theory?"

	YES	NO	
Groups: Fully Employed	32%	68%	100%(59)*
Continuing Schooling	64	36	100%(14)
Occupational Needs	42	58	100%(38)
Other Needs	27	73	100%(15)
Combined Needs	37	63	100%(19)
College Teachers	67	33	100%(9)
El. or Sec. Teachers	17	83	100%(18)
Social Service	38	62	100%(8)
Nurses	67	33	100%(3)
Media	50	50	100%(6)
Administrators	80	20	100%(5)
Business	22	78	100%(9)
Total Sample	38	62	100%(73)

*The figures shown in parentheses indicate the number of responses
from which the percentages were derived.

NOTE: difference in reported group sizes in Tables 1 and 2 were due
to the 4 people who did not respond to this item.

TABLE 7

"Were course offerings sufficient for you to graduate
in the length of time you intended?"

	YES	NO	
Groups:			
Fully Employed	84%	16%	100%(61)*
Continuing Schooling	93	7	100%(14)
Occupational Needs	84	16	100%(37)
Other Needs	88	12	100%(16)
Combined Needs	86	14	100%(21)
College Teachers	78	22	100%(9)
El. or Sec. Teachers	78	22	100%(18)
Social Service	100	0	100%(9)
Nurses	100	0	100%(3)
Media	100	0	100%(7)
Administrators	100	0	100%(5)
Business	80	20	100%(10)
Total Sample	85	15	100%(75)

*The figures shown in parentheses indicate the number of responses
from which the percentages were derived.

NOTE: difference in reported group sizes in Tables 1 and 2 were due
to the 2 people who did not respond to this item.

responded to this item (three did not respond), 77 percent said

"yes" specific course requirements and standards were high enough

so that graduates felt their education was worthwhile. For percentage

breakdown for each of the identified groups regarding course require-

ments and standards see Table 8.

Most alumni would recommend the Communication Arts and Sciences

Graduate Program to an individual who was considering admission.

Of the seventy-five who responded to this item (two did not respond),

88 percent said "yes" they would recommend the program. Results

of statistical group breakdowns concerning program endorsement

can be found in Table 9.

Most beneficial aspect of the program

The questionnaire provided a space for respondents to indicate

what they felt was the most beneficial aspect of the Communication

Arts and Sciences Graduate Program. Alumni complied with seventy-

three responses (four did not respond) which fell roughly into nine

major categories (see Appendix D for a complete listing of alumni

responses).

The category that contained the greatest number of responses,

19 percent, was "faculty." A few of the sample responses are

listed below:

> "The relationships with faculty. The enrichment of the
> regular academic program with faculty who made themselves
> available for consultation; thus, providing feedback."

> "The interaction with professors who provided honest
> evaluation and concern."

TABLE 8

"Were specific CAS course requirements and standards high enough
so that you felt your graduate education was worthwhile?"

	YES	NO	
Groups: Fully Employed	76%	24%	100%(62)*
Continuing Schooling	92	8	100%(13)
Occupational Needs	68	32	100%(37)
Other Needs	87	13	100%(15)
Combined Needs	90	10	100%(21)
College Teachers	89	11	100%(9)
El. or Sec. Teachers	76	24	100%(17)
Social Service	89	11	100%(9)
Nurses	100	0	100%(3)
Media	57	43	100%(7)
Administrators	80	20	100%(5)
Business	60	40	100%(10)
Total Sample	77	23	100%(74)

*The figures shown in parentheses indicate the number of responses
from which the percentages were derived.

NOTE: difference in reported group sizes in Tables 1 and 2 were due
to the 3 people who did not respond to this item.

TABLE 9

"Would you recommend our program to an individual who is
considering admission to a communication program?"

Groups:	YES	NO	
Fully Employed	89%	11%	100%(61)*
Continuing Schooling	100	0	100%(14)
Occupational Needs	82	18	100%(38)
Other Needs	88	12	100%(16)
Combined Needs	100	0	100%(20)
College Teachers	100	0	100%(8)
El. or Sec. Teachers	89	11	100%(18)
Social Service	100	0	100%(9)
Nurses	100	0	100%(3)
Media	57	43	100%(7)
Administrators	100	0	100%(5)
Business	80	20	100%(10)
Total Sample	88	12	100%(75)

*The figures shown in parentheses indicate the number of responses from
which the percentages were derived.

NOTE: difference in reported group sizes in Tables 1 and 2 were due to
the 2 people who did not respond to this item.

The "applicable or practical aspects of the program" also accounted for 16 percent of the responses. Some of these responses were:

> "I have found practical application pertaining to all the course work I took."

> "That which was applicable not theoretical."

The grouping "the flexibility of the curriculum" accounted for 15 percent of the responses. Some examples of these responses were:

> "The flexibility was incredible. I did projects, papers, etc. that were related to my field."

> "The freedom to design a set of classes that met my needs."

"Helping students develop 'self' awareness or awareness of their relations with others" received 10 percent of the responses. Some examples of these responses were:

> "The program was an exciting experience which more than anything else aided my personal growth."

> "The program enabled me to overcome my introversion and express myself as an individual."

"Interpersonal courses" received 8 percent of the responses. Some samples of these responses were:

> "I enjoyed my field of 'interpersonal' communications."

> "I found the interpersonal courses most beneficial."

