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Graduate Study in the Communication Discipline: An Extension of 1994 Directory Data

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AMERICAN society has become virtually obsessed with evaluation and analysis of its educational institutions and programs. Federal investigations have spotlighted a near crisis state in elementary and secondary education. Calls for diversity and multiculturalism have enflamed ideological and cultural debates within the academy. Reformist elements in every jurisdiction have issued a host of plans, projects, and propositions to re-shape American education as they best see fit. And, volumes of data are generated annually by agencies, foundations, and other bodies attempting to appraise the current status of education at all levels. This interest in the status of education extends to elements within the academy as well. Many disciplines seek to assess their status and evaluate the programs that they offer. The communication discipline is no exception to this rule.

Scholars and investigators within the communication discipline have devoted much effort to the appraisal of instructional programs, particularly at the graduate level. Specific graduate courses, such as argumentation theory (Benoit & Follert, 1986), have been examined. Specific programs of study, including mass communication (Watson, Edwards, & Barker, 1989), have garnered attention. More generally, masters-level programs in speech communication have been evaluated (Roach & Barker, 1984; Trott, Barker, & Barker, 1988). And, a number of doctoral programs within the discipline have received the attention of investigators (Edwards & Barker, 1984; Edwards, Watson, & Barker, 1988).

The communication discipline has responded to the interest in graduate education in part, by publishing data to facilitate examination of graduate programs around the nation. For a good many years, the Speech Communication Association published an annual directory of graduate programs within the communication discipline. Although that project lapsed for a period of time, the SCA produced a new graduate directory in 1994 (Brooks & Berko).

The SCA graduate directory helps to illuminate several important features of study in the communication discipline. The directory contains individual listings from hundreds of masters and doctoral level communication programs throughout the nation. These individual listings provide a host of data concerning the programs that have produced the infor-

mation. Readers may, for example, examine specific admission standards and the range of financial aid available to potential graduate students.

Despite the value associated with the current graduate directory, there are several notable limitations with that work. There is virtually no summary or cumulative data provided in the directory. It is, in fact, largely a collection of responses from individual graduate programs. Further, Brooks and Berko have edited the material in an efficient and effective manner, but that is where the process ends. There is no interpretation or even speculation as to what the data represented for the communication discipline.

The production of summary data and some degree of speculation regarding the data found in the 1994 graduate directory would be beneficial in a number of ways. Such information would help facilitate decision-making on the part of both potential graduate students and the programs that must attempt to attract them by providing an overall view of graduate study in the communication discipline. Such information would also be particularly valuable for communication administrators. Those engaged in communication administration would have discipline-wide data to compare with their own programs as well as information that would allow better comparison with programs housed in other disciplines. The present effort is an attempt to generate the information that might facilitate the attainment of these benefits.

METHOD

The 1994 SCA *Graduate Directory* edited by Brooks and Berko serves as the data base for the present effort. The 1994 directory is the first expressly devoted to graduate study in the communication discipline since 1985. All institutional members of the SCA were asked to provide data regarding their masters and doctoral programs for the directory. A total of 267 graduate programs provided data for the directory. Programs in 47 states and the District of Columbia were represented by the results. A total of 211 masters programs and 56 doctoral programs provided information for the directory. Specific information was requested from each program regarding the number of graduate faculty, degrees offered, number of graduate students, admission requirements, tuition waiver status, kinds of financial aid appointments available, range of financial aid per academic year, total number of financial aid appointments, masters thesis requirements, application closing dates, and the details of masters and doctoral degree programs offered. Appropriate cumulative and summary results are provided here for these data.

RESULTS

Both masters and doctoral programs are listed by concentration in the graduate directory. Programs are classified as applied communication, argumentation, communication and aging, communication and law, family communication, generalist in communication, intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, mass communication, medical communication, nonverbal communication, oral interpretation, organizational communication, political communication, public address, public relations, rhetorical and communication theory, small groups, speech communication education, speech and hearing science, telecommunication/mass media, theatre, women's studies, and other. Cumulative results for these concentrations are provided in Table 1. The largest concentration at the masters level was organizational communication with 128 programs offering this speciality, while the smallest concentration was communication and aging, which was offered by only 9 programs. The largest concentration at the doctoral level was interpersonal communication, with 45 programs offering this specialty. Communication and aging was also the smallest concentration at the doctoral level, with 3 programs listed.

