DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 431 202 CS 510 091

AUTHOR Lerstrom, Alan C.
TITLE Reviewing the Core Curriculum through the Journals.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Joint Meeting of the Central States Communication Association and the Southern States Communication Association (St. Louis, MO, April 7-11, 1999).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Core Curriculum; Higher Education; *Majors (Students); *Mass Media; *Scholarly Journals; Small Colleges; *Speech Communication; *Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS Faculty Attitudes; Hope College MI

ABSTRACT

In the summer of 1985, faculty at a number of small colleges met at Hope College (Michigan) to attempt to decide if there is an essential curriculum that all undergraduate communication majors should encounter, and if there is, what concepts or courses should be included. Participants at the conference selected a course approach, which resulted in specifying five courses: interpersonal communication, small group communication; public speaking; understanding mass media; and a rhetorical/communication theory course. A review of articles in the appropriate scholarly journals was undertaken to verify course selection. Articles seemed to fall into three broad categories: the Nature of the Field (lasts from about 1914 to 1954); the Discipline and Strategies for Survival (articles appeared from the late 1960s to the early 1980s); and Assertively Addressing Disciplinary Concerns. Questions regarding the importance of specific courses in the core curriculum have not been addressed by authors in the field, and there are relatively few articles related to larger curricular concerns since 1985. Authors were primarily concerned about the broader issues of defining the field, surviving, and placing communication departments in universities--and issues such as which specific courses should be taught were not addressed. Thus, the most comprehensive description of a core or essential curriculum is the one developed at Hope College. Contains 16 endnotes. (NKA)

Reviewing the Core Curriculum Through the Journals

Alan Lerstrom
Associate Professor
Luther College
Decorah, IA 52101
lerstral@luther.edu

Presented at the
Joint CSCA/SSCA Convention
St. Louis, MO
April 7-11,1999

In the summer of 1985, faculty at a number of small colleges met at Hope College to attempt to decide if there is an essential curriculum that all undergraduate communication majors should encounter, and if there is an essential curriculum, what concepts or courses should be included. The participants at the conference selected a course approach, which resulted in specifying five courses: interpersonal communication; small group communication; public speaking; understanding mass media; and a rhetorical/ communication theory course.

In volunteering to review the core or essential curriculum as discussed in the journals, two assumptions were made 1) the primary source for finding the appropriate articles would be R. J. Matlon's *Index to Journals in Communication Studies Through 1995,* (1997) , and 2) that this study would focus primarily on articles which had been published since 1985. Matlon provides a broad search category of **Curriculum**. This listing is approximately two columns long and varies from issues related to teaching specific courses to high school requirements in various states. Discussions relating to new ways to teach public speaking or methods of evaluating Oklahoma's speech requirement for high school graduation are not directly related to this paper; however, two subcategories "Curriculum Aims and Standards," (p. 607) and "Curriculum Outlook" (p. 608) do address questions about the core curriculum.

Questions regarding the importance of specific courses in the core curriculum have not been addressed by authors in the field, and there are relatively few articles related to larger curricular concerns since 1985. *The Journal of the Association for Communication Administration* had three articles 1987 and 1991 (2), while *Communication Education* had 6 articles 1989 (2), 1990, 1991, 1993, and 1994), and *Communication Quarterly* had 1 article in 1986. The most recent article regarding major curricular issues which was published in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* appeared in 1954, while *The Southern Communication* Journal's last article related to curricular outlook appeared in 1980, and from *The Western Journal of Communication* in 1976. There were no articles regarding "Communication Outlook" in *Communication Studies.* This may be the appropriate time to write an article from both historic and future perspectives related to the role of courses in describing the essential communication curriculum.

The articles which were reviewed seemed to fall into three broad, but not mutually exclusive categories. The first category is the clearest chronologically in that it addressed the **Nature of the Field,** and it lasts from about 1914 to 1954. While the regional journals did have some articles the primary discussion occurred in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech,* As a example there was comment about the fundamental course at Stanford (McKelvey, 1946) and a program which Lilywhite was establishing at Whittier College (1947). McKelvey noted "our fundamentals courses center on voice training which in turn is aimed at the development of adequate vocal skill in reading, speaking and conversational situations" (1946, p.504). Lillywhite objected to the emphasis on vocal training, and wanted speech courses to address more significant issues. He asked "could

research. Finally, Harwood (1986) addresses concerns regarding student's weak writing abilities, and claims that the most positive "change in the teaching of speech communication is to increase greatly the emphasis upon the writing of speeches. Supervised exercises in speech writing seem likeliest to help students to get the basic skill in communication for which employers seem most eager to pay" (p. 17).