"A wide range of course listing" categorized 8 percent of

the responses. Some of these responses were:

> "Interpersonal, Non-Verbal, and General Semantics seemed
> to open my eyes to a whole new horizon concerning rela-
> tionships."

> "General Semantics, Listening, Group Problem-Solving,
> and Instructional Radio and Television were the most
> beneficial aspects."

"A general approval of the whole curriculum" accounted for

8 percent of the responses. Some of these responses were:

> "I felt that every aspect of the program was excellent."

> "I felt that small classes, class discussions, lectures,
> and faculty availability were all strong beneficial aspects."

There were 7 percent of the responses that mentioned "specific

courses (listings of one or two classes)." Examples of these responses

were:

> "Organizational Communication and Group Problem-Solving
> were the most beneficial."

> "A course called Listening was the most help."

There were 8 percent of the responses that were put in the

"miscellaneous" grouping. Some of these responses were:

> "The informal classroom setting and the lack of an overly
> competitive atmosphere were the best parts."

> "The experience in theatre was the most beneficial."

Suggested changes and comments

The questionnaire provided space for alumni to write in any

suggested changes or additional comments they might have. Alumni

complied with sixty-one responses (sixteen did not respond):

forty-five suggested changes and sixteen comments.

Statements regarding suggested changes roughly fell into

nine categories (see Appendix E for a complete listing of suggested

changes made by alumni).

The grouping "more career counseling" was one of the categories

that contained the greatest number of responses (16 percent).

A few of these responses are listed below:

> "The program needs more career orientation; more specif-
> ically, the program should do much more to prepare
> graduates to teach at the community college/college
> level. Also, the program very definitely needs a placement
> service."

> "More in depth career counseling would be an asset to
> the department and those it serves."

"More extensive course offerings" was a category that also

accounted for 16 percent of the responses. Some of these responses

are listed below:

> "Even though the Theatre Department split from the
> Communication Arts and Sciences Department, please allow
> graduate hours to be accumulated in the Theatre Department.
> Also, please provide broader Summer graduate offerings
> and have more in depth Summer workshops."

> "More courses need to be offered for full-time working
> students in the evenings. Also, Spring and Summer course
> changes are mandatory, and more flexibility in course
> offerings are needed from year to year."

There were 13 percent of the responses that fell into the

"more research and theory" category. Below some of these responses

are listed:

> "I do recommend adding a course in research methods as
> a requirement. Many times I really wish I had it, so
> now I'm learning on my own."

> "Expand the program to include more theory, especially
> theory construction. Also, expand to include empirical
> and historical-critical research methods."

There were 13 percent of the responses that fell into the

"higher standards" category. Some of these responses were:

> "Courses should have higher standards and be more directed
> towards the professional person."

> "Many fellow students did not seem to have a clear idea
> of why they were in the program. I would like to see
> one or two courses used as a screening or as an opportunity
> to clarify goals before admission."

The category "more emphasis in helping teachers cope" made up

9 percent of the responses. Two of these responses were:

> "If I were to request any new courses, I would request
> an educational course that addressed teacher-student
> relationships i.e. how to communicate to a student when
> the student needs help dealing with divorce, death, and
> both parental and child abuse."

> "More classroom planning and material preparation needed
> for those in education."

"Need more business related courses" was a grouping that

accounted for 7 percent of the responses. Two of these responses

were:

> "Because Western has such a fine Communication Department
> and because communication itself is becoming increasingly
> more important (especially in my career business),

I feel the Communication Department should do some thinking concerning the business student and add some business communication related courses."

"In the Business and Professional courses and the Persuasive Speaking courses, I strongly recommend including such aspects as conducting small business meetings, board meetings, staff meetings, etc. rather than focusing strictly on the larger audiences."

The category "more classes directly applicable to the outside world" made up 7 percent of the responses. Some of these responses were:

"Graduate students need more practical experience, especially in regards to real studio time for those in media."

"Too much time is spent debating the merits of section 315 when you should instead be making classes applicable (i.e. exposing people to the realities of broadcasting)."

"Require a Masters Thesis" was a grouping that accounted for 4 percent of the responses. These responses were:

"I strongly feel that the program should require a Masters Thesis."

"The changes are coming. Anyway--I'd keep open admission without requiring previous speech work and prerequisites, but make it harder to 'get by' without a focus: require a thesis or comparable project not as an eliminating factor, but as an aid to specifying uses for the academic program."

The "miscellaneous" category accounted for 16 percent of the responses. Some of these responses were:

"Education on the graduate level should allow one to explore himself at his own pace as much as possible."

"Some instructors need to lighten up on busy work.
Either a project is worth doing or it is not worth
the time."

A computer check was done in an attempt to isolate those
who requested more career counseling and it was discerned that
six out of seven were either unemployed or only partially employed
while enrolled in the Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate
Program.

Comments concerning the Communication Arts and Sciences Program
roughly fell into three categories (see Appendix F for a complete
listing of handwritten comments about the program).

The category "keep the program the same" accounted for 56
percent of the responses. Two of these responses were:

"I believe the graduate program in Communication Arts
and Sciences should remain the same. A large part of
its beauty is the amount of freedom of choice it gives
enrolled students."

"I feel the program is fine the way it is. It has an
excellent program and staff."

