

**COORDINATING COMMISSION
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

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PROPOSAL FOR NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM
Form 92-40

SECTION I

Institution Submitting Proposal: University of Nebraska at Kearney

Title of Program: Public Communication

CIP Code: 09.0499

Organizational Unit in which program will be located:

Department of Communication

Name of contact person in the event additional information is needed: Dr. Susan M. Fritz

Telephone: 402-472-5242

Degree, Diploma, or Certificate to be offered (use separate submittal for each level):

Master of Arts in Public Communication


Proposed date to initiate program: When approved by the Coordinating Commission

List the location(s) where this program will be offered: UNK

If the program has a projected ending date, please so indicate:

Date approved by Governing Board: February 7, 2020

(Attach all documents related to this proposal upon which the Governing Board made its decision to approve the proposal.)

Chief Executive Officer's or other Authorized Officer's signature: 
Susan M. Fritz

TO: The Board of Regents Addendum X-A-1
Academic Affairs

MEETING DATE: February 7, 2020

SUBJECT: Creation of a Master of Arts (MA) in Public Communication in the Department of Communication in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approval is requested to create a Master of Arts in Public Communication in the Department of Communication in the College of Arts and Sciences at UNK

PREVIOUS ACTION: None

EXPLANATION: The proposed Master of Arts (MA) in Public Communication is designed to prepare students to take specialized knowledge (in areas such as healthcare, political science, agriculture, etc.), synthesize complex topics, and persuade target audiences using modern mass media and public relations strategies. Communicating expert knowledge to broader audiences is a vital part of most outreach and public service programs. The degree will be offered entirely online to serve students who are employed and/or place-bound; it primarily will be designed to serve professionals who are looking to advance in their careers.

Students may opt to complete a practicum or write a thesis. These options will allow them to tailor the degree to their own professional/academic goals. The program prepares students to learn how to lead outreach programs within their chosen disciplines, yet offers the flexibility to prepare students for a Ph.D. program.

This proposal has been approved by the Council of Academic Officers and the Executive Graduate Council. This proposal also has been reviewed by the Academic Affairs Committee.

PROGRAM COST: \$17,000 for Year 1; \$85,000 over five years

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Tuition and fees

SPONSORS: Charles Bicak
Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

Douglas Kristensen, Chancellor
University of Nebraska at Kearney

RECOMMENDED: /s/ Susan M. Fritz
Executive Vice President and Provost

DATE: January 10, 2020

Public Communication
Master of Arts Degree (M.A.)
University of Nebraska at Kearney

Submitted by: Drs. Ralph Hanson, Richard MocarSKI, Nanette Hogg and Chuck Rowling

Descriptive Information:

Name of institution proposing the program: University of Nebraska at Kearney

Name of master's degree proposed: Public Communication

Degree to be offered graduates of the program: Master of Arts Degree

Other programs offered in the field at UNK:

Organizational and Relational

Communication Comprehensive – BS

Sports Communication – BA

Sports Communication – BS

Minor in Professional Communication

Advertising and Public Relations – BA

Advertising and Public Relations - BS

Minor in Advertising and Public Relations

Administrative units for the program: Department of Communication

Proposed delivery site: Online program through University of Nebraska at Kearney

Proposed date of initiation: Upon final approval by CCPE

Date approved by governing board: Pending

Additional faculty/resources necessary to initiate program: None

New coursework needed to initiate program: All courses have already been approved

CIP Code: 09.0499

Description and Purpose of the Proposed Program

Public Communication is communication with a goal and specific audience in mind. To be an effective public communication practitioner, one must be able to translate domain-specific knowledge into lay-terms and to package information into persuasive discourse. In other words, the study of Public Communication is interested in understanding how to translate information from jargon specific terms to lay terms. The program spans the breadth of communication as a field, equipping students with techniques from public relations, theory from communication studies, an understanding of audience and publics from rhetorical studies, the use and impact of media from journalism and media studies, and more.

The proposed Master of Arts in Public Communication is designed to prepare students to translate domain-specific knowledge for lay and targeted audiences and to reach the intended audiences effectively in the most impactful and efficient ways possible. Students will learn how to take specialized knowledge (health, political science, etc.) and communicate that knowledge to larger publics. Communicating expert knowledge to broader audiences is a vital part of most outreach and public service programs. Students will learn how to utilize mass media and public relations strategies to synthesize and persuade publics about knowledge in their particular area of specialization. They also will learn how to become critically engaged and process mass media messages.

As the world becomes both more complex and more integrated, there is greater need for professionals who understand how to wield communication tools to reach desired audiences and, essentially, translate jargon-laden messages for greatest impact. The need for this type of skill set is best illustrated by looking toward the rise of health communication, political communication, and science communication. In these domains, it is imperative that there are professionals who have domain-specific knowledge and skills. This program will help create stronger organizations through individuals gaining the skills to better carry out their jobs and enhance their careers.

Many current Master of Arts programs throughout the country focus solely on Strategic Communication skills. We believe that these programs produce professionals who will always see end goals in terms divorced from the content they represent, often homogenizing messages. Our vision for Public Communication is to work with content experts so that they can craft nuanced and detailed messaging in an effective manner.

