Strategic Plan

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT OF BUFFALO STATE (SUNY)

Mission
The Communication Department of Buffalo State College is ...
... a faculty of scholars serving the communication disciplines by creating new knowledge and effectively sharing existing knowledge within a community of scholars and media professionals.
... a faculty of educators preparing students to think analytically and creatively, communicate clearly, act ethically, and succeed professionally.

(Adopted 2001; revised 2005)

Values
As a collegial and dedicated group of faculty and staff both individually and collectively dedicated to this mission, the Communication Department holds the following values:

Academic Excellence. In its relationship with higher education – at Buffalo State, within the State University of New York, and beyond – the Communication Department values the ideals and best practices of academic excellence. We provide opportunities for students to think critically, discern ethically, solve problems creatively, and communicate effectively.

Service Excellence. In its relationships with students, the Communication Department values the ideals and best practices of service excellence. We give priority to student interests and needs in matters such as course development, scheduling, faculty accessibility, and the creation of a climate of encouragement and mutual respect.

Communication Primacy. In its grounding within the communication disciplines, the Communication Department values communication as the basis of democracy and the vehicle for providing information, analysis and advocacy. We uphold the highest professional standards and practices of the media and communication professions.

Quality Performance. In its relationships with employers and graduate schools, the Communication Department values the ideals and best practices of quality performance. We maintain high professional standards and seek to develop graduates who meet and exceed these expectations.

Social Responsibility. In its relationships with the community, the Communication Department values the ideals and best practices of social responsibility. We offer leadership, scholarship, creative work and service to the communication and media professions and adding to the quality of life in Western New York and beyond.

(Adopted 2004; revised 2013)

Strategic Vision
The Communication Department at Buffalo State embraces the tension inherent in offering a quality professional education within a liberal-arts context. The Department will continue to provide a comprehensive array of specialties that is reflective of our mission, consistent with our vision and values, and appropriate to our resources.

(Adopted 2004)
Situation Analysis
In a planning/strategy session in March 2013, the faculty participated in a brainstorming session based on the basic SWOT analysis, identifying departmental strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Following is the alphabetical listing of these attributed. As an unfiltered list, these elements are noncontextualized and sometimes contradictory or redundant. They are listed here to provide a record of the collective thinking of department faculty engaged in a planning process. Contextualization and analysis of these elements is built into subsequent sections of this Strategic Plan.

**Strengths**
- Academic programs with comprehensive curriculums
- Accreditation
- Affordable tuition
- Alumni network
- Arts community connections
- Collegiality
- Departmental leadership
- Diverse student population
- Experiential learning opportunities, including Service Learning
- Faculty that is strong, energetic and professional
- Professional preparation
- Social media within the department
- Student organizations, including WBNY radio
- Undergraduate research
- Urban location, able to draw on the cultural resources of metropolitan Buffalo, including internship opportunities for internships

**Weaknesses**
- Confusion of relationship between Media Production and Television & Film Arts
- Department identity weak
- Facilities; poor equipment at BSC-TV; poor production quality
- Full-time/part-time ratio
- Grade inflation
- Lack of funding, weak budget
- Lack of passion among students
- Limited lab access
- Little student research
- No dedicated auditorium
- Not housed in our own building
- Rude and disrespectful students
- Student self esteem (unnecessarily low, or unwarrantedly high)
- Student-faculty ratio
- Too few faculty
- Too many adjuncts to supervise
- Too many students in the department; unprepared students admitted to the program
- Underprepared students
OPPORTUNITIES
- Advising
- Alternative media
- Alumni
- Campus media
- Collaboration with other departments
- Community relationships
- Curriculum revision
- Department activity in external environs
- Division heads
- Engaged faculty
- Growth
- Increased BSC-TV organization
- Interest in four Communication majors
- Lab fees
- Local media close by
- Marketing
- Mobile media distribution
- More flexible merged media
- New hires
- Professional alumni
- Social media
- SUNY collaboration
- Support from local media
- Labor Dept statistics on public relations jobs

THREATS
- Classroom space
- Closer integration with Erie Community College
- Excessive assessment
- Few job opportunities
- Money
- Open SUNY
- Other colleges winning tech race
- Pending retirements
- Poor introductory writing preparation
- Potential 4/4 load
- Staffing too thin
- State funding; SUNY funding; RAT budget process
- SUNY collaboration merger
- SUNY privatization

CHALLENGES EMERGING FROM THE SWOT ANALYSIS
- Where possible, to transform weaknesses into strengths, and threats into opportunities
- To balance teaching loads with increasing expectations for faculty scholarship and service
- To creatively engage part-time faculty while assertively advocating for a significant increase in the number of full-time faculty for the department
- To adapt the curriculum to anticipate and incorporate developments within the communication professions and/or the media industry
**Benchmark Analysis**

In analyzing its strengths and weaknesses relative to its mission, values and vision, the Communication Department benchmarks itself against the leading academic programs for journalism and mass communication.