"Thanks for the graduate program" was the category that accounted
for 31 percent of the responses. Some of these responses were:

"Although it may appear that I am 1000 miles from my
master's objectives, the exact reverse is actually true.
I interact with individuals/groups everyday, and my
success and happiness is largely due to the program I
pursued and assimilated in your department. Thanks to
you all."

"The personal concern unusual to large universities has
left a lasting impression on me. I really appreciate
the faculty."

"Condemnation of the program" was a category that made up 13 percent of the comments. In total, these responses were:

"Quit filling the heads of those young people with bullshit about vague theories about communication."

"I learned much more in my undergraduate classes because we tested out what we discussed. Graduate school was all talk, mostly boring talk at that."

Summary

This investigation sought answers to two central questions in regards to Communication Arts and Sciences Graduate Alumni. First, what was the employment/academic status, both past and present, of master's program graduates? Second, how well did the graduate program meet alumni needs? A survey questionnaire was designed providing both demographic as well as evaluative data to answer these questions.

In summary, demographic data provided information about the academic/employment status of master's graduates. Most alumni were fully-employed with a variety of occupations, for which the most frequent was elementary and secondary teaching. They most often found satisfying, permanent employment within one month of graduation; plus, they were usually employed while enrolled in the program. In addition, alumni enrolled initially in the program most often because of occupational needs. And, some graduates received financial support from their employers while enrolled in the program. Also, some alumni were pursuing further education.

In brief, evaluative data provided information pertaining to

how well the graduate program met alumni needs.

Results showed that the combined program aspects were relevant to alumni needs. Specific aspects such as faculty, course content, and the freedom to design one's own curriculum stood out as especially relevant; whereas, advisement and relations with other students were rated as only slightly relevant.

Results indicated that the program varied in its relevance to different aspects of post-graduate concerns. Most graduates described the master's program as relevant to job functioning, essentially neutral toward securing a job and slightly relevant to goal clarification. Those who were continuing their schooling reported that the program was relevant to their formal education. Also, many wrote in post-graduate concerns, led by "'self' awareness" toward which the program was relevant.

Results revealed that a high percentage of graduates would recommend the program to someone considering admission, and most graduates were not in favor of specific program changes posed in the questionnaire.

Results showed greatly varied responses in regard to open-ended questions concerning the most beneficial aspect of the program and suggested changes and comments. The most beneficial aspects were led by "faculty," "applicable or practical aspects of the program," and "the flexibility of the curriculum." Suggested changes were led by "more career counseling," "more extensive course offerings," and "more emphasis in helping teachers cope." Comments were led by "keep the program the same," and "thanks for the program."

Endnotes

[1] See "Data Analysis" section of Chapter III for explanation of how those items which were not responded to were computed.

[2] Reasons should be noted for apparent discrepancies regarding the combined group numbers that should logically equal the total number of respondents. For instance, in Tables 1 and 2, it appears as though the number who were fully employed and the number who where pursuing further schooling together should equal the total number of all respondents, seventy-seven, but in fact, they equal seventy-six. There were three reasons for this discrepancy: (1) some did not respond to the demographic items regarding either the extent of employment or the extent of further schooling, (2) some indicated that they were neither fully-employed nor attending school, and (3) some were both fully-employed and attending school. In addition, it would seem as though the number of respondents in the combined categories of needs for initially enrolling in the program should equal seventy-seven but instead it equaled seventy. The sole reason for this discrepancy was that there were seven who did not respond to this specific item. Finally, it would appear as though the number of respondents in the combined job description categories should equal seventy-seven, however, combined they equal sixty-one. The reasons for this discrepancy were two fold: one, thirteen respondents did not respond to this item and two, three were put in a miscellaneous category not reported in the tables.

[3] For purposes of clarity handwritten responses were edited.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This conclusion chapter contains (1) an interpretation of
questionnaire responses made by those in the demographic groups,
(2) a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the study,
(3) a presentation of suggestions for further research, (4) a discussion
of implications for further program development, and (5) a summary
of the results of the study.

Responses From Demographic Groups

Using the demographic data, groups were identified on the
basis of employment status, academic status, and initial need for
enrolling in the program. It was hoped that the identified group
responses to the questionnaire could be examined for significant
differences. Unfortunately, because of the limited number of
respondents within most groups, tests for statistical significance
could not be done. Nonetheless, after examining the data closely,
this researcher would like to point out differences among groups
that appear to exist. Presentation of these notable group differences
are divided into three categories on the basis of questionnaire
content: (1) program relevancy ratings, (2) post-graduate concerns,
(3) specific program recommendations.

Program relevancy ratings

When average scores for all items in the program relevancy

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section of the questionnaire were analyzed, those demographic groups

(1) those pursuing further schooling, (2) nurses, and (3) those

with occupational/other needs appeared especially high in their

program relevancy ratings. Media respondents ranked the program

as only slightly relevant to their current needs.

Relevancy ratings of program to post-graduate concerns

Those with occupational/other needs, social service employees,

those pursuing further schooling, college teachers, and nurses

found the program especially relevant to job functioning. Adminis-

trators and especially persons in media saw the program notably

less relevant to job functioning.

College teachers as a group rated the program high in relevancy

for securing of employment.

Those in social service, nursing, those pursuing further

education, and those with occupational/other needs found the program

particularly high in relevancy to goal clarification. Those who

were in business, media, and those who entered the program with

occupational objectives viewed the program especially low in relevancy

to goal clarification.