This Master in Public Communication will primarily be designed to serve professionals who are looking to advance in their careers. Presumably these kinds of students will come to the program with some level of professional experience and expertise. The program will be designed to help students learn how to utilize what they know from their corner of the world and to engage the public. The program will do this by requiring students to take core classes that will familiarize students with foundational concepts of communication theory and research. Students will build on this foundational knowledge by choosing classes that relate to their area of expertise. Finally, students will take classes focused on building specific skills for translating expertise to the public.

Students will have two degree completion options. They may opt to complete a practicum or write a thesis. These options will allow students to tailor the degree to their own professional/academic goals. The program prepares students to learn how to lead outreach programs within their chosen discipline yet offers the flexibility to prepare students for a Ph.D. program.

The Master of Public Communication will be offered entirely online. This will serve students who are currently working in a career or are place-bound. The Communication Department at UNK has an extensive record of offering online courses. Additionally, the Communication Department at UNK has the faculty to offer this program. Minimal resources will be required to get the program started.

Proposed Curriculum

Students will gain experience working with various field specific tools and apply these, along with their other knowledge, to their practicum experience or thesis. The curriculum is situated in such a way as to ensure students will have a grounding in theory, method, and media literacy as well as specialized knowledge in one or more content areas.

Students will have the option to complete their degree with a practicum or thesis. The core and course categories are the same across all options. All students will take the following courses:

Core & Media Literacy (3 required courses)

SPCH 899P: Communication Theory
JMC 860P: Mass Media and Society

Choice of *one* research methods course:

*SPCH 883: Qualitative Research Methods
*SPCH 881: Quantitative Research Methods

Specialization (choose 2 courses)

*JMC 831: Critical Approaches to Media
*SPCH 804: Health Communication
*SPCH 841: Science Communication
*SPCH 826: Social Movements and International Media
SPCH 852P: Advanced Organizational Communication
PSCI 884P: Media and Public Policy
SPCH 845P: Diffusions of Innovations
HIST 848: Readings in American History (special topics class must have consent of adviser)
*JMC 835: International Media and Society
PSCI 883: Political Communication

Skills (choose 2 courses)

*JMC 801: Social and Emerging Media
*SPCH 803: Strategic Communication
SPCH 851P: Leadership Communication
*JMC 802: Media Technology and Narrative
MGT 820: Management and Communication
PSCI 865: Campaigns and Elections
SPCH 855P: Communication Training and Consulting

Elective – Student will choose 3 additional courses in the curriculum

In addition to the required curriculum, students will choose one of the following options to complete the degree.

1. *Practicum Option*

- a. Students will enroll in 6 credits of SPCH 875: Practicum (Prerequisite of SPCH 899P and SPCH 883 or SPCH 881)
- b. Students will connect their graduate curriculum to professional experience in an effort to demonstrate an ability to apply coursework within an organization. Students will develop a completion paper that explains accomplishments in the practicum experience and connects these accomplishments to the graduate curriculum. Students will present their practicum findings to faculty.

2. *Thesis Option*

- a. Students will enroll in 6 credit hours of SPCH 876: Thesis (Prerequisite of SPCH 899P and SPCH 883 or SPCH 881)
- b. In conjunction with their adviser, students will prepare a research project based on graduate coursework. The student's adviser and two additional graduate faculty

will comprise the student's Thesis Committee. The committee will assemble for an oral defense of the thesis.

Admission Criteria

Admission to the Public Communication MA program is based on undergraduate GPA, resume, letter of intent, and letters of recommendation. An applicant interested in pursuing an MA in Public Communication should:

1. Meet the requirements for admission set forth by the Office of Graduate Studies
2. Submit official college/university transcript showing the conferment of a Bachelor's degree with an overall GPA of 2.75* or higher on a 4.0 GPA scale
3. Submit two letters of recommendation
4. Submit a letter of intent that describes the applicant's interests and goals in obtaining a degree in Public Communications
5. Submit a professional resume

*Students with an undergraduate GPA lower than 2.75 may still be considered for the program based on their other strengths. These students will be conditionally admitted for the first semester and must achieve a 3.0 GPA to be fully admitted to the program. Conditional approval will be considered for students who have especially strong work history, letters of recommendation, and/or students whose undergraduate GPA in the major is markedly higher than their overall GPA.

International students will be required to meet the minimum TOEFL score of 213 on the computerized test and 550 on the paper test.

Plan for Degree Completion

Students will be admitted to the program three times a year: Fall, Spring, and Summer terms. The Public Communication program is thirty-six (36) credit hours and can be completed in two (2) years. The final six (6) hours of the program will be completed either through practicum or thesis hours. Students must complete 21 hours to take SPCH 875 and SPCH 876 and have passed SPCH 899P and SPCH 883 or SPCH 881.

Courses will be offered strategically depending on student need. As the program grows for the first few years, these strategic offerings will maximize the number of students taking a single course which will allow for fewer courses to be offered at any one time. A tentative course rotation is below.

