


Memorandum

To: Faculty Senate
Seton Hall University

From: Karen E. Boroff, Ph.D. 
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President

Re: Approval of Two Changes to Strategic Communications MA Program
2018-FS-26

Date: February 7, 2019

The Office of the Provost is in receipt of the memorandum, "Approval of Two Changes to Strategic Communications MA Program," which was passed by the Faculty Senate on December 7, 2018.

To begin, it should be noted that the Office of the Provost provided assistance in the form of a taskforce to develop a potentially new focus for graduate education in the College of Communication and the Arts. There was a survey that attempted to identify some new areas, possibly interdisciplinary ones, for development. While the results of that work did not germinate anything useful then, it is a step forward that this new proposal is coming from the College and has support.

These proposed changes seek approval for changes to the name of the program, from M.A. Strategic Communication, to simply M.A. in Communication. The other change involves curriculum modifications which encompass two tracks: Digital Communication/Communication Technologies and Communication in Organizations.

In programs that matriculate students from various career and educational pathways, it can be helpful to provide some distinguishing tracks. This proposal aims to be flexible and adapt to the faculty expertise that exists within the College of Communication and the Arts. It is also helpful that this proposal carefully lays out the overlap between the tracks and the pathways through the curriculum so that the learning objectives are covered multiple times throughout the program.

In order to improve organizational performance, we are asking new program proposals to include information regarding expectations for enrollment over a three to five year period, and direct expenses for instruction and marketing, including adjuncts. We also ask for an indication of the horizon when we should see that the program or track is breaking even, returning an investment, or if it should sunset. This is not a new program, but we understand that enrollments have been a challenge and these changes are meant to support an increase. There are references in this proposal to National Communication Association and Huron data to support the name change and the

curriculum revisions to provide additional focus, but we do not have much in the way of actual baseline data and expectations.

Once we have enrollment projections for the next few years, which translate to this new curriculum with two tracks, we will then quickly assess revenue/expense projections, and thereby set a reasonable timetable to continue on with the two tracks, or, alternatively, sunset one or both. This office is mindful that any initiative needs time to prove itself. Likewise, even tracks need to have programmatic assessment. Especially at the master's level, there has to be faculty scholarship in journals and books that are in the nexus of the track's discipline, regardless of enrollments. Students likewise deserve a robust intellectual environment of fellow students in the classroom and very small enrollments detract from that. There are other costs associated with tracks, majors and the like, including Banner systems, advising, career support, and marketing. Even so, this office is willing to try new options based on the faculty's projected viable enrollments and see what we learn from implementation.