Program recommendations

Discussion of group responses regarding specific program

recommendations is divided on the basis of questionnaire items

concerning program standards, credit hour requirements, requirement

of a Masters Thesis or terminal project, research and theory,

course requirements and standards, and program endorsement.

Administrators, those with occupational/other needs, and nurses seemed especially strong in their feelings that program standards should not be higher.

Those with occupational/other needs, elementary and secondary school teachers, and nurses seemed to feel especially strong that credit hour requirements should not be increased. College teachers and administrators seemed to feel particularly strong that credit hour requirements should be increased.

The question whether or not a Masters Thesis or terminal project should be a program requirement elicited considerable difference of opinion among groups. College teachers, elementary and secondary teachers, and those with occupational/other needs all felt especially strong that a thesis or terminal project should not be a program requirement. Those pursuing further schooling, those in media, those with occupational needs, those with needs other than occupational, administrators, and nurses all seemed to feel particularly strong that a thesis or terminal project should be a program requirement. This divergence of strongly felt opinion was also reflected in the higher number of gratuitous commentaries made both for and against the requirement for a thesis or a terminal project.

There was also considerable difference of opinion regarding whether or not the program should pay more attention to communication research and theory. Those with needs other than occupational, business people, and elementary and secondary teachers seemed to feel particularly strong that communication research and theory

should not be a program requirement. Those pursuing further schooling,

college teachers, nurses, and administrators seemed to feel that

the graduate program should pay more attention to communication

research and theory. Again, this divergence of strongly felt opinion

was reflected in the greater number of gratuitious commentaries

both for amd against the requirement.

Those in social service, college teachers, those with occupational/

other needs, those pursuing further schooling, and nurses appeared

to feel especially strong that course requirements and standards

were high enough. Those in business and media did not appear to

feel that course requirements and standards were high enough.

In regards to program endorsement, those pursuing further

schooling, those with occupational/other needs, college teachers,

social service people, nurses, and administrators indicated unanan-

imously that they would recommend the program to others.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this survey discussed in this section are

the study's advantageous "decision-oriented" design, contribution

to a growing, changing field of speech communication, and tailoring

to meet the specific needs of the Communication Arts and Sciences

Master's Program.

According to Stufflebeam, a needs assessment like this study

is a "decision-oriented" evaluation designed to proactively aid

in improving the program as well as to retroactively aid in assessing

its worth. It is this type of evaluation that can assist educators

in both making and defending decisions that are in the best interest

of meeting student needs.[1]

The field of speech-communication has grown from a field

primarily concerned with public speech to one which, in addition,

has a strong focus on interpersonal communication. As a result,

there is little information available regarding the effectiveness

of the latter emphasis in speech communication, consequently, any

information pertaining to the effectiveness of such a program is

of value.

This survey was specifically designed to address the informational

needs of the communication program. As mentioned in Chapter II,

this was ensured with extensive input of the director of the graduate

program as well as other faculty members in the design and implementa-

tion of the questionnaire.

The limitations of this study were primarily a consequence of

sampling problems, questionnaire design difficulties, and the problem

of internal bias.

Sampling problems arose for two reasons: (1) although the

response rate was not unreasonably low, the total number of respondents

and especially the number of respondents within the groups was quite

low, and (2) the sample may have been biased since it is a common

research phenomenon that those who feel positively about a subject

are more inclined to respond to that subject than those who feel

negatively.

Limitations resulting from the nature of the questionnaire design

were created because (1) the questionnaire was designed specifically

for the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program, therefore, limiting the study's ability to generalize to the speech-communication field, (2) structurally speaking a questionnaire is not "transactional" in nature--that is, information obtained was entirely the result of a one time message and response, thus, lacked the clarification possible in a transactional process, (3) a primary term in the questionnaire, "relevant" was ambiguous in that respondents could have interpreted the term differently, and the survey did not ask them to specify in what way the program was relevant, and (4) the question regarding how long it took to find employment was poorly worded--it should have stated that only those seeking employment after graduation should have responded.

This was an internal study, meaning that it was an evaluation of a program which was designed and implemented by those who were a part of that program. As a result, bias was a possibility.

<center>Implications For Further Research</center>

What jobs are speech-communication graduates qualified for? Although this study indirectly addressed this question by requesting alumni job descriptions, there is still a strong need for further clarification in this regard. This could be achieved by conducting studies that further define the marketability of communication graduates (i.e. studies that assess what those in the community see communication graduates as being qualified for), and studies that specifically ask for job descriptions from alumni who found their communication degree a significant factor in finding employment.

How effective are speech-communication programs in meeting
students needs? Even though the primary purpose of this study
was to evaluate the effectiveness of Western's Communication Master's
Program--to make statements about the effectiveness of speech-commun-
ication with confidence, more research is required. More specifically,
additional evaluative studies should be done of communication graduate
alumni, undergraduate alumni, and students still in process. Also,
follow-up studies should be done that employ other sampling procedures
to ensure a larger sample (especially in demographic groups) and
transactional studies (i.e. interviews) to ensure a greater clarity
of results for the researcher. Furthermore, surveys should be done
that go into greater depth regarding the value of communication
programs to alumni.

What research could be done to improve the effectiveness of
the Communication Arts and Sciences Program in meeting students'
needs? In answer to this question, it would seem wise for the
program to periodically maintain contact with its master's alumni
to evaluate the success of the program in meeting student needs.
In addition, it might prove useful to conduct similar evaluations
of undergraduate alumni and those still enrolled in the program.

