In June, 2001 the Department of Communication signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in the third cycle of DePaul University's Academic Program Review Process (Cycle 3). After consultation with the Department of Communication Cycle Three Self Study Committee (Evensen, Martin, Speicher, Teboul, and Willard) and the broader faculty, the following report outlines progress to date toward the achievement of MOA goals.

1. CURRICULUM

   a. Assessment. The department established an assessment committee, which designed and completed an inaugural assessment project to explore learning outcomes in Communication Theory, a multi-section core course offering. While the committee identified learning goals and corresponding learning activities, as well as gathered evidence through direct measures of student learning (pre and post testing of student concept masteries, as revealed within in-class essays completed at the start and near the conclusion of the Winter, 2002 term), the results were deemed inconclusive by faculty teaching course sections. First, faculty questioned the validity of the writing samples as representative of student knowledge, because the "...assessment observations were not embedded in graded course activities and, therefore, there was little motivation on the part of students to demonstrate their true learning outcomes."[1] Secondly, "the faculty thought that multiple points of observation would have increased the committee's ability to

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accurately gauge student outcomes by triangulating the results from multiple indicators."\textsuperscript{2}\textsuperscript{2} These (and other) methodological considerations caused faculty to press for renewed investigation of the learning outcomes in this core course during the 2002-2003 academic year. As Michael Mezey, Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences, noted: ". . .it is clear that the department learned something about the assessment process and how to make such an exercise more useful the next time around."\textsuperscript{3}\textsuperscript{3}

Based on the ". . .increased faculty insight into the practice of doing assessment and the constructive feedback on how future assessment activities might be improved,"\textsuperscript{4}\textsuperscript{4} a re-formulated departmental assessment committee has drafted an assessment plan for Communication Theory, which was presented to the Department of Communication at the faculty meeting on September 13, 2002. Based on multiple indicators, involving faculty responsible for the course in the assessment process, and using measures embedded within graded work in the class, committee members will assess learning outcomes and recommend changes in order to improve student learning. This proposal has been forward to the Dean of Liberal Arts and Science for review. This second assessment project began in Autumn, 2002.

The Capstone Committee in the Department of Communication deliberated the advisability of investing in either program-wide or course assessment projects associated with the capstone class. The department now offers a capstone based on the present curriculum; however, a major revision of the curriculum is anticipated. A revised curriculum proposal is currently under review by the LA&S Curriculum Committee. Since faculty knew about student perceptions of the undergraduate departmental curriculum based on a student survey conducted in 2000, focus groups of recent graduates assembled in Spring and Summer, 2001 as well as a thematic summary of student conclusions derived from capstone portfolio essays across two terms (Winter, 2000 and Spring, 2001), faculty agreed to invest in revision of the curriculum as the most pressing priority for programmatic improvement.

b. Revision of the Undergraduate Curriculum. In Spring, 2000 Communication sought and received a Departmental Initiative Grant from the University Quality of Instruction Council (QIC) to support an Undergraduate Planning Retreat. Prior to the retreat Faculty did preliminary planning at three meetings in Spring, 2000 and continued curricular planning and retreat preparation in September and October, 2001. From October 12-14, 2001 faculty forged the skeleton of the revised curriculum and established future work groups, which included all members of the departmental faculty. As specified in the MOA this curricular revision was based upon findings from the department assessment initiative (student work, surveys, etc.) and reflected gateway courses for varied specialties, greater upper division specialization, fewer core requirements, and greater student choices as well as flexibility.

Five major tracks of course work were identified in the revised major: (1) Journalism (JOU); (2) Political and Social Discourse (PSD); (3) Public Relations and Advertising (PRA); (4) Radio, Television, Film (RTF); and (5) Relational, Group, and Organizational Communication (RGO).

\textsuperscript{2}\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.\textsuperscript{3}\textsuperscript{3} "Re: Assessment," Memorandum, August 13, 2002.\textsuperscript{4}\textsuperscript{4} "Assessment Report," 4.
From Autumn, 2001 until Spring, 2002 faculty contributed to department-wide discussions, draft formulations, and copy revisions.

