

**Agenda and Evaluation Report for  
Audit & Review Face-to-Face Meeting  
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater  
Communication Masters, 2023-2024**

**Date:** 1/29/2024

**Invited:** Provost John Chenoweth; Dean Michael Dugan (Arts & Comm); Dean Matt Vick (Graduate Studies); Department Chair Kathy Davis; Graduate Program Coordinator Corey Davis; Audit & Review Team Chair Pavan Chennamaneni; Audit & Review team member Kristen Prock; Assessment Representative Katy Casey

- 1) Call to order
- 2) Introductions
- 3) Overview of review team evaluation, program comments

The Review Team Chair, Pavan Chennamaneni, provided a summary of the strengths and recommended actions based on the review team report. Corey Davis shared an overview of the current Master's program, highlighting some of the changes from the last program. The changes shared included the program being offered fully online (asynchronous), elimination of the 3-credit capstone to one e-Portfolio, two required courses with the remaining 21-credits selected by students from a list of electives. The new structure also includes a stackable certificates option. The new program launched in fall of 2020.

- 4) Discussion of Review Team's evaluation:

- a) Please share your plan to market the COMM Matters modules outside of the program.

The Graduate Marketing plan is being coordinated with the Graduate School and is underway, mainly through social media. There may be potential to pitch the program- particularly the certificates or modules, to employers down the road to recruit a team from a regional business.

COMM Matters modules should be ready to launch by spring 2025. The goal of the modules is to take a few of the .5 credit courses (offered as modules) and bundle the courses into a 3-credit course that could apply to a master's program.

- b) Has the program thought about how to create community between students in the program to encourage persistence and engagement?

Student engagement has been a topic of discussion among staff in the program. Some classes in the program do offer synchronous opportunities for students to connect with each other and the instructor. There have also been observations by faculty that students are connecting with each other- on their own and do not necessarily require instructors to create the space. The attendees of the meeting questioned/discussed what the expectations are for fully online, asynchronous, programs to engage students. Dean Dugan shared that some of the topics being discussed are part of the Online Council's work, and the program review process should be aware of final recommendations and incorporate those into the process.

- c) Has the program considered a plan for sharing advising responsibilities should the program continue to grow?

In recognition of the potential growth of this program since the redesign, the committee discussed their recommendation of building leadership in the graduate space to assist the coordinator. Hiring additional support is not likely, and currently the program does not have plans to bring others into the administration of

the graduate program. However, the attendees discussed the rationale and Dean Dugan suggested a conversation with the Coordinator and Chair should the need arise.

- 5) **Recommended Actions:** The evaluation report lists three recommended action (see page 10, point 3) related to consideration of an external advisory board, enrollment, and assessment.
- 6) **Recommended Result:** *Continuation without qualification*
  - **Please make use of the detailed comments in the evaluation report (below).**
  - **Please select all applicable boxes and fill in the appropriate year:**
    - Next SHORT self-study will be due to the Dean on October 1, 2028 and to the Assessment Office on November 1, 2028.**
- 7) Adjourn.

*Review team report is attached below, including Recommended Actions and instructions for Progress Reports (if required).*

**University of Wisconsin-Whitewater  
Review of Audit & Review Self-Studies  
Undergraduate Programs, 2023-2024**

Date of Evaluation 12/1/2023 Short Self Study (SS\*) \_\_\_\_\_

Program: Communication MS      Masters       Major       Minor

**Evaluations submitted by:** Matthew Vick; Kristen Prock; Katy Casey; Pavan Chennamaneni

**Review meeting attended by:** Matthew Vick; Kristen Prock; Katy Casey; Pavan Chennamaneni

**I. General Program Information**

**1. The program's mission statement reflects the nature and scope of the program.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**2. The program's mission statement aligns with the School of Graduate Studies mission.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
Not Applicable (explain why in comments below)	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**3. Program described changes impacting the program since the last review.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**4. The program has been responsive to actions recommended from the previous Audit and Review report; Progress Reports have been submitted, if relevant.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**5. The program has achieved or maintained program-level accreditation or has considered seeking it, where appropriate.**

Sufficient Evidence	0
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No Evidence	0

### General Comments related to section I.

The revised MS-Communication program has clearly articulated its focus and mission. It has distinguished itself from other programs in the state.

Stackable certificates and micro-credentialing are very effective in enhancing the attractiveness of the program. I commend the program for their innovative approach. More programs on campus need to follow this model.

Clear and focused mission statement that focuses on the value of this degree within a professional context, which seems very marketable. The creativity of the program by offering certificate tracks with several micro-credential options is impressive.