Implications For Further Program Development

On the basis of findings from the questionnaire, implications
can be drawn for further program development in the Communication
Arts and Sciences Graduate Program. It should be noted that the
implications given in this section were made solely on the researcher's

interpretations of the findings.

In regard to advisement, it might be wise to assess as clearly as possible an applicant's needs for enrolling in the program. Even though this is currently done by requiring the applicant to submit a statement of educational objectives, it might be useful to clearly identify his or her occupational needs. The reasoning behind this suggestion is that applicants may enter the program with two divergent needs: the need for an auxiliary aide to one's job and general life functioning, and the need to use the program to later obtain satisfying employment. Once identified, graduates who wish to use this degree to find employment could probably benefit greatly by the assignment of an appropriate departmental faculty member to serve as a career counselor.

Also, students could possibly benefit from a job posting system. This might entail the posting of jobs communication graduates have found, postings of available openings in speech communication, access to publications regarding communication careers, and information concerning any professional contacts the department has with the community.

It would also seem wise to identify an applicant's professional field as well as to find out if the applicant has any intent on pursuing further schooling after graduate work in this program. This might help in advising by reporting how others in the same profession or with the same education aspirations felt about the program. For instance:

1. Nurses could be told that other nurses enrolled in the

program found the program especially relevant to their needs.

Also, they could be told that nurses rated the program very high

in relevancy to their job functioning, and that most nurses felt

a need for more emphasis on communication research

2. Those in media, on the other hand, could be informed that

those in media who responded to the questionnaire viewed the program

comparatively low in relevance and very low in relevance in regard

to job functioning

3. Those who intend on pursuing further studies after completion

of Western's Communication Program could be informed that those

continuing their schooling in retrospect felt that the program

was relevant toward their further studies and toward goal clarifica-

tion; however, they would recommend more emphasis on communication

research and theory and would recommend requiring a Masters Thesis

or terminal project

If the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program, in

the future, were to prepare a pamphlet to attract perspective

graduate students, it might wish to include some of the results from

this study: (1) alumni found the program relevant to their needs,

(2) alumni found the program relevant to job functioning, and (3)

alumni who enrolled with a combination of occupational as well as

needs other than occupational found the program especially relevant.

Also, in terms of circulation, it would make sense to be sure to

distribute the pamphlet to both hospitals and school systems since

employees from both institutions found the program high in relevance

and both institutions seem more likely to provide financial assistance

to their employees doing graduate work in communication.

Summary

In summation, the results of this study provided descriptive data regarding graduates from the Communication Arts and Sciences Master's Program as well as evaluative feedback about the program.

Demographic data revealed information about the employment/academic status of communication alumni:

1. Alumni initially enrolled most often because of occupational needs

2. Most graduates were employed while enrolled in the program

3. Some graduates received financial support from their employers while enrolled in the program

4. Most alumni found permanent employment within one month of graduation

5. Most alumni were fully employed in occupations led by elementary and secondary teaching, and followed by business, collegiate teaching, social service, media, administration, nursing, and politics

6. Some alumni were furthering their education

Evaluative feedback about the program revealed the following:

1. Alumni indicated that faculty, course content, and the freedom to design one's own curriculum stood out as especially relevant to their needs

2. Alumni felt that advisement and relations with other students stood out as less relevant to alumni needs

3. Alumni saw the program as relevant to their job functioning

4. Graduates saw the program neutral in relevance toward the securing of a job

5. Alumni felt that the program was somewhat relevant toward goal clarification

6. Nineteen alumni provided items toward which the program was extremely relevant. The most frequently supplied relevant item was 'self' awareness

7. Those pursuing further schooling found the program relevant to their continuing education

8. Graduates were <u>not</u> in favor of program changes regarding program requirements and standards, program emphasis, and course offerings, requirements, and standards

9. The most frequent changes that alumni requested had to do with more career counseling, more extensive course offerings, and more emphasis toward helping teachers cope

10. Graduates indicated that they would recommend the program to someone considering admission

11. The most beneficial aspects of the program alumni listed were the faculty, the practical aspects, and the flexibility of the curriculum

12. The most frequently provided alumni comments consisted of statements thanking the department for the program and urging the department to keep the program the same

In conclusion, the evaluation provided results which indicated that alumni, employed in a wide variety of occupations, saw the Communication Arts and Sciences Program as being highly successful

in meeting their needs. With the exception of advisement, all program aspects were clearly seen as relevant to alumni needs and the program was seen as relevant to job functioning. In addition to the results, curriculum areas were identified for continued review, analysis, and development for the purpose of program improvement.

Endnote

[1] William J. Webster and Daniel L. Stufflebeam, "The State of Theory and Practice in Educational Evaluation in Large Urban School Districts," Invited address presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 24-29, 1978. Printed in the United States of America, pp. 16, 17.

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APPENDIX A

THE DEPARTMENTAL MEMO

TO: C.A.S. Faculty

FROM: David Lau, Graduate Assistant

DATA: September 6, 1977

I have been asked by the Graduate Committee Chairperson, William
E. Buys, to assess the current status of those who have completed
our graduate program within the past five years.

Possible questions to be addressed to prior students are a descrip-
tion of their present situation, the felt relevance of our graduate
program to job acquisition, and the felt relevance of our program
to functioning in their present situation.