	Core & Media Literacy	Specialization	Skills
Fall Year 1	SPCH 883 (Quant) & JMC 831 (Crit Media)		SPCH 803 (Strat Comm)
Spring Year 1	SPCH 899 (Com Thry)	SPCH 852 (Ad Org C)	SPCH 851 (Lead Comm)
Summer Year 1		SPCH 804 (Health Com)	SPCH 855 (Com Train)
Fall Year 2	SPCH 881 (Qual) & JMC 860 (MM&Soc)	JMC 801 (Social M)	JMC 802 (Media Tech)
Spring Year 2	SPCH 899 (Comm T) & JMC 835 (Int. Media)	SPCH 852 or SPCH 845 (Diffusion)	SPCH 851 (Lead Comm)
Summer Year 2		SPCH 841 (Sci Comm)	PSCI 883 (Pol Comm)
Fall Year 3	SPCH 883 (Quant)	SPCH 826 (Soc Mov.)	SPCH 855 (Com Train)
Spring Year 3	SPCH 899 (Com The)	SPCH 852 (Ad Org C)	SPCH 851 (Lead Comm)
Summer Year 3	JMC 831 (Crit Media)		

Program Policies

All UNK Graduate School policies must be complied within the pursuit of the MA in Public Communication. Additionally:

1. Students must be admitted unconditionally into the program prior to completing more than six (6) hours of the Public Communication coursework.
2. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing in the program.
3. Thesis or Practicum hours may not be completed until students have completed 21 hours and have passed SPCH 899P and SPCH 883 or SPCH 881.

Accreditation and Assessment

Assessment metrics already exist for the undergraduate Communication degrees. Assessment data will be gathered in SPCH 875 or SPCH 876. Both the practicum and thesis require a written research paper. Practicum presentations and thesis defenses will be evaluated by faculty and used for assessment purposes as well. The assessment will be conducted by the department's graduate committee formed by three members of the department's graduate faculty. This assessment will be aligned with measuring whether the program is achieving the goals listed below in this section.

The course of study offered by the UNK Public Communication program provides students with the theoretical knowledge, research skills, and practical applicability to conscientiously and competently advance in their career. A study conducted by Burning Glass Technologies in 2015 examined 40,000 position advertisements across a variety of careers, and found that the number one baseline skill that employers search for are communication skills. The UNK Public Communication program will focus on helping students build these skills. The program will achieve this through ensuring that course content (and the structure of the curriculum in general) challenges students to excel in one or more of the goals below.

Goal #1: UNK Public Communication graduates are effective at communicating specialized knowledge to the public. Review Criteria (to be developed later in conjunction with UNK assessment)

Goal #2: UNK Public Communication graduates understand how to critically analyze and improve communication practices both internally and externally in organizations. Review Criteria (to be developed later in conjunction with UNK assessment)

Goal #3: UNK Public Communication graduates are skilled at using the tools of persuasion to achieve organizational goals. Review Criteria (to be developed later in conjunction with UNK assessment)

Goal #4: UNK Public Communication graduates understand how to apply theory to both critically examine organizational communication and make changes that improve the efficiency, effectiveness and ethics of communication within organizational Review Criteria (to be developed later in conjunction with UNK assessment)

Review Criteria

A. Centrality to Role and Mission of the Institution

UNK Mission: *The University of Nebraska at Kearney is a public, residential university committed to be one of the nation's premier undergraduate institutions with excellent graduate education, scholarship, and public service.*

UNK Vision Statement: *The University of Nebraska at Kearney will achieve national distinction for a high quality, multidimensional learning environment, engagement with community and public interests, and preparation of students to lead responsible and productive lives in a democratic, multicultural society.*

The purpose of the Public Communication Master's Program is to meet the demands for communication practitioners who can work with the lay public and the specialty public of their choice to move the conversations in these complex areas forward. As articulated by Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent (2001) in regard to the scientific and medical communities, while “mediator[s] or translator[s]” were once adequate for bridging the gap between the lay public and these disciplines, the 20th and 21st century have continued to expand the gap between publics where now these publics are living “in two different worlds” (p. 108). The increased specialization of fields is evident across all the identified areas of emphases in the proposed program (Health, Science, Politics, Media, Public Relations). This program will equip students with the tools to move beyond mere translation, propelling graduates to be active participants in nuanced conversations between specialist and lay persons.

Additionally, the program in Public Communication fits squarely within the UNK vision as it utilizes a multidimensional learning environment by leveraging scholars from multiple disciplines; requiring students to become versed in theory, method, practice, and tools; and offering students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery either within the industry of their choosing (through practicum) or through an academic demonstration (e.g. thesis). This program also provides opportunity for engagement with the community and public interests through

community partners during the practicum and the central mission of the program to build knowledge and skill-sets that allow graduates to engage with multiple publics.

