

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
TO THE REGULAR June 2018 SENATE**

FOR INFORMATION

**Quality Assurance – Cyclical Program Review of Laurentian University’s
BA in Communication
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan**

In accordance with the Laurentian University’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report has been prepared to provide a synthesis of the external evaluation and Laurentian’s response and action plan. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

**SUMMARY OF THE CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE BA IN
COMMUNICATIONS**

At Laurentian, the Communications program has been offered through Huntington University since 2000. Huntington is one of Laurentian’s three federated universities.

In the program, students work toward their Bachelor of Arts (4 Year). There are several options for students including: a specialization (60 credits), a major (42 credits), a minor (24 credits), or a joint minor in Sports Communication with the Sports Administration program (24 credits). Within the specialization (60 credits), students can opt to pursue a post-graduate diploma in Public Relations with Cambrian College in their third and fourth years. Students can enter the program from a variety of pathways, including direct entry, transfer, or via articulation agreements.

Currently, there are two full-time faculty responsible for the program although several others, including sessionals, are also involved.

On December 19, 2016, the program submitted its self-study to the Office of Vice President Academic and Provost of Laurentian University.

The self-study presented an overview of program options and the methods by which students could enter it. It also set out the objectives of the program and its mission statement, followed by its learning objectives and learning outcomes of the program

based on degree level expectations. The self-study then addressed the concerns expressed in ACAPLAN's 2008 review of the program, and described actions taken under the headings: student issues, faculty and staff issues, program issues, and finally, research issues.

Halfway through, the self-study described the role of each of the persons involved in the writing of the self-study, and then highlighted the innovative features of the program. Thereafter, it listed the faculty starting with full-time faculty, core faculty, and part-time faculty and discussed their various involvement in the program. This was followed by a discussion of the physical resources, laboratory and computer facilities, space, and appropriateness and effectiveness of the utilization of these. The last three sections analyzed the enrollments and graduations of students, discussed program regulations and courses and finally planning, concluding with an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current program. There were also a number of Appendices, some of which were supplied to ACAPLAN, including some of the CVs of the faculty and the results of student focus groups.

The Review team noted that there was a lack of detailed information on student performance and achievement in the program and at the University more broadly. In addition, it observed that no recruitment or retention statistics were provided for the review nor were they available on request.

After reviewing the self-study, the Review Team conducted a site visit on 3 and 4 April 2017. The external reviewer was Dr. Jonathan Finn, an Associate Professor who, at the time, was Chair of the Department of Communication Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. In addition, the team consisted of two faculty members from Laurentian, Dr. Lorraine Mercer who teaches Gerontology at Huntington University and Dr. Aven McMaster who teaches Ancient Studies at Thorneloe University. Two COST students, Maureen Sheehan and Kenneth Bondar were also on the team.

During the visit, the team met with, Dr. Serge Demers, the Associate Vice President: Learning and Teaching, and Dr. Elizabeth Dawes, the Dean of Arts. In addition, it met with the President and Vice-Chancellor of Huntington University, Dr. Kevin McCormick, Huntington University Registrar, Karen McBain, and the Director of Academic Services, Dawn Noel-de-Tilly. The team also had separate meetings with Desmond Maley, the former Huntington librarian, now working at Laurentian, and Janis Goldie, the Chair of Communication Studies. Finally, the team met with faculty (full and part time), five undergraduates, and two external stakeholders, Nancy Griffin from the Public Relations program at Cambrian College and Wendy Watson from Greater Sudbury Utilities. In addition to various meetings, the team toured classrooms, office space, student study and social space, as well as Huntington's J.W. Tate Library and the Teaching and Learning Centre.

