CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION REPORT
Planning and Review Committee
Consultant Recommendation

I. Degree: B.S. in Professional Communication and Emerging Media

Date of Review: 2011-12 academic year

Program Director: Dr. Matthew J Livesey

PRC Consultant(s): Dr. Alexander Basyrov, Dr. Pete Schlosser

Purpose of the Review: The review was conducted to assess the quality of the B.S. in Professional Communication and Emerging Media (PCEM) degree Program as part of the ongoing seven-year review Cycle of every UW-Stout program.

Committee Findings: The PRC recommends continuation of this program through the next scheduled review in 2017-18 and that the recommendations made by the committee be implemented.

Abstract: The B.S. in Professional Communication and Emerging Media prepares students for employment in a rapidly evolving field. In alignment with UW-Stout’s mission, the Professional Communication and Emerging Media program emphasizes communication, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. The UW-Stout tradition of “hands-on” experience and active learning is reflected in the program’s emphasis on problem solving, usability, and applied knowledge. Additionally, the program incorporates new learning and teaching strategies including distance delivery options that are part of the UW-Stout’s high-tech digital campus. The degree consists of 124 credits of general education and professional coursework and is unique at UW-Stout (and in the field of technical communication) for blending applied professional fields into the requirements for the degree. The B.S. in Professional Communication and Emerging Media is housed within the English and Philosophy Department and is being reviewed for the second time. Past concerns with tensions between the needs of the program and the general education mission of the department have been largely resolved. The program is growing and gaining recognition in the industry and among peers.

II. Process Followed for Current Review:
The PRC consultants met with the program director to review the procedures and offer assistance. Data regarding several aspects of the program were collected from juniors and seniors currently enrolled in the PCEM program, key faculty and alumni. The data were analyzed and returned to the program director and PRC members. The program director then completed the self-study report and presented the report to the PRC. The consultants then wrote the recommendation report. This report was forwarded to the dean for his response. The PRC reviewed the dean’s response, approved the recommendation report and forwarded the report to the Faculty Senate.

III. Previous Review Year: 2004-05
The committee indicated solid support and made commendations that continue to be predominant in the current review. It was noted that the program had been responsive and
was in tune with current trends and technologies. Placement of graduates, as noted in the prior review continued to be high. National and international recognition was reported along with strong support and connection to industry. Key faculty were noted as being knowledgeable and committed to the students. It was noted that a revision of the program was being undertaken. Some dissatisfaction with advising due to the complexity of the program was noted. Friction between some department members and the existing program director was noted, along with frustration with workload.

Previous Recommendations for Program Director:
1. Work with other department members; continue to review the curriculum in an effort to avoid unnecessary overlap.
2. In cooperation with the department chair and the college dean, continue work to develop and implement a solid program marketing plan.

Response from Program Director:
1. Work on these issues has already begun. At the end of its fourth year, the technical communication program’s industry advisory board presented members of the core program faculty recommendations for a large-scale revamping of the curriculum, not only to update it but to set it apart from competing programs in the region and worldwide. To bring the board’s recommendations to reality, the program launched the new curriculum development process on September 24, 2004, with a day-long program faculty retreat involving faculty and staff members from the departments of Art & Design; English & Philosophy; and Speech Communication, Foreign Languages, Theater, and Music. The day began with a keynote presentation by Dr. James Romano, a program advisory board member, and was followed by brainstorming of new courses.
2. The chief thrust of the program’s recruiting efforts over the next few years will be the Stout Writing Relays, a competition that brings high school students to the Stout campus, where they then learn from the program’s faculty and current students about the technical communication field and program. The English & Philosophy Department put all plans in place for an April 2005 competition but found high school teachers had objections to the timing or had not received notification of the event. To remedy these problems before the 2006 event, the College of Arts & Sciences is preparing to send a three-person panel to the October 14, 2005, Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English & Language Arts convention, where they will staff an information booth and have a place on the convention program to talk about Stout, the technical communication program, and the Stout Writing Relays.

Previous Recommendations for Department Chair:
1. Be supportive of the program director and his efforts to purchase adequate software needed to better serve the students.
2. Be supportive of the program director and his efforts to seek department faculty support and participation.
3. Be supportive of the need to develop and implement a solid marketing plan designed to increase student enrollment and retention.
4. Be supportive of the program’s need to recruit and retain faculty qualified to teach in the program.
Response from Department Chair:
1. The department’s funds for supplies and software are modest but where we can buy software that the program needs, we do. We are also supportive of attempts by the program director and other instructors in the program to improve software through grants, lab mod, and end-of-the-year purchases with money from the dean. Two years ago we ranked program-related software needs at the top of our end-of-the-year wish list. This year we supported a large and successful lab mod request.
2. There have been some problems selling everyone in the department on the importance of the program and their participation in it. We have worked on this in a number of ways, assigning program-related tasks to department members, setting up several departmental forums at which the program and its relationship to the department have been discussed at length, and bringing in other program directors to talk about their relationships with their parent departments. This year we instituted a policy whereby job candidates have been required to spend some time talking to the program director and learning about what will be required of them, even when they aren’t primarily being hired to teach program-related courses. We have also set up a committee which has been charged with coming up with a graphic representation of the department, covering all of its job positions, the people currently holding those positions, and the various tasks that need to be done for both the department and the program. We’re hoping that this graphic representation will help clarify our needs.
3. Department members have lent their support to recruiting through participation in the Stout Writing Relays event. Although this event has not yet been successful, we will be sending faculty to a conference in Madison next semester to better advertise it.
4. The department has been highly supportive of the program in this regard, having hired three new program-related faculty members in the last two years, with a fourth new hire already completed for next year and candidates for a fifth program-related hire interviewing this week and next.

