

Communications Department

Action Recommendations and Updates for the Journalism, Broadcasting and Communications Programs

September 2009

Recommendations are placed in prioritized order of importance:

Recommendation 1: Maintain and Improve Facilities, Equipment

Update A: Finish the Broadcast Trailer: We now have the funds. The Broadcast Department accepted January 2009 the city of San Dimas' proposal to run its public access station. This meant that the University of La Verne Communications Department was running two public access stations (La Verne and San Dimas) plus staging a full undergraduate program for its students. Then, in February, the department lost its television truck that was vital for out-of-building broadcast productions. By federal decree, Time Warner was no longer mandated to provide and maintain a loaner truck free of charge to public access stations. This was a huge hit to not only the academic program but also the two public access stations under contract to the department. As a result, the Broadcast Department appealed to the provost and executive vice president for funding help for a broadcast trailer and equipment. That funding call was answered, as a new broadcast adapted trailer was purchased in April. In June, the ULV Biology Department signed over its pickup truck for free to provide mobility for the trailer. The trailer is presently being wired and outfitted with equipment.

Update B: Updating Software. When a Macintosh specific media lab was opened fall 2000 in ACB 110, OIT was maintaining software under its budget. OIT has cancelled that policy and left the Communications Department with the mandate of finding funds for software updating. Presently, thanks to help from the Arts and Sciences Dean's Office, we are successfully struggling to stay current with software.

Update C: Move to High Definition. The move has begun. The Department continues to seek funds to replace aging equipment in its conversion to the new industry high definition format. The Department has one HD camera. KWST San Dimas has two HD cameras. Most of our edit systems are HD capable. We need to make Studio D capable. Minimum cost: \$100,000; time frame: three years.

Upgrading of rest of academic camera gear: Minimum cost: \$50,000-\$75,000. Time frame: Three years.

Update D: Master Control hardware and software. The LeoFM radio station needs to be included on hardware, software roll over cycle every five years. We are halfway through that cycle now. When the updating takes place, it will cost \$45,000.

Update E: Move to a Video Server System to store video and for accessing video files for

editing. Minimum cost: \$75,000-\$100,000; Time frame: two years.

Recommendation 2: Update Curricula for Journalism, Broadcast, Public Affairs, Broadcast Journalism, Multimedia.

Update: Ongoing. Departmental faculty are revisiting curriculum program requirements. New media technology, most notably the internet, has forced change in the media profession. The change is reflected in university communications department curricula change nationwide. Media convergence needs to be reflected in the ULV Communications Department's curricula. The ULV Communications Department faculty are presently reviewing course outlines, developing new classes, and reorganizing and merging program offerings where necessary.

Recommendation 3: Personnel Additions

Update A: Needed: A new broadcasting assistant position to work in television and radio.

Historically, the Broadcast Department functioned with three broadcast lab assistants—one in radio and two in television—until the late 1980s. In all, the Communications Department contained four lab assistants (one additional position in journalism) plus three journalism teachers and three broadcast teachers. Then, a condition of University financial exigency forced the down sizing of this department to two lab assistants and five faculty.

Meanwhile the number of student majors in the broadcast department has more than doubled since 1990, to our count of 200 plus student majors, and the department has undergone a revolutionary shift, moving from analog to digital technology. Additionally, two new majors were added with the advent of new digital technology: Broadcast Journalism and Multi-Media.

The sole Broadcast Lab Assistant employed now teaches broadcast classroom labs with the students in the individual edit labs (we have nine for television in the building; three for radio), plus leads the students on their outside production shoots. The new television studio (upstairs in the ACB Building) presents an additional area of responsibility for a lab assistant. A television studio and control room were not present in the department's old home in the Student Center.

On the radio side, students work in two production labs, plus LeoFM radio is on the air from 7 a.m. to midnight. The digital revolution has changed the way audio sound is captured and processed. When the students sign off the air, the new "Master Control" computerized system takes over and keeps the radio station broadcasting 24/7. The broadcast assistant maintains the complicated and expensive computer system.

It is a complex teaching assignment to lead students into the real digital world of broadcasting, which we offer at ULV. The broadcast assistant position is at the forefront in this assignment, both in radio and in television.

Presently, there is only one person in this position, and he is overwhelmed but somehow still loyal.

Update B: Hire faculty for two unsupported majors: broadcast journalism and public affairs. These two student popular majors do not have full-time faculty assigned to them. Instead, part-time faculty staffs them. There is opportunity for student growth in these two areas.

Update C: Establish a Paid Broadcast Program Chair

Rationale: A Division Chair position already exists in the Communications Department. George Keeler leads in his duties as department chair.

The Communications Department chair job has grown to become full-time in itself without the teaching duties that accompany it. The Communications Department holds six large majors: journalism, broadcast television, broadcast radio, public affairs, multi-media and broadcast journalism. All need constant attention. Issues are constantly confronted dealing with full-time personnel, part-time teachers, budget, students, class scheduling and coordination with the larger University.

