9 Shippensburg University's Technical / Professional Communications Minor: A Multidisciplinary Approach

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To meet increasing student interest in technical and professional opportunities for post-graduate career preparation, Shippensburg University, PA, has recently developed an interdisciplinary Technical/Professional Communications Minor, bringing together a variety of pertinent courses from across the college curriculum and organizing them into a minor that is substantive, coherent, and flexible. This article discusses the development and implementation of Shippensburg University's new interdisciplinary minor. While the program's final structure sprung primarily from necessity, its multidisciplinary status will allow our students to reap many unforeseen benefits. We feel this program could be a successful model for other smaller schools to follow, schools that have neither the student numbers nor the resources to begin their own majors or minors in technical communications.

BACKGROUND: WHO WE ARE

Shippensburg University is a public university in the State System of Pennsylvania of about 6600 students. We attract an increasingly competitive student body, with SATs averaging about 1100. Most are from across Pennsylvania, and a number are from rural areas and are first-generation college students, who especially see college as an important and vital step in preparing for a professional career. At the same time, our university is committed to its traditional liberal arts curricula: we maintain a strong general education program, expose students to many fields of inquiry, and encourage close faculty-student relationships and community service.

Thus, though the English Department felt pressures (from an array of sources which I'll discuss) to provide a more "professional" education—to teach more overtly the workplace skills our students might need—our faculty believed whole-heartedly that our liberal education was best suited to instill the knowl-

edge, judgment, and skills base for all college-educated citizens, for the greater community as well as the professional workplace.

In determining how to supply our graduates with the higher-education communications skills we felt they needed to succeed in professional careers, we looked to contributions from across the university and developed a multidisciplinary model to help give students access to a range of courses and skills. This model allows us to marshal resources and course offerings heretofore segregated among various college departments. In so doing, it provides a career-enhancing program for students while maintaining a meaningful liberal arts backdrop.

STRIKING A BALANCE: THE PRESSURE TO PROFESSIONALIZE VS. MAINTAINING A LIBERAL EDUCATION

One of the most obvious pressures to update our students' skills came from outside academia—the need to meet demands of the information technology job market. Professionals capable of combining technical expertise with communication skills are sought after, and the increased numbers for and roles of technical communicators in various industries has therefore impacted university instruction. Aimee Whiteside, in her survey of the skills that the new generation of technical communicators need, reiterates the feeling that the working world's rapid changes "created a profound challenge for academia, which grappled to balance pedagogical strategies and foundational critical thinking skills with specific skills that technical communication students need to be successful in business and industry" (303). Universities have tried different strategies for giving their graduates the necessary skills: some have added whole departments in technical or professional writing; some have implemented new majors and minors in technical writing or communication; some have created writing tracks within an existing department (in our own geographical area, for example, the number of major or minor programs has nearly doubled in the past five years).

But for many schools it is hard to know exactly what kind of program or how much of a program to create to fulfill the demands of their community. They then run the risk of leaving either professional or pedagogical gaps in their students' education, or both. Rude and Cargile Cook's recent article on the academic job market in technical communication discusses this problem in light of the issue of an inadequate number of trained faculty to teach this burgeoning population of students. But the assumptions governing the fates of both groups, faculty and students, stem from the same set of problems: uncertain job markets and difficulties adequately assessing future need "on the basis of current de-

mand" (50). Their point that "the growth of academic programs [in PTW] and the parallel demand for new faculty seem tied to growth of the role for technical communicators in the corporation" is a nice piece of information, but one that is hard to address logistically (50). What's a small regional school to do?

The other major pressure we were feeling came from the State System Chancellor's Office. Like most program innovations, our Technical/Professional Communications Minor arose several years ago from discussions effected by mission and curricular changes already in the air if not in the works. Our administration was increasingly underscoring the need for competitive professional preparation programs (though offering little in the way of additional resources to underwrite them). In response to this, for example, the History Department retooled their Master's Degree to offer an MA in "Applied History," providing training in more practical applications of a History degree: how to be an archivist, or a tour guide, or a curator. Our own MA came under the hatchet at about the same time because we couldn't come up with a suitable way to make it more professionally oriented (now we offer just a few graduate courses per year in the Department of Education's Curriculum and Instruction degree).