Any additional questions that you think are important will be
appreciated.

Please leave suggestions in Bill Buys' mailbox no later than
Monday, September 19th.

Thank you.

APPENDIX B

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

READ THESE CATEGORIES
OVER CAREFULLY. THEN
ANSWER EACH QUESTION.

CIRCLE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

	VERY IRRELEVANT	SOMEWHAT IRRELEVANT	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT RELEVANT	VERY RELEVANT
1. How relevant were the following aspects of our M.A. Program to your needs:					
a. Course content	1	2	3	4	5
b. Relations with faculty	1	2	3	4	5
c. Freedom to design own curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
d. Advisement	1	2	3	4	5
e. Relations with other students	1	2	3	4	5
2. How relevant has our program been to you in these areas:					
a. Job functioning	1	2	3	4	5
b. Securing employment	1	2	3	4	5
c. Further academic studies	1	2	3	4	5
d. Clarifying goals	1	2	3	4	5
e. (other) _____	1	2	3	4	5

	YES	NO
3. Should Graduate School academic admission standards be higher?	1	2
4. Should our degree requirements be increased to 36 credit hours?	1	2
5. Should a Masters Thesis or terminal project be a requirement?	1	2
6. Were specific CAS course requirements and standards high enough so that you felt your graduate education was worthwhile?	1	2
7. Were course offerings sufficient for you to graduate in the length of time you intended?	1	2

8. Would you recommend our program to an individual who is considering admission to a communication program?

	YES	NO
	1	2

9. Do you feel the CAS Program should pay more attention to communication research methods and theory?

	YES	NO
	1	2

10. While enrolled in the CAS Graduate Program were you also employed?

	YES	NO
	1	2

	FULL TIME	PART TIME
a. If YES, were you employed	1	2

	YES	NO
b. Did your employer support your educational expenses?	1	2

c. If YES, who was your employer? _____

11. Was your purpose for enrolling in our M.A. Program related to:

OCCUPATIONAL NEEDS _____ or NEEDS OTHER THAN OCCUPATIONAL _____

12. How long did it take you to find either a satisfying permanent job or be accepted at the school you now attend?

0-1 mo. _____   1-4 mos. _____   5-8 mos. _____ 9-12 mos. _____

1-2 yrs. _____   2-3 yrs. _____   3 or more yrs. _____   still havent't _____

13. Are you currently:

Employed Full-Time_____   Part-Time _____   or Unemployed _____

Attending School Full-Time_____   or Part-Time_____

14. Describe either your job or the degree you are pursuing:_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What aspect of our program did you find most beneficial?_____

_____

_____

_____

16. Please note any recommended changes or additional comments you might have:

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

THE COVER LETTER

March 21, 1978

Dear Graduate:

Where are you? What are you doing? How relevant has our C.A.S.
Program been to you?

We have developed a two page questionnaire to answer these ques-
tions. All the information you provide will be kept striclty con-
fidential; in no way will we make any attempt to find out who you
are. Thus, we hope that you will fill out the questionnaire and
send it back to us as quickly as possible.

Your response is important to us, so please tear off this page,
fill out the enclosed questionnaire and place it in the self-addressed,
stamped envelope provided for you and place it in the mail.

Sincerely,

David L. Lau

David L. Lau
Graduate Assistant

PLEASE TEAR OFF THIS SHEET AND FILL OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX D

ALUMNI RESPONSES REGARDING
THE MOST BENEFICIAL ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM

ALUMNI RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION
"WHAT ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM DID YOU FIND MOST BENEFICIAL?"

Faculty (category for responses)

"The relationships with faculty. The enrichment of the regular
academic program with faculty who made themselves available for
consultation; thus, providing feedback."

"The interaction with professors who provided honest evaluation
and concern."

"I felt all of the faculty practiced what what they preached and
communicated in an open frame of reference."

"The professors were the best part."

"The faculty, courses taught by Bill Livingston and Lyda Stillwell
in particular."

"Buys, Brown, Crane, Stech, Dieker, etc., the faculty made the
program."

"Being introduced to the fascinating world of human communication
by highly skilled instructors who care."

"The best aspect was the faculty relations which provided encourage-
ment and support."

"The contact I had with some of the staff in relation to the course
content."

"The student-instructor relationship."

"The accessibility and excellence of the faculty who didn't seem
to function in ivory towers."

"Some of the great faculty support—especially in the interim of
looking for a job."

"The concern of some of the professors in really trying to help
students find where they are."

"The exposure to an academically excellent and philosophically
varied faculty."

Applicable or Practical Aspects of the Program

"I have found practical applications pertaining to all the course work I took."

"That which was applicable not theoretical."

"Both theory and practice were the best parts of the program. However, the practical stands out foremost because knowledge of theory without the ability to convert it into useful application is a fruitless exercise."

"The ability to design class projects applicable to my teaching area."

"The practical classroom experiences including the research project."

"The courses related to practical studio experience."

"The traditional courses which taught practical skills."

"The ever-applicable process of critiquing and listening."

"The organizational applications of communication theory; also, production oriented courses."

"The lesson plans I could transfer to my own students (especially with group interaction)."

"Actually doing what you are learning."

"The practical experience of TV production classes and my experience at WIDR."

The Flexibility of the Curriculum

"The freedom to design a set of classes that met my needs."

"The ability to choose projects rather than exams even though sometimes both are needed."