### II. Alignment within the University

#### 1. The program contributes to the fulfillment of UW-Whitewater's mission.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

#### 2. The program contributes to the fulfillment of UW-Whitewater's Strategic Plan.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

### General comments related to section II.

### III. Program Goals & Accomplishments

#### 1. Goals and objectives were identified and undertaken to improve and advance the program.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No Evidence	0

#### 2. Goals currently in place will contribute to the program's advancement. Criteria for determining success were measurable and attainable.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No Evidence	0

#### 3. The program has a process for setting and assessing goals and making decisions about changes to the program goals.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**4. Program faculty, staff, and/or students received special recognitions or awards during the review period.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**General comments related to section III.**

Impressive and ambitious goals set for the program. The goals are appropriately focused on marketing and growing enrollment.

The program's goals were clearly laid out and were achievable. The revised assessment plan was accomplished by attending the Assessment Institute.

**IV. Curriculum**

**1. The program has a clearly articulated, efficient, and purposeful curriculum, complete with a capstone experience.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**2. Dual-listed courses are described and explain differences between expectations for undergraduate and graduate students.**

Sufficient Evidence	0
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0
Not Applicable (explain why in comments below)	4

**3. Changes to the curriculum were described, including the basis for the changes.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**4. Appropriate assessment data were used in making curricular revisions.**

Sufficient Evidence	3
Some/Partial Evidence	1
No/Limited Evidence	0

**5. The program provides opportunities for students to engage outside the classroom.**

Sufficient Evidence	1
Some/Partial Evidence	3
No/Limited Evidence	0

### General comments related to section IV.

5 The nature of the program makes it difficult for engagement outside of the classroom.

2. The program does not offer dual listed courses. 4. The program is new and does not necessarily need data to drive curricular decisions. The inclusion of micro-credentialing was driven by anticipated market demand. 5. The report did not describe opportunities for students to engage outside of faculty-study research. Do graduate students work with faculty on research?

2. Program reports that they do not offer dual-listed courses 4. What does an "informal survey" look like? How many students responded? Was this representative of the program as a whole? 5. Although research has declined due to the type/wants of students in the program, I wonder what other opportunities might be there? Mentoring? Practicums?

The program revised its curriculum to meet current workforce and societal needs. The flexibility of the stackable certificates make assessment a bit complex, but it provides a lot of opportunity and choice for students.

### V. Assessment of Student Learning

#### 1. The program uploaded an assessment plan that includes student learning outcomes.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

#### 2. The program aligns their student learning outcomes to the Master's Essential Learning Outcomes.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

#### 3. Student learning outcomes are "mapped" to the curriculum.

Sufficient Evidence	3
Some/Partial Evidence	1
No/Limited Evidence	0

#### 4. The program provided a timeline indicating when faculty and staff assess SLOs. The timeline is manageable and sustainable.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

#### 5. The program described the measures/processes they use to assess SLOs, and the criterion for performance.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**6. The program described the results of the assessment data collected.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**7. The program described specific actions individuals in the program took, or will take, to make changes to the program based on assessment results.**

Sufficient Evidence	3
Some/Partial Evidence	1
No/Limited Evidence	0

**General comments related to Section V.**

3. The action plan provided did not clearly indicate where SLOs were taught, supported, and/or assessed. I believe enough information was provided to know if this work does occur, it was just not clear in the plan submitted. 6. Results of assessments were shared, and in some cases, more than one source of information was used to make judgements on students' knowledge and skills. There were detailed descriptions of students' performance on the SLOs.

The assessment plan is very detailed. The wording of the outcomes seems to include a lot of items in each goal (for example SLO 1 includes gathering, investigating, documenting, analyzing, interpreting, evaluating and synthesizing). This seems to be a lot to assess in a single outcome. The process of sharing the assessment results is shared, but it is not clear how the results will be put into use.

**VI. Student Recruitment, Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation: Trend Data****1a. The program explains fluctuations in enrollment.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**1b. Five-year enrollment and graduation trends reflect program vitality and sustainability.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**1c. Program has strategies to recruit and retain students.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**1d. Students can enroll in appropriate courses and proceed without delaying graduation.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**1e. The program described efforts to engage underrepresented communities.**

Sufficient Evidence	1
Some/Partial Evidence	3
No/Limited Evidence	0

**1f. The program described student composition and whether it was reflective of the diversity of the University.**

Sufficient Evidence	1
Some/Partial Evidence	3
No/Limited Evidence	0

**2. Claim that the program is oversubscribed, undersubscribed, or at optimal level is justified or supported by examples or data.**

Sufficient Evidence	0
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**General comments related to section VI.A**

2. There is an error in the self-study form and this item was not asked of the program

1e. I am not sure I understand how encouraging students to use inclusive language in all writing assignments is an effort to engage students from underrepresented communities 1f. How do these data align with the University data?