B. Evidence of Need and Demand

Need for the Program: The 2018 *Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska* provides some relevant information about the demand and growth potential for a distance education graduate program in communication. A few particularly relevant data points are below:

1. Distance education graduate programs have been increasing in popularity. In 2012 33.4% of graduate students were classified as exclusively distance education. In 2016 that percentage had increased to 43.3%. In that same time frame, exclusively distance undergraduate students only increased from 13.6% to 14.1% (2.7).
2. The program would greatly serve Nebraska residents. In 2016, 48.4% of graduate distance education students were in the same state as the institution granting the degree (2.7).
3. Graduate enrollment has been growing. Between 2006-2017, statewide graduate enrollment increased 29.4% while undergraduate enrollment increased 2% (2.2)
4. The kind of students that the Master of Public Communication is targeting (mid-career professionals) is a growing segment of graduate education. Graduate enrollments within the independent sector increased 59.9% from 2007-2017 and part-time graduate enrollments increased 25.6% in that same time period (2.2)

Currently, there are only a few Public Communication Master’s programs in the country including Colorado State University (CSU). The program at CSU is a more generalist program akin to our proposal. However, CSU’s program is on-campus only and offers a Master of Science. It appears that many of the students are focused on agricultural communication.

This degree also will prepare graduates to pursue and advance in careers that will allow graduates to sustain themselves. According to the National Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average median annual wage for Media and Communication Occupations is \$57,530, which is higher than the annual median wage of \$38,640. Additionally, The Nebraska Department of Labor, projects growing demand over the next 7 years for jobs that graduates will be prepared for. The following table shows the increase in projected job demand in Nebraska from 2016 – 2026 in relevant jobs.

Career	2016	2026	Increase	%Change
Public Relations Specialist	2,225	2,427	202	9
Human Resources Specialist	4,430	4,896	466	10.5
Training and Development Specialist	2,561	2,935	374	14.6
Advertising and Promotions Manager	87	95	12	9.2
Public Relations and Fundraising Managers	1,019	1,125	106	10.4
Total	10,322	11,478	1,160	

Demand for the Program: The demand for the proposed program exists as employers increasingly privilege communication skills. In a 2014 study generated by Hart Research Associates, 400 employers who belong to organizations with at least 25 employees (at least 25 of those employees have an associate or bachelor's degree) were surveyed. Participants were asked about which learning outcomes were most important to employees. First and third on the list were "The ability to effectively communicate orally" and "The ability to effectively communicate in writing" with 85% and 82% of employers reporting these learning outcomes as "very important" (p. 4). The annual Job Outlook Report conducted for the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that the most important skill/quality that employers were looking for in employees is the "Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization."

Communication skills are important to employers, which in turn means they are imperative to employees. A Master's degree in Public Communication would be attractive to people in the workforce who were looking to make a difference in their organizations. The focus on Public Communication makes the program even more attractive, since it focuses not only on organizational inward facing communication skills, but outward facing skills as well. Included with the proposal are letters of support from area businesses and potential students to qualitatively demonstrate the kind of potential students who will be served by this program.

C. Required Resources

Faculty and Staff Resources: No new faculty positions will be required to offer this program. This proposal has the support of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of Graduate Studies. Additionally, it has the support of the Communication Department's graduate faculty. Currently, the Communication Department has eight graduate faculty (Dr. Nanette Hogg, Dr. Ralph Hanson, Dr. Fletcher Ziwoya, Jacob Rosdail, Dr. Richard MocarSKI, Dr. Mary Harner, Dr. Akbar Javidi, and Dr. Sonja Bickford). Dr. Tiffani Luethke is a new tenure track assistant professor hire for the 2019/2020 academic year and should obtain graduate faculty status before Fall 2020. The department also has clearance to hire another additional tenure-track communication assistant professor for the 2020/2021 academic year. With these individuals, the department can support the addition of a graduate program with the current faculty and resources. This program will utilize graduate courses already being offered in the Department of Communication and in other departments (Political Science, History, and Management).

The program will require one graduate assistant for the first two years of the program. If numbers warrant, a second graduate assistant will be needed in year three and beyond. Graduate assistants will teach sections of JMC 100 and SPCH 100, thereby releasing faculty to teach graduate courses. The Dean of Graduate Studies will provide a graduate assistant for the first two years. Additional graduate assistants will be funded through the funds generated by the online funding model.

eCampus is a multi-functional unit on the UNK campus that is devoted to providing leadership, services, support, resources, and accessibility in online and blended education at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The eCampus team includes instructional designers, a video specialist, a marketing team, advisers, online coordinators, and communication experts. The instructional designers assist faculty with the design and development of online courses by matching teaching strategies with pedagogy and technology solutions. The marketing team

consults with administration, faculty, and staff to develop and implement strategies for increasing online enrollment, including recruitment plans, social media management, and research. They also are responsible for outreach to prospective and current online students, including lead nurturing, student advising, and monitoring, and analyzing the impact of online programs. The video specialist develops and implements educational classroom technology and video production. eCampus will provide administrative staff in the form of an online coordinator. The online coordinator will assist in processing paperwork and programmatic duties including recruiting, marketing, and technology updates.

Physical Resources: The Public Communication Master's Degree will be an online program. There will be no physical facilities necessary beyond the infrastructure that is already in place.

Instructional Equipment and Informational Resources: The Department of Communication already has a healthy relationship with eCampus. The eCampus team provides instructional design and marketing staff for online programs. There is no need for additional resources beyond an enhanced marketing plan that will be supported using existing eCampus resources.