When the Review team submitted its report on April 25, 2017, it noted that "The full and part time faculty members in COST are to be commended for their tremendous work over

the review period and for building such an inviting, positive teaching and learning environment.” In particular, the team was very favorably impressed by:

- The program’s many substantive improvements since the last review, including a curriculum overhaul, building a robust set of learning objectives and outcomes, launching the innovative Sport Communication minor, and standardizing the pathway between Cambrian College and Laurentian University
- The flexible admissions process which created a diverse student body
- The enrollment which was among the best in the Faculty of Arts
- The clearly articulated objectives, learning outcomes, and degree-level expectations and the the program’s alignment with the Huntington University’s mission to instill life-long learning and “continuous personal, interpersonal, professional and spiritual development.”
- The curriculum, which strikes a balance between the need to ‘cover the discipline’ and offering courses that reflect the expertise of the program’s faculty.... As such, the curriculum is built around two areas of emphasis: media and culture; and Information and Communication Technologies
- The faculty who are excellent teachers
- The sense of pride and positivity within the program between students, faculty, staff, administrators and external community members

While the team was satisfied with the balance between the need to cover the discipline and reflect the expertise of the small size of the faculty, it was noted that:

- There seems to be a disconnect between the issues and theories addressed in senior courses from those introduced at the first year
- Given the faculty complement, the program could not adequately respond to changes in the discipline, such as current interests in areas including globalization, health communication, and social media
- Students asked for courses in marketing and French courses in media studies and journalism.
- Focus groups requested a co-op placement and a formalized stream in marketing as taught by the School of Management.
- The program does not seem to have a a set of grading guidelines (with narratives) to build consistency across the curriculum and to further clarify the expectations of the program for its students.
- The bulk of COST courses are in the mid-size range (30-60 students) and these courses have to be taught in the large lecture hall. Students and faculty were unanimous in their view that this room was not effective for mid-sized classes and that it had a negative impact on pedagogy.
- The administrative and service load of the faculty is higher than at most universities.

On May 23, 2017, the program submitted its reaction to the recommendations and on June 16, 2017 Dr. Elizabeth Dawes, Dean of Arts submitted a response that included the

program's reaction to the recommendations as well as her own. The review team's recommendations plus comments from the Program and the Dean appear below.

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS (R) THE PROGRAM'S (P) RESPONSES AND THE RESPONSES OF THE DEAN OF ARTS (D)

R1: The program [should] revisit the introductory courses to ensure continuity between those courses and the 2nd through 4th year courses. The program might also consider 'standardizing' the content and/or texts of the first-year courses to ensure consistency across teaching terms.

P1: The [program] is happy to re-examine the curriculum from years 1 to 4 to ensure continuity throughout the program. While we appreciate the desire to standardize content from a student perspective, because different professors often teach the first-year courses from year to year and term to term, we do not wish to hamper the intellectual freedom of professors to make their textbook and course selections in the way that they best see fit.

D1: I agree that it would be worth examining the continuity between theories and issues introduced in first-year courses and those addressed in the upper years. However, continuity can be established or maintained without going so far as to standardize the specific texts selected by instructors to achieve the course objectives.

R2: The program should revisit the COST pool of electives to ensure the relevance of existing offerings and to add courses in marketing and existing journalism and media courses offered in French. Further, a review is needed to ensure the electives are offered on a regular basis.

P2: We agree that the COST pool of electives needs to be updated and this process began in the Winter 2017 term. The consultations with the various departments involved should be completed by July 2017 so that students returning to take courses in the fall will have access to a relevant and updated list. Whether courses are offered on a regular basis is somewhat outside of our control, however, as these courses are predominantly offered in [program]s other than our own. In the updating of the list, the [program] is also asking the participating [program]s as to their plan to offer the courses and is only including courses that are offered at least biennially. The [program] will also investigate the inclusion of marketing courses and believes that this is an excellent suggestion. As Communication Studies is currently an English program we do not plan to add existing journalism and media courses offered in French to the COST pool of electives. However, students that are interested in taking French courses in Communication Studies have a great opportunity to do so. In the traditional specialization option, for instance, students have a total of 48 credits of pure electives to utilize, wherein students can select any course on campus that interests them, including French language courses. In addition, we encourage students interested in pursuing studies in French to consider minoring or double-majoring in a French language program. There are many options available for our

students to pursue their studies in the way they would like, which is, in our opinion, part of the strength of the program.

