ABC

Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States
2023 Refereed Proceedings
March 9-12, 2023
Houston, TX

Lindsay C. Clark, *President*
Ashley Hall, *President-Elect and Program Chair*
Matari Jones Gunter, *Secretary/Treasurer*
Ashton Mouton, *Historian*
Leslie Ramos Salazar, *Past President*

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Editor's Note

Welcome to this meeting of the Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States! This is a very special year as we celebrate 50 years of association with the Federation of Business Disciplines. Thanks to the planners, program chairs, reviewers, presenters, and others who made this program possible. A special thanks to Ashley Hall as the Program Chair of ABC-SWUS for assembling the program you will experience over the next few days. I am certain that everyone connected to business communication, whether as an instructor, researcher, or practitioner, will find interesting topics discussed at this conference.

The program this year includes 27 presentations by authors representing institutions across the United States and around the world. Included in the proceedings are one full paper and 26 presentation abstracts. We would like to thank the following people for helping review proposals and papers: Lindsay Clark (Sam Houston State University), Matari Gunter (Texas State University), Ashton Mouton (Sam Houston State University), Lorelei Ortiz (St. Edwards University), Leslie Ramos-Salazar (West Texas A&M University), Kayla Sapkota (Arkansas State University at Beebe), Lucia Sigmar (Stephen F. Austin State University), Kristen Waddell (Stephen F. Austin State University), and Carol Wright (Stephen F. Austin State University).

Completed papers that are submitted for the program are considered for the Distinguished Paper Award. This year's award is presented to Carol S. Wright and Lucia Sigmar of Stephen F. Austin State University the paper entitled "Undergraduate Business Majors' Perceptions of Skills Acquired During College." The paper will be presented at 8:30am on Thursday, March 9. Each year the association awards the FBD Outstanding Educator award in recognition of exemplary teaching. This year, we congratulate N. Lamar Reinsch of Georgetown University as the recipient of this award.

In these proceedings, you will also find information on previous program chairpersons, award recipients, and recipients of the outstanding research and outstanding teacher awards.

Please make plans to join us next year for the conference. We will meet from April 10-13, 2024 at Moody Gardens in Galveston, TX.

We hope you enjoy your time at the conference reconnecting with colleagues and friends!

Seth Frei
Editor

Future International, National and Regional Meetings

2023 ABC International Conference
October 25-28, 2023
Denver, Colorado

2024 ABC Western Conference
March 4-10
Location TBD

2024 ABC-KABC Conference
June 18-21, 2024
Seoul, South Korea

For more information, visit:
https://www.businesscommunication.org/page/conferences

Program and Paper Reviewers

Lindsay Clark (Sam Houston State University)
Seth Frei (Texas State University)
Matari Gunter (Texas State University)
Ashton Mouton (Sam Houston State University)
Lorelei Ortiz (St. Edwards University)
Leslie Ramos-Salazar (West Texas A&M University)
Kayla Sapkota (Arkansas State University at Beebe)
Lucia Sigmar (Stephen F. Austin State University)
Kristen Waddell (Stephen F. Austin State University)
Carol Wright (Stephen F. Austin State University)

ABC-SWUS Program Chairpersons 1973 - Present

2022-2023	Ashley Hall		1994-1995	Roger N. Conaway
2021-2022	Lindsay C. Clark		1993-1994	Donna W. Luse
2020-2021	Leslie Ramos Salazar		1992-1993	F. Stanford Wayne
			1991-1992	Beverly H. Nelson
2019-2020	Kayla Sapkota		1990-1991	Marian Crawford
2018-2019	Carol S. Wright			
2017-2018	Kelly A. Grant		1989-1990	Marlin C. Young
2016-2017	Laura Lott Valenti		1988-1989	Sallye Benoit
2015-2016	Susan Evans Jennings		1987-1988	Tom Means
			1986-1987	Lamar N. Reinsch, Jr.
2014-2015	Kathryn S. O'Neill		1985-1986	Sara Hart
2013-2014	Traci L. Austin			
2012-2013	Randall L. Waller		1984-1985	Betty S. Johnson
2011-2012	Lucia Sigmar		1983-1984	Larry R. Smeltzer
2010-2011	Margaret Kilcoyne		1982-1983	Daniel Cochran
			1981-1982	Nancy Darsey
2009-2010	Faridah Awang		1980-1981	John M. Penrose
2008-2009	Marcel Robles			
2007-2008	Ann Wilson		1979-1980	R. Lynn Johnson
2006-2007	Carolyn Ashe		1978-1979	Raymond V. Lesikar
2005-2006	Harold A. Hurry		1977-1978	Jack D. Eure
			1976-1977	Phil Lewis
2004-2005	Lana W. Carnes		1975-1976	Dale Level
2003-2004	Marsha L. Bayless			
2002-2003	Betty A. Kleen		1974-1975	Bette Anne Stead
2001-2002	William Sharbrough		1973-1974	Sam J. Bruno
2000-2001	Carol Lehman			
1999-2000	William P. Galle, Jr.			
1998-1999	Anita Bednar			
1997-1998	Timothy W. Clipson			
1996-1997	Debbie D. Dufrene			
1995-1996	William J. Wardrope			

CALL FOR PAPERS
Federation of Business Disciplines
Association for Business Communication Southwestern U.S.
Hyatt Regency Houston * Houston, TX
March 8 - March 11, 2023

Please submit a proposal or paper related to business communication topics for presentation at the 2023 ABC-SWUS Conference in Houston, Texas. Research papers, position papers, or case studies related to business communication topics in the following areas are encouraged:

Communication Technology	Technology and Education
Innovative Instructional Methods	Business Education Issues
International Business Communication	Paradigm Shifts in Communication
Training and Development/Consulting	Interpersonal Communication
Nonverbal Communication	Executive/Managerial Communication
Legal and Ethical Communication Issues	Organizational Communication

- Papers or proposals should include a statement of the problem or purpose, methodology section (if applicable), findings (as available), a summary, implications for education and/or business, and a bibliography.

