NCA’s Monthly Teleconference Series
CARD Calls: Communicating About Research and Professional Development

Current Trends in Higher Education for Communication

Featured Speakers:
Diana Carlin, Professor, Communication Studies, University of Kansas;
Bill Eadie, Professor, Journalism and Media Studies, San Diego State University;
and Scott Jaschik, Editor, Inside Higher Ed

Moderator:
Melissa Anderson, Coordinator for Research & Educational Initiatives
National Communication Association

Thursday, May 13, 2010
1:00pm Eastern time
National Issues in Higher Education Affecting Communication Programs

Diana Carlin, Professor
Department of Communication Studies
University of Kansas
Overview

• Interdisciplinary research
• Emphasis on transferable skills
Interdisciplinary Research Trends

• Boundaries of knowledge are less clear
• New interdisciplinary degree programs are increasing
• Grant funding encourages interdisciplinary research (IGERT)
• Many world problems require interdisciplinary answers
Where Does Communication Fit?

• Communication has always been interdisciplinary
• However, the discipline is also fragmented
  - By Methods
  - By Theory
  - By Structures (where housed in the university)
• Fragmentation can reduce opportunities for collaboration
  - Within the discipline
  - With other disciplines
What are the opportunities?

• Most problems facing the world have a communication component
• Most methods and theories have applications beyond the discipline
Transferable Skills

- Oral and written communication skills, group problem solving, critical thinking
- Part of an international trend in graduate education
- A major component of the U.S. movement for Professional Science Master’s
Current Trends in Higher Education for Communication

Bill Eadie, Professor
Journalism and Media Studies
San Diego State University
Former Associate Director, NCA (1993-2001)
Two Issues Facing the Communication Discipline

• How can we insure that our doctoral graduates are finding meaningful work appropriate to their education?

• How can we work to integrate media and communication theory? Or, do we need to integrate?
Issue 1: Placement of Doctoral Graduates

- Media and communication are lucky; our doctoral production has increased slowly over the years.
- The numbers of doctoral programs have risen more rapidly, but many of the newer ones are small and limited in numbers of specialties.
- Communication as a discipline has expanded steadily and has been embraced by more institutions.
Problems with Doctoral Production

• The field absorbs most graduates through normal attrition, except during recessions.
• There has been a sharp division between students who are attracted to teaching (the majority) over students who are attracted to research. This division has been lessening, however.
• Production in specialties has been uneven.
Specialties in Highest Demand

• Public relations
• Digital communication/new media
• Journalism (candidates with professional experience and a research specialty other than history)
• Organizational communication
Will the NRC’s Ranking of Doctoral Programs Affect Communication?

• The study seems to be very carefully done, but the data are now old (from 2005-06).
• Possibly, the various analyses will provide an incentive for doctoral programs to engage in self-examination, resulting in re-focusing their energies.
• Possibly, universities will use these results to set priorities for support (or lack of same).
Issue 2: Media & Communication Theory

Arguments for integrating theory:

• Communication is the umbrella term used to describe all forms of the transmission of information and the creation of social meaning, so there should be some sort of unifying theory for the discipline.

• Most media theories acknowledge that some form of face-to-face communication is essential to assessing media effects.
Arguments Against Integrating Theory

- Media in themselves are significant social phenomena and should be studied separately from other, more transient, communication phenomena.
- There are several dominant media theories, while there are few to no dominant theories of face-to-face communication, thus making the study of media more organized and concentrated.
Some Questions

• What potential effects do the development of various kinds of social media have on the integration of media and communication theory?

• How does a culture of professionalism tied to specific media industries (news, public relations, advertising) hamper or facilitate integration efforts?
Current Trends in Higher Education for Communication

Scott Jaschik
Editor
Inside Higher Ed
The Fallout From the Economic Mess – by Sector

• Wealthy private colleges
• Less wealthy private colleges
• Flagship public colleges and universities
• All other public colleges and universities (including community colleges)
The Fallout From the Economic Mess – Across Sector

• Disciplines (favored or not)
• Centralization vs. decentralization of higher education power
• Faculty career tracks
• Graduate education and the plight of today’s doctoral students
• The decoupling of higher education functions
• The (further) rise of for-profits
The Accountability Debate

• History of debate, pre-economic mess
• Where it stands
• Outcomes
• Testing
• The faculty role
Big Changes Accelerated by the Economic Mess (but not directly related)

- Online education
- New faculty roles
- Internationalization
An outsider’s view (mine) of Communication and its strengths and weaknesses at this time in higher ed
The 2010-2011 CARD Calls series will begin in September. The Schedule will be released soon.

If you have any questions about the teleconference series, please contact Melissa Anderson at manderson@natcom.org or (202) 534-1111.
May 13, 2010 Conference Call: Dial-In Information

• Dial the Access Number: 1.800.920.7487
• When prompted, enter the Participant Code followed by #
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Participant Star Commands

• *4- Volume: Pressing *4 will increase/decrease the volume

• Q &A Session: Participants press *1 to ask a question, and the moderator will take your questions in the order that they arrive

• For technical assistance during the teleconference, contact Customer Service at 1.800.989.9239