D2: In keeping with our bilingual and tricultural mandate, I would encourage every program to include options for students to fulfill the general degree requirements (6 credits of linguistic awareness, Indigenous content and scientific literacy) within the program electives. Marketing courses in English and French would be excellent additions.

R3: The program [should] develop a service learning or co-op component as part of the curriculum, provided that it can be effectively resourced and staffed with no additional labour required of COST faculty.

P3: The [program] also agrees that this is a priority and will focus on developing this option in the upcoming year. We also agree that once developed and in operation, this will presumably be an enticing option to many of our students and that we will need to work with administration to identify an efficient way to resource an internship or co-op program to avoid adding further labour to the current small complement of faculty. In the immediate interim, the [program] is working to address the student demand for practical / professional experiences through the adding of work- integrated-learning (WIL) opportunities in a number of our courses.

D3: It is for Huntington University to determine whether additional resources can be made available for program development.

R4: The program [should] explore the option to develop a formalized stream in marketing as currently offered through the Faculty of Management. The existing Sport Communication Minor could be used as a model in this regard.

P4: The [program] agrees that marketing is an area of study that is appealing to a number of students and we will encourage students interested in this, to pursue the current Minor in Marketing offered at present via the Faculty of Management. In September 2016, the Faculty of Management at Laurentian developed the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), and with that, a large number of business-related minors that students from other faculties could pursue. One of those minors is a Minor in marketing, in addition to specialized minors in Business Administration, Human Resources Management, Entrepreneurship, International Management and Finance. As the Faculty of Management currently offers an excellent and formalized stream of study in marketing, via its minor, the Communication Studies will not develop an additional, and likely redundant, stream. It will, however, continue to highlight this relatively new and exciting opportunity to our current student body.

D4: I agree with the [program] that students already have access to a 24-credit Minor in Marketing offered in both English and French. This minor can be combined with the

major or specialization in Communication Studies. It would appear unnecessary to create a marketing stream within the program.

R5: The program [should] examine the possibility of developing a set of grading guidelines with associated narratives. These could be added to syllabi and distributed with other communications and PR materials related to the program.

P5: The [program] will certainly examine the possibility of developing a set of grading guidelines to be added to syllabi and other communications material.

D5: Clarity around course expectations is always appreciated by students.

R6: Increase the core faculty complement over the next review period. The program is aware of the difficult financial realities of the current PSE landscape but is simultaneously frustrated by the inability to seize on opportunities for growth and further development that is tied to minimal faculty complement.

P6: The [program] wholeheartedly agrees that a major priority over the next review period is to increase the core faculty complement. This would certainly enable the program to diversify, grow and further develop in a multitude of desired ways, including many identified within the report. Adding more Communication Studies faculty members would enable us to consistently offer extra and varied courses, which in turn, will allow our students and program to benefit in a number of ways.

D6: It is for Huntington University to determine whether an increase to the faculty complement is feasible.

R7: Develop a part-time or full-time staff position to assist the program with current and future initiatives including a co-op program, resource-sharing possibilities, community partnerships, and classroom support.

P7: The [program] appreciates this suggestion and can see how a part-time staff position would certainly assist in helping to do many of the activities and programs that the faculty members desire to pursue in Communication Studies but find difficult to achieve with two full-time members. With dedicated staff support, the Communication Studies [program] may be better able to offer more on-campus and off-campus events such as workshops, conferences, or speakers. This could also help to address concerns in Recommendation 10, to work to develop an institutional culture that respects and rewards research. In addition, a staff member could help to coordinate outreach activities with community partners as well as administer a co-op program.

D7: It is for Huntington University to determine whether the addition of a staff position is feasible.

R8: The University should explore options for a mid-size (30-60 student) classroom for the COST program.