- If you are submitting a proposal only, it should contain **750 to 1,500 words** and must be submitted on the ABC website. Click the link for the 2023 ABC-SWUS Conference or use the following direct link: https://www.businesscommunication.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1411

- If you are submitting a completed paper, please submit your proposal online as indicated above. Then submit the completed paper HERE as a Microsoft Word document by **October 1, 2022**

- Personal and institutional identification should be removed from the body of the paper. Identify yourself and your institution only on the cover page. Submissions will be anonymously reviewed.

- A cover page is required with the title of the paper and identifying information for each author: name, institutional affiliation, address, phone, and e-mail address. For your research to be considered for the Richard D. Irwin Distinguished Paper Award, you must submit a completed paper rather than a proposal by the submission deadline, **October 1, 2022**.

- Submitted papers should not have been previously presented or published, nor should they be under consideration or accepted for presentation elsewhere.

> **FBD Statement of Academic Integrity**
> Your paper should not have been previously published or previously presented at FBD.
> Please indicate to the Program Chair if your paper is currently under submission to another FBD association. If your paper is later accepted by another FBD association, it is your responsibility to notify the appropriate Program Chairs.

- Upon receiving notice of acceptance, all authors and co-authors are expected to **pre-register for ABC-SWUS and FBD** at http://www.fbdonline.org.

Submission Deadline: Papers and proposals must be received by October 1, 2022.

Proceedings Deadline: Accepted papers must be received by January 6, 2023.

For information, contact Dr. Ashley Hall, Program Chair, via e-mail at writetodrh@gmail.com

FBD Outstanding Educator Awards

Past award winners are:

2023   N. Lamar Reinsch, *Georgetown University*
2022   Lindsay C. Clark, *Sam Houston State University*
2020   Laura Valenti, *Nicholls State University*
2019   Traci L. Austin, *Sam Houston State University*
2018   Judith L. Biss (posthumously), *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2017   Susan E. Jennings, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2016   Tim Clipson, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2015   Lucia Sigmar, *Sam Houston State University*
2014   Margaret S. Kilcoyne, *Northwestern State University*
2013   S. Ann Wilson, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2012   Marcel M. Robles, *Eastern Kentucky University*
2011   Harold A. Hurry, *Sam Houston State University*
2010   Geraldine E. Hynes, *Sam Houston State University*
2009   Roger N. Conaway, *Tecnológico de Monterrey, campus San Luis Potosí*
2008   Bobbye J. Davis, *Southeastern Louisiana University*
2007   Betty A. Kleen, *Nicholls State University*
2006   William Wardrope, *University of Central Oklahoma*
2005   Betty S. Johnson, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2004   Marsha L. Bayless, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2003   Lillian H. Chaney, *University of Memphis*
2002   Debbie DuFrene, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2001   Anita Bednar, *University of Central Oklahoma*

Outstanding Researcher and Teacher Awards

These awards were developed and first awarded in 1992 to recognize the accomplishments of the region's members. Nominated candidates are evaluated by a panel of previous award winners. No awards were given in 2001 or 2007. The association began alternating the awards every other year in 2000 between researcher and teacher. In 2011 the Outstanding Teacher Award was renamed the Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award in honor and memory of his contributions to the ABC-SWUS organization. In 2018 the Outstanding Researcher Award was renamed the Raymond V. Lesiker Outstanding Research Award. The recipients below each received a plaque and award of $100 (the award was changed to $200 in 2008):

2023 Kayla Sapkota, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2022 Carol S. Wright, Raymond V. Lesiker Outstanding Researcher Award

2021 Marsha Bayless, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2020 Ashley Hall, Raymond V. Lesiker Outstanding Researcher Award

2019 Lindsay Clark, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2018 Danica Schieber, Raymond V. Lesikar Outstanding Researcher Award

2017 Judith L. Biss (posthumously), Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2016 Geraldine Hynes, Outstanding Researcher Award

2015 Margaret Kilcoyne, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2014 Lucia Sigmar, Outstanding Researcher Award

2013 Brenda Hanson, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2012 Susan Evans Jennings, Outstanding Researcher Award

2011 S. Ann Wilson, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2010 Margaret Kilcoyne, Outstanding Researcher Award

2009 Harold Hurry, Outstanding Teacher Award

2008 Roger N. Conaway, Outstanding Researcher Award

2008 Geraldine E. Hynes, Outstanding Teacher Award

2006 Janna P. Vice, Outstanding Researcher Award

2005 Bobbye Davis, Outstanding Teacher Award

2004 William Wardrope, Outstanding Researcher Award

2003 Marcel Robles, Outstanding Teacher Award

2002 Lillian H. Chaney, Outstanding Researcher Award

2002 Jeré Littlejohn, Outstanding Teacher Award

2000 William Sharbrough, Outstanding Researcher Award

1999 William Wardrope, Outstanding Teacher Award

1998 Betty Kleen, Outstanding Researcher Award

1998 Robert Olney, Outstanding Teacher Award

1997 Al Williams, Outstanding Teacher Award

1996 Betty S. Johnson, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Marsha L. Bayless, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Anita Bednar, Outstanding Teacher Award