Budget Predictions for the first five years. The proposed program will require minimal financial commitment. No new faculty lines are needed. A graduate assistant will be provided by the Office of Graduate Studies for the first two years and eCampus will provide an online program coordinator to assist with administrative and advising duties.

Projected revenues and expenses for a more thorough explanation are attached.

D. Avoidance and Unnecessary Duplication

Statewide: There are no other similar programs statewide. Further, we have no interest in duplicating what is already offered within the system since both UNL and UNO already provide highly reputable graduate programs in Communication.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

UNL offers an MA in *Communication Studies* in two primary areas of study: Interpersonal, Family and Intergroup Communication and Rhetoric and Public Culture. These programs are geared toward understanding how communication works in relationships and how persuasion and ideology function in mass communication. The proposed program is not scoped to overlap with this program.

The *College of Journalism and Mass Communications* offers various graduate programs, but of interest, the *Integrated Media Communications* focuses on advertising and public relations industries. UNL's Integrated Media Communication program is designed to "Sharpen your advertising and Public Relations skills in today's rapidly changing media environment." This program is aimed at advertising and PR professionals, aiming to enhance their skills for these fields. This program is closely related to commercial communication. UNK has long supplied courses for students enrolled in the program with a partnership dating back to 2013. UNK was asked to contribute courses to make up for missing online options at UNL; this is documented in part by a memorandum of understanding dated Feb. 24, 2014. The MA in Public Communication is not targeting Advertising/Public Relation professionals; instead it is targeting experts in diverse fields who may have some of these responsibilities but for whom these are not their primary duties.

Finally, UNL offers an MA in Journalism that aims to “Enhance your professional skills by mastering how to produce and analyze news and information across the latest media platforms.” Again, this program is targeting a different audience, journalist, than the MA in Public Communication, which is targeting professionals in a variety of disciplines who have content expertise but need to be able to translate and disseminate this content expertise for a lay audience.

Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication offers graduate degrees in Leadership Education (MS) and Human Sciences with Specialization in Leadership Studies (Ph.D.). Leadership Education provides academic study and support to people in a variety of disciplines focusing on leadership (leadership studies, training and development, extension education, and postsecondary teaching). The MA in Public Communication will have leadership as part of the curriculum, but leadership is not at its core. Instead, public communication practitioners will leverage leadership techniques to be impactful communicators, but they are communicators first and foremost. They will be critical thinkers and analyzers, as well as translators and communicators. Additionally, the MA in Public Communication does not focus on Agricultural issues.

Lastly, UNL also offers a certificate in Public Relations, which has the same differentiation as described above.

University of Nebraska – Omaha

UNO also offers a well-respected *Communication*, MA program, but the curriculum emphasizes a broad theoretical knowledge of speech and mass communication. This is a fairly traditional graduate program that not only advances students in their careers, but is an excellent preparation for doctoral education. Students can choose from a variety of specializations: convergence journalism, service-learning, instructional communication, conflict mediation, and American Democracy. Public communication is not included in the options. Public Communication students will encounter more skill-based classes and the focus will be broader than the disciplines of the UNO program. The UNO program is also delivered as an on-campus program rather than online, so we are not direct competitors.

The Master of Arts in Public Communication program at the University of Nebraska at Kearney will be distinctly different from what our educational partners offer at UNL and UNO. The focus on Public Communication will set UNK apart from our educational partners. The proposed Public Communication M.A. at UNK will be professionally oriented and aimed at working adults looking to find ways to contribute to organizations they likely already belong to. Our graduates will be equipped to act as translators between their own organizations and publics. We are instead aiming to teach theory to help mid-career professional build and cultivate professional skills to advance in their organizations and to better serve their communities. We are also offering this as a completely online delivered program. The proposed program is distinctly different than the aforementioned programs.

Programs in contiguous states: Colorado State has a Communication Studies graduate program, but it is not available in an entirely online format. The proposed graduate program at UNK will be completely online reaching more students in a comfortable learning environment, accommodating convenience and flexibility that can be used for improved technical skills and career advancement.

E. Consistency with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education

The proposed program is consistent with the Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education. The program is an attempt to properly leverage the potential of the Department of Communication at UNK in service to the State of Nebraska and its citizens. It has been designed to be efficient and effective. The program takes care to avoid unnecessary duplication of other programs. Additionally, as an online program it will allow students from across the state and beyond to benefit from its existence. Below are specific ways in which the proposed program is consistent with the statewide plan for postsecondary education.

Meet the Educational Needs of the Students: The UNK Public Communication program clearly aligns with the needs of Nebraska students. The online component meets the goal to “ensure that access to higher education institutions’ programs and services is not restricted by factors such as geographic location, economic status, age, culture, disability, color, national origin or gender.” The program is accessible and does not require residency. It will provide skills that students need in order to advance in their careers and to have impact in their communities. The faculty teaching in the program are well established and have the necessary experience and education to deliver high quality instruction to students of the proposed program.

