

Undergraduate Council Report on the Department of Media and Communication Studies Academic Program Review (draft)

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A. Introduction

The department of Media and Communication Studies offers a B.A. and a certificate in Media and Communication Studies.

The B.A. program in Media and Communications Studies is relatively young, with a 2007 inception. The B.A. program grew from 32 degrees conferred in the 2009-2010 school year to from 64 to 65 degrees conferred each year from 2011 to 2014. The department claims the highest student-faculty ratio in the university, with 300 majors and five full-time faculty members.

B. Student Learning Outcomes

The department hopes to provide a rigorous, interdisciplinary course of study in a number of areas and has linked its goals with specific learning outcomes, each tied specifically to one or more courses.

C. State of the Discipline; Program modifications; Program changes

The department modified its curriculum in 2012, adding MCS 101 *Media Literacy* and MCS 334 *Media, Communication, and Globalization*, while simultaneously eliminating a requirement to choose from a list of courses outside the department. Using courses outside the department was expedient when the department was new, but as faculty were added it became unnecessary.

D. Undergraduate Curriculum

Undergraduate majors are required to take nineteen specific credits, including internship and a capstone seminar, and an additional eighteen credits, nine of which must be upper level.

The tenure- and tenure-track faculty are obligated to teach 100% of their course load in the core curriculum, but several MCS courses have been added, taught by a Senior Lecturer, a Professor of the Practice, and adjunct faculty. With such a small faculty, the senior capstone seminar has been particularly challenging.

E. Research Opportunities

MCS students are active undergraduate researchers, engaged in independent research projects and receiving training to assist with faculty research. MCS students are active in the Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement Day (URCAD) and regularly publish in the *UMBC Review*.

F. Undergraduate Advisement

All full-time faculty are involved in advising, and the load appears to be significant, with 300 undergraduates split among 5 full-time faculty and one part-time advisor. Additionally, faculty advise graduate students from other departments.

G. Council of Majors; Undergraduate Honors; Awards; Recognition

The Council of Majors has facilitated collaborative learning, serving as a liaison between faculty and students. The council hosts regular movie nights that feature core faculty as guests. Qualified students may earn departmental honors.

H. Faculty Development; Teaching Quality

The department considers teaching to be a strength, with a number of honors and competitive grants received by a variety of MCS faculty. Additionally, the department consistently ranks among the top at UMBC in SCEQ scores.

Faculty teach a 3-2 load, and often take on overloads. Adding faculty would reduce the overloads and allow a wider variety of courses to be offered.

I. Additional Comments; Summary Evaluation

The department wishes to hire a full-time advisor and add three tenure-track positions. With student-faculty ratios so high, both seem prudent. The Dean, in the Dean's Response, expected to add two tenure-track assistant professors Fall 2015, which is a significant help. The Dean points out that advising is an issue across the College and that most departments with full-time advisors are larger than MCS.