We also felt pressures a little closer to home. In the fall of 1999 our English Department underwent a constructive five-year review. One of the suggestions that came out of that review was to revamp our degree programs to include, among other new features, a Writing Emphasis option to accommodate those students who wanted more practical skills but who were not interested in teaching (nearly half of our majors are Secondary Education students). Our new writing track came with a commitment to hire faculty with expertise in technical writing and to develop two new courses, Technical/Professional Writing I & II. By creating this Writing Emphasis, we saw a way not only to supply students with new courses but also to provide a new professional slant on existing courses, such as Reviewing the Arts.

While serving as department chair at that time, Prof. Hathaway had concerns of two opposing kinds. First, in agreement with the department's outside reviewer, he saw the need to better prepare the majority of our English graduates for their immediate future in the professional workplace. But at the same time, he and the rest of the department wanted to stem the "workforce prep" mentality that we felt was beginning to threaten the liberal arts heart of higher education in the State System. He discussed options with the now-former Dean of College of Arts and Sciences, who, though appreciative of our dilemma, communicated the State System's increased professional preparation emphasis. At the same time, she was very supportive of realigning our options in the major and adding Technical Writing courses; she also paid to send the one faculty member with some background in the field to the ATTW conference to gather

ideas. That faculty member came back armed with the realization that professionalizing our courses meant more than teaching memo-writing; if we were serious, we had to come up with a way to incorporate some of the theoretical and pedagogical background that constituted a meaningful professional writing program.

There was one big problem: we had neither the fiscal resources nor the student population to consider a separate program. Nor did we necessarily want to. We knew that other departments were undergoing similar struggles to combine their traditional offerings in the major with more skills-based courses—the Art Department, for example, had added Computer Design I and II. And the Computer Science Department was working on an emphasis in software design, and wishing that someone on campus taught technical writing. The chair of the department mentioned this to the Dean, who relayed the good news that the English Department was adding just such a course. She discussed with Prof. Hathaway her desire to require that software engineering students take it even though it was an "English Major" course, and the two began wondering what else they could combine. In a strange confluence of need, therefore, members of faculty from several departments looked around and saw that a shift was occurring and that the best way to capitalize on it was to combine forces.

From here, Prof. Hathaway asked the Dean if he could convene an interdisciplinary committee to come up with a program design, knowing the strain on resources that creating a new minor can put on departments: hiring new faculty, adding new courses, updating facilities. Creating an interdisciplinary minor seemed to be the best option: it would give students some substantive breadth and depth to preparation for the professional workplace, *and* it would spread the responsibility for this program among a number of participating departments, so as not to overly burden or alter the curricula of any one department. We believed we could answer the call for professionalization by adding several new courses in various disciplines and pooling existing departmental resources.

Thus, in the Fall of 2000, we convened a Technical and Professional Skills Committee, with representatives from the Computer Science, Communications/ Journalism, and English departments. As the committee considered the objectives and prospective course inclusions for such a program, we invited in the Art and Speech departments as well. In our deliberations over that year, we reviewed the various technical and professional communication programs in the region and studied student need to better determine the service and draw of such a program.

We followed up by designing an eighteen-hour program that had a six-hour core of two 100/200 level courses: Technical/Professional Writing I from

the English Department and either Overview of Computer Science or Business Computer Systems, which students in the College of Business could take in lieu of Computer Science. The other available courses provide the minor with the variety the Committee was hoping for, with offerings from the following departments:

- Art Department: Computer Design I & II
- Communications/Journalism Department: Advertising Copy Writing, Feature Writing, Writing for Broadcast Media, and News Writing
- History and Philosophy Department: Ethical Issues and Computer Technology
- English Department: Technical/Professional Communication II
- Computer Science: Web Programming
- Speech/Theater Department: special topics course in either Communication in Training or Organizational Communication

To insure that students in the program would benefit from the variety of course offerings and not end up taking a facsimile of a participating department's existing minor program, we stipulated that, excepting internships, no more than two courses from any one department could count for minor credit. This allows students who might be interested in graphic design to focus more computer courses, for example, while allowing those interested in Communication to create a "different" minor with courses more suitable for them, selecting two courses from the Communications/Journalism Department and two from somewhere else. Thus, the program we envisioned and eventually put into place is more comprehensive and diverse than almost any program in the area. And though creating a multidisciplinary program was logistically our best option, it has provided us with some unforeseen pedagogical benefits as well.

