



## Principles, History, Curriculum, and Personnel

The ISUComm Steering Group is an ad hoc committee of the Faculty Senate (FS), charged with reporting each semester to the FS Academic Affairs Council and periodically to the Senate at large. At the October 15 meeting of the Senate, ISUComm will briefly outline its activities for Fall 2002 and request input from Senators regarding future developments. The present document is intended to provide some background on the ISUComm initiative for the benefit of members of the Faculty Senate.

### 1. The Basic Principles

ISUComm is a faculty-based initiative for improving the communication skills of Iowa State graduates. The initiative is guided by the following principles, which were adopted by the Faculty Senate in May 2001.

The Faculty of Iowa State University believe that all educated people should be able to communicate effectively in a variety of settings and media, including electronic. Consequently, Iowa State University graduates are expected to develop competence in three interrelated areas of communication: written, oral, and visual.

This communication competence can best be achieved through the following five principles:

- Communication instruction and practice are distributed over the student's entire undergraduate experience, both in and out of the classroom, from the first year through the senior year.
- Communication instruction and practice are distributed across the curriculum, both in communication courses and in courses in the student's major.
- Active learning and higher-order thinking are fostered through communication.
- Faculty across the university share responsibility for the student's progress in communication practices.
- Both faculty and students engage in ongoing assessment for continuous improvement of the student's communication practices.

Iowa State University's communication curriculum, based on these five principles, seeks to enrich the student's understanding of the various subjects studied as well as prepare the student to communicate successfully in professional, civic, and private life.

These principles were the culmination of three years of work initiated by the Faculty Senate in 1999. The following timeline provides an overview of prominent ISUComm-related activities from that date forward.

### 2. ISUComm Timeline

Spring 1999: The Faculty Senate appoints a Task Force to investigate the English Proficiency Requirement

October 1999: Nationally- prominent communication consultants visit Iowa State to evaluate the existing communication curriculum; they suggest a variety of changes but conclude that Iowa State has the potential to develop "a model program."

- Nov. 1999 –  
March 2000: ISUComm Assessment Committee surveys 1,200 Iowa State faculty members and 100 employers of ISU graduates regarding student communications. Faculty and employers endorse the importance of communication instruction but also acknowledge that many students are unprepared as communicators. Almost two-thirds of faculty surveyed indicate a willingness to include communication instruction in their own classes.
- April 2000: The first ISUComm Symposium: a two day event in the Great Hall, with 150 participants, nationally-recognized speakers, panel presentations, and workshops for curricular planning. Symposium materials available on the ISUComm ([www.engl.iastate.edu/ISUComm/](http://www.engl.iastate.edu/ISUComm/)).
- October 2000: The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) presents a Faculty Forum featuring ISUComm.
- January 2001: *The CTE Newsletter* presents cover story on “ISUComm: Communicating to Learn.”
- February 2001: The second ISUComm Symposium, with Faculty Senators as the specific audience and the Basic Principles as the particular topic. College level curriculum planning sessions from Symposium II are available on the ISUComm web site.
- May 2001: Faculty Senate debates and adopts the Basic Principles.
- June 2001: The Faculty Senate Executive Board makes ISUComm an ad hoc extension of the Senate, with the specific charge of developing a curricular plan that fills out the Basic Principle. ISUComm to report regularly to the Academic Affairs Council.
- Sept. 2001: ISUComm awards eight mini-grants to faculty members conducting projects related to communication instruction. Departments sponsored include Civil and Construction Engineering, the Greenlee School of Journalism, English, Agricultural Education and Studies, Art and Design, Food Science and Human Nutrition, Speech Communication, and Health and Human Performance.
- Nov. 2001: ISUComm Ad Hoc committee circulates a discussion document on communication instruction to all academic departments. Departmental responses and symposium records used as the basis for the ISUComm curricular proposal: see the *ISUComm Progress Report* (online).
- January 2002: A second cover story on ISUComm appears in the *CTE Newsletter*.
- February 2002: ISUComm distributes the *Progress Report* ( a 32-page outline of potential revisions to the communication curriculum) to all college curriculum committees, Faculty Senate committees, and college and university administrators.
- Feb.–Mar. ‘02: ISUComm representatives discuss the Progress Report with all college curriculum committees. Changes suggested by these committees are incorporated into the developing curricular plan.
- Feb. 2002: A second CTE Faculty Forum presentation, this time introducing WOVe, the integrated approach to written, oral, visual, and electronic communication, that is a central feature of the proposed new foundation course curriculum.
- March 2002: A catalog copy version of the ISUComm curricular proposal is discussed and approved by the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee.