1994 Nelda Spinks, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 Timothy W. Clipson, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 F. Stanford Wayne, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Debbie D. DuFrene, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Beverly H. Nelson, Outstanding Teacher Award

ABC-SWUS Distinguished Paper Award Recipients[1]

2023   Carol S. Wright and Lucia Sigmar
        Undergraduate Business Majors' Perceptions of Skills Acquired During College

2022   N. L. Reinsch, Jr.
        Giving Values a Voice in the Business Communication Classroom

2021   Laura Lott Valenti and Stavros Sindakis
        *A Qualitative Analysis of Top Performing Franchise Brands' Email Communication
        Used in the Franchise Sales Process*

2020   Ashley Hall, Carol S. Wright, and Amanda Smith
        Augmented Reality in Business Communication Classes

2019   Traci L. Austin, Lindsay L. Clark, and Lucia S. Sigmar
        Just Get to the Point: Persuasive Strategies for the iGeneration

2018   N. Lamar Reinsch and Vicki Gates
        *Communication Strategies for Human Resource Managers and Other Counselors:
        Extensions and Applications of Equity Theory*

2017   Jon M. Croghan and Tammy L. Croghan
        *Improving Performance Evaluations: The Role of Intrapersonal Communication,
        Message Strategy, and Age*

2016   Melissa A. Barrett and Geraldine E. Hynes
        The Little Creamery that Could: Weathering a Crisis and Maintaining Brand Loyalty

2015   Mark Leonard, Marsha Bayless, and Timothy Clipson
        *Media Selection in Managerial Communication: Exploring the Relationship between
        Media Preference, Personality, and Communication Aptitude*

2014   Kathryn S. O'Neill and Gary L. May
        Using Business Cases to Foster Critical Thinking

2012   En Mao, Laura Lott Valenti, and Marilyn Macik-Frey
        *Status Update – "We've Got a Problem" – Leadership Crisis Communication in the Age
        of Social Media*

2011   Betty A. Kleen and Shari Lawrence
        Student Cheating: Current Faculty Perceptions

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[1] Formally called the Irwin/McGraw Hill Distinguished Paper Award

Association For Business Communication
Southwestern United States

March 9, 2023 (Thursday)

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Window Box

Joint Breakfast with ABIS and ABC-SW

All ABC-SW and ABIS presenters and members are invited to enjoy a delicious breakfast. ABC-SW or ABIS Association Name Badge Required for Entry.

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Joint Session with ABIS & ABC-SW	Window Box

Joint Session ABIS and ABC-SW Distinguished Paper Presentations

Co-Session Chairs:
Ashley Hall, Stephen F. Austin State University
Jason Powell, Northwestern State University

ABC-SWUS Distinguished Paper: *Undergraduate Business Majors' Perceptions of Skills Acquired During College*
Carol S. Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University
Lucia Sigmar, Stephen F. Austin State University

ABIS Distinguished Paper: *Assessing Sentiment of the Top 10 Tech Trends that Will Shape the Next Decade: A Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Posts*
Benjamin Richardson, Brigham Young University

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Market Place

Coffee Break

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	Arboretum 5

Teaching Business Communication

Less Is More: Communicating with Students in an Online Learning Environment
Yong-Kang Wei, University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley

"I'm Your Host!:" Podcasting to Build Business Communication Skills
Ashton Mouton, Sam Houston State University
Lindsay C. Clark, Sam Houston State University
Danica L. Schieber, Sam Houston State University
Kevin Kryston, Sam Houston State University

11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.	**Lunch on your own**

ABC–SW Executive Board Meeting and Luncheon (By Invitation Only)

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Arboretum 5

Enhancing the Business Communication Curriculum

Integrating Transformative Digital Oral Communication Technology into Professional Communication Curricula to Meet ABET-mandated Student Learning Objectives
Kenneth Robert Price, Texas A&M University – Kingsville

Managerial Communication Undergrad or Graduate Research/Report Project: From Proposal to Report to Presentation to Rubric
Marcel M. Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

Active Grading: Specifications Grading for Business Communication Courses
Traci Austin, Sam Houston State University

Electronic Eloquence: Some Advice for Teaching the On-line Presentation
Jeanine Warisse Turner, Georgetown University
N. Lamar Reinsch, Georgetown University

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Market Place

Coffee Break

Attend poster sessions. Please make plans to visit the exhibits for information on the latest books and newest educational technologies. Let our exhibitors know how much we appreciate their presence and continued support!

Great Door Prize Drawings take place at 3:15 p.m. in the Exhibit Area. Must be present to win.

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Arboretum 5

Specialized Business Communication

Practical Considerations in International Business Communication (Did Not Present)
Marianna Richardson, Brigham Young University

The Proposal for the Study of the Military Veteran Transition, Through the Lens of Business Communication, to Improve the Civilian Job Search Experience
Kevin Sanford, Los Angeles Valley College
Jeffrey Archibald, West Los Angeles College
Geraldine E. Hynes, Sam Houston State University

Addressing Communication Apprehension among Autistic Professionals
Peter W. Cardon, University of Southern California

Resisting Ableism in Standardized Business Writing Courses through the Application of User-Experience Design Practices Informed by Disability Justice (Did Not Present)
Kristin Bennett, Sam Houston State University

Developing Intercultural Communication and Digital Literacy Competencies in the Technical Communication Classroom: An Analysis of Students' Experiences (Did Not Present)
Saveena Veeramoothoo, University of Houston-Downtown

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Market Place

Presidential Welcome Reception

You are invited to attend this FBD conference-wide social event. Visit with long-time friends and make new ones as you enjoy light appetizers and a cash bar. Stop by to relax and wind down from the day's conference activities before heading out for the evening. To enter the Exhibit Hall, all persons older than six years of age are required to wear their conference or guest badge. All badges can be obtained from the Registration area during their open hours.