The Multidisciplinary Edge

Financial considerations were one of those pragmatic realities that we faced when we set about creating the new minor. When developing the program, we were very mindful of finite resources on campus and other concerns that the Chancellor's Office might raise down the road, and so we worked to allay fears. For example, recent university-wide technological initiatives meant that regular technology and software updates kept departmental computer labs and equipment up to par; thus we did not have to ask for any start-up money. The Communications/Journalism and Art departments not only upgraded but also expanded their computer labs, which helped make space for students in the

minor. To insure that there would be available space in the participating departments without the burden of new sections, we proposed an initial program cap of thirty students; in fact, we did a seating-availability breakdown, course by course.

But spreading the burden of a new minor to various departments has sound pedagogical as well as resource benefits. Allowing only two courses from any one department to count for minor credit, for example, certainly eases potential department overload. But the benefits our graduates will get from a multidisciplinary approach, by exposing them to fields other than their own, is even more important. Few English majors will take a computer science course, the other core course in the minor, if they don't have to. Some classes in the Art and Communication/Journalism departments are closed to students outside of the major or minor, so without declaring this minor, students would not be able to take certain courses. Even if our university was large enough to have a technical writing minor track in the English department, these types of courses would not be available to them.

And exposure to a variety of courses in other fields is vital for technical communicators, since it is so often their job to serve as a liaison in the workplace. Whiteside's survey of recent technical communication graduates and their managers in the field is applicable. While there were some differences between what students perceive they need and what managers wish they had (like learning computer software and languages), there was strong agreement that students need more preparation in the following four areas: business operations, project management, problem-solving skills, and scientific and technical knowledge (313). It is our hope that students get some preparation in these areas during the time they are in the minor, working as they will in different departments. Writing students with a knowledge of business systems, which they can receive in our minor, will be able to understand more completely the role of technical communicators in the workplace, a need that many managers in Whiteside's survey noted. In addition, we saw the opportunity to expand our students' writing, judgment, and speaking skills by including courses such as advertising copy writing, ethical issues and computer technology, and topics in organizational communication. This range of skills is not often emphasized in technical programs, yet it reflects a broader preparation that is very applicable in the professional workplace.

Another example of the unforeseen benefits of the multidisciplinary minor concerns the directorship of the minor. Because the program is not housed in any one department, the potential burden of directorship will not be limited to one department, where course-release for the director might cause hardship. But this has an additional benefit of reminding the students (and the university) of the true multidisciplinary nature of the minor. Though the English Depart-

ment was one of the departments that spearheaded the proposal, we did not have the intention or the desire for it to be particularly our minor. There is question as to whether even a "regular" technical writing or communication program should be housed in the English Departments of universities, as MacNealy and Heaton describe in "Can this Marriage be Saved?" Their survey questions where the right home for such programs is, based on the difficulties that some technical communication faculty members have in English departments, where they get neither respect nor support from their colleagues. One of the solutions these authors propose is to make the program interdisciplinary, a choice "which would seem to suit a large group of respondents in our survey" (58). Thus, while a revolving directorship serves the practical function of lessening possible strain on departments, it also insures the long-term interdisciplinary character and ownership of the program.

Our proposal for the interdisciplinary Technical/Professional Communications Minor passed university review in Fall 2001. However, it sat unresponded to for a year and a half in our State System's Chancellor's office. When it was finally readdressed, we took the opportunity to update the information in it and expand on our vision of its apparatus. Finally, in the Spring of 2003, we were given approval to begin implementing and advertising the minor.