"The freedom to design a custom program with emphasis on my interests."

"The flexibility of classes offered in extension courses."

"The flexibility of the program."

"The flexibility was incredible. I did projects, papers, etc. that were related to my field."

"The academic freedom."

"The freedom to design a course of study in accordance with my own needs."

"The freedom to design one's own program."

"The choice in writing one's own "research" program (final six hours), and the relative freedom to explore and write about one's own ideas rather than writing to appease a particular advisor."

"The ability to make my own program."

Helping Students Develop "Self" Awareness or Awareness of Their Relations with Others

"The program was an exciting experience which more than anything else aided my personal growth."

"The program enabled me to overcome my introversion and express myself as an individual."

"Theory building and the application of the program to our present cultural context helped me to better understand how people behave."

"The program helped me get in touch with 'me.' Also, it helped me understand others and be more effective in relating with others."

"The environment of the program facilitated learning without being threatening. Thus, it helped increase my knowledge but did much more for my 'self-concept' and my relationships with others."

"It let me explore, accepting me as a worthwhile human with lots to share."

"The classes pertaining to 'communication' helped me learn about myself and others."

Interpersonal Courses

"I enjoyed my field of 'interpersonal' communications."

"I found the interpersonal courses most beneficial."

"The training in interpersonal communication."

"The program design which stressed interpersonal related courses."

"The interpersonal aspect of the program."

"The interpersonal communication courses."

A Wide Range of Course Listings

"Interpersonal, Non-verbal, and General Semantics seemed to open
my eyes to a whole new horizon concerning relationships."

"General Semantics, Listening, Group Problem-Solving, and Instructional
Television were the most beneficial aspects."

"Emotion and Cognition, General Semantics, and TV Production."

"Interpersonal courses, General Semantics, and cognate courses in
counseling were the most beneficial."

"History, theatre, and cognate courses were the best."

"The courses in Conflict Resolution, Small Group Problem-Solving,
and Listening were the most beneficial to me in my interpersonal
as well as my business relationships."

A General Approval of the Whole Curriculum

"I felt that every aspect of the program was excellent."

"I felt that the small classes, class discussions, lectures, and
faculty availability were all strong beneficial aspects."

"Working with other graduate students sharing mature ideas, courses,
and close contact with professors were the best aspects."

"Of the work I do in engineering, communications accounts for 50
percent."

"The course content, interpersonal courses, faculty, and the graduate
assistantship were the most helpful."

"There were many aspects I found most beneficial: contact with
the faculty members, research, seminar board for thesis probing,
workshop weekend, interpersonal laboratory, and the versatility
of the program."

Specific Courses (one or two listings)

"Organizational Communication and Group Problem Solving were the most beneficial."

"A course called Listening was the most help."

"Group Problem-Solving and Leadership were the most valuable."

"Dr. Dieker's course on behavior, attitudes, and motivation theories."

"The production courses were the best (Media Regulations and FCC Laws)."

Miscellaneous

"The informal setting and the lack of an overly competitive atmosphere were the best parts."

"The experience in theatre was most beneficial."

"None, the program was irrelevant to occupational, social and other needs in a "real world" situation.

"After graduating I realized the communication Master's served no useful purpose."

"Allowing theatre courses in the communication program (This is before they went on their own)."

"The dynamics of group interaction."

APPENDIX E

ALUMNI RESPONSES REGARDING
SUGGESTED CHANGES IN THE PROGRAM

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ALUMNI RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM
ASKING FOR SUGGESTED CHANGES IN THE PROGRAM

More Career Counseling (category for responses)

"The program needs more career orientation; more specifically,
the program should do much more to prepare graduates to teach at
the community college/college level. Also, the program very definitely
needs a placement service."

"More in depth career counseling would be an asset to the department
and those it serves."

"Students need career counseling: they need to learn how to sell
their degree. The University needs to make it known more to the
business and social world--proclaiming its merits to society and
industry. It is great but seemingly unknown and misunderstood."

"Students need to be counseled about employment opportunities.
What kinds of jobs are available to a person with a masters in
communication."

"Advise students of job opportunities and assist in job placement.
Consider coordinating the Communication Department with other
disciplines for job placement."

"The program needs better counseling for a better long range look
at job opportunities in the future."

"There should be assignment (by mutual consent) of a career advisor
to periodically meet with students to discuss possible occupational
orientations for the students' program. Both Ernie Stech and Tom
Pagel seem to lean in this direction on their own."

More Extensive Course Offerings

"Even though the Theatre Department split from the Communication
Arts and Sciences Department, please allow graduate hours to be
accumulated in the Theatre Department. Also, please provide broader
Summer graduate offerings and have more in depth Summer workshops."

"More courses need to be offered for full-time working students
in the evenings. Also, Spring and Summer course changes are mandatory,
and more flexibility in course offerings are needed from year to year."

"Offer more courses in the field off campus."

"Do something with scheduling so it is possible to take communication classes at the same time you are taking short term theatre workshops. Probably more course offerings would take care of the problem."

"There is a need for more courses related to listening."

"Please add more classes related to an interpersonal practicum and a group practicum."

"There should be more varied theatre courses available at night."

More Research and Theory

"I do recommend adding a course in research methods. Many times I wish I had it, so now I'm learning on my own."

"Expand the program to include more theory, especially theory construction. Also, expand to include empirical and historical-critical research methods."