Name Badge Required for Entry

March 10, 2023 (Friday)

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Arboretum 5

ABC-SW and ABIS Joint Breakfast

All ABC-SW and ABIS presenters and members are invited to enjoy a delicious breakfast
ABC-SW or ABIS Association Name Badge Required for Entry

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Arboretum 5

Teaching Business Communication

Enhancing the Instruction of Cross-Cultural Communication Through Business Diplomacy
Marla Mahar, Oklahoma State University
MaKenzie Norman, Oklahoma State University
Paul Sims, Oklahoma State University

Identifying Your Freak Factor: An Activity to Develop Students' Professional Brand
Ashly Bender Smith, Sam Houston State University

Business Communication in a "Fishbowl" Reflection: Increasing Active Learning and Course Effectiveness while Lowering the Mask of Disconnection
H. Steve Leslie, Arkansas State University

A New Frontier: Developing the Online Honors Course for Quality, Engagement, & Inclusivity
Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.		Market Place

Coffee Break

Attend poster sessions. Please make plans to visit the exhibits for information on the latest books and newest educational technologies. Let our exhibitors know how much we appreciate their presence and continued support!

Great Door Prize Drawings take place at 10:15 a.m. in the Exhibit Area. Must be present to win.

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	ABC Business Meeting	Arboretum 5

ABC-SW Business Meeting (all members welcome)

Lindsay C. Clark, Sam Houston State University

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	**Lunch on your own**	

Enjoy local cuisine in Houston!

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.		Arboretum 5

Business Communication in the Workplace

Developing an Instructional Unit on Organizational Culture: Utilizing Consulting Case Studies in the Classroom
John McGrath, Trinity University

Business Communication in a Virtual Workplace
Ashley Hall, Stephen F. Austin State University
Kristen Waddell, Stephen F. Austin State University

Communications and Controversy: A Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Posts
Benjamin Richardson, Brigham Young University
Degan Kettles, Brigham Young University

The Impact of Communication Medium on Apology Effectiveness
Kristen Wilson, Eastern Kentucky University

Communicating for Results (Did Not Present)
David Jon Olson, Liberty University

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Market Place

Coffee Break

Attend poster sessions. Please make plans to visit the exhibits for information on the latest books and newest educational technologies. Let our exhibitors know how much we appreciate their presence and continued support!

Great Door Prize Drawings take place at 3:15 p.m. in the Exhibit Area. Must be present to win.

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Choice Session	Arboretum 4

Business Communication: Past, Present, Future (Option I)

Pandemic Impact on Internships: How Effectively Did Business Interns Pivot to Meet the Moment?
Lorelei Amanda Ortiz, St. Edward's University

Exploring challenges to engage Corporate Communication students in a post-COVID-19 world at a minority serving institution with a large number of transfer and non-traditional students
Darius Benton, University of Houston-Downtown
Ivan Gan, University of Houston-Downtown
Natalia Matveeva, University of Houston-Downtown

The Business Communication Discipline: A content analysis of the top-ranked U.S. colleges of business websites
Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe
Leslie Ramos Salazar, West Texas A&M University

Celebrating 50 years of ABC-SWUS with FBD: The Past and Future of Business Communication
Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University
Marice Kelly Jackson, Stephen F. Austin State University

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Choice Session	Arboretum 5

ABC-SW & ABIS Joint Session – Innovative and Multidisciplinary Topics

Designing an Online Interpersonal Business Communication Course
Marcel M. Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

Incorporating Artificial Intelligence Sentiment Analysis into the Business Communication Curriculum
Jamie Keith Humphries, Stephen F. Austin State University
Lucia Sigmar, Stephen F. Austin State University

A Review of Recent Laws and Cases in the Crypto Asset Space
Mary Fair, Northwestern State University
Carmella Parker, Northwestern State University

Virtual Reality and the Communication Classroom
Trey Guinn, University of the Incarnate Word
Susanna Alford, University of the Incarnate Word

ABC-SWUS Distinguished Paper: Undergraduate Business Majors' Perceptions of Skills Acquired During College

Carol S. Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University
Lucia Sigmar, Stephen F. Austin State University

Introduction

Students learn a variety of skills while completing their business degrees. Each of these skills is important for all business graduates, and professional competency in all business disciplines is closely aligned with communication skills. In particular, the AACSB identifies writing and communication skills as a core competency (2018). Employers consistently and highly rate the ability to organize and develop ideas clearly and concisely along with the correct use of grammar, punctuation, and spelling in written communication (Kohn, 2015; Coffelt, et al. 2019).