A foundation for this benchmark is a study by the University of Florida in 2004 that identified characteristics among schools that previously had been judged as having the Top 10 journalism/mass communication programs in the United States. (For the record, those schools were Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan State, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Syracuse, and Texas.) While these universities are not among Buffalo State aspirational schools, they do offer a basis for comparison with the Buffalo State Communication Department, and they provide an opportunity to compare Buffalo State as a regional university with characteristics of national leaders in our field.

### Characteristics of Top 10 Programs

<p>| Balanced curricula | Strength: The department requires both conceptual and skills courses: Journalism, 6 skills of 12 required plus 2 electives; Media Production: 7 skills of 12 required plus 2 electives; Public Communication: 5 skills of 11 required plus 3 electives; Communication Studies: 3 skills of 10 required plus 4 electives. The curriculum is continually reviewed with an eye toward ensuring its professional and academic relevance and attempting to anticipate media trends and needs. The department also has identified a need to ensure consistency among courses, particularly those offered in multiple sections. To this end, the department monitors grading patterns and the level of consistency between course proposal documents and syllabi. The department also participates in several interdisciplinary programs, including three majors, seven minors, and one certification. |
| Faculty balance | Strength: Current full-time faculty of 15 includes eight with PhD/EdD, one with a pending PhD, two with other terminal degree (MFA, MS/Public Relations), and four with non-terminal masters. On average, full-time faculty have 13 years of professional experience apart from an average 15 years of full-time teaching experience. |
| Specialized centers | Weakness: The department sponsors the American Indian Policy and Media Initiative, which began in 2005 and was active through 2010, currently attempting to resume activities. Beyond this, the department has no specialized centers or institutes. |
| Respected faculty | Strength: Communication faculty are rated highly across campus, with two full professors, one Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, one President’s Award for Excellence in Advising, one President’s Leadership Award, four Faculty Appreciation Award (United Students Government). In terms of scholarship, professional achievements include one faculty member serving on the national board of PRSA, one faculty |</p>
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<th><strong>Sufficient size</strong> to offer complete curricula, with sufficient faculty expertise</th>
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<td><strong>Both Strength and Weakness:</strong> Communication is the largest department within the School of Arts and Humanities, representing 40 percent of total enrollment. The department is the third largest throughout Buffalo State, representing 9 percent of total university enrollment. However, a corresponding weakness is that the department is significantly understaffed, with a current student-faculty ratio of 56:1 based on the number of full-time faculty; 36:1 based on the exclusion of currently non-enrolled students and advisees assigned to professional staff. This compares with 19:1 for the School of Arts and Humanities and 24:1 for the entire university.</td>
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<th><strong>Accreditation</strong> from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications</th>
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<td><strong>Strength:</strong> The department was provisionally accredited by ACEJMC in 2008 and received full accreditation in 2010.</td>
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<th><strong>Adequate budget</strong> to provide high quality in administration, instruction, research/creative work, facilities/equipment, and support services</th>
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<td><strong>Weakness:</strong> The university provides for salary-related budget items for all faculty and staff, both full-time and part-time. Through the School of Arts and Humanities, the university provides the department’s operating budget (OTPS, Other Than Personnel Services). Currently this is $19,400, representing $30 for each enrolled student. Note that this compares with $168 per student throughout the School of Arts and Humanities. In Spring 2013, the department began attaching a $50 materials fee to certain media production courses as an attempt to supplement the operating funds supplied by the university.</td>
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<th><strong>Faculty governance</strong> that is effective and a shared commitment among the entire faculty</th>
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<td><strong>Strength:</strong> The department meets every three or four weeks. The department is structured into six standing committees. All faculty and professional staff participate in the work of these committees and other departmental task groups. The full faculty evaluates the performance of the chair every three years. Faculty evaluate peers’ annual performance every one or two years for untenured faculty.Peer review of tenured faculty occurs with consideration of promotion.</td>
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<th><strong>Effective leadership</strong>, both administrative leadership and leadership by influence and reputation</th>
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<td><strong>Strength:</strong> The department has a long pattern of effective leadership. For the past 30 years, each department chair has served 2 or 3 terms. The current chair has been in office since January 2011. The previous chair left during his third term to become interim associate dean for the School of Arts and Humanities. His predecessor left</td>
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office during her second term to serve as dean of University College. Her predecessor left during his second term to serve as associate vice president for Enrollment Management and dean of the School of Arts and Humanities.