The third category co-existed with the second, but differed in that the orientation was toward **Assertively Addressing Disciplinary Concerns**. Dance in *Speech Communication as a Liberal Arts Discipline* (1980) claims "the argument for the academic viability and necessity for programs in the discipline of speech communication is simple and direct. The argument has four propositions:

Proposition 1: Human language is necessary, although insufficient, for the liberal education of human beings.

Proposition 2 Spoken language is the natural and primary manifestation of human language, from which written language is derived.

Proposition 3: Speech communication is the academic discipline that historically and presently has the study and practice of spoken language as its primary subject matter.

Proposition 4: Academic training and experience in speech communication result in improved understanding of and more effective use of the spoken language. (p. 327)

After analyzing each of the four propositions Dance concluded with the following thought:

> The student who is denied study and experience in speech human and communication and its subject matter of spoken language isessentially denied the essence of a liberal education. Speech communication, the study of spoken language, is one of the foundations of a liberal education and is a basic requirement of all programs which intend to produce a liberally educated human and humane being (p. 331).

There were a series of articles which focused on collaboration. Becker (1978) discusses strategies in the Communication Studies Department at the University of Iowa which might be summarized as working with other departments by not duplicating course taught in other departments i.e. statistics, team teaching with other departments and developing joint majors, double listing courses, increasing talented faculty by hiring couples in joint appointments, and using visiting faculty and exchange opportunities. Sillars(1979) builds a case for interdisciplinary programs, and Conrad (1982) suggests that communication through diversification which would involve "cultivating speech communication course requirements within a large and diverse group of other departments and programs" (p.

we not say that speech is also an expression of the entire personality of an individual through a system of language symbols, the precise understanding of which is dependent not only upon the symbols themselves, but upon the intentional and unintentional meanings of the speaker and the intentional and unintentional interpretations of the listener" (1947, p. 506). He further argued that speech training does not begin and end with "the broad and general objectives," but with "immediate objectives and procedures [that] must be more specific in all speech courses" (p.508). Unfortunately he does not suggest what those courses should be. The following article in the 1947 volume of *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, "Speech Training in Negro Colleges," by Marcus Boulware is the only article found which actually lists courses. He found that courses in the colleges he studies could be divided in six broad categories: 1) Debate and Discussion; 2) Dramatic Production; 3) Oral Interpretation; Speaking; 5) courses listed as English; and 6) Extracurricular Speech.

The second and largest category has been labeled **the Discipline and Strategies for Survival.** The articles appeared from the late 1960's to the early 1980's, and are primarily found the *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration.* While the authors recognized the importance of communication curricula, the primary theme was that as the baby boomers completed college by the mid 1980's higher level administrators would be forced to tighten budgets and would begin to eliminate programs. Many feared that speech communication programs would be seen as being insignificant. The most powerful example of a statement regarding changes on college campuses and survival was written by Patti Gillespie (1978), who comparing the 1960's with the 1970's observes "enrollments are in steady state or decline. Students, while interested in vocational preparation seem less prepared and devoted to liberal studies" (p. 6). She continued by noting that "construction has ceased" and "curricula and programs are as apt to be eliminated as the are to be added" (p. 6). She cited a story in *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* in which the president of Lincoln University is "under fire because of his decision to send a notice of termination to every member of the faculty..." (p.6). Richard Ranta (1978) noted the loss of public faith in higher education, and fears that administrators may "wake up one morning and discover that their program is fighting for its life" (p.8). As concerns about the survival of programs grew Robert Kully (1978) listed questions which the field should be prepared to address. They are "1) what is the content of the discipline? 2) what is the importance or contribution to the curriculum of the university and to the long-range education of students? 3) what is its relationship to other disciplines? 4) what societal, cultural, and vocational needs does or can it serve? and 5) what can speech faculty do to keep the discipline from becoming stratified at its current level without resorting to fads or fashions for content?" (p, 27).