TABLE 1

Program Concentrations

<u>Concentration</u>	<u>Masters</u>	<u>Doctoral</u>
Applied Communication	38	9
Argumentation	33	13
Communication & Aging	9	3
Communication & Law	26	6
Family Communication	26	12
Generalist in Communication	97	8
Intercultural Communication	63	24
Interpersonal Communication	120	45
Mass Communication	106	28
Medical Communication	18	8
Nonverbal Communication	27	12
Oral Interpretation	17	6
Organizational Communication	128	34
Political Communication	54	22
Public Address	63	18
Public Relations	49	6
Rhetorical & Communication Theory	103	38
Small Groups	47	20
Speech Communication Education	38	8
Speech & Hearing Science	26	9
Telecommunication/Mass Media	81	26
Theatre	38	10
Women's Studies	22	9
Other	41	11

The directory lists graduate programs by state. The largest number of masters programs is offered in California, with 16 programs listed. Only one masters program is offered in several states. The 7 doctoral programs offered in New York is the largest, while a number of states feature only one program.

The directory provides information regarding the number of both full-time and part-time graduate faculty associated with each program (Table 2). A total of 3,829 graduate faculty are associated with all programs listed. A total of 3,505 of these are full-time faculty, while 324 are part-time faculty. Full-time faculty range from a high of 421 in one program, to 2 at another. Part-time faculty range from 26 to 1. The 256 programs reporting had a mean of 13.69 full-time faculty. The 97 programs reporting part-time faculty had a mean of 3.34.

TABLE 2

Graduate Faculty

Full-Time Faculty	3,505
Part-Time Faculty	324
Total Faculty	3,829

The directory also reports data regarding the number of full-time and part-time graduate students (Table 3). A total of 13,160 students were reported as participating in communication graduate programs. A total of 10,977 were enrolled at the masters level, and 2,183 were enrolled at the doctoral level. Of the 10,977 masters students, 5,912 were full-time and 5,065 were part-time. The range for full-time masters students was 206 to 1, with a mean of 24.95 for 237 programs reporting. The range for part-time masters students was 612 to 1, with a mean of 26.80 for the 189 programs reporting. Of the 2,183 doctoral students reported, 1,733 were enrolled full-time and 450 were enrolled part-time. The range for full-time students was 75 to 2, with a mean of 25.87 for 67 programs reporting. The range for part-time students was 70 to 1, with a mean of 12.86 for 35 programs reporting.

TABLE 3

Graduate Students

Masters Students	
Full-Time	5,912
Part-Time	5,065
Total	10,977
Doctoral Students	
Full-Time	1,733
Part-Time	450
Total	2,183
Total Student Enrollment	13,160

A host of specific admissions data is reported in the SCA directory. The one consistent feature reported concerns use of the Graduate Records Examination (GRE). A total of 203 programs required the GRE for admission, while 65 did not.

The directory provides a great deal of information regarding financial aid and financial aid appointments. A total of 254 programs indicated that they make financial aid appointments, while 13 programs did not. Of those, 254 indicated that they provided assistantships and 99 indicated that fellowships are available.

A total of 170 programs reported that tuition waivers are provided to students with financial aid appointments. Another 29 indicated that a waiver would not be provided. A total of 25 programs reported that a waiver was provided for out-of-state tuition, and 28 programs reported that the waiver option varied.

The directory asks programs to indicate the various forms of financial aid appointments that they make. A total of 14 different forms of financial aid appointments were reported, as noted in Table 4. A total of 198 programs reported that teaching appointments would be made. Research appointments totaled 120.

TABLE 4

Forms of Financial Aid Appointments

<u>Form</u>	<u>Number of Appointments</u>
Teaching	198
Research	120
Clinical	17
Forensics	8
Production	4
Lab	3
Administrative	2
Technical	1
Clerical	1
Theatre	1
Journalism	1
Management	1
Publicity	1
As Assigned	1

A total of 3,771 financial aid appointments were reported in the directory. Appointments ranged from as many as 100 to as few as 1. The mean number of appointments for the 232 programs reporting was 16.25. The financial aid range for masters students was \$200 to \$24,505. For doctoral students, the range was \$250 to \$24,585.

The directory also reports data regarding masters thesis options. A total of 120 programs reported that the thesis was optional while 93 programs reported that the thesis was required. Another 40 programs reported that the thesis option varied with the individual student's program of study.