The program seems very attractive to women more than men... any ideas why? The program has nicely revised itself and its relaunch is showing steady growth. The faculty are to be commended.

**VI. Student Recruitment, Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation: Demand for Graduates****1. Placement information indicates that program graduates find employment to continue their education.**

Sufficient Evidence	3
Some/Partial Evidence	1
No/Limited Evidence	0

**2. Data suggests that employment opportunities for graduates of this program will remain strong.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**3. Described efforts to retain and track graduates.**

Sufficient Evidence	3
Some/Partial Evidence	1
No/Limited Evidence	0

**4. Described unique features of the program that set it apart from other system or regional colleges and universities.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**General comments related to section VI.B**

The program could take a more active approach to maintaining links with graduates and knowing what careers they get into.

**VII. Resource Availability & Development: Faculty and Staff Resources**

**1. Information on the numbers of full and part-time faculty and staff is provided. Expertise of teaching staff is aligned with the needs and future vision for the program.**

Sufficient Evidence	3
Some/Partial Evidence	1
No/Limited Evidence	0

**2. Tenure and promotion standards, including post-tenure requirements, reflect faculty and staff ability to advance in rank.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**3. Information is provided about changes in the faculty since the last Audit and Review.**

Sufficient Evidence	3
Some/Partial Evidence	1
No/Limited Evidence	0
Not Applicable (explain why in comments below)	0

**4. The program has identified staffing changes and anticipated areas of potential future need.**

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

**General comments related to section VII.A**

1. Attached table provides information on faculty but does not appear to address if the "expertise of teaching staff align with the needs and future vision for the program" 2. It is noted that some folks have retired, but it is unclear if there were new hires?

## VII. Resource Availability & Development: Student Resources

### 1. The program has adequate personnel, student help, and service and supplies to serve its graduate student population.

Sufficient Evidence	1
Some/Partial Evidence	3
No/Limited Evidence	0

### 2. The program has adequate facilities, equipment, technological, and library resources to effectively serve its students.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

#### General comments related to section VII.B

1. There was a reported to struggle to recruit GIAs to the graduate program- which are necessary to meeting the demands of COMM 110.

1. It is unclear what the reported need is here. It appears that the need is GIAs to assist with the teaching of COMM 110 and other responsibilities due to faculty assignments, but that appears to align more with the needs of the undergraduate program.

## VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations from the Department or Program

### 1. Areas of strength are provided.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

### 2. Areas of improvement and continued progress are discussed.

Sufficient Evidence	3
Some/Partial Evidence	1
No/Limited Evidence	0

### 3. Recommendations and resources are discussed.

Sufficient Evidence	4
Some/Partial Evidence	0
No/Limited Evidence	0

#### General comments related to section VIII

2. It appears that the program is reporting their only, or perhaps most relevant area for improvement is assessment. And although I do believe that this is important, I wonder what other areas that there might be room for improvement.

Development of the COMM Matters modules is a good idea. How will the program seek to make sure its certificate topic remains "timely" as the years progress?

## IX. Reviewer Conclusions

### 1. Strengths of the Program

This program is flexible and innovative. The faculty took assessment seriously by attending the Assessment Institute and formulating a detailed assessment plan.

The redesign of the curriculum, which includes offering smaller 1/2 credit course options is innovative and very timely with the demands of returning students. The department is very invested in the success of its students and reports 100% job placement.

The curriculum that includes stackable certificate seems to be a flexible and marketable approach to offering the program. The enrollment is on an upward trend.

Strong growth. Innovative changes.

### 2. Areas for Work or Improvement

The assessment plan is a work in progress but has a solid foundation. This should be implemented and routinely evaluated

Develop a plan to revisit what stackable certificates are timely and meeting the needs of current workforce needs. With the flexible structure, additional certificates could be offered without needing to create many new classes.

### 3. Recommended Actions

1) Consider creating an advisory board that includes employers and graduates. Meeting the advisory board once year to get feedback and suggestions for improvement is invaluable.

2) Report out program enrollment, including enrollment in the COMM Matters Modules.

3) Continue developing the assessment plan, including how the program uses assessment data to drive improvement.

### 4. Other Questions/Comments

Are the COMM Matters Modules available to those not enrolled in the graduate program?

### 6. Recommended Result

Continuation without qualification. Next self-study will be a shortened one focusing on the Recommended Actions from the current report.	4
Continuation with minor concerns. Progress report may be required, at the discretion of the Audit & Review Committee.	0
Continuation with major concerns in one or more of the four areas. Submit progress report(s) addressing the concerns as directed by the Audit & Review Committee. Progress reports must be submitted to the College Dean, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and the Audit & Review Committee.	0
Insufficient Information in the self-study to decide; revise self-study & resubmit.	0
Refer to Provost for action. This option is selected if the report is not completed by the date due.	0