Student-faculty instructional ratio: No higher than 35:1 course enrollment, with instructional SFR in professional skills classes at a maximum of 20:1.

Facilities and equipment: Of sufficient quantity and quality to sustain high-quality teaching, research/creative work, and service.

Professional outreach: Involving regular, systematic and high-quality outreach to media/communication professionals.

Competitive students: Who successfully match students from other programs throughout the country.

Strength: For Spring 2013, the department had 97 sections with 2,053 students enrolled. Average course enrollment of 21 ranged from 7 to 109. Only 9 percent (n=9) of these courses had an enrollment above 35.

Of the total number of sections, 31 percent (n=30) are professional/skills courses with an average enrollment of 13.4 students. The range was between 7 and 19. Full-time faculty taught 32 percent (n=31) of these sections; part-time faculty taught 68 percent (n=66). In terms of student enrollment, 38 percent of students (n=779) were instructed by full-time faculty, and (n=1,274) by part-time faculty.

Facilities and equipment: The department has marginally adequate facilities but clearly needs more, larger and better-equipped facilities to achieve its goal of providing a professionally oriented program.

Department facilities include four dedicated computer labs, each equipped with 16 student workstations; three video edit suites with a total of five work stations; one 1,500 sf television studio plus a 670 sf control room; two 170 sf radio production studios, and edit suites totaling 310 sf.

In Spring 2013, plans began taking shape to add a 675 sf multi-media online newsroom and a 200 sf TV production studio in spaces to be rehabilitated in the basement of Bishop Hall contiguous to two existing computer labs dedicated for departmental use both for teaching and for student media.

The entire Communication Department is slated to move into new facilities in a new wing to be constructed at Upton Hall specifically to house Communication and other Arts and Humanities departments. Thus the department enjoys the opportunity and challenge to design a new facility from the ground up. Design for this project is expected to begin in 2015.

Professional outreach: The department is located in a media-rich area, the largest metropolitan area in the state outside of New York City, and within the broader media sphere of Toronto. It generally enjoys a reputation among media professionals in Western New York for offering a quality and practical academic program.

However, the department’s attempts to maintain contact with alumni and with regional media professionals have been haphazard and sporadic, reactive rather than proactive. The department’s new strategic plan has several action steps to address this deficiency.

Competitive students: Students have been successful, with many academic and professional achievements. Communication majors have been the largest group of commencement student speakers, students are consistently active in United Students Government, 22-25 percent are on the Dean’s List each semester,
and students have received competitive scholarships from professional groups such as the local chapters of the Society of Professional Journalists and the Public Relations Society of America.

However, the department also is grappling with increasing numbers of what it perceives as under-prepared students, particularly students with poor writing and critical-thinking skills. Addressing this, the department initiated a cooperative venture with the College Writing Program to offer Communication-specific sections of CWP101 and CWP102 (required freshmen writing courses) capped with a Writing Exam for both native and transfer students.

**Accomplished alumni** who include nationally known practitioners and leaders in their fields and in the academy

Strength: Communication alumni have been quite successful over the years. The department’s Hall of Fame showcases currently 16 successful alumni, including recipients of Emmys, Pulitzers, Edward R. Murrow Award, Academy Award, Religion Writer of the Year, and many other professional awards; and others with credentials such as MTV executive, United National media consultant, network news producer, television executive producer, member of the New York Times editorial board, and producers/directors for national and international news reporting of car, politics, sports, entertainment, religion and business.

Meanwhile, the department’s Professional Achievement Award similarly has recognized the work of 16 communication professionals who have achieved local and regional success in their media careers.

**Diversity commitment** to preparing future journalism and communication professionals to work in a diverse, multicultural, global community

Strength: The department offers 5 percent (n=2) of the 43 university-wide courses designed as Diversity courses. Most of all departmental courses include learning outcomes and/or course content dealing with diversity and inclusiveness.

Additionally, 33 percent of sections (n=34) had instructor-generated topics related to diversity/inclusiveness, 31 percent (n=32) had similar student-generated research/creative activities, and 52 percent (n=54) had women or minorities as guest speakers.

**Inclusive faculty and student body** that reflects inclusiveness across race, ethnicity and gender, and a curriculum that exposes students to issues of inclusiveness affecting journalism and communication

*Both Strength and Weakness:* The Communication student body is a strength, in terms of diversity. The department has a long-standing pattern as one of the most diverse and inclusive on a campus that itself is richly diverse. It consists of 846 students, 690 of whom (82 percent) were enrolled in courses during the reporting semester (Spring 2013).

