Lambda Pi Eta: **SRU’s Communication Honorary**

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**Student Advisory Board Report 2017**

Lambda Pi Eta has compiled the following assessment to provide the Advisory Board with suggestions for the department. This year-long examination covers the many strengths and weaknesses of the communication department and aspires to suggest the necessary changes and protections we feel will improve the department. We offer them in good faith for the benefit of future students.

**Course Offerings: Information and Access:**

* Class requirements per program can be difficult to achieve. The department should reconsider how realistic it is to have students achieve 60 credits per program. Are there any considerations this requirement could be altered to assist double majors, transfer students, or students who have changed majors?
* Many times, students have trouble taking classes in their majors until late into their college career. Lambda Pi Eta proposes, if possible, that students take more major classes in their earlier years of college.

**Course Offerings:**

* Create a public speaking course designed specifically for communication majors. This requirement should focus on enhancing existing skills and developing new skills directly related to the students’ fields of study (interviewing, press conference practice, etc.) Accessibility to public speaking courses is low. Many communication students do not get to take this class until their junior or senior year.
	+ If a separate public speaking class cannot be designed specifically for communication majors, we suggest that communication majors be required to take Professional Presentation instead of Public Speaking.
* Encourage students to take classes in the field of sociology as liberal studies courses. Understanding people and how they think and interact is key for communication majors and taking some sociology classes could be highly beneficial to communication students. This applies to several different departments including communication, anthropology, sociology and philosophy. We believe that it would be beneficial to students if the communication department interacted with other departments in order to make classes like these more accessible and increase knowledge of them amongst communication students.
* Create a social media 2 class to better student understanding of social media operations, SEO settings, analytics and more. Digital Media Production, Public Relations and IMC majors have expressed interest in this course. The existing social media class is valuable, but it does not provide enough time to cover every aspect of social media. A second course could provide a follow up for students and further educate us on running social media accounts for businesses.
* Create a crisis communication class to cover the practice in depth. PR majors could benefit from an extended education in the area of crisis communication.
* Offer two PR writing classes to give students access to this class earlier in their education. This class is a prerequisite to other classes and is very important for students who wish to gain a better understanding of the concepts discussed in upper level courses.
* Create a Communication Ethics course to give students a better understanding of what they learn in communication law. This class would provide students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge to real life situations. Additionally, this course could provide students with a deeper understanding of ethical issues and guidelines.

**PR Program:**

* Offer more major classes earlier so that individuals may experience what public relations is sooner in their college careers. It has been expressed by public relations students that they did not take the bulk of their classes until senior year. This has led them to cram classes and struggle to give as much attention to valuable courses.
* Offer site visits (outside of Rock PRroductions) in order to give students an experience outside of the classroom. Another option would be to work with Rock PRoductions in order to allow students who are not a part of the club to attend events. Rock PRoductions does many beneficial events such as site visits to public relations companies. However, not every public relations student is able to join the club. Offering these trips to other students in the department, or creating separate ones, would offer all communication students equal opportunity for exposure to the real world of PR.

**IMC Program:**

* Provide an analytics class offering a relevant math substitution. A statistics course could benefit both IMC and PR. As such, a math requirement for statistics or alternative option to the math requirement would be appreciated. Many communication students struggle in this area. Instead, they take “easy” classes that do not relate to their major or contribute to their learning.
	+ Programs for statistics and research (SPS) could be especially beneficial.

**Journalism:**

* More focused and specific liberal studies classes could benefit this major. It would be especially useful for journalism majors to have suggested liberal studies options that line up well with their studies.
* Journalism majors could benefit from a PR writing requirement. This requirement could give journalism majors a deeper understanding of communication and provide a link to the world of PR.
* Encourage and supply more opportunities for portfolio pieces.
* Offering a reporting class (half taught/ half learned,) could also help journalism majors engage with real world situations. Reporting could also be linked to clubs such as WSRU-TV and The Rocket. The class could be partially a learning experience and partially field work. This combination would benefit students with more real-world experience.

**BA Program:**

* Make it a requirement for BA students to do an internship.

**Digital Media Production Program:**

* Provide students with more in-depth descriptions of each emphasis earlier in their education.
* Reintroduce 2D Animation as a course for Digital Media Production majors. Many students have expressed interest in this course and want to see it offered again.

**PRSSA/Rock PRoductions:**

* Time constraints and meeting times need to be addressed. They could be more conducive to students’ schedules.
* Account Executive responsibilities need to be observed, regulated and evaluated. Some account executives are not qualified or dedicated to their positions and it is very taxing on team members.
* Digital Media Production majors could benefit from participating in this organization. Encouraging their participation could benefit the club as well. For instance, video and design specialists are needed.