While national initiatives have enabled more students than ever before to pursue higher education, only about a fourth of high school seniors have the ability to write well enough for college-level work, and improvement at the high school level is questionable due to the social and cultural forces that inform literacy (Jameson, 2007). These forces strongly influence the many ways in which populations use language, and may include cultural values and beliefs, social roles and personalities, the social history of place, our social institutions, and the impact on languages by other languages in a world connected by technology. It is not surprising then that over half of college freshmen are "unable to produce papers relatively free of language errors" and "analyzing…arguments and synthesizing information are also beyond the scope of most first-year students" (Intersegmental Committee, 2002, p. 4). With higher education costs on the rise, universities and colleges are becoming increasingly scrutinized for the "value" of their degree programs and are being held accountable not only to their accrediting agencies, but also

to state governments. However, the reality is that students' skills acquisition and mastery continue to be an issue for business educators and employers (Kowalewski & Halasz, 2019), despite the rigors of the AACSB accreditation processes.

For business schools, AACSB accreditation is the gold standard for academic integrity and educational excellence (Thompson & Koys, 2012; Romero, 2008), and passing this exacting educational process can position colleges of business among the best worldwide. In addition, the demands of the AACSB certification process enable schools to improve their ability to compete with assurances of quality instruction, programs, and scholarship (Thompson & Koys, 2010). Between AACSB maintenance visits, stakeholders within the college enact assessment processes, including program and curricular assessment, evaluation, and student learning outcomes. These findings are then used to implement a continuous improvement cycle.

In 2003, the AACSB's Eligibility and Procedures and Standards for Business Accreditation shifted its primary focus from assessing "what teachers taught to what students learned" (Martell, 2007, p.189), and the Assurance of Learning standards reflected this major change. Previous indirect measures (student/employer surveys) were replaced with more direct measures that required students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge (Martell & Calderon, 2005). Since that mandate, many AACSB -accredited institutions, the business college in this study among them, have ascertained the degree of skills-based learning that students acquired based on these direct assessment measures (AACSB, 2018). Writing instructors were charged with evaluating the artifacts that students produced, and assignment-specific rubrics were provided to the students before and during the learning process. These rubrics specifically addressed the learning criteria and the performance levels for the assignment, and provided a

more objective means of evaluation. In this process, less attention was given to the students' perceptions of their own improvement.

Recently, business colleges have experienced a shift in the way business writing is typically taught and evaluated. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused higher education's urgent adaptation of an almost exclusive online environment. This change presented course delivery challenges to faculty and students alike. Students who preferred face-to-face courses were faced with learning specific skills online and in isolation from their academic environments, colleagues, and instructors. The ultimate effect of the pandemic on learning has yet to be realized.

Loosely based on a 2021 study published by Routon, et al, this study examines the self-rated skills of senior business students to determine how those skills may have changed since they entered college and were forced into an online course delivery system during their sophomore, junior and senior years and how the students self-assess their abilities. The study will review several categories of skills and will focus on communication skills, specifically. Renewed opportunities for indirect skills assessment (self-assessment) may provide students with greater self-awareness and more accurate perceptions of their skill level and performance on specific tasks (Granz & Gruber, 2014), especially in an online context.

Literature Review

Perhaps as a result of AACSB's shift to more direct assessment, research over the last ten years is extremely limited on examining student self-assessment of communication skills in the business disciplines, and rarely spans the business disciplines. One focus of recent research has been an examination of the student as a peer-reviewer of his or her own work (Rieber, 2006).

In their examination of the self-rated skills of business majors, Routon et al. (2021) also find a limited basis in the literature for self-efficacy and self-perceptions of business students when assessing their own writing ability. Although the traditional form of evaluating writing involves instructors grading papers and providing feedback to their students, nurturing the beliefs of students to evaluate their own writing is an important step in acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses in their work, and perhaps more importantly, may encourage students to take responsibility for their own skills acquisition (Pajares, 2003). This multi-faceted assessment approach is both relevant and realistic for educators who are teaching remote audiences.

Using two data sources, Routon et al. (2021) examined a data set of over 400,000 college students across the United States to assess students' self-evaluation. Their study noted that 41.9% of students rated themselves as above average in writing skills and 35.3% rated themselves as only average when compared to their peers. The study also found that non-business students generally ranked themselves higher on writing ability. Saenz and Barrera (2007) also report that college student rank themselves above average in writing ability 60.9% of the time.

Three main differences distinguish this study from that of Routon et al (2021). First the data set is significantly smaller. Second, this study focuses on business graduates at a regional university in the South, not institutions across the nation. Third, the data for this study is more current and representative of the pandemic protocols and possibly the impact of forced online courses on student skills acquisition. Our hypotheses for this study are as follows.

- Hypothesis 1. Business majors at a regional university in the South will report lower satisfaction with communication skills at graduation than those in Routon et al.'s 2021 nationwide study due to the predominance of first-generation students in a non-urban location.

- Hypothesis 2. Overall scores may be lower because students surveyed were sophomores when the college was forced to shut down and go online during the pandemic.

- Hypothesis 3. Communication skills scores may be higher because college seniors closer to graduation may be more confident about those skills at that time.

- Hypothesis 4. Students will rank their abilities in all categories as stronger since beginning college.

Methodology

This study was conducted at a regional comprehensive university in the South during the spring and summer terms. Using a convenience sample of students enrolled in a capstone class for the Bachelor of Business Administration Degree, students were asked to complete a survey about their opinions of their abilities in a variety of areas. Students enrolled in the face-to-face sections were provided a printed survey instrument during their assigned class time. For students who were absent, some instructors allowed the students to complete a link to the online survey. Students enrolled in the online sections of the course were provided a link to complete the survey using Qualtrics. Surveys completed on paper were entered into Qualtrics by the researchers to combine all responses. The survey questions are included in Appendix A. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the researchers' university.