Of students reporting race and ethnicity, the department is 40 percent non-white (compared with 31 percent for the university. The student population is 51 percent female and 49 percent male.

A weakness is in the composition of the department faculty, which – despite consistent efforts in hiring – does not reflect the diversity that has been sought.

Of the department’s full-time faculty of 15, 93 percent are white (n=14), 7 percent Asian (n=1). The full-time faculty is 67 percent male (n=10) and 33 percent female (n=5).

The part-time faculty of 36 is 94 percent white (n=34) and 6 percent minority (n=2). The part-time faculty is 56 percent male
External funding obtained through philanthropy or contracts/grants

Weakness: The department has no endowment for general operations. It currently (Summer 2013) has $22,487 in the Buffalo State Foundation. Additionally, the department’s American Indian Policy and Media Initiative has $17,204 through the SUNY Research Foundation at Buffalo State. The department’s Strategic Plan addresses the issue of fundraising.
Goals, Strategies and Action Steps

Goal 1 – Academic Excellence
The Communication Department will offer an academic program that is both professionally oriented and rooted in the liberal arts and is recognized as fostering high academic and professional standards.

Strategy – Academic Standards. The department will offer an academic program that fosters high academic standards. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 1)

Priority Action Step – Student Capacity. We will monitor numbers of students, ratios of full-time to part-time faculty, section size, university requirements for COM/SPC service courses, and other resource factors – particularly in the three professional majors – with the possible outcome of capping the maximum number of students who can be maintained in a major with current resources.

Oversight: Smith
Metric: Report

Priority Action Step – Senior Portfolio. We will implement the requirement, first articulated in the department’s 2004 Strategic Plan, that students must maintain a digital portfolio of their work as they progress through their major and that graduating seniors submit this for review.

Oversight: Curriculum Committee
Metric: Implementation of portfolio

Priority Action Step – Writing Proficiency Test. We will implement the writing test, first articulated in the department’s 2004 Strategic Plan, and apply it to all students upon the completion of COM210 Converged Media Writing or at the time of transfer into the department.

Oversight: Curriculum Committee
Metric: Adoption, implementation

Action Step – Standards and Competencies. We will review all courses to ensure that the course proposal/revision and section syllabi reflect all assessment standards and all ACEJMC competencies relevant to each specific course.

Oversight: Curriculum Committee
Metric: # and % courses in compliance

Action Step – Writing Infusion. We will encourage, support and monitor faculty efforts to infuse writing practice in every course possible.

Oversight: Curriculum Committee
Metric: # and % courses

Strategy – Professional Standards. The department will offer an academic program that is oriented toward high professional standards in journalism, media production, public relations and advertising. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 4)

Priority Action Step – Professional Facilities. We will continue to advocate and plan for ongoing developments to enhance the professional facilities within the department to provide a high quality professional education with state-of-the-art equipment for audio and video production, pre- and postproduction, digital and other social media, computer-based research, photography, publishing and graphic communication. Specific in this action step is the department’s continued involvement in the all-university planning for a new Communication building or wing being coordinated through the dean’s office. The department will solicit input from alumni and media professionals.

Oversight: Smith, Technology Committee
Metric: Acquisition of new equipment and facilities
**Priority Action Step – Student Organizations.** We will support and encourage the work of student organizations including BSC-TV, WBNY-FM, The Record, Public Relations Student Society of America, and Communication Honor Society. Where possible, we will provide leadership for the integration of and collaboration among student media.
  
  Oversight: Student Enrichment Committee
  Metric: Report

**Action Step – Program Review.** We will monitor the evolution of the communication professions and will continually review each area of study (journalism, media production, public relations, and advertising) and revise programs and courses as appropriate.
  
  Oversight: Marren
  Metric: Report, revision as needed

**Priority Action Step – Benchmarking.** We will continually benchmark the department against other ACEJMC-accredited universities and against standards associated with relevant professional organizations. With this information, we will continually consider opportunities for enhancing our professional curriculum.
  
  Oversight: Smith
  Metric: Report

**Action Step – Professional Norms.** We will develop a checklist of skills and competencies for each professional major, based on norms and expectations of the discipline. Faculty in each major will assess student competencies in the practical skills associated with the discipline.
  
  Oversight: Smith
  Metric: Development, implementation

**Action Step – Area of Specialization.** We will recommit to the expectation, identified in the 2004 Strategic Plan, for each student to identify an area of specialization outside the Communication Department, with various options for achieving this, such as a second major, a designated minor, or a 15-credit concentration.
  
  Oversight: Marren, Smith
  Metric: # graduating students compliant

**Action Step – Internship.** On the premise that a professional internship is a privilege rather than a right, we will monitor and enforce prerequisites for students enrolling in internships and will monitor the involvement of professional supervisors at internship sites.
  