Previous Recommendations for Dean:
1. Be supportive of the program director and the chair in their efforts to identify and fund the purchase of software for the program.
2. Be supportive of the need to develop and implement a solid marketing plan designed to increase student enrollment and retention.
3. Be supportive of the program’s need to recruit and retain faculty qualified to teach in the program.

Response from Dean:
1. After meeting with the program director and department chair to discuss this issue it was decided to allocate $5,000 annually to the program for purchase of software. Although there may be times when this sum is not sufficient, it was felt that on average it would meet current needs for software updates. It was also discussed that the program would work with the Art and Design Department to coordinate the purchase of mutually used software.
2. This was discussed with the program director and department chair. The Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts convention is critical to the recruitment efforts with K-12 teachers. Therefore, the College of Arts and Sciences
has agreed to fund a three person panel from the Technical Communication Program to attend this convention. We also plan to continue discussions regarding a more “targeted marketing” strategy and the funds that would be needed to do so.

3. The College of Arts and Sciences is well aware of the need to recruit and retain qualified faculty in all areas of the college. Salary savings (from retirement replacements) over the past several years have accumulated to the point at which the college can now begin to address salary inequities. CAS will allocate over $120,000 in base funding to adjust 74 faculty and staff who have been shown to be underpaid according to CUPA analysis. This increase in existing salaries will allow us to offer more competitive salaries to future candidates in all disciplines but especially in Technical Communication. We have just recently hired a highly qualified person in Technical Communication as a result of being able to offer a more competitive package.

IV. Current Year Program Review:

Program Strengths:
1. The program has been responsive and is in tune with current trends and technologies. (Key faculty survey - A [inside department], Key faculty survey - B [outside department], PD self-study)
2. The program has a delivery structure that makes degree completion accessible to off campus students. (PD self-study)
3. Placement of graduates, as noted in the prior review continues to be high. (PD self-study)
4. National and international recognition was reported along with strong support and connection to industry. (Program Advisory Committee, PD self-study)
5. Enrollment is growing rapidly. (PD self-study)
6. The current Program Director and staff were noted as a strength being knowledgeable and committed to the students. (PD self-study)
7. Strong, diverse, current and rigorous curriculum. (Key faculty survey - A [inside department], Key faculty survey - B [outside department], Program Advisory Committee, Student surveys, PD self-study)
8. Placement of graduates continues to be high. (PD self-study)

Issues of Concern-Indicate Source
(NOTE: All issues of concern need to have a recommendation related to it. However, there may be some recommendations that don’t relate to a particular issue of concern):
1. The need for a Journalism faculty -- search is underway, but the hire needs to happen for the Applied Journalism concentration to be successful. (PD self-study)
2. Library resources. (PD self-study, student surveys)
3. Classroom facilities need to keep up with the evolving field and changing technology. (PD self-study, student surveys, advisory board)
4. Laboratory equipment needs to keep up with the evolving field and changing technology. (PD self-study, student surveys, advisory board)
5. The current smaller size of the program forces most of the classes to be delivered in the traditional and online format by the same instructor -- this seems to dramatically increase the workload of instructors.
Recommendations for the Program Director:
1. (regarding issue of concern #1) Work with the Chair of Department and the Dean on hiring the needed Journalism faculty.
2. (regarding issue of concern #2) Work with the Chair of Department, the Dean, and the Library on finding the resources to keep the Library resources aligned with the need of the program.
3. (regarding issues of concern #3, 4) Work with the Chair of Department and the Dean on securing resources needed to keep classroom facilities and laboratory equipment up to date.
4. (regarding issue of concern #5) Work with the Chair of Department and the Dean on identifying solutions to the persistent workload issues due to the formats of delivery of the offered courses.

Recommendations for the Chair of Department:
1. (regarding issue of concern #1) Work with the Program Director and the Dean on hiring the needed Journalism faculty.
2. (regarding issue of concern #2) Work with the Program Director, the Dean, and the Library on finding the resources to keep the Library resources aligned with the need of the program.
3. (regarding issues of concern #3, 4) Work with the Program Director and the Dean on securing resources needed to keep classroom facilities and laboratory equipment up to date.
4. (regarding issue of concern #5) Work with the Program Director and the Dean on identifying solutions to the persistent workload issues due to the formats of delivery of the offered courses.

Recommendations for the Dean:
1. (regarding issue of concern #1) Work with the Program Director and the Chair of Department on hiring the needed Journalism faculty.
2. (regarding issue of concern #2) Work with the Program Director, the Chair of Department, and the Library on finding the resources to keep the Library resources aligned with the need of the program.
3. (regarding issues of concern #3, 4) Work with the Program Director and the Chair of Department on securing resources needed to keep classroom facilities and laboratory equipment up to date.
4. (regarding issue of concern #5) Work with the Program Director and the Chair of Department on identifying solutions to the persistent workload issues due to the formats of delivery of the offered courses.