Three large budgets exist in the Communications Department: Journalism, Broadcast, and LVTV. Mediated work products include the Campus Times, La Verne Magazine, LeoFM Radio and the two public access television stations in La Verne and San Dimas. Five full-time faculty and 15 part-time faculty are employed; 200 plus student majors claim the Communications Department their home.

The addition of a supporting paid Broadcast Program Chair will direct fiscal leadership, ensure responsibility in the hiring of part-time broadcast faculty and help greatly in the day-to-day management of faculty and student personnel in the Broadcast arena. This individual would head the coordination of the radio station and the television station and monitor/manage those budgets, which need constant supervision.

The Communications Department contains the third largest number of students in the College of Arts and Sciences, (Behavioral Sciences and the natural sciences are ranked first and second). Unlike those two areas, this department lacks paid administrative organization. These parallel large departments set the model for how we should reorganize.

Recommendation 4: Improve opportunities for student recruitment and student retention.

Update A: Ongoing. Continue hosting Communications Day. We are hosting our 18th Communications Day, Oct. 23. The day, attended by 200 plus high school students and their teachers, boasts the image of the University of La Verne and serves as a recruitment event for our department. For high school students and their advisers, the day offers a valuable training opportunity. Money is not built into our budget to stage this day; we cobble together on an ad hoc basis. We struggle successfully with monies from the Dean's Office and, new for 2009, from Academic Admissions.

Update B: Restore opportunities for students to attend professional conferences. Student conferences (Society of Professional Journalists, Broadcast Education Association, California Newspaper Publishers Association, Associated Collegiate Press, Columbia Scholastic Press Association) have been part of this department since its founding. These conferences provide professional opportunities for students to learn from professional media experts. Some of the conferences offer opportunities for students to present research. We would like to bolster our efforts to send students to these professional association events.

Update C: Restore opportunities for student coverage of post-season athletic play. The elimination of the travel budget impacts student travel to cover off campus assignments. We have sent students from the Campus Times (writers/photographers) to post season athletic play. By the Arts and Science dean's generous grace, the Department has been able to send reporters to cover national championship games such as Women's Volleyball, Men's Water Polo, Women's Basketball, et al, when these playoff games were held in the Midwest or east coast. The championship coverage provides legitimacy for the sports achievement by the athletic teams; it provides a valuable service for the La Verne campus audience, and it serves as a great teaching moment for the journalism/broadcasting reporting teams. Trips have included writers, photographers, radio broadcasting crews and accompanying advisers, when necessary. It is tough to predict championship play; however, the University has, on average, had one team enter the national finals each semester.

Update D: Ongoing. Continue strengthening the campus chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. This professional association, of which the ULV Communications Department holds a hard-won charter from the national organization, brings prestige and acclaim to the department. The organization carries a mandate that students must attend national and regional meetings. We struggle to pay the travel costs.

Recommendation 5: Improve quantity of media literacy in general education courses.

Update: Accomplished. Three Communications Department classes were accepted into the new general education program: Introduction to the Mass Media, Journalism/Radio/TV 166; News Reporting, Journalism 100; and Ethics of the Mass Media, Journalism/Radio/TV 467. In addition, the department chair continues to teach Core 320, The Human Condition: War and the Mass Media in the general education program each fall.

Recommendation 6: Improve assessment techniques in senior exit surveys to better address learning outcomes.

Update: Senior Seminar assessment continues. Of great value, too, are the internship supervisor evaluations and the internship self-evaluations. Since each student in the Communications Department is required to undertake an internship, these evaluations provide a useful and valuable assessment from outside media companies and agencies regarding departmental students.

Recommendation 7: The rubric for senior project evaluations should be modified and improved to better assess learning outcomes. Senior projects will be evaluated on an ongoing basis using a common rubric that will be accumulated over time.

Update: In progress and on going.

Recommendation 8: Add advanced coursework in emphasis areas of Broadcast Journalism, Multimedia, and Public Affairs/Information.

Update: Advanced work is now in place in these subject areas. Curriculum review continues in the department.

Recommendation 9: Incorporate multicultural and diversity issues in more communications courses.

Update: Multicultural and diversity issues have been incorporated into communications classes.

Recommendation 10: Provide more direct and better program and career related advisement to students.

Update: Since we reassessed our advising procedures, our students have been snapped up by the industry. Our internship statistics suggest that 78 percent of ULV Communications Department students are employed directly out of college by their host internship site.

We have seen a huge jump in the number of students seeking and being successfully placed in graduate studies.

Communications Department faculty actively work with alumni in career placement and career advising.

Recommendation 11: Revise course outlines to reflect the current syllabi and course objectives.

Update: In progress and on going.