Others chose to address issues of change by advocating changes which from the perspective of 20 years into the future were not particularly radical. Cathcart (1979), argues that the future will be dominated by the media, and that "we and the republic will survive as we become centers for media studies" (p. 55). Jennings (1985) pictures a university of the future which would incorporate computer technology and distance learning. Deethardt (1985) calls for a greater emphasis on interdisciplinary teaching and

53). In providing an example he noted that at the University of North Carolina 14 departments "teach courses in interpersonal communication under various titles" (p. 54). He argues that by reducing duplicative efforts and having the speech communication course fill the requirement smaller programs could protect themselves and increase upper level offerings. Finally, Wood in *Innovation in Administration: Hard Times: The* Best *Defense is a Good Defense*(1978) described the strategy at Northwestern University in which speech programs must remind administrators of the liberal arts roots of the discipline, but also extol the accomplishments of alumni; and the strength of extracurricular programs and summer institutes. While these faculty and administrators were advocating programmatic strategies for maintaining and increasing the role of communication departments on campus, they did not address specific courses.

Since the authors cited above were primarily concerned about the broader issues of defining the field, surviving, and placing communication departments in universities, it should not be surprising that issues such as which specific courses should be taught were not addressed. Even the recent NCA *Task Force on Advancing the Discipline (*1996) focuses on concerns across the curriculm that are not course or content specific. Thus, the most comprehensive description of a core or essential curriculum is the one developed at the Hope College Summer Institute during the summers of 1985 and 1986. In light of reoccurring questions as to whether interpersonal communication, small group communication, public speaking, understanding mass media, and a rhetoric and theory course are the core or essential courses, I would advocate at least one additional course and perhaps a second. In an age that must address issues relating to increased national diversity, international economies and instantaneous world wide communication intercultural communication has become essential. In order to place our discipline on the same level as departments which require research methods courses, a reasonable case can be built for a course which introduces rhetorical and social science research methodologies to our students. Perhaps it is time to ask our regional and national associations to address questions regarding the core curriculum.

Endnotes

Becker, S.L. (1978). Innovations in administration: Using and being used by other departments. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XXIV, 21-27.

Buulware, M.H. (1947). Speech training in negro colleges. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech,* XXXIII, 509-514.

Conrad, C. (1982). Programmatic diversification as a strategy for the decade of the eighties. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XLII, 53-55.

Cathcart, R. S. (1979). McLuhan vs. Aristotle: Media dominance in the 1980's. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XXVII, 52-55.

Dance, F. E. (1980). Speech communication as a liberal arts discipline. *Communication Education,* XXIX. 326-331.

Deethhardt, J. F. (1985). Communication at the center of university education: Implications for innovation. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* LI, 57-60.

Gillespie, P.. P. (1978). Looking forward...to uncertainty: Introductory remarks. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XXIV, 6.

Harwood, K. A. (1979). Speech communication: 1986. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XXX, 15-17.

Jennings, L. (1985). Response to the university of the future. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* LI, 61-63.

Kully, R. D. (19778). Administrators' perceptions and misperceptions about the discipline of speech communication. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XXIV, 24-27.

Lillywhite, H. (1947). A reevaluation of speech objectives. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech,* XXXIII, 505-508.

Matlon, R. J. (Ed.), Ortiz, S. P. (Assoc. Ed.), (1997). Index to journals in communication studies. Annadale, VA: National Communication Association.

McKelvey, D. P. (1946). Improving the fundamentals course. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech,* XXXII, 501-505.

Ranta, R. R. (1978). Looking ahead...to uncertainty: A dean's view. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XXIV, 7-8.

Sillars, M.O. The opportunities of steady state. *The Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XXIX, 45-47.

Wood, R. V. (1978). Innovation in administration: Hard times: The best defense is a good Defense. *The Journal of the Association for Communication Administration,* XXIV, 11-13.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

CS 510 091

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Reviewing the Core Curriculum Through the Journals	
Author(s): Alan C. Lerstrom	
Corporate Source: Luther College	Publication Date: April 10, 1999

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☒

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Alan C. Lerstrom	Printed Name/Position/Title: Alan C. Lerstrom, Assoc Prof
Organization/Address: Luther College Decorah, IA 52101-1045 700 College Dr.	Telephone: 319-387-1216 FAX:
	E-Mail Address: lerstral@luther.edu Date: 6/18/99

(over)