Meet the Needs of the State: Additionally, the program will meet the needs of the state by providing “graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed as capable employees and responsible citizens.” The skills taught in this program are the essential skills that employers need. The letters of support included in this proposal clearly show this. The focus on critical media literacy also empowers students to be responsible citizens. Additionally, the Public Communication Master’s Program at UNK clearly meets the goal “Higher education in Nebraska will be effective in meeting the needs of students and the state, will be efficient in its expenditure of the state’s resources.” The program requires very little additional expenditure of resources since the department already offers many online courses. It will be a self-sufficient program.

Meeting Educational Needs through Partnerships and Collaborations: The program will require a high degree of collaboration given that this is a professional degree. The departments of Marketing, Political Science, and History will offer elective courses for the program. The Department of Communication currently has good relationships with several area businesses where we frequently place interns and graduates. The practicum option will require students to apply what they have learned to an existing organization. Additionally, many of the classes in the curriculum come from other departments on campus which will encourage interdisciplinary collaboration.

Statewide Facilities Plan: The program is offered entirely online, so it will require minimal resources and no additional facilities. Additionally, the Communication Department can support this program with current faculty.

Off-Campus and Graduate Program Plans: Finally, the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education states that “off-campus programming, in particular, provides an important educational service to place-bound students within its geographic service area” (7-29). Given that this degree will be offered online, it will fit well into the Nebraska statewide plan for UNK. The statewide plan also explains that new Master’s degrees are to be developed “when a definite need exists and UNK has demonstrated the capacity-including fiscal, human and

physical resources-to meet that need” (7-29). This need clearly exists since there is no program that offers this particular degree in an online format.

Cited Sources:

Bensaude-Vincent, Bernadette (2001). A genealogy of the increasing gap between science and the public. *Public Understanding of Science*. 10 (99-113).

Burning Glass Technologies (2015). *The Human Factor: The Hard Time Employers Have Finding Soft Skills*. Boston, MA.

Hart Research Associates (2014). *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success*. Washington DC.

National Association of Colleges and Employers (2016). *Job Outlook 2016*. Bethlehem, PA.

Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (2006). *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*. Lincoln, NE.

Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (2018). *2018 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska*.



Ensuring a future for North America's Cranes

Trustees: Brad Korell, Craig Thompson and Doug Curry
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TO: Department of Communication
ATTN: Dr. Mary J. Harner, Dr. Benjamin Myers
MEMO: Public Communication Master's Program

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing in support of the Public Communication Master's Program proposed for the University of Nebraska at Kearney. I recently chaired the *13th Platte River Basin Ecosystem Symposium* held in Wood River, Nebraska, which included an interactive workshop to determine research and management needs. Participants determined that one of the greatest impediments to conservation success on the river was communicative success. We as a conservation community need to better understand the impacts of our messaging on general audiences and improve its efficacy to protect the Platte River. Scientific methods have continued to advance, becoming less interpretable to the general public. Concurrently, faith has dwindled in our public institutions, including academia. Now more than ever there is a need for professionals who can clearly, honestly, and accurately talk about complex systems like the environment while using plain language. We are missing translational middle-persons to help foster fruitful conversations in the public sphere regarding scientific advances. For instance, the scientific community has been very ineffective in communicating the risks of global climate change to the general public. The Public Communication Master's Program has the potential to train students to address challenges in conservation and beyond. Thank you for fielding this letter. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Kind Regards,

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October 15, 2018

Re: University of Nebraska at Kearney – Public Communications Master’s Program

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in favor of the University of Nebraska at Kearney’s opportunity for a Public Communications Master’s Program. SCORR Marketing is the leading marketing and communications firm in the health sciences industry. We are a global partner for organizations around the world involved in research, development and commercialization of biopharmaceutical and device products and the delivery of health care products and services. SCORR currently employs 60 team members across the United States.

SCORR has a long-standing relationship with the University of Nebraska at Kearney and values the high quality, multidimensional students they produce, with over 45% of our employees possessing a degree from UNK. The addition of the Public Communications Master’s program and the curriculum presented in this course will allow SCORR to hire students trained with additional specialized knowledge on how to communicate internally, as well as externally with clients. The students will have the opportunity to gain valuable experience during their studies; experience that will be a significant asset in ensuring professional and goal-oriented communications with our clients.

A core value of SCORR Marketing is to set the bar high through offering expert advice and hiring highly qualified team members. A Public Communications Master’s program would allow us easier access to those qualified team members who meet that core competency. For these reasons, and many more, I believe this program at the University of Nebraska at Kearney would be of great interest to me as a hiring manager for a marketing communications firm. If you have any questions regarding this recommendation or SCORR Marketing, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie Whiting".

Carrie Whiting

Human Resources Director

(308) 237-5567



The Health Science Experts : SCORRMarketing.com

2430 Marshall Ave
Kearney, NE 68847
308-236-7483
questions@HollmanMedia.com



October 10, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I enthusiastically write this letter in support of the implementation of a Public Communication Master's Program at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. If given enough time and paper, I could easily produce binders of essays that speak to the need of such a program. But given that my support is already evident, I will limit myself to just a few important points from the perspective of an owner, founder, and executive of an established company in Central Nebraska.