DISCUSSION

The data regarding areas of concentration within graduate communication programs are informative. With 24 different options listed, the concentration information indicates a great deal of diversity within the discipline. The popularity of organizational communication (128 masters programs and 34 doctoral programs) may reflect an attempt by the discipline to prepare students with skills that can be used in business and industry and other practical settings. Interpersonal communication (120 masters programs and 45 doctoral programs) is also extremely popular. Interpersonal communication has been a traditional area of emphasis within the discipline for a good many years. Mass communication (106 masters programs and 28 doctoral programs) and telecommunication/mass media (81 masters programs and 26 doctoral programs) may be popular as new media technology and corresponding opportunities escalate.

State-by-state data speak to the overall health of the communication discipline. With 47 states and the District of Columbia reporting programs, the communication discipline is well established at the graduate level throughout the nation. The largest number of programs tend to match population figures with a large number of programs found in such states as California, New York, and Texas. Despite such reflections of the health of the discipline, many in the field of communication will find themselves constructing arguments in defense of the existence of the discipline. Scholars may want to examine the data in the present study and the thorough analysis of state-by-state data in the 1994 *Directory* in order

to prepare such arguments and perhaps help to preclude them in the first place by pointing to the implicit importance of the discipline as represented by the number of graduate programs around the nation.

Graduate faculty data indicate that most individuals appointed to that status function as full-time instructors. Indeed, full-time graduate faculty outnumber part-time graduate faculty by more than ten to one. The mean graduate faculty figures (13.69 full-time and 3.34 part-time) suggest that graduate programs have the ability to maintain very reasonable faculty-student ratios.

Data regarding the graduate student population in the communication discipline are illuminating. Over 13,000 students are reported to be enrolled in graduate programs within the discipline. That figure would seem to speak to the wealth of graduate education within the discipline. This data also reveal that nearly half of those students pursuing a masters degree in communication are doing so on a part-time basis. Such part-time study may reflect economic concerns that force many to continue their education while employed. The fairly limited number of part-time doctoral students may, however, reflect both the reluctance of many programs to accept doctoral students on a part-time basis and the demands of the programs.

The material regarding admissions requirements that appears in the directory is somewhat problematic. A host of specific requirements are reported, which makes it difficult to generalize to the discipline as a whole. The reports concerning the GRE do, however, suggest that it remains a popular standard for admission to communication graduate programs.

Data reported on financial aid appointments suggest that many communication graduate programs attempt to provide assistance to students. The vast majority of these appointments are in the form of assistantships, which implies that graduate programs expect students to contribute to the program in some fashion in order to receive assistance. Fellowship data, on the other hand, suggest that awards are also provided in ways that recognize and reward talented students. The tuition waiver data confirm the notion that programs appear eager to assist students. The vast majority of programs waive tuition for students receiving financial aid appointments, further easing the economic demands placed upon them.

Although 14 different forms of financial appointments were reported in the directory, teaching and research remain the most common. The provision of teaching appointments suggests that the need to assure appropriate training for entry-level teaching assistants remains important (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990). The research and clinical appointments probably reflect the interest in research maintained by a great many institutions. Only eight programs indicated that forensics appointments would be made despite the fact that the vast majority of forensics programs are housed in communication departments.

An extremely wide range of financial awards was reported in the directory. These data are probably most helpful to students who are attempting to select a graduate program. Potential students can assess the range of awards available and better calculate the other resources they may need. Departmental units and graduate programs might use these data to better gauge the range of awards necessary to attract potential students.

The data regarding thesis options for masters students indicate that graduate programs are very flexible at this level. A total of 160 programs report that the masters thesis is either optional or varies with the student's individual course of study. This flexibility may also be correlated with the large number of part-time students at the masters level who may simply not be able to invest the time that writing a thesis requires.

The present investigation suffers from the same limitation that the directory itself faces. The directory and, therefore, this investigation, rely upon the reports of individual graduate programs within the discipline. Some programs probably did not report at all, others reported only part of the data requested, and others may have interpreted requests differently from what the editors intended. Each of these factors might affect the final tabulated data.

These limitations also suggest areas that might be of interest for future researchers. Researchers might consider conducting extensive survey investigations designed to capture additional information regarding graduate education in the communication discipline. Further, researchers might consider constructing criteria or standards that would permit administrators, faculty, and others in the discipline to rate various programs. It would be of interest to know, for example, which masters program features the "best" concentration in interpersonal communication.

This investigation generates one principal recommendation for those who prepare the next directory. The inclusion of cumulative and summary data along the lines of what is reported here might make the directory information more robust and better facilitate benefits for potential graduate students, administrators, and others.

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