"I think that perhaps more research might be set forth for those who plan on working on a doctorate."

"The program needs much more research and theory."

"Maybe this was my own lack of foresight, but I believe all master's candidates need to be introduced to the research process--not necessarily as a primary investigator but at least as a consumer of new knowledge."

"Expand curriculum to include additional aspects of communication study beyond that of interpersonal relationships. Add meat (i.e. methods and theory) to more of the interpersonal classes."

Higher Standards

"Courses should have higher standards and be more directed towards the professional person."

"Many fellow students did not seem to have a clear idea of why they were in the program. I would like to see one or two courses used as a screening or as an opportunity to clarify goals before admission."

"Master's program needs higher standards especially in regard to requiring proficiency in management skills."

"Credit hours should be raised, already there are so many individual communication categories that it takes more than thirty credit hours of time to even explore one area."

"Standards should be raised so that Introduction to Interpersonal Communication is a prerequisite requirement."

"The program should require courses in media and journalism."

More Emphasis in Helping Teachers Cope

"If I were to request any new courses, I would request an educational course that addressed teacher-student relationships i.e. how to communicate to a student when the student needs help dealing with divorce, death, and both parental and child abuse."

"More classroom planning and material preparation needed for those in education."

"More tangible teaching methods are needed rather than 'do your own thing.' Specifically, more involvement in collegiate speech is needed."

"There should be less emphasis upon intra-personal communication and more emphasis for future teachers upon public speaking, debate, parlimentary procedure and discussion. Also, there should be more emphasis regarding how to coach forensics."

More Business Related Courses

"Because Western has such a fine Communication Department and because communication itself is becoming increasingly more important (especially in my career business), I feel the Communication Department should do some thinking concerning the business student and add some business communication related courses."

"In the Business and Professional courses and the Persuasive Speaking courses, I strongly recommend including such aspects as conducting small business meetings, board meetings, staff mettings etc. rather than focusing strictly on the larger audience."

"I would definitely recommend more emphasis on business or industry in the communication program."

More Classes Directly Applicable to the Outside World

"Graduate students need more practical experience, especially in regards to real studio time for those in media."

"Too much time is spent debating the merits of section 315 when you should instead be making classes applicable (i.e. exposing people to the realities of broadcasting)."

"Program should improve the practical capabilities of the curriculum."

Require a Masters Thesis

"I strongly feel that the program should require a Masters Thesis."

"The changes are coming. Anyway--I'd keep open admission without requiring previous speech work and prerequisites, but make it harder to 'get by' without a focus: require a thesis or comparable project not as an eliminating factor, but as an aid to specifying uses for the academic program."

Miscellaneous

"Education on the graduate level should allow one to explore himself at his own pace as much as possible."

"Some instructors need to lighten up on busy work. Either a project is worth doing or it is not worth the time."

"Interpersonal Theory should be a two semester course--not really enough time to really cover the content--especially Spring and Summer terms."

"It is a good idea for a professor to stay with his/her orginal syllabus."

"Department should develop a strong-coordinated internship program for graduate students. Also, get 'Master's Organizational Communication' going."

"I would like a doctoral program in interpersonal communication."

"I would like to see a McLuhan disciple on the faculty."

APPENDIX F

ALUMNI COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

ALUMNI RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM
ASKING FOR ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Keep the Program the Same (category of responses)

"I believe the graduate program in Communication Arts and Sciences
should remain the same. A large part of its beauty is the amount
of freedom of choice it gives enrolled students."

"I feel the program is fine the way it is. It has an excellent
program and staff."

"In an increasingly structured and rigidified environment, please
strive to maintain a flexible and open posture with regard to
admission standards, degree requirements, and individually designed
programs."

"Though I didn't think I was fully enough prepared for doctoral
work, I did think the program was effective since it helped me
grow in necessary and important ways."

"For me the communication program was a very worthwhile experience.
Keep it up."

"I have no suggested changes. I enjoyed every bit of the program
the way it was and was actually sorry to graduate. I wish you had
a master's program in nursing."

"The program was great, try to maintain a high degree of academic
and social interaction between staff and staff, staff and students,
and students and students."

"I feel the program was beneficial, especially because so much of
the interaction was on a one to one basis. I learned much faster
and enjoyed the classes more due to this factor. If I should ever
seek further education, I would certainly go on in communication.
I only wish Western had a program for a doctorate degree. I feel
it was an excellent program with excellent instructors."

"The program was excellent, I wish you had a doctorate in inter-
personal communication."

Condemnation of the Program

"Quit filling the heads of those young people with bullshit about
vague theories about communication."

"I learned much more in my undergraduate classes because we tested
out what we discussed. Graduate school was all talk, mostly boring
talk at that."

Thanks for the Graduate Program

"Although it may appear that I am 1000 miles from my master's
objectives, the exact reverse is actually true. I interact with
individuals/groups everyday, and my success and happiness is largely
due to the program I pursued and assimilated in your department.
Thanks to you all."

"The personal concern unusual to large universities has left a
lasting impression on me. I really appreciate the faculty."

"My experience in the communication program was a tremendous growth
opportunity in both the cognitive and affective aspects of my life.
I learned to care and see people as I never had before. I miss you
all very much and think of you often. I'm grateful for those times
we shared."

"Thanks for the program. I miss you all!"

"Thanks for having such a good program."