P8: The [program] agrees that a mid-size classroom is important for the pedagogical needs of faculty and an optimal experience for students in the Communication Studies [program]. We will work with administration at Huntington University to try to identify a solution to this issue.

D8: It is for Huntington University to determine the best solution (e.g. renovating space or making an agreement with another institution).

R9: The program should explore options of curricular and extra-curricular links to existing campus media and communication outlets such as LAMBDA, CKLU, and the Communication Office of Huntington University.

P9: The [program] agrees that the on-campus media and communication outlets are important places for students to gain skills and experiences. Communication Studies students are encouraged from first year to participate in an extra-curricular fashion in all of these, as well as organizations outside of the university and we often make connections for the students to do so. For the last 8 years, a Communication Studies student has been the editor of the LAMBDA, many of our students contribute via photography, writing and layout, and a faculty member has sat on the Board of Directors of the publication. In addition, the student editor often joins a first-year class to talk about the publication and the opportunities for students to get involved. Further, many of our students have participated in CKLU in both production and announcing roles. We plan to continue to strongly encourage students to get involved in on-campus and off-campus media and communication outlets in an extra-curricular way. In addition, the [program's] media and industry connections are often utilized in various course assignments within the curriculum. The creation of an internship or co-op program seems like the best way to begin to develop curricular relationships with these organizations and thus, we will explore options in this fashion. In addition, faculty will consider whether these relationships can be further explored and utilized in specific courses or assignments.

D9: I agree that on-campus experiential learning opportunities are beneficial to students and should be encouraged.

R10: Students, staff and faculty in the COST program should explore ways to build an institutional culture that respects and rewards research and scholarly activity to enhance the already impressive teaching and learning environment within the program.

P10: The [program] agrees that students, staff and faculty in the COST program should explore ways to build an institutional culture that respects and rewards research and scholarly activity. We believe this is an excellent suggestion and with faculty and students, hope to investigate ideas on how best to achieve this over the upcoming review period.

D 10: I strongly discourage full-time faculty members from teaching overload courses every year. Many [programs] have a roster of established sessional faculty members who do an excellent job of teaching. The program will suffer if full-time faculty members are unable to remain active scholars.

R11: **The COST program [should] develop a set of concise communication pieces for the program outlining the curriculum, learning objectives (and rationale) and transferable skills (career preparation).**

P11: The Communication Studies [program] agrees that communicating the program's curriculum, learning objectives and transferable skills is crucial and that this information needs to be easily accessible for students. We believe that the suggestion of a curriculum map is an excellent one and will pursue its development. We will work with the communications/liaison departments, at both Huntington and Laurentian University, to try to streamline the communication efforts and to create these documents.

D 11: I agree that a curriculum map would be helpful to students.

R12: **The program and/or University should explore possibilities for compiling all essential academic information into a single space, such as would usually be found in a University Academic Calendar.**

P12: The [program] agrees that a University Academic Calendar would be an incredibly helpful tool for Laurentian and Huntington University students. However, to be truly useful to students, we feel that such a document needs to be done at an institutional rather than a [program] level, and thus, not one that the program alone should create.

D12: It goes without saying that every university requires a University Academic Calendar. It was a grave error to discontinue the Laurentian University Calendar in 2006. This remains one of the most critical issues for the Faculty.

ACAPLAN'S RESPONSE

ACAPLAN does not endorse the following recommendations, or in the first instance, partial recommendation from the Review Team:

R1. The program might also consider 'standardizing' the content and/or texts of the first-year courses to ensure consistency across teaching terms

Reason: Different professors often teach the first-year courses from year to year and term to term, ACAPLAN does not wish to hamper the intellectual freedom of professors to make their textbook and course selections in the way that they best see fit.

R3. The program [should] develop a service learning or co-op component as part of the curriculum.