1. As a manager, I look for employees who can communicate well. This is hands down the most coveted skill that I look for when hiring. I am not unique. Peers within my industry and other industries lament that it is difficult to hire employees who can communicate exceptionally well.
2. We managers, and our organizations, are just as guilty of breeding ineffective communication. Within my own organization, communication problems held our progress down for years until we learned how to manage and operate our business with communication in mind. This process is teachable and learnable. We just didn't understand it while we had the problems. It took an outsider to point it out. I feel that a Communication Master's Program will help equip students to become experts in helping organizations overcome these common challenges.
3. Every non-profit board I served on over the years had communication problems. In my mind, communication was always our organizations' biggest weakness. This includes both internal communications as well as public-facing communications. The two work in tandem. I fully support a program that teaches students the theories and practices needed to help organizations communicate effectively internally and publically.
4. Many of our clients are media clients (TV, radio, etc.). One would think they are experts at communication. They are not. I see a real need in the media for more communication experts.
5. Our company is hired to help other companies communicate online, both through social networks and through other conduits. In some ways, communication online is new and unique. In other ways, the same gaps remain. Regardless, it is often difficult for us lay people to make that distinction. We need help.

While this is not a comprehensive list of reasons for establishing a Communication Master's Program, any one of the items on the list is reflective of a real gap and a real opportunity for the proposed program. The technology conduits through which communication is delivered will evolve indefinitely, and we can never be sure what the future holds; however, communication itself will always be relevant and unrivaled in importance. The need for understanding, improving, and implementing better communication will never diminish. How do we do that? This type of program will bring those answers to light for its students so that they can go out and help businesses like mine. Please support it. I do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Travis J. Hollman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Travis J. Hollman
President

Haley Pierce
Kearney, NE 68845
402.380.8694
pierceha@lopers.unk.edu

November 12, 2018

Ben Myers
Chair, Department of Communication
The University of Nebraska at Kearney

Dr. Myers,

It is my understanding the Communication Department is considering offering a Masters of Arts in Public Communication, and I wanted to write in support of this program.

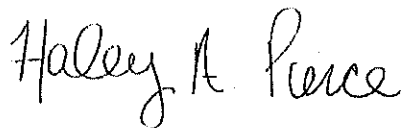
Many students in our department and others major in Organizational and Relational Communication, Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations, Political Science, Sports Administration, and related fields with intentions of working on the communication side of these industries. An advanced degree in Public Communication would afford them greater professional opportunities and allow them to more quickly work as an effective communicator in their field. Indeed, I believe the areas of specialization offered in this program are critically important to students, their goals, and their career paths.

Personally, I intend to pursue an advanced degree after graduation. As a Journalism and Political Science student, this program would allow me to effectively work as a lobbyist, campaign manager, or political director. I know I am not the only undergraduate student with interests in taking communication skills to a specialized field.

Moreover, I cannot stress enough the benefits of such a program to the department and campus. As a student diplomat, I've observed prospective students who are apprehensive of choosing a university that can't offer them an advanced degree in their field. This was a concern for myself in choosing a school too. Additionally, our university has a strong e-campus presence, and this program would only contribute to it. As urbanization continues to affect our campus, I expect this online degree to attract students from across the region looking to further their career.

Offering a Master's degree in Public Communication is an opportunity to improve the department, e-campus, UNK, and students' educations. I hope it is treated as such.

Regards,



Haley Pierce

610 W 25th St
Kearney, NE 68845
savan2014@gmail.com
(308) 991-7358

October 11, 2018

To whom this may concern,

I am writing this letter to relay my excitement for the prospective Public Communication Master's Program at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. As a potential student of this program, I can't help but think of an immense list of benefits for its graduates.

If you look at every field, department, and career, it is obvious that effective communication is a key factor to success, whether you are a school bus driver or CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Messages come into our lives sporadically on a daily basis and it is of utmost importance in this day and age to know how to critically decipher them.

Personally, I would enroll in this program to equip myself with the knowledge to effectively convey messages to people in and around my chosen field, nonprofit organizations. Those of us who have passions for integrating with people must know the theories behind the processes of organizational communication and the ethics that accompany them. Though being a millennial inherently allows me to be technology-inclined, my generation seems to be lacking general communication skills. This tool on my belt would easily magnify my abilities as a leader, organizer and community developer.

A career field such as nonprofit organizations could utilize students of this program to launch outreach programs, grow funding, and achieve interorganizational precision. Public Communication graduates will be able to implement strategies regarding the organization's mission in a manner that literally and figuratively "speaks" to the public.

A master's degree in Public Communication might be the best decision for someone like myself to pursue. I would be able read messages critically and speak back with integrity, backed by an education in theory, methods, and specialization. Thank you for your time and I hope you consider this program for those of us who wish to improve communication within our world.

Sincerely,



Savannah High

Jessica Moser
Kearney, NE 68845
308.660.5715
moserjd@lopers.unk.edu

November 16, 2018

Ben Myers
Chair, Department of Communication
The University of Nebraska at Kearney

Dr. Myers,

It has come to my attention that the Communication Department is considering offering a Masters of Arts in Public Communication, and I wanted to write in support of this program.