  Oversight: Tramont
  Metric: # interns, report

**Action Step – Certificates of Specialization.** We will investigate the possibility of expanding the department’s current offering of a certificate in Sports Communication by considering parallel professional specialties within the department’s resources that interest students and enhance their career credentials.
  
  Oversight: Smith
  Metric: Adoption, implementation
Strategy – Community Engagement. Consistent with Buffalo State’s commitment “to enhance the quality of life in Buffalo and the larger community” and reflecting the department’s stated value of “providing opportunities for students to think critically, discern ethically, solve problems creatively, and communicate effectively,” the department will offer an academic program that positively and proactively engages the Western New York community. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 3)

Priority Action Step – Civic Engagement. We will review course proposals and revise them as appropriate, and we will offer resources to instructors, to enhance civic engagement of students and faculty through activities such as experiential learning linking coursework with community businesses and organizations, service learning, and other types of community partnerships. Particular attention will be given to projects and partnerships with diversity-oriented organizations.
   Oversight: Curriculum Committee
   Metric: # courses

Priority Action Step – High School Outreach. We will encourage, support and monitor faculty efforts to recruit high school students to the communication professions and to provide workshops and other training activities as appropriate. Particular efforts will be given to outreach projects that include a focus on minority students.
   Oversight: Student Enrichment Committee
   Metric: # activities

Action Step – Educational Partnerships. We will explore opportunities to expand educational partnerships such as the current relationship with the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts through which the department offers credit-bearing courses to high school students. We will also explore opportunities to create joint academic programs with communication units of universities in other countries.
   Oversight: Silverman, Oyer
   Metric: Report, # programs

Action Steps – Media and Professional Engagement. We will explore opportunities to assist Western New York media, communication professionals, and relevant professional organizations, with programs such as professional workshops, seminars, consultancies, and other educational opportunities.
   Oversight: Marren
   Metric: # activities

Action Steps – Professional Engagement. We will expand our presence in relevant professional organizations in Western New York by encouraging and facilitating faculty membership and participation.
   Oversight: Marren
   Metric: # membership, # leadership roles

Action Step – Specialized Center. We will seek to increase the activity of the American Indian Policy and Media Initiative and will explore the possibility of creating a center for the study of communication in a particular subject area such as education, health or environment.
   Oversight: Smith
   Metric: Report

Action Step – Assessment. We will involve communication professionals in the department’s assessment program, specifically by inviting such individuals to review student portfolios, and to observe and comment on student activities within the capstone courses within each professional major.
   Oversight: Liao
   Metric: Report
**Strategy – Recognition of Excellence.** The department will offer an academic program that is recognized for its excellence by students, alumni and media professionals. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 4)

**Priority Action Step – Accreditation.** We will assess the department’s adherence to ACEJMC principles and standards and through the self study will document this adherence, and we will modify any department practice and procedure that may be necessary to ensure compliance with ACEJMC standards.

   Oversight: Smith
   Metric: Completion of self study, re-accreditation

**Priority Action Step – Department Media.** We will enhance the department’s use of its own media and communication-related events to strategically highlight current/recent student work.

   Oversight: Smith, Knowles, Karlis
   Metric: # media postings

**Action Step – Student Honor Society.** We will encourage and support Lambda Pi Eta Communication Honor Society.

   Oversight: Liao
   Metric: Report

**Action Step – Student Scholarships and Awards.** We will seek to enhance the visibility, prestige and funding resources for scholarships and awards (including Dean’s List, scholar-athletes, and similar student recognition), and we will maintain and potentially enhance the granting of recognition to top graduating seniors and students completing graduate work in the department. We also will use the department website, display cases, CommBLOG and other media to recognize student academic and professional success.

   Oversight: Student Enrichment Committee
   Metric: # awards
Goal 2 – Students
The Communication Department will effectively manage enrollment patterns among Communication students toward recruiting a well-qualified and diverse student population, and toward advising and assisting students on a path to graduation.

Strategy – Recruitment. The department will implement a plan to successfully recruit quality students into our majors, with particularly focus on students from under-represented backgrounds. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 1)

Priority Action Step – Research & Planning. We will undertake an analysis of current students, from which we will identify categories of preferred potential students based on characteristics such as academic achievement and extracurricular involvement with student media, and demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, and identification with an under-represented population. The outcome will be a plan identifying messages, themes, and distribution recommendations directed toward high school students and their parents, school guidance counselors, university advisers working with undeclared students, admissions counselors, community college faculty and advisers, and others who may be in a position to influence potential students toward the department.