And

R9: The program should explore options of curricular and extra-curricular links to existing campus media and communication outlets such as LAMBDA, CKLU, and the Communication Office of Huntington University

Reason: In March 2018, the program secured academic approval of a new internship course. This will allow students in the program to secure academic credit for participation in, among other options. Existing campus media and communication outlets such as LAMBDA, CKLU, and the Communication Office of Huntington

R4: The program [should] explore the option to develop a formalized stream in marketing as currently offered through the Faculty of Management. The existing Sport Communication Minor could be used as a model in this regard.

Reason: Students already have access to a 24-credit Minor in Marketing offered in both English and French. This minor can be combined with the major or specialization in Communication Studies. It would appear unnecessary to create a marketing stream within the program.

R12: The program and/or University should explore possibilities for compiling all essential academic information into a single space, such as would usually be found in a University Academic Calendar.

Reason: It is the University’s view that all “essential academic information” is available through the university website. While a calendar could be useful, particularly for historical purposes, it would not be feasible to revert to a printed version.

Those aside, ACAPLAN endorses the balance of the Review Team’s recommendations, including those that involve the hiring of a third full-time member of the program, as well as a staff person would could coordinate placements, develop community partnerships and assist in classroom activities.

Other programs in the Arts are struggling for enrollment—with a stronger base of core full-time faculty¹—and in those programs, is very difficult to make the case that more personnel could be hired. In the case of the Communications program, it is easy—it is one of the most successful program in the Arts faculty and it only makes good sense to support it to the hilt. One notes in passing that Huntington’s Gerontology program, which has slightly fewer students enrolled (63 v. 67 in 2017) has three full-time faculty at its disposal. It should also be noted that a third faculty member could maintain the program more easily during sabbaticals—to offer a four year program with one full-time member when the other one is on sabbatical undermines the academic credibility of the program and indeed the University. In addition, with three in place, it should also be easier for all

¹ In History for example, the full-time enrolment in 2017 is 39; the program has 8—eight—full-time faculty on the English side.

of them to fulfill the requirement in their collective agreement to engage in scholarly activity² and it would also go a long way towards meeting:

R10: Students, staff and faculty in the COST program should explore ways to build an institutional culture that respects and rewards research and scholarly activity to enhance the already impressive teaching and learning environment within the program.

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Add one new full-time faculty to program	Proposal to Huntington Budget Committee	Chair with Huntington President	August 2018
2. The program [should] revisit the introductory courses to ensure continuity between those courses and the 2nd through 4th year courses	An agenda item on a unit retreat	Chair	August 2018
3. Revisit the COST pool of electives to ensure the relevance of existing offerings	Agenda item at the unit retreat	Chair in consultation with other Program chairs	August 2018
4. Develop a part-time or full-time staff position to assist the program with current and future initiatives including a co-op program, resource-sharing possibilities, community partnerships, and classroom support.	Agenda item at the unit retreat Proposal to Huntington budget committee to hire staff support	Chair in consultation with Huntington President	September 2018
5. Examine the possibility of developing a set of	An agenda item at unit retreat	Chair in consultation with professors	August 2018

² Article 11.03 of Huntington's 2017-2020 Collective Agreement states: "Full-time academic staff shall have the right and responsibility to devote a reasonable portion of their time to scholarly activity."

grading guidelines with associated narratives.	Add to syllabi and distribute with other communications and PR materials related to the program.	associated with program	
6. Explore options for a mid-size (30-60 student) classroom for the COST program.	Examine availability of such space both in the other federated universities as well as Laurentian	Chair in consultation with Huntington administration	August 2018
7. Develop a set of concise communication pieces for the program outlining the curriculum, learning objectives (and rationale) and transferable skills (career preparation).	Agenda item for unit retreat	Huntington’s Director of University Advancement in consultation with Chair.	August 2018

The Dean of Arts shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made shall be presented in the Dean’s Annual Report and filed with the Vice-President Academic and Provost as well as with the President of Huntington University. The executive Summary and the monitoring reports will be posted on Laurentian University’s web site.

CONCLUSION

Huntington’s BA program in Communications is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2025.