**The Rocket:**

* The current facility for The Rocket is very much appreciated and the space has proven to benefit students who work for the organization. This space is especially beneficial to the office considering that many students involved are within the Communication Department.
* A tie-in to the journalism program could benefit both The Rocket and journalism majors. Students in the major are currently writing pieces that could be used for the newspaper. As such, it would be rewarding for the aspiring journalists to contribute to The Rocket as a requirement. Their existing assignments could transfer to The Rocket with minimal effort.
* Better advertising for the organization could also be beneficial. The club could use an updated bulletin board and further coverage to encourage students to contribute. Students are unaware that they can contribute at any time in the semester without being dedicated to the club. Communication majors could build their portfolios by contributing to The Rocket. Awareness could be communicated through Lambda Pi Eta and the department’s administration.
* More frequent departmental promotion of the pieces produced by members of The Rocket. The Rocket only receives recognition for their work when winning an award, but social media coverage of their work throughout the semester would benefit their current and potential readers. The department could also advocate for The Rocket more outside of social media. Expanding the paper’s reach would also help students better understand what is happening on campus.
* The Rocket could also work with Rock PRoductions to create advertisements for the paper’s clients. Businesses often buy ad spaces and ask The Rocket to design the ad for them. However, they only have so much time to produce a paper. The members of Rock PRoductions are skilled at producing media and could build their portfolios and resumes by working with clients and The Rocket.

**WSRU-Radio:**

* Increase outreach for the radio station. Issues regarding the station’s standing with the University need to be addressed and outreach could benefit both communication majors and the station. This could help any disconnect or lack of understanding between the two entities.
	+ Station members would like to create an understanding that there is a disconnect between the department and the station, and would appreciate the boundaries to remain intact.

**Lambda Pi Eta:**

* Recommend classes members personally wish they would’ve taken to FYRST seminar students (i.e. specific math courses.)
* An extensive mentorship program for transfer students entering the department could be beneficial. Lambda members could also expand their impact to freshmen by mentoring them.
* More bulletin boards could be used to connect minors to majors, list clubs, provide information about broadcasting and indirectly linked clubs such as the radio station, etc.
* Lambda should seek work with other clubs and organizations to better the department and organize events.
* Members of Lambda should hold instructional meetings for students who need help within the department.
* Create a means, such as a point system, for increasing/ monitoring meeting attendance and participation.
* Provide a program or celebration for professors in the department at the end of the semester or year. Their hard work is appreciated and deserves recognition from the student body.
* Socials could provide Lambda members with a closer connection and help increase turnout at meetings. A more interpersonal component would encourage more people to join the organization as well. Some members have expressed that they do not know all of the other students in the organization and socials would be extremely beneficial.

**Proposed Mixer for All Organizations:**

* Members of The Rocket and several other organizations have expressed interest in a mixer between the department’s organizations. This social opportunity could encourage more interaction between the organizations and their members.
	+ Crossover work between clubs could lead to networking opportunities, collaboration, mutual understandings, promotion and more.
	+ The social aspect will also help students create meaningful connections and relieve stress.

**Overall Communication Facilities:**

* Provide computer support staff to maintain computers and other equipment.
* Explore the possibility of 24-hour open lab, using card swipe system.
	+ Create sign-up sheets and post hours for the lab
* The updated software in the MAC lab is incredibly helpful to students. Ensuring the protection of this constantly updated software will provide students with an easier method of file sharing between personal computers and the lab’s.
* Repairs/adjustments to the printer in the MAC lab are requested. The printer is not working properly and prints low quality materials with printer marks.
* Provide easily accessible technical support for the PC, MAC and spare labs. Students have experienced problems with logins and would appreciate a resource for technical assistance in a timely manner.
* The Rocket office has time constraints and a lot of their work can only be accomplished in the office. As such, the time limits placed on the building and office have a great effect on members of the organization. An extended operation period for the office would be much appreciated by students. They are often asked to leave the office while working on projects at night.

**Overall Communication Faculty:**

* More faculty are needed to teach classes such as interactive multimedia 3, persuasion, etc. This will resolve scheduling issues and assist in settling the need for more sections. The more professors capable of teaching classes, the more availability. Many students cannot get into classes due to low availability and limited course offerings. It is harming their learning experience.
	+ The lack of faculty is an issue because full-time professors must teach public speaking courses rather than their major discipline areas. Adding more faculty could allow professors to teach more sections of limited-availability courses.
	+ If more temporary staff members and new faculty cover public speaking classes, then they could also cover PR classes with limited availability, a social media 2 class (professors with specialty areas such as SEO and analytics,) etc.
	+ Some students have had to substitute valuable communication classes with other, not as valuable classes due to the more valuable classes not being offered because of the lack of qualified professors for said classes (e.g. Interactive Multimedia 3).
* Professors are open and care about the well-being of the students.
* Professors need to be up-to-date on all software and approaches.
* Professors should not have too much overlap in content of certain classes.
* When advising, professors should make students aware of when classes are being offered. Example: Media Project Management is only offered in the spring semester.