Oversight: Marren, Smith
Metric: Implementation of plan

Action Step – Recruiting Materials. We will develop recruiting materials to support the recruiting plan. These materials will include print, digital, video, and other formats as appropriate. Particular attention will be given to visual and verbal messages that highlight the department’s record on and commitment to diversity in its many aspects.

Oversight: Smith, Rera, Oyer
Metric: Production of materials

Strategy – Advisement. The department will enhance and fully implement its Advisement Plan, which serves as the foundation for helping students make informed choices about their majors and appropriate ways to meet personal academic goals. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 1)

Action Step – New Students. We will attempt to engage incoming first-time and transfer students prior to their first semester course registration.

Oversight: Marren
Metric: # successful registrations

Action Step – Advisement Materials. We will review the Advisement Plan and associated materials each year, and will revise as needed both the plan and print and digital materials used for student advisement.

Oversight: Smith
Metric: # revised materials

Action Step – Advisement Training. We will provide opportunities for veteran and new faculty to become familiar with advisement issues and procedures.

Oversight: Smith
Metric: # training sessions

Action Step – Articulation Agreements. We will review current articulation agreements with community colleges, with particular attention to the consistency of departmental course proposal/revision documents with syllabi of community colleges to ensure course consistency and the viability of accepting transfer courses for required Buffalo State courses.

Oversight: Marren, Smith, Curriculum Committee
Metric: # courses reviewed
Strategy – Retention. In its efforts to retain the maximum number of students and to provide a supportive environment for all students (including those who excel, average students, and those making less-than-satisfactory academic progress), the department will offer a comprehensive package to support an environment that reinforces students in their path toward graduation. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Directions 1 and 2)

Priority Action Step – Student Creativity. We will encourage students to participate in research projects, creative activities, media productions, professional competitions, awards programs, and similar activities. Department media will highlight student creativity.

  Oversight: Marren, Student Enrichment Committee
  Metric: End-of-semester faculty report on # students participating

Priority Action Step – At-Risk Students. We will identify and reach out to students who are considered as being at risk (that is, students with an overall GPA less than 2.2 and those with a major GPA less than 2.6). This outreach will include frequent contact with advisers prepared and resourced for the particular needs of at-risk students.

  Oversight: Smith
  Metric: Report

Priority Action Step – Transfer Students. Consistent with SUNY expectations for smooth movement among campuses, we will carefully monitor the progress of transfer students with the commitment to ensuring that they have the opportunity to graduate within four semesters at Buffalo State after completion of their Communication Core courses and while maintaining a minimum 2.6 major GPA.

  Oversight: Smith
  Metric: # successful transfers

Action Step – Research. We will conduct research including exit surveys and focus groups to identify trends, opinions and areas for improvement. We also will track data on the progress and retention of enrolled students.

  Oversight: Smith
  Metric: Completion of research, tracking of data

Action Step – Graduation. We will monitor retention rates for both native and transfer students, with an eye toward maintaining a retention rate which exceeds that for Buffalo State in general.

  Oversight: Smith
  Metric: Retention report

Action Step – Placement. We will encourage and assist students in applying to graduate studies and professional employment.

  Oversight: Tramont
  Metric: # graduates in professional jobs and graduate school
Goal 3 – Faculty
The Communication Department will support faculty by offering opportunities to enhance their teaching skills and to increase both the quality and quantity of scholarship and professional achievement.

Strategy – Faculty Support. The department will advocate for and initiate attempts to support faculty in their teaching, scholarly and service roles. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 2)

Priority Action Step – Faculty Ratio. In the 2004 Strategic Plan, we identified 75:25 as the ideal proportion of full-time and part-time members of the faculty (calculated on the basis of sections offered). At that time, the actual ratio was 57:43. Currently (Spring 2013), the ratio is 34:66, with students more likely to encounter part-time instructors than full-time faculty. (Note: That ratio shifts to 51:49 by excluding general education courses for non-majors. Thus we will continue to advocate in the interest of students for additional faculty lines – minimally four new hires (in addition to Ron Smith’s return to the department and the hiring of two new faculty beginning in Fall 2013) to modify the full-time/part-time ratio to 50:50 (based on current levels of student enrolment and the current number of sections); we would need 10 new hires to reach the optimal 75:25 proportion.

Oversight: Marren, Faculty Concerns Committee
Metric: # full-time and part-time faculty

Action Step – Promotion and Tenure. We will attempt to reduce as much as possible the service burden on assistant professors, provide effective mentoring by associate and full professors, and otherwise increase the likelihood that they can do what is necessary to achieve tenure and promotion to associate status.