The next section, focusing specifically on revisions to our original proposal, describes the overall rationale for creating a totally new professional communications minor. It discusses the strategies we used to support our claim for the need for this type of program, through analyzing both other colleges' programs and student need, and our plan for the program's assessment.

PROGRAM RATIONALE

In our original proposal from the Fall of 1999, we completed a survey of area colleges (within a one hundred mile radius) to see what kinds of courses or programs in technical communication they had. One of our concerns was that after two years, our rationale for the program's importance and the area's need for it was a little outdated. We set out to prove our minor was now even more in demand.

Showing Need for the Program

In updating our proposal, we expanded our hunt for technical communication programs to all schools in Pennsylvania and in the Baltimore area. We discovered that several area colleges were now offering either tracks within a major or an actual degree in Technical, Professional, or Business Writing, a fact that

we found both welcome and alarming. On the one hand, the increase in technical communication programs implied a need for graduates of such programs in the workforce and lent support to our assertions; on the other hand, it meant that we needed to get our own program going, so as to not get left behind.

But we were able to draw two other conclusions from our survey that were more satisfying. First, while a number of State System schools have similar tracks or minors, none are located in South Central Pennsylvania. Thus, within our own system of universities, this minor would fill an area need. And second, while a few schools had an interdisciplinary focus to their tracks, our range of multi-departmental offerings made our program unique. This could potentially draw students to our school who might have otherwise attended a different one in the system.

Another way we showed the importance of our program was to relate the growth of the technical communications field to our Chancellor's Office in a meaningful way. We knew that jobs in the field were on the rise; we weren't sure they knew. So we passed on the fact that the Bureau of Labor Statistics anticipates that opportunities for technical writers are excellent: "Demand for technical writers and writers with expertise in specialty areas, such as law, medicine, or economics, is expected to increase because of the continuing expansion of scientific and technical information and the need to communicate it to others" (Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Outlook).

To give this data a local slant, we pointed out the increased enrollment in area chapters of the Society for Technical Communicators (STC), a nonprofit group dedicated to highlighting the work of technical communicators and the largest of its kind. Even more exciting was that a whole new chapter of the STC centered in the Harrisburg area, the Susquehanna Valley chapter, had been created in 2000. Like in most chapters, members include both professionals in academia and professionals out in the field. Its thriving status speaks to the large presence of technical communicators in our area and their desire to participate meaningfully in their careers and in their community. We plan to have at least one member of our Advisory Committee members (see section IV) join this chapter, helping foster connections between the university and area companies.

We also highlighted the excellent salary opportunities in the technical communications field, based on the survey of national salaries that STC performs every year. By comparing the salaries for 2000 to those in 2003, we were able to show that salaries were not only highly competitive but that they continued to rise. We also noted STC's assertion that there existed a very small difference in pay between men and women—women can earn 97% of their male counterparts. Judith Glick-Smith, the 2002-2003 past president of STC, writes that "this smaller 'gender gap' points to financial opportunities for

women in the growing field of technical communication" ("Salary Survey"). This fact is significant because one of the things the Chancellor's office wanted to see was how the minor would attract women, minority students, and non-traditional students. We were proud that we could provide such a telling statistic.

Lastly, we turned that knowledge into a more personal recommendation, interviewing Shippensburg's Director of the Career Development Program, Dan Hylton. He reiterated for the Chancellor's Office what our research showed:

> For the past several years, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has published research indicating that communication skills top the "Perfect Candidate" list of desired qualities in candidates being interviewed for entry level professional positions. In particular, technical writing and computer literacy are highly sought in new hires. […] From our campus and job fair feedback to national trends and research, we would strongly support the implementation of a technical/ professional communications minor at Shippensburg University.

Having researched the need for a program like the one we envisioned in the area and in our own university, we felt confident that the new minor would succeed.