**Course Availability:**

* More marketing classes should be available to, and required for, public relations majors. Marketing can be a useful skill to have some background in. In order to capitalize on this, more marketing classes should be available as electives for PR majors and other interested students.
* Offer senior seminar to seniors during the first semester of their senior year or create a junior seminar class instead. The availability of an earlier section of this class would benefit students seeking to finish their portfolio prior to their final semester. This secures the ability to interview for jobs, apply for jobs or graduate school, and prepare for the senior presentations in depth. Resumes, cover letters, etc. are completed prior to taking this class and the subject matter is less relevant during the final semester of senior year.

**Professional Preparation:**

* Encourage mock interviews for internships, jobs and other positions.

**Internship Program:**

* Continue to enable students to go anywhere to figure out what they like and build experience.
* Provide on-site visits from the internship advisor.
* Make sure students branch out from on-campus internships.
* Encourage students to take more than one internship.
* Lessen the department requirements for the internship because having a final paper, daily journals and discussion posts on top of work at the internship and other classes has concerned multiple students. Many students have expressed that the requirements are too much, and the internships for other departments do not require so much. While these may be beneficial, a simple timesheet, discussion posts and final paper may be more feasible for students, especially those completing an internship during the spring or fall semester.

**Seminars:**

* If a class is not possible, then a script writing seminar would be beneficial to assist students who intend to pursue a video production career.
* A constructive workshop should be offered to assist students with the production and presentation of their portfolios.
	+ Although interactive multimedia 2 and 3 included an assignment in which students must make their own digital portfolio, not all students are required to take these courses. Additionally, many students wish to develop their professional portfolios prior to their senior seminar course.
	+ Offering a workshop for ANY communication major that will show them how to create their own portfolio and assist them in doing so.

**One-Credit Course Offerings:**

* The addition of a script writing class to assist students in preparation of video production courses. The only existing classes for script writing are focused on theatrical productions.
* The offering of a one credit media operations class. This course will offer assistance to students who do not have prior experience in operating cameras, video equipment, microphones, editing software, etc. It should be open to all majors.
* The addition of a one credit “workshop” class to cover important information and skills. This course could be used to help students build portfolios, teach students to use Adobe products, establish a professional presence online, educate students on internships and encourage networking opportunities.
* It would be beneficial to offer a one credit course that will assist students in creating their online portfolios earlier on in their studies.
* Reinstating one credit junior and/or senior seminar courses would benefit students who want to prepare for job interviews, grad school and their final presentations prior to the final semester.

**Minor Programs:**

* Highlighting minor options earlier could benefit many communication students. If students understand their options earlier in their college careers, they can better plan their future.
	+ Create bulletin boards to provide students with a listing of minor options that line up with their majors. Lambda Pi Eta could be placed in charge of this project.

**Proposed Minors:**

* Offer a graphic design minor specifically for communication programs such as PR majors, video emphasis (digital media production majors,) journalism and the BA program. This minor could stimulate and improve upon existing design skills. This is a valuable and marketable trait in the field of communication that students wish to capitalize on. This option would potentially be more accessible to students within the department than the one offered by the art department.
* An advertising minor or emphasis would benefit students from all majors. This minor could provide design instruction, close the divide between the IMC and Digital Media Production programs, and inform students on subjects such as media buying.
	+ This minor could make SRU’s communication department stand out. The program would be much more competitive with a minor like advertising. It is not common in the area. Temple and Youngstown State both have programs for advertising, but SRU’s closest program would be IMC. This program does not efficiently cover the aspects of advertising that these schools feature.
	+ With the creation of this minor, communication majors (particularly IMC majors) could easily obtain a better understanding of advertising with minimal class additions.

**Events:**

* Departmentally sponsored events and activities for students and professors alike. The college of business provides events for students, but the communication department could benefit from departmentally specific events.
* Increased awareness and advertising for networking events/opportunities such as the Advisory Board event.

**Transparency:**

* Students have expressed concern over the transitions of staff members.
	+ Students request further information regarding instruction of classes when professors retire or course offerings change.
	+ Students seek updates on staffing transitions and protections provided to them.

**FYRST Seminar:**

* Test knowledge of new communication students in the various areas of communication (list of software experience, expertise, etc.) A requirement could be for professors to test the knowledge of students upon entering the class, then evaluate their progress at the end of the semester.
* Offer an equivalent of FYRST seminar to interested transfer students or provide session offerings.
* A transfer or freshman packet created by Lambda Pi Eta could benefit FYRST Seminar students and transfer students alike. This packet could be adapted into a fact sheet for the university’s website.
* Provide major and minor information for interested students who are unsure of what path they want to take.