Oversight: Marren
Metric: # positive promotions

Strategy – Faculty Scholarship: The Communication Department will support and encourage faculty scholarship through a broad array of approaches and venues, as outlined in the department’s Statement on Faculty Scholarship. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 2)

Action Step – Recognition. Department media will highlight the scholarly, creative and professional activity of faculty members, and we will promote such work through the Dean’s Office, College Relations, department media, and other appropriate entities. We also will encourage faculty to share their scholarship with colleagues, both for information purposes and for the purpose of potentially sharing the fruits of this research/creativity with students and colleagues.

Oversight: Marren, Smith, Faculty Concerns Committee
Metric: # reports

Action Step – Resources and Output. We will advocate for availability of resources including software, publications, travel and other expenses associated with faculty scholarship; and we will encourage and assist faculty in producing scholarship, with an eye toward increasing scholarly output for the most recent three-year period, as compared with previous three-year periods.

Oversight: Marren, Faculty Concerns Committee
Metrics: # faculty assisted
Goal 4 – Alumni-Media Engagement
The Communication Department will enhance its relationship with former students, members of the Western New York media professions, donors, and others who may potentially be involved in and supportive of the work of the department.

Strategy – Alumni Outreach. The department will enhance the organizational infrastructure to support the ongoing involvement of alumni and media professionals in advancing the interests of the department. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 3)

Priority Action Step – Alumni Organization. We will build on the existing informal steering group among Communication alumni, specifically by helping that group evolve into a body that can assist the department, interact with students, and assist with practical areas such as recruiting and internship placement.
  Oversight: Tramont
  Metric: # events held & planned

Action Step – Career Mentoring. We will work through the alumni organization, various student organizations, and individual instructors to invite alumni and/or media professionals to provide each semester workshops, seminars, panels, and other informational, networking and mentoring opportunities for students.
  Oversight: Marren, Tramont
  Metric: # events held & planned

Strategy – Recognition of Achievement. The department will recognize the professional achievement of former students and Western New York media practitioners and the involvement of alumni, donors and others who assist the department and its students. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 5)

Action Step – Thank-You Note. We will send a thank-you card or e-mail in a timely manner to guest lecturers, presenters, and other visitors who interact with faculty and students. Note that it is the responsibility of individual faculty members inviting guests to notify the chair and provide contact information.
  Oversight: Marren
  Metric: # sent

Action Step – Congratulatory E-Mail. We will send a congratulatory e-mail to current and former students when their achievements are made known to the department. Note that it is the responsibility of all faculty members to notify the chair and provide contact information about achievements of alumni with whom they maintain contact.
  Oversight: Marren, Tramont
  Metric: # sent

Action Step – Hall of Fame. We will continue the department’s Hall of Fame on an every-other-year basis to recognize national-level achievement in communication by Buffalo State alumni. Note that it is the responsibility of all faculty member identify potential nominees.
  Oversight: Marren, Tramont
  Metric: # inductees

Action Step -- Professional Achievement Award. We will continue presenting the department’s Professional Achievement Award to recognize local and regional achievement of alumni and others formerly associated with the department. As opportunities warrant, we also may choose to present special awards for service or distinction in specific areas. Note that it is the responsibility of all faculty member identify potential nominees.
  Oversight: Marren, Tramont
  Metric: # inductees & awards
**Strategy – Fundraising.** The department will seek to develop private support to supplement university and student funding for its programs and services. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 5)

**Priority Action Step – Scholarships.** We will continue to solicit alumni and other would-be benefactors for financial contributions to scholarship and assistance/enrichment funds for students

- Oversight: Marren, Smith, Tramont
- Metrics: $ solicited/contributed, # scholarships given

**Action Step – General Fundraising.** We will work with the dean’s office and with Institutional Advancement to solicit funding for departmental projects and activities.

- Oversight: Marren
- Metrics: $ solicited
Goal 5 – Reputation and Communication
The Communication Department will effectively use a full blend of media to strategically enhance its ongoing communication with all persons and groups who have an interest in the department (including current and potential students, faculty, alumni, donors, media professionals, career counselors, parents, colleagues on and off campus, and professional and community organizations).

Strategy – Department Media. The department will evaluate the effectiveness and enhance its use of existing internal media (print, audio, video, digital). (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 5)

Priority Action Step – Reputation. To foster supporting public opinion toward the department, we will pursue ways to enhance the reputation of the department and will work both independently and with College Relations, the Dean's office, and other entities of the university to publicize the achievements of the department and its faculty and students. Attention will focus on both visual and verbal messages describing the department and its values, programs, and demographic makeup.