Attracting Students to the Minor

Another item the Vice-Chancellor wanted to see was how we would attract students to the program, especially minority students, nontraditional students, and undeclared students. We contacted our Dean of Admissions and our Dean of Undeclared Students to see what they thought. Both were highly supportive, recognizing that the combination of computer and business skills with writing and communication skills created a highly desirable program of study. Joseph Cretella, Director of Admissions, agreed that prospective students might be attracted to the minor, something we had hoped would be the case: that its uniqueness might actually draw students to Shippensburg instead of to another college in the State System. He writes:

> I do believe the combination of technical writing and computer skills could be the key to elevating the interest in the program. We get a ton of interest in computer design programs. Instead of computer graphics with a huge

> amount of math and programming, your proposal could be an alternative, which would fine tune their writing skills supported by the computer.

Dr. Marian Schultz, Dean of SU Academic Programs and Services, who works with both undeclared majors and minority students, was very enthusiastic. In discussing the minor's appeal to students who enter the university undeclared, she said:

> Philosophically, we encourage undeclared students to see their college degree more broadly and to select academic programs and experiences that will help them develop lifelong skills that are transferable to many occupations. Primary among these are good oral and written communication skills, as well as technical proficiency with various computer programs and applications. [. . .] The proposed Technical/Professional Communications Minor, which helps students develop these skills [. . .] will provide them with a competitive edge in the work place.

She also thought the program would be attractive to students of color, many of whom are enrolled in business programs, as undeclared, and in communications majors. She writes, "The Technical/Professional Communications Minor will provide our students of color with the opportunity to enhance their educational experience and to increase their employability by helping them to develop the communication skills employers are looking for." As the minor grows, the director will make a strong effort to meet with leaders of programs like Ethnic Studies, Multicultural Student Affairs, and Women's Studies to discuss ways to best attract a diverse student population to this minor.

Lastly, in keeping with other minors on campus, the program has no grade-point average requirements, so that any student who is attracted to the minor can take it. While it might be tempting to use the popularity of this minor to set minimum entrance requirements and attract stronger students, to do so could box out some students who might particularly benefit from the professional knowledge and skills afforded by this program, in particular these non-traditional or under-prepared populations.

When the minor was approved, we sent our promotional flier to all academic advisors prior to scheduling, and Prof. Hathaway visited with department chairs at our College Council meetings. We also put an article in our student newspaper and in the undeclared majors' newsletter to let students know that the new minor had arrived.

Assessment Tools

A final concern of the Provost and Chancellor was our assessment strategy. Our original proposal did not outline an assessment plan in any detail; when we went about revising it, therefore, we took more time thinking about what goals we wanted to accomplish with the minor and how we might design an assessment strategy to meet those goals.

In our case, we had an additional difficulty in trying to develop an assessment plan for a program that hadn't even been implemented yet. But we knew that a well-thought out assessment plan was invaluable for meeting our program's goals. As Jo Allen suggests, assessment can be "powerfully effective for planning, designing, and promoting distinctive programs and then recruiting desirable students and faculty"(93). Further, we agreed with our Provost that a solid assessment plan was especially vital for an interdisciplinary minor, which lacked the curricular structures found in single-major programs.

But first, we needed to clarify what we wanted our assessment to do. Jo Allen echoes the types of questions we were asking ourselves: what do we want to accomplish with the assessment, and how will the information we receive from the assessment be used (98)? The committee had a clear sense that it wanted to focus on student-outcomes assessment, looking at what students learned from being in the minor. We thus developed goals and objectives of the assessment plan:

- To measure student learning and skills as appropriate for professional and post-graduate educational opportunities
- To review student attitudes and feedback about strengths and weaknesses of the program experience
- To solicit program alumni feedback
- To review appropriate design and effectiveness of constituent courses
- Based on the above, to make periodic program changes as deemed appropriate

Similarly, we needed to better clarify how our program assessment would benefit from the evaluation criteria we had decided upon. We had briefly listed some evaluation tools in our initial proposal—course evaluations, student portfolios, exit interviews, and alumni surveys—but we hadn't really thought about what we were looking for with all this information. Thus, when we went back to flesh out our proposal, we began with some goal statements: what did we want the students to know when they completed the minor? What skills did we deem most important?

