The Communication and Theatre Arts major is an integrated study in Communication, Media, and Theatre. The goal of the major is to develop competencies in the analysis, understanding, creation and delivery of communicative exchanges, direct or mediated, instrumental or artistic.

Human communication takes place in a variety of environments (intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public) and in private and public settings. It involves understanding of self, message transmission and reception, aesthetic principles, audience analysis, and skill development. It utilizes verbal and nonverbal codes transmitted face to face and through an ever increasing array of communication technologies. Communicating is, quite simply, the formative process of everyday living; and its understanding is crucial for helping our students to:

- explore multiple perspectives on the human condition and (to) prepare themselves for rich personal and professional lives...for leadership, citizenship, and service in a global context. (Monmouth College Mission Statement)

In these ways our major supports the mission and purposes of the college. In fact, communication undergirds all education, and the department takes very seriously its commitment to support the general purposes of the College.

As one example, our senior “capstone course”, Freedom of Expression and Communication Ethics, explores issues such as artistic freedom, free speech and the ethical dimensions of communication to “promote awareness and exploration of … principles which exist in democracy, pluralism, equality and freedom” (purpose three).

Upper level courses such as Organizational Communication, Small Group Communication, Principles of Directing, and Radio-TV Production use intensive small group projects to “foster and promote intellectual inquiry through mentoring relationships” (purpose seven).

Many of our majors also take a second major; we encourage this exploration as a means of “fostering the discovery of connections among disciplines and of larger patterns of meanings.” (purpose four [a]).

The department seeks to “develop creativity and skills in written and oral communication and artistic expression” (purpose eight) and to “understand the methods of inquiry in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences” (purpose nine) directly through nearly all of our courses.
Monmouth College has created a four year program of study and experiences “in order to foster the discovery of connections among disciplines and of large patterns of meaning” (Mission statement). The Communication and Theatre Arts Department supports this endeavor through coursework designed for all campus members (Fundamentals of Communication for all first year students, general education offerings in Theatre, course work in Issues and Ideas), through extracurricular offerings, and through its major program.

**CATA Major Requirements**

A **Major in Communication and Theatre Arts** consists of 36 semester hours of work in CATA courses, including:

- CATA 101, Fundamentals of Communication
- 3 hours of 100/200 level workshop credit,
- CATA 230 – Introduction to Communication Studies
- CATA 261 – Mass Media and Society
- CATA 321 and 421 – Junior and Senior Colloquium (one credit hour each),
- CATA 491 – Senior Seminar in Freedom of Expression and Communication Ethics,
- An independent study or internship and
- Departmental acceptance of a senior web-based electronic portfolio.

In addition, majors must complete one of the following **concentrations**:

**Communication and Media**

- **Either** CATA 231 (Interpersonal Communication) or CATA 235 (Small Group Communication),
- **Two courses** selected from CATA 333 (Organizational Communication), CATA 335 (Argumentation), 337 (Communication Criticism) and 339 (Persuasion);
- **One course** selected from CATA 263 (Radio and Television Production), CATA 265 (Media Writing), or CATA 365 (Media Production);

**Theatre**

- CATA 273 (Classical Theatre),
- CATA 275 (Modern Theatre),
- CATA 373 (Adv. Acting) and
- CATA 375 (Scenery and Lighting Design) or CATA 377 (Directing)
**Goals of the Major in Communication and Theatre Arts**

The major in Communication and Theatre Arts is organized around four primary objectives defining the learning outcomes expected of student majors.

“Students should be able to . . .

- Construct effective written and oral messages.
- Demonstrate general knowledge of the field and specific knowledge in their CATA area concentration.
- Apply their skills and knowledge of the field to reach goals and solve problems in practical settings and professional contexts.
- Demonstrate the skills of effective communication performance and effective use of appropriate technologies.”

These four primary objectives are defined in greater detail (included sub-goals for each objective and evaluation rubrics) on the department’s web site and are presented formally to students in the Junior and Senior Colloquium courses offered annually.

**Assessment of Student Learning in the Major**

Proficiency in achieving objectives is assessed first through formal evaluation (examinations, papers, projects, oral performances and technical products) in departmental course offerings. Competency is also assessed by faculty directors and advisors as each student participates in the co-curricular program of the department (Theatre, Student Publications, Radio and Television). For example, the elevation of a student to positions of authority and responsibility in departmental programs (WMCR Radio Station Manager, Departmental (basic course) Speech Tutor or Assistant, Stage Manager, Director, Designer) is seen as an indicator of competence and accomplishment. Assessment also takes place outside the department through evaluations of performance for Internships, Standardized Tests, Job Placement and Student Teaching.

Systematic program assessment occurs primarily through the evaluation of each graduating student’s electronic portfolio. A substantial portion of each portfolio is organized to present evidence demonstrating competency for each objective in the major. Portfolio creation occurs in conjunction with CATA 321 – Junior Colloquium and CATA 421 – Senior Colloquium. Students receive individual feedback on their work as a part of the portfolio review process. Details of the portfolio evaluation process (including our evaluation rubrics), as well as current and recent student portfolios, can be found through the department’s web site.
End-point data used for assessment is routinely collected in the following ways:

1. Scores from the evaluation of electronic portfolios for each graduating student major on each major objective are recorded and saved. These scores are used as primary data to evaluate the success of the major in helping students meet learning objectives during our comprehensive program assessments every five years.

2. Student responses, both quantitative and qualitative, concerning both individual courses and the program generally, from the “Exit Survey” given annually to senior CATA majors is collected and used in the comprehensive program assessment review.

3. Supervisor evaluations, both quantitative and qualitative, from the standard internship evaluation form completed for each student at the close of their required internship are saved and used in the comprehensive program assessment review.

4. Wackerle Center survey reports on job placement for our majors are reviewed annually and saved for use in the comprehensive program assessment review.

   We expect that recent enhancements to our departmental web site will allow us to conduct internet surveys of alumni to supplement outcome and career data. We collect and use summary data from student responses to questions concerning effectiveness of pedagogy in meeting course goals for assessment of our basic course CATA 101 - “Fundamentals of Communication.” from the college’s regular student evaluation system. Unfortunately, we have not been able to use student evaluation data to evaluate other courses due to institutional resistance.

Because our graduates prepare for a wide variety of careers, we use a number of other measures as assessment tools on an occasional basis. For those students involved in Teacher Education, the state’s proficiency test is a measure of subject area knowledge. This test has competency areas in Communication, Media, and Theatre. For those students who seek entrance to graduate school, we will monitor performance on appropriate examinations (GRE, LSAT, etc.) and will also consider acceptance rates and the offering of graduate/teaching/research assistantships.

While formal assessments focus on end-point measures, more informal kinds of assessment do occur at intermediate points, especially as students work with the department chair and their advisors in beginning the electronic portfolio and program adjustments have been made based on this kind of informal assessment. Departmental faculty meet on a regular basis (often at a summer departmental workshop) to review assessment information and to identify opportunities for change/improvement.

September 5, 2005