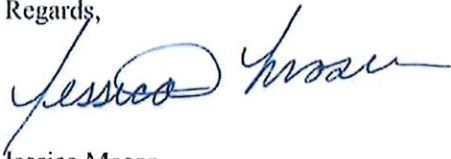
An advance degree in Public Communication would afford many students in our department greater professional opportunities and enable them to grow as communicators in their chosen fields. It is my belief that the areas of specialization offered in this program would highly benefit students and help them to achieve their goals and prospective careers.

As a Journalism and English student who is interested in pursuing an advanced degree after graduation, this program would help me to take communication skills into other fields. I doubt if I am the only undergraduate student that would be interested in taking communication skills into a specialized field.

In addition, offering a Master of Arts in Public Communication can have immense benefits for both the department and the campus as a whole. There are many potential students who are leery of choosing a university who can't offer them an advanced degree in their field. There are also many students who have gotten their bachelor's degree here at UNK and now want to get an advanced degree who have to go elsewhere to find it.

This program would be an asset to the department and UNK as a whole.

Regards,



Jessica Moser

November 16, 2018

Dr. W. Benjamin Myers
Department of Communication, Chair
University of Nebraska at Kearney
2504 9th Ave.
Kearney, NE 68849

Dear Dr. Myers:

I write on behalf of myself, a senior student at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) majoring in Organizational & Relational Communication, in support of the proposal for a new Public Communication Masters of Arts Degree (M.A.) at UNK. I strongly support this proposal because I truly believe in providing students, myself being one of those students, with a variety of excellent options to further their education after obtaining their undergraduate degree.

I arrived at UNK my freshman year as a biology major in hopes of one day attending medical school. However, I soon realized I was not in the right area of study. I moved over to the Communication Department and have never looked back since. I have continuously been an avid participant in all of my undergraduate courses, I was on the UNK Forensics Team for 2 years, I do undergraduate research within the Communication Department, and have been involved in the UNK Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society since I moved over the Communication Department – I am currently serving as President. I cannot begin to explain what this department, the professors, and the extra curricular activities have done for my as a student and as a young woman.

I've never questioned that one day I'd further my education by obtaining my Master's Degree because of my passion for learning and my love for communication. When told about the possibility of UNK obtaining a 2-year online Master's Degree in Public Communication, I was ecstatic! I have a strong interest in health communication and public communication and have always believed I would obtain my Master's Degree in an area encompassing both of these studies. This program provides that possibility and so much more.

In conclusion, I know the quality of academics at UNK is absolutely excellent and would be honored to be a student within this program. I strongly support this program proposal and believe it would be only beneficial to prospective students looking to further their education.

Sincerely,

Brittany Hanzlik
Organization & Relational Communication
Senior, University of Nebraska at Kearney
hanzlikbl@lopers.unk.edu

TABLE 1: PROJECTED EXPENSES - NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM
UNK Master of Arts in Public Communication

Personnel	(FY2021 Year 1		(FY2022 Year 2		(FY2023 Year 3		(FY2024 Year 4		(FY2025 Year 5		Total Cost
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	
Faculty											
Professional											
Graduate Assistants ¹	0.5	\$17,000	0.5	\$17,000	0.5	\$17,000	0.5	\$17,000	0.5	\$17,000	\$85,000
Support Staff											
Benefits											
Subtotal	0.5	\$17,000	0.5	\$17,000	0.5	\$17,000	0.5	\$17,000	0.5	\$17,000	\$85,000
Operating											
Operating and Supplies											
Equipment											
Library/Information Resources											
Subtotal											\$0
Total Expenses		\$17,000		\$17,000		\$17,000		\$17,000		\$17,000	\$85,000

¹ One graduate assistant will be required for curricular support and outreach in years one and two. If enrollments warrant, a graduate assistant will be required in years three through five.

TABLE 2: PROJECTED REVENUES - NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM
UNK Master of Arts in Public Communication

	(FY2021 Year 1		(FY2022 Year 2		(FY2023 Year 3		(FY2024 Year 4		(FY2025 Year 5		Total
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	
Reallocation of Existing Funds											
Required New Public Funds											
1. State Funds											
2. Local Tax Funds (community colleges)											
Tuition and Fees ¹											
# of students - 5, 15, 25, 35, 45		\$31,320		\$93,960		\$156,600		\$219,240		\$281,880	\$783,000
Other Funding											\$0
Total Revenue		\$31,320		\$93,960		\$156,600		\$219,240		\$281,880	\$783,000

¹ Indicates tuition and fees based on an average of 18 credit hours per academic year [\$348 (\$302 Online Graduate Tuition) + \$35 (Online Course Fee) + \$11 (Technology Fee)].

Projection is for 5 students the first year, 10 new students the second year and 10 new students each year thereafter. Each of these students would be completing a total of 36 credit hours to complete the program with an average of 18 credits per academic year totalling \$6,264 per year. This is based on \$348 per credit hours for online tuition including the following: \$35 Online Course Fee, and \$11 Technology Fee. The projection shows the program growing by an additional 10 new students each year and assumes that each student will progress through the program in a traditional manner, completing the degree in 2 years. This is a conservative estimate based on in-state tuition rates, although it is fully expected there will be out-of-state students in the program.