We outlined four basic skills we wanted out students to graduate with:

- Shows facility with appropriate computer applications
- Has knowledge of and can apply the conventions of professional writing
- Presents material in an organized, clear fashion
- Demonstrates critical thinking appropriate for professional tasks

These are clearly broad, broader than what is listed in most programs' skills assessment. But with such a range of courses in the minor, and the various combinations of courses that each student could take, we felt it necessary to think as broadly as possible. Nonetheless, these items can be used by each department or course instructor as meaningful indicies of student growth and preparation.

From there we felt we had a better sense of how the tools we would use to measure these skills would help us monitor the program and evaluate its effectiveness, based on a student-outcomes assessment. These tools consist of a portfolio system, samples of which would be reviewed every other year, and both an exit questionnaire, taken by students in non-core courses, and an Alumni questionnaire, surveying graduates two and five years after their graduations.

Portfolios form the basis of our assessment, as they serve so many vital functions: they provide us with a body of work from both core and elective courses; they provide a way to sample the actual work students are doing, and they give students some control over the work by which they choose to be evaluated (though when we use the portfolios for assessment purposes the students' names will not be provided). Since having experience with appropriate computer applications is one of our skill outcomes, in addition to the traditional writing skills, we want to collect both electronic and written projects for the portfolio. Each portfolio will contain work from both of the core courses, Tech Writing I and either CMP 102 or BUS 141, and then two additional projects from other courses, one of which must be 300-400 level or an internship.

Figure 1 shows an edited copy of the assessment rating form (on the actual form, all courses are listed), which clearly lists our goals for the students and the rating scale. Faculty in pertinent courses will make anonymous numbered, dated copies of designated minor students' projects and turn them in each semester to the program director.

We also plan on administering two sets of questionnaires, separate from the university's standard course evaluations. Both the Exit and Alumni questionnaires will be written and will use the same numerical scale as the portfolios. The categories we plan to cover include: the program overall, the students' individual courses, and the students' own assessment of their professional knowledge and

skills. For the Alumni questionnaire, we will add a place where the students can update us on any professional or post-graduate education. These questionnaires are currently being developed, as we graduate our first batch of students who have completed the minor this December.

Student Year _____ Student No._____

	Shows facility with appropriate computer applications	Has knowledge of and can apply the conventions of tech writing	Presents materials in an organized, clear fashion	Demonstrates critical thinking appropriate for professional tasks
ENG 238				
CPS 103				
ART 217				
(list continues for all courses)				
Internship				

Scale: 1, excellent; 2, good; 3, adequate; 4, unsatisfactory

FIGURE 1. TECHNICAL/PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION MINOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT RATING FORM

After fine-tuning our assessment plan, we feel that we have a good blueprint to help us begin to evaluate our program and how the minor will contribute to our students' career possibilities. The next section discusses the program's administration and its immediate success with the students, verifying the confidence we had about the program and its attractiveness to students from across the college.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Once approval to begin was in hand, we set about preparing to inaugurate the minor program. Several concerns faced us that had not been part of our original plan. First was the changed state of availability in participating

(more)

classes. The university had admitted record-size entering classes for two years running since 2001; overall enrollment, including increased transfers, was up several hundred. Some of the participating courses, such as Technical/Professional Writing I and Computer Design I, had experienced unforeseen demand and were turning some students away every semester. This meant that seniors and juniors were filling most if not all of the available seats and that some who would want to declare the minor might not have enough credit hours remaining to take it. In addition, we knew, anecdotally, that the word of pending T/PC Minor approval had already generated considerable student and faculty interest.

We decided to pursue two solutions: first, to make passing the core courses a prerequisite to declaring the minor, which would require students seriously interested in the minor to establish their eligibility; and second, to try making a number of summer sections available online, particularly those for the core courses. The College of Business and the English and Communications/Journalism departments took up the online invitation; in fact, the request from the minor program gave them the final nudge in a direction already being seriously considered. Thus, seven of the thirteen courses in the minor were offered this past summer, and five of those, including the two core courses, were offered online, making our capacity for enrollment in the minor potentially unlimited, without stretching existing resources.