A total of 266 students were enrolled in 11 sections of the course. Six sections were face-to-face; whereas the other five sections were online. Of the students enrolled in the class, all were given to opportunity to complete the survey, and 126 students completed the survey for a 47.4% response rate. For this paper, descriptive statistics are used to report the results.

Results

Responses from students enrolled in face-to-face sections were the majority of responses (64%) of responses. Eighty-seven percent were full-time, and 88.1% began taking college classes in

2017 or later. Students were young, with 69.9% aged 22 or younger, 19.9% being 23-25 years old, 4.8% being 26-30 years old, and 5.6% being over 30 years old. More males (53.2%) completed the survey, compared to 44.4% females. A small number (2.4%) did not indicate a gender.

Respondents represented most of the majors in the College of Business. The most represented majors included General Business (22.2%), Accounting (19.1%), and Marketing (18.3%). Students were confident in their abilities as they approached graduation. When asked how they would rank their ability in each category, students responded as shown in Table 1 below. The choice with the greatest number of responses is represented in bold.

Table 1 – Ranking of Abilities
Q: Compared to the Average Person Your Age, How Would You Rank Your Ability in Each Category:
Number of Respondents and percentage

Category	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Well Above Average
Academic Ability	-	49 (39.9%)	**65 (51.6%)**	12 (9.5%)
Communication Skills	3 (2.4%)	39 (31%)	**55 (43.7%)**	29 (23%)
Computer Skills	3 (2.4%)	54 (42.9%)	**56 (44.4%)**	13 (10.3%)
Teamwork Skills	2 (1.6%)	26 (20.6%)	**55 (43.7%)**	43 (34.1%)
Drive to Achieve	-	21 (16.7%)	51 (40.5%)	**54 (42.9%)**
Leadership Ability	1 (0.8%)	37 (29.4%)	**48 (38.1%)**	40 (31.8%)
Mathematical Ability	7 (5.6%)	**66 (52.4%)**	40 (31.8%)	13 (10.3%)
Public Speaking Ability	25 (19.9%)	**45 (35.7%)**	28 (22.2%)	28 (22.2%
Self-Confidence (Intellectual)	5 (4%)	**48 (38.1%)**	44 (34.9%)	29 (23%)
Self-Understanding	-	36 (28.6%)	**56 (44.4%)**	34 (27%)
Understanding of Others	-	37 (29.4%)	**59 (46.8%)**	30 (23.8%)
Writing Ability	8 (6.4%)	**58 (46%)**	42 (33.3%)	18 (14.3%)

Most of the students believed their abilities improved during their college experience. When asked how they felt they improved in different areas, students responded as shown in Table 2 below. The choice with the greatest number of responses is represented in bold.

Table 2 - Improvement
Q: Compared to When You First Started College, How Would You Rank Your Ability in Each
Category:
Number of Respondents and percentage

Category	Weaker	Unchanged	Stronger	Much Stronger
General Knowledge	3 (2.4%)	7 (5.6%)	**73 (57.9%)**	43 (34.1%)
Analytical/Problem-Solving Skills	2 (1.6%)	9 (7.1%)	**71 (56.4%)**	44 (34.9%)
Knowledge of Particular Discipline or Field	2 (1.6%)	6 (4.8%)	**71 (56.4%)**	47 (37.3%)
Communication Skills	3 (2.4%)	10 (7.9%)	**64 (50.8%)**	49 (38.9%)
Ability to Think Critically	2 (1.6%)	9 (7.1%)	**66 (52.4%)**	49 (38.9%)
Leadership Ability	3 (2.4%)	14 (11.1%)	**56 (44.4%)**	53 (42.1%)
Interpersonal Skills	3 (2.4%)	14 (11.1%)	**79 (62.7%)**	30 (23.8%)
Writing Skills	4 (3.2%)	22 (17.5%)	**73 (57.9%)**	27 (21.4%)
Public Speaking Skills	2 (1.6%)	17 (13.5%)	**67 (53.2%)**	40 (31.8%)
Mathematical Skills	3 (2.4%)	30 (23.8%)	**69 (54.8%)**	24 (19.1%)
Computer Skills	1 (0.8%)	11 (8.7%)	**78 (61.9%)**	36 (28.6%)
Teamwork Skills	2 (1.6%)	11 (8.7%)	**69 (54.8%)**	44 (34.9%)

Students were provided the opportunity to provide an open-ended response to further explain

their answers. A sample of these responses follows.

Some students commented about the activities that helped them to improve:

- Sure, I have grown so much in my college experience. [The University] truly pushed and
  encouraged my growth.

- I have done a lot of group work and multiple case study competitions to improve these
  skills.

- The overall experience that I've had here has made me a lot stronger in all categories due
  to the teachers & students that have helped me.

- [The University] has given me many opportunities for growth. Having more personal relationships with my teachers have helped me.

Students were concerned about how the COVID pandemic may have affected their learning:

- College helped me develop greatly, due to the pandemic. I feel my communication skills took a hit.

- My knowledge & understanding of the business field has improved but I believe it could have been stronger if COVID did not happen.

- Some students believed their skills were strengthened through activities outside the classroom:

- A lot of my communication, public speaking, leadership, and interpersonal skills development had to do with clubs and organizations I was involved in on campus that I both participated in and became a leader in.

- I think with the combination of taking learnings from work experience and knowledge from the university, i've [sic] grown a lot since i [sic] first started here at [The University].

- College has helped me change as a person a lot but I believe that being out in the real world working has helped me change as a person way more than college has so far.