April 2002: The same catalog copy is discussed and approved by the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Council.

Fall 2002: ISUComm experiments with pilot projects in various aspects of the foundation course curriculum.

- ISUComm Consultants begin working with faculty in Materials Science and Engineering as well as Accounting to determine the communication needs of students in their respective disciplines. Communication consulting continues with Food Science and Human Nutrition, Civil and Construction Engineering, and Ag Education and Studies.

- ISUComm begins planning assessment efforts for both the foundation course pilot projects and the consulting activities, with results to guide future developments. Assessment results to be reported to the Faculty Senate in the spring.

- ISUComm begins to formulate a comprehensive grant-search strategy.

- ISUComm requests and receives support from the Provost's Office for its 2002-2003 activities.

Oct. 30, 2002: ISUComm, the CTE, and the Instructional Technology Center sponsor a mini-conference on the electronic portfolio.

Spring 2003: ISUComm plans a series of meetings with the curriculum committees of all colleges to discuss the communication curriculum developments. For initial college responses, see the Spring 2002 report to the Academic Affairs Council (online).

The ISUComm Consultants plans to work with two new departments, foundation course pilot projects continue, and assessment efforts get underway.

Mar./April '03: The ISUComm communication curriculum is tentatively scheduled for discussion and vote on Senate floor.

### **3. A Brief Outline of the ISUComm Curricular Plan**

(A comprehensive discussion of the proposed communication curriculum is available in the *ISUComm Progress Report*: please see [www.engl.iastate.edu/ISUComm/](http://www.engl.iastate.edu/ISUComm/))

Foundation Courses: To ensure that broad communication competence is addressed and developed at the beginning of a university career, all students will earn six credits in the two-course introductory sequence, normally taken in the first and second years. These two courses will include the following emphases:

- Students will focus on writing and critical reading, with complementary instruction in visual, oral, and electronic communication,
- they will concentrate on civic and cultural themes, and
- they will enter work in a communication portfolio to document their current level of proficiency.

Upper-Level Curricula: Continuing development of communication skills will be directed by the student's major department. Using the university's basic principles as a guide, each department will specify a set of intended learning outcomes and design communication experiences by which students in the major can achieve the desired level of communication proficiency.

Departments may select from or combine a variety of communication options that best match their faculty, students, and curriculum, including:

- designated communication-intensive courses that integrate written, oral, and visual communication into a course in the major;
- a sequence of courses within the major that incorporates communication tasks of increasing complexity;
- linked courses—one in communication, one in the major—that integrate readings and assignments;
- advanced composition course(s) appropriate to the student's major and offering instruction in written, oral, and visual communication;
- communication-intensive activities within or beyond course work, such as communication portfolios, discipline- or course-specific student tutoring, community service projects, internships, electronic presentations, informational fairs, juried competitions, entrepreneurial projects, newsletters, web sites.

Departments will be asked to regularly assess the degree to which their students achieve the specified learning outcomes and to make curricular improvements based on departmental assessment data.

#### **4. ISUComm Committee Members**

##### College Representatives:

Agriculture: Robert Martin  
Business: Cyndie Jeffrey  
Design: Roger Baer  
Education: Kathy Thomas  
Engineering: Loren Zachary  
FCS: Cheryl Reitmeir  
LAS: Rebecca Burnett  
Vet. Medicine: Kevan Flaming  
Greenlee : Denise Vrchota  
FSCC: Ken Kruempel  
Student Rep. Adam Lambrecht  
Tad Patterson  
Chair: Michael Mendelson

##### Ex Officio Members:

Center for Teaching Excellence: Corly Brooke  
Center for Teaching Excellence: Susan Yager  
Speech Communication: Ray Dearin  
First-Year Composition; Marty Graham  
Asst. Vice Provost: Mary Huba  
Rhetoric and Prof. Comm. Don Payne  
Foundation Course Planning: David Russell  
Vice Provost for UG Programs: Howard Shapiro  
Art and Design: Paula Curran  
FSCC: Sedahila Crase  
Consulting: Dorothy Winsor  
Mark Redmond  
Grants: Richard Freed

**[www.engl.iastate.edu/ISUComm/](http://www.engl.iastate.edu/ISUComm/)**