On May 17, 2002 the Department of Communication Undergraduate Curriculum Proposal was forwarded to the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Curriculum Committee. Feedback is expected shortly.

c. Servicing New Degree Programs. The department hired two tenure-track faculty in Public Relations in Spring, 2001: an Associate Professor with considerable teaching and administrative experience and an Assistant Professor with solid teaching experience, though a newly minted Ph.D. Both faculty members teach graduate and undergraduate offerings. One serves as Graduate Program Director for the newly launched MA in Public Relations and Advertising and now chairs the search committee to hire a tenure track faculty member in Advertising during this academic year. In 2002-2003 the department also seeks to hire a tenure track faculty member in Journalism.

In addition to faculty hires, an additional full-time staff member also was hired to support the new MA and to relieve the workload on the departmental administrative assistant. With these employee additions the curriculum has gained important personnel.

2. FACULTY

a. Service Load. In the MOA Dean Mezey suggested that the department reassess its heavy reliance on committees as an internal governance mechanism. Above all, however, the MOA articulated an agreement “. . . to monitor more closely the service obligations internal to the department so that junior faculty will not continue to be overburdened with service.” Faculty discussed improved approaches to governance and voiced strong support for participatory rather than authoritarian governance; however, this was within a context of “working smart” and of reducing the size of internal committees and the number of obligations undertaken by any single faculty member in a given year. The following agreements were endorsed: (1) tenured faculty chair all standing committees; (2) committees consist of 2-3 members (with the exception of the Personnel Committee); (3) no departmental committee meetings are scheduled on Mondays or Tuesday (thus assuring some predictable blocks of research time); (4) untenured, first year hires are excused from service on standing committees; (5) committees are composed each May with an eye toward faculty availability and the scope of other committee obligations . . . and membership is both voluntary and rotational (though at least one member continues to ensure committee continuity); (6) streamlined Personnel Committee processes now operate with only 2-3 faculty members observing the teaching of each person under formal review. In addition, faculty agreed to use a blend of methodologies in order to expedite work. Thus, electronic exchanges of drafts, telephone conferences, or other means can reduce the number of meetings required to complete tasks. Finally, the total number of departmental faculty meetings has been reduced from approximately fifteen to eighteen annually to only six in 2002-2003. Faculty collaborate in work groups associated with curricular specialties and often accomplish the work of the department in small subsets of faculty, which facilitates communication and increases the voice of participants. Faculty continue fine-tuning departmental processes. All agreements are works in progress, as experimentation progresses to find ways to work more efficiently together and to address service loads.
b. Part-time and Adjunct Faculty. The MOA stipulates that: “The department will continue to monitor the quality of part-time faculty and will consider having senior faculty take part in some classroom observations.” In 2001-2002 the Adjunct Faculty Director inaugurated a trial instrument of adjunct faculty through an eight-question evaluation of teaching effectiveness that probed the content, presentation, and classroom management of part-time faculty. Both senior and junior faculty visited adjunct classrooms during Winter, 2002. Written assessments were shared with adjunct faculty and mutual discussions between paired adjuncts and full-time faculty often resulted.

This pilot program in adjunct evaluation followed more than a decade of student evaluation of every course taught within the department. After consideration of the experimental effort last year, the current Adjunct Faculty Director, prepared a refined proposal for continued adjunct faculty assessment. This proposal will be discussed at the Departmental Faculty Meeting on October 25, 2002. Based on research in the field of faculty assessment and departmental experience, he recommends all adjunct faculty will be reviewed twice in their initial two years of employment and once in every two year period thereafter. In this way adjunct teaching evaluation will be a regularized process within departmental life and be shared by both senior and junior faculty. Though the interval between evaluation visitations remains for discussion, the process seems likely to continue.