  Oversight: Marren, Smith
  Metric: Report

Priority Action Step – Website and Social Media. We will enhance the department’s website and our use of social media, seeking to make them more interactive and more reflective of current technology, with content that is relevant, easy to navigate, useful and strategic. We also will recognize the achievements of students, faculty, alumni and media professionals associated with the department by posting notices and news reports at the department website, blog, and social networking pages. Alumni, faculty and others will be invited to provide information on their accomplishments.

  Oversight: Smith, Karlis, Rera
  Metric: Report

Action Step – Print and Broadcast Media. We will enhance the use of print media and audio/visual media, seeking to make these useful to students and reflective of current technology, with content that is relevant and strategic.

  Oversight: Marren, Smith
  Metric: Report

Action Step – Evaluation. As part of the department’s Assessment Plan, we will invite students and others to comment on and evaluate the effectiveness of the department’s ongoing communication. This may take the form of surveys or focus groups, and it may involve projects associated with various courses in which students strategize and/or design communication programs and tools.

  Oversight: Liao, Smith
  Metric: Report
Goal 6 – Diversity and Inclusiveness
The Communication Department will enhance its record as an inclusive faculty servicing a diverse student population with an academic program that fosters an appreciation of diversity and inclusiveness in all their forms, and enhances awareness of multiculturalism and global relationships that reflects the broad panorama of society at large, the communication professions, and the Western New York community.

Strategy – Curricular Diversity. We will continue to offer a comprehensive curriculum that presents concepts of diversity and inclusiveness, both to increase knowledge and understanding among students and to better prepare students for the diverse environment in which they will live and work. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 4)

Action Step – Infused Diversity. We will continue the model of infused diversity as articulated in the 2004 Strategic Plan, specifically addressing issues of diversity and inclusiveness in various relevant places within the curriculum.

  Oversight: Niman, Curriculum Committee
  Metric: #/% syllabi documenting infused diversity

Action Step – Textbook Diversity. We will use textbooks and other materials that appropriately cover material related to diversity and multiculturalism, or will adopt or create supplemental materials to accomplish this.

  Oversight: Niman, Curriculum Committee
  Metric: # textbooks or supplemental materials used in courses

Strategy – Student Diversity. In addition to attention to diversity and inclusiveness in recruiting efforts outlined in Goal 2, we will celebrate diversity within the department’s student body. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 4)

Priority Action Step – Assessment. We will research through focus groups, surveys and other methodologies the knowledge, attitudes and opinions of students concerning issues of diversity, inclusiveness and multicultural/global understanding as they relate to each major. These will be conducted as part of the department’s assessment program.

  Oversight: Liao
  Metric: Research report

Action Step – Networking. We will promote scholarships, internships, professional service prospects, networking through professional organizations, and other educational opportunities of particular interest to students of under-represented populations.
Strategy – Faculty Diversity. We will strive to recruit as diverse a faculty as possible and to invite members of under-represented populations to interact with students. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 4)

Priority Action Step – Visitors. We will be proactive in including members of under-represented populations among invited guests, speakers and presenters within the department. Each faculty member who uses guest lecturers will be encouraged to invite at least one person each year who is a member of an under-represented population or who presents a topic associated with diversity, inclusiveness, multiculturalism, or global issues.

  - Oversight: Niman
  - Metric: # visitors

Action Step – Full-Time Faculty. We will continue to follow university recruiting guidelines for affirmative action in soliciting applications for faculty positions with attention to under-represented populations, with hiring always to be made on the basis of the best person available for the job.

  - Oversight: Marren
  - Metric: # applicants, # offers made to candidates

Action Step – Diversity Hires. We will continue to take advantage of SUNY opportunities to hire qualified persons with diversity credentials even when local funding for new hires is unavailable.

  - Oversight: Marren
  - Metric: # offers made to candidates

Action Step – Part-Time Faculty. We will actively solicit the Western New York professional media community for applications from qualified members of under-represented populations.

  - Oversight: Marren
  - Metric: # offers made

Strategy – Advocacy. The Communication Department will advocate for diversity and inclusiveness in and through the media and will advocate for an appreciation of diversity as it relates to both the scholarship and practice of communication. (cf Buffalo State Strategic Plan, Direction 3)

Priority Action Step – Diversity Education. Through both its media and its presentations, we will provide forums and resources to students, alumni and media professionals on issues related to diversity within the communication context.

  - Oversight: Niman, Student Enrichment Committee
  - Metric: # resources provided

Action Step – Community Involvement. We will maintain an involvement in minority/diversity venues both academically and professionally through membership in minority-focused media and professional organizations and through active working relationships with minority-focused media organizations.

  - Oversight: Marren
  - Metric: # engagements