Once we lined up our courses and had the online offerings arranged, we began advertising. In early October of 2003 we sent out our promotional flier to all faculty and academic departments. We also sent a flier and a note to all enrolled students who had already taken one or more of the core courses and who had sufficient credit hours remaining to undertake and finish the minor in time to graduate. Our efforts paid off, as we had expected. Advising for spring semester began mid-October of 2003, and as of mid-November, we already had thirteen students registered for the minor with additional students signing up daily for advising conferences. This substantial early response clearly indicates that our new minor will be a highly attractive offering to students from across the university.

Looking Ahead

To fully complete the goals we set out for ourselves in our proposal, we still need to finalize several tasks within the next year. One of the first items on our list is to create and convene our advisory board, composed of area professionals, faculty, and students. We plan to use this body to help us to evaluate and assess the program, but particularly, to help develop off-campus internship opportunities and aid in career planning. To that end, we have scheduled meetings

with the College of Business to discuss promoting the minor and assembling business professionals in the surrounding Carlisle-Harrisburg areas.

Our second major task is to begin initiating our assessment plan cycle. When we revised our proposal and included a detailed assessment strategy, we included a timetable for when those instruments would be used. All of the assessments will be performed by the Program Director in conjunction with the advisory board.

Below are the assessment instruments and our planned timetable for their implementation.

1. Portfolios

   Written and electronic student portfolios of key course projects:
   - one each from each of the two core courses;
   - two additional from other courses, one of which is 300-400 level or an internship.

   Portfolio folders, record sheets, and student consent forms:
   - to be set up, signed, and explained by program director when students sign up for minor;
   - to be shared with participating faculty.

   Completed portfolios to be reviewed:
   - starting third year of program;
   - every other fall, from a significant sample of program students completing requirements the previous two years

2. Exit Questionnaire

   Anonymous exit questionnaires:
   - one for each student completing requirements, in his or her last program semester;
   - to be distributed by professor in all non-core courses near the conclusion of each semester.

   Exit questionnaires to be reviewed:
   - starting third year of program;
   - every other fall.

3. Alumni Questionnaire/Survey

   Periodic alumni questionnaires:
   - one for each program alumna/alumnus of a given year;
   - to be mailed on the second and fifth anniversary of SU graduation;
   - Second anniversary mailings in spring of even years;
   - Fifth year anniversary mailings in spring of odd years, by program director.

   Alumni questionnaires to be reviewed:

- starting fifth year of program;
- every other fall.

4. Syllabi Review

All participating courses' syllabi/descriptions for the most recent year to be reviewed:

- starting third year of the program;
- every other spring.

We also needed to establish our program's publications, a newsletter and a website in support of the program. The website was completed this past fall, as was an informational brochure to be placed in the admissions office. We hope that either a graduate assistant or an intern can be regularly appointed to help with a newsletter and other program maintenance. In addition, we want to begin implementing several other services in support of the minor. First, we plan on instituting annual job fairs and resume/professional portfolio workshops. We also want to continue to improve our marketing of the minor to incoming and prospective students by promoting the minor during freshman orientation and by holding open houses.

Lastly, we will begin reviewing other courses for possible inclusion in the minor. We initially developed the minor's course offerings based on the strengths that our faculty had and by choosing classes that were already available. We foresee that a number of departments will wish to contribute courses to the minor or to increase the number of courses they currently supply. Also, if demand for the program continues to rise, it is possible, based on exit and alumni questionnaires, that new courses can be created to fill certain gaps or student desires. This will continue to provide our students with the interdisciplinary focus we want the program to supply.

CONCLUSION

To meet increasing student interest in technical communication opportunities, faculty from a number of disciplines met and developed a unique multidisciplinary program, bringing together a variety of courses from across the college curriculum and organizing them into a flexible and substantive minor. The Technical/Professional Communications Minor will allow participating departments to better integrate shared expertise and to better utilize existing resources, with a minimum of additional resource needs. Most importantly, the skills and knowledge available in this program will offer a synthesis of academic and professional preparation that truly reflects the liberal arts core of Shippens-

burg University. We are particularly proud of our ability to integrate, rather than segregate, professional skills and traditional higher-education skills, and meet in the best way possible the whole of the university's mission.

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