Other processes commended in the MOA also endure. The department maintains complete personnel files on each adjunct and holds competitive interviews for available positions. Two orientations (one for new hires and another for continuing adjunct faculty) continue prior to Autumn term. New faculty orientations are offered as needed, if additional hires occur in subsequent terms. Continuing faculty orientations usually contains a teaching workshop in which participants share ideas for teaching excellence or learn about new resources available to support instruction.

3. RESOURCES

a. Improved Resource Allocation. The calculation of departmental enrollments still requires clarification; however, the problems are related more to PeopleSoft, software difficulties rather than to the unwillingness of any parties to receive or to act on accurate counts. Dean Mezey improved the departmental budget with a sensitive eye toward increased students and to enhance resource allocation; hence, there is better coverage of basic needs within the department. Continuing budget adjustments in subsequent years will be important in order to continue this positive effort to meet the needs of expanding students and faculty.

b. Staffing. As discussed in 1c (above) the department hired two full time faculty and is conducting two additional searches in 2002-2003 “. . .to teach in the new MA in Advertising and Public Relations [sic], and to support a new undergraduate curriculum.” This corresponds with the staffing resources required for undergraduate and graduate course work in Public Relations and Advertising and endorsed in the MOA.

Issues on which there is joint commitment to continue working
1. Curriculum: Willingness to take departmental courses to other campuses remains a future possibility, although such outreaches would require adequate support (library, staff, technical services) and resources (critical mass of students, faculty, etc.). During Summer Session I, 2002 the department supported a section of CMN 212, Small Group Communication, on the Barat campus on an experimental basis. Presently the work on the undergraduate curriculum revision, the development of the Digital Media Center (for LA&S), and the mounting of the MA in Public Relations and Advertising at Lincoln Park for its inaugural cohort have been the central focus of departmental efforts.

2. Service Load. See discussion in 2a (above).

3. Resources: Development of a Media Center. The Digital Media Center (DMC) on the fifth floor of SAC opened to students in September, 2002. Another state-of-the-art media center also is available in the Student Center. These facilities are operated by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, but many departmental classes in film studies and video production are scheduled in the centers. Journalism, art, web design, and marketing classes also will utilize the facilities; hence, these resources now support departmental curricular offerings. Providing appropriate instructional space for radio production courses will be a future challenge, since accommodation of these offerings in the DMC may not prove feasible, as video production and graphic design courses increase. For now, however, the resources constitute a great improvement over past facilities and technology.

Issues noted for further discussion

1. Curriculum: Offering More Courses in the Liberal Studies Program. While a communication course in the First Year Program on Public Speaking or Communication remains interesting, the faculty tabled its development until the undergraduate curriculum was revised, approved and enacted. The department has increased the number of sections taught in the First Year Program and in other requirements or domain electives in Liberal Studies. While this is an improvement, faculty will seek approval of other classes, too, and the degree of acceptance afforded such proposals remains to be determined.

2. Institutional Support. The department still seeks broader institutional support for its new initiatives, such as the new undergraduate curriculum. The department sees real potentials for enrollment growth and curricular depth, if granted such support. Cross-departmental collaboration is envisioned as part of the evolving curricula.
3. Members of the Department of Communication cooperated with faculty in English and Art in discussions concerning development of a New Media Studies program. These discussions continue and the next meeting is scheduled for mid-October, 2002.

University-level Issues and Commitments

According to the MOA: “In subsequent conversations about . . .major issues, the units, the deans, the Academic Program Review Committee members, and the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs all have recognized the need for university-level coordination in the following areas: a) developing appropriate staffing models to support growth; b) assisting units in the transition to PeopleSoft student administration system and in getting the maximum benefits from it, such as identifying and counting double majors, enforcing prerequisites, and securing better information and support for student advising; c) providing research assistance to units through university-level research offices; d) improving support for advising, especially in light of PeopleSoft; e) facilitating cross-college collaboration within DePaul with respect to new programs of study.

While some improvements in these areas have been promised, much is still in process. Perhaps those best qualified to address university-level progress on these fronts should author this section of the report.

At the department level we are aware of discussion and software or training development efforts, but tangible outcomes are still awaited.