

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

MISSION STATEMENT

WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE RESEARCH AND ADVANCED STUDY OF THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION IN A WAY THAT INTEGRATES THEORY AND PRACTICE. IN OUR SCHOLARSHIP AND TEACHING WE SEEK TO PROMOTE A CULTURE THAT VALUES DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES AND EMPHASIZES THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF COMMUNICATION.

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK OF GRADUATE EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

The Master of Arts program in Communication at Western Michigan University embraces the philosophy of engaged scholarship. This philosophy grounds our theory and research in a practical effort to address the challenges we face in our personal relationships, our organizations, our communities, our society, and in the global community. We wish to produce knowledge and scholarship that makes a difference and also bridges differences to reveal common ground to accomplish our common goals. Recent examples of engaged scholarship include faculty led projects assessing the civil rights health of selected communities in Michigan, an examination of nurses' roles and communication as factors in nurse retention at a major health care facility, a video project focused on changing attitudes toward HIV infected persons in Africa, and a case analysis of transformation in the global telecommunications industry. In addition, many of our courses include applied course projects for which students may produce materials and research findings useful to their own professional and personal affiliations.

Our program is designed for persons intending to pursue careers in both academic and nonacademic settings. Current graduate students include full-time students planning to enter doctoral programs and full-time students planning to enter careers in business, government, or non-profit organizations. The program also includes part-time students seeking to expand their knowledge of communication for the purpose of career advancement. These students come from diverse organizational backgrounds including education, hospital administration, human resources, and public relations/communication.

Our goal is to educate individuals to become reflective practitioners and engaged scholars. In pursuit of this goal, the MA in Communication provides grounding in communication theory and research methods combined with challenging, intra- and interdisciplinary coursework. All students complete a set of foundation courses that provide a survey of theories and research in mass communication, interpersonal communication, and organizational communication. Students also receive instruction in qualitative and quantitative research methods, recognizing that both methodological approaches are utilized widely within the communication discipline. Further, possession of competence in research skills provides value to organizations and communities. Each student then develops an individualized program of study, in consultation with a faculty advisor that reflects their specific interests in communication and their specific career goals. For example, students interested in careers in human resources may combine organizational communication courses with the study of interpersonal communication. Another student who wishes to pursue a doctoral degree in media studies may integrate mass communication courses with interpersonal communication work. In their individualized plans students also are invited to integrate knowledge from other disciplines reflecting the value of interdisciplinarity as central to the substantive focus of the degree.

In sum, our program serves students interested in career advancement and/or enhancement, or those interested in new professional careers, or those focused on preparation for further academic degrees. At graduation the person completing a Master of Arts degree in Communication at Western Michigan University should possess a significant level of accomplishment in both the discipline as well as the ability to use one's professional training in the interest of a successful and diverse society.