One interesting comment provides good insight on student accountability:

"The professors at the business school gave me all the tools necessary to improve, it was up to me to utilize them. I know many students who chose not to, and as such, would likely respond negatively to this survey, without realizing that they need to hold themselves accountable."

To gain further insight into how students responded to the questions, they were also asked for ways to improve their business degree. Most of the comments fell into two main categories:

Students wanted more face-to-face interaction:

- Less online, more face-to-face courses.

- Online courses might consider some different thinking such as an hour per week Zoom session where students could interact "face-to face" with classmates and the instructor. It could be voluntary or be part of the class participation segment of the grade. This would allow open dialog, Q&A that others benefit from hearing, and allow students to feel more a part of the university.

- If some course [sic] could be in person instead of online

- More time in class, less on Zoom

Related to the desire for more interaction, students also seemed to want more practical experience:

- We spend a lot of money towards degrees that require certain classes to be taken only to end up using a small portion of that knowledge towards a future job. If there was a way a class could help us gain specific skill sets, that can be more applicable/ appealing to employers that would be great.

- Talking about real world applications and modern looks at the world of business meant much more to me and stuck with me far better than any vocab term or outdated flow chart.

- Working on more hands-on real-world examples instead of repetitive book examples.

- Offering courses that deal with real world business classes not just textbook

- More guest speakers

- Offering ways to do more internships during school

- More courses that include information about what we will actually encounter outside of school; less hypotheticals or maybe possibilities

Discussion and Implications

Based on a review of data on degrees awarded (Office of Institutional Research, n.d.), the respondents appear to be a representative sample of a typical College of Business major in 2021. Although fewer males completed the survey than would be standard (58.4%), the respondents who did not indicate a gender may account for the slight difference. General Business majors also seem over-represented in the sample; however, the principal majors in the College remain the same (General Business, Accounting, and Marketing).

When students compare themselves to others, they generally rank themselves above average in most categories. They are most confident in their ranking of their drive to achieve. No students indicated they were below average, and only 16.7% believed they were average. This high view may be that they feel more driven because they will graduate soon. Interestingly, 38.1% of students ranked themselves as only average, and 4% ranked themselves as below average in self-confidence. Other criteria that students ranked themselves as average include mathematical ability (52.4%), public speaking ability (35.7%), and writing ability (46%). In fact, public speaking ability received the highest percentage ranking (19.9%) as below average. The National Survey of Student Engagement (2019) for the university study also shows a similar trend of confidence. When reviewing the results of senior responses, students ranked

their higher-order learning ability in the ability to apply facts, theories, and methods four percentage points higher than other Texas public schools.

Overall communication skills were rated above average by only 23% of respondents. They rated these skills as above average (44.4%) and only average (31%). Three respondents (2.4%) felt they were below average compared to others in their age range. Oral and written communication seemed to rank lower, too. When asked about how their public-speaking skills compared to others, 19.9% felt they were below average, 35.7% were average, 22.2% were above average, and 22.2% were well above average. Self-ranking of writing ability showed similar responses: 6.4% felt they were below average, 46% were average, 33.3% were above average, and 14.3% were well above average. These results correspond with the findings of Routon et al. (2021) who noted that business students ranked themselves lower than non-business majors. Specifically, 7.2% felt they were below average, 38.9% were average, 41.5% were above average, and 12.7% were in the top 10%. However, these responses are lower than Saenz and Barrera (2007) who reported that 60.9% of all students reported higher than average writing ability.

When reviewing feedback on how students viewed their improvement during their college experience, communication scores were also lower. Although only 3.2% of students viewed their writing ability as weaker, it was the highest ranked ability in this category.

With these findings, Hypothesis 1 is not supported. More students in this study (46%) were average compared to 38.9%; however, fewer students (33.3%) were above average compared to 41.5%. There were slightly fewer (0.6%) more students in this study who indicated they were below average, and more students (1.6%) who believed they were well above average.

Although some student comments reflected concern over a loss of communication skills as a result of the pandemic, this does not appear to support Hypothesis 2; however, these same scores support Hypothesis 3 because responses indicate slightly higher rankings in their perceived abilities.

When asked how skills had improved since beginning college, students ranked themselves stronger in all categories. These results seem supported by selected student comments who believed the university provided the experience needed to improve in many categories. Categories that received a significant score for much stronger improvement include leadership ability (42.1%), ability to think critically (38.9%), and knowledge of a particular field or discipline (37.3%). Surprisingly, at least one student indicated their skills were weaker in each category. This finding supports Hypothesis 4 in that the majority of respondents believe their skills were stronger or much stronger in all categories. The student comments regarding the COVID pandemic's negative impact on their educational experience may explain those who felt they did not improve as they should.

Of particular interest to business communication instructors, written and oral communication skills seem to appear too frequently as skills that need improvement. Twenty-six students (20.6%) of students believed their writing skills were unchanged or weaker. Improving students' views of their writing abilities is important to career success. As noted by Routon et al. (2021), "one's perceptions of their own skills will affect their career goals and to what jobs they apply" (p. 351). If students feel their skills are lacking, they may not apply for positions that lead to greater advancement opportunities.

Study Limitations

Cognitive bias may have influenced student responses that indicated stronger writing skills or much stronger in all categories. For example, low performers may have judged themselves higher because they lack the skills needed to recognize their own incompetence in a possible manifestation of the Dunning Kruger Effect (Dunning, 2011). Hiemstra (2001) found that students may have more difficulty assessing their skills, perhaps due to unrealistic and high regard for their communication skills, and therefore seeing less need to improve those skills. In addition, in their study of undergraduate students (not necessarily business students), Simkin, et al (2012) found that most students are unaware of their own writing deficiencies.

Bandura's social cognitive theory (1989) may also be a factor in influencing student responses. Students' beliefs about self-efficacy may have resulted in thinking that was self-hindering (p. 1175), thus leading to students' perceptions that their communication skills were lower than expected.

Conclusions

The current data suggests that students' perceptions of their communication abilities appear lower than expected for students soon graduating with a BBA; even more concerning, as Routon, et al (2021) observed, this finding suggests that low self-perception may affect their career success. It is uncertain whether this viewpoint is a result of pandemic isolation, but selected student comments may indicate as such.

Since research on writing supports the idea that students' beliefs are an important predictor of their performance (Masele, 2013), instructors of business communication might consider incorporating assessment of the writing product, with feedback, <u>and</u> periodic student self-assessment of their own skills acquisition as a best practice. Having students reflect on what they have learned or the extent to which their level of awareness has increased as a result of the

learning experience (or in an experiential learning environment) is an effective and proven instructional method.

Reflection is well-established in educational learning theory and is a critical aspect of authenticity in learning (Herrington, 2012; Herrington, et al, 2010; Lombardi, 2007). Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) defined reflection as "those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation" (p. 19). Hatton and Smith further expanded the definition in 1995 as "deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement" (p.52). Recollecting a realistic and complex task, articulating its importance, applying the course content, analyzing the results, making judgements about those results, and projecting the ways in which they might be able to use this experience in the future are meaningful ways students can become stakeholders in their own learning.

In addition, if students do not perceive value in their skills acquisition during their college tenure, perhaps business programs need to be further scrutinized for training deficiencies (Kowalewski & Halasz, 2019) during AACSB program reviews and modified to increase skills acquisition outcomes for students' continued success beyond graduation.

Results from this study provide some insight into student perceptions, but more data should be collected to ensure reliability. The survey used in this study will be distributed again to collect additional business students' responses in the capstone class. When additional data is collected, an intensive review will be conducted that compares responses across the business disciplines and how self-perceived abilities vary within major. The additional data collected, along with student comments, may indicate ways to improve student skills.

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Appendix A

Business Senior Survey

What modality is your course?

   ◯ Face-to-face

   ◯ Online

   ◯ Hybrid or other

What year did you <u>first</u> enter college?

   ◯ 2021

   ◯ 2020

   ◯ 2019

   ◯ 2018

   ◯ 2017

   ◯ 2016

   ◯ Before 2016

What is your enrollment status?

   ◯ Full time student

   ◯ Part time student

What is your gender?

   ◯ Male

   ◯ Female

   ◯ Prefer not to say/Other

What is your age range?

- ○ 18 - 22 years
- ○ 23 - 25 years
- ○ 26 - 30 years
- ○ Over 30 years

What is your major?

- ○ Accounting
- ○ Business Communication & Corporate Education
- ○ Economics
- ○ Entrepreneurship
- ○ Finance
- ○ General Business
- ○ Human Resource Management
- ○ International Business
- ○ Management
- ○ Marketing
- ○ Sports Business
- ○ Other

Compared to the <u>average person your age</u>, how would you rank your ability in each of the following categories?

	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Well Above Average
Academic ability	○	○	○	○
Communication skills	○	○	○	○
Computer skills	○	○	○	○
Teamwork skills	○	○	○	○
Drive to achieve	○	○	○	○
Leadership ability	○	○	○	○
Mathematical ability	○	○	○	○
Public speaking ability	○	○	○	○
Self-confidence (intellectual)	○	○	○	○
Self-understanding	○	○	○	○
Understanding of others	○	○	○	○
Writing ability	○	○	○	○

Compared to <u>when you first started college</u>, how would you rank your ability in each of the following categories?

	Weaker	Unchanged	Stronger	Much stronger
General knowledge	○	○	○	○
Analytical and problem-solving skills	○	○	○	○
Knowledge of a particular discipline or field	○	○	○	○
Communication skills	○	○	○	○
Ability to think critically	○	○	○	○
Leadership ability	○	○	○	○
Interpersonal skills	○	○	○	○
Writing skills	○	○	○	○
Public speaking skills	○	○	○	○
Mathematical skills	○	○	○	○
Computer skills	○	○	○	○
Teamwork skills	○	○	○	○

Would you like to explain your responses to the above questions?

In what way do you feel your business degree can be improved?

What grade do you anticipate earning in this course (MGMT 4363)?

- ○ A
- ○ B
- ○ C
- ○ D
- ○ F

What grade do you remember earning in your basic business communication course (BUSI 2304/BCM 247)?

- ○ A
- ○ B
- ○ C
- ○ D
- ○ F

What grade do you remember earning in your freshman English courses? Provide an average of the two courses.

- ○ A
- ○ B
- ○ C
- ○ D
- ○ F

What is your current overall GPA?

○ 3.5 - 4.0

○ 3.0 - 3.49

○ 2.5 - 2.99

○ 2.0 - 2.49

○ Below 2.0

Less is More: Communication with Students in an Online Learning Environment

Yong-Kang Wei, University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley

Abstract

The wide-spread use of the Internet and Cyber communication may have already changed the cognition of modern-day humans in their way of processing and using information. As a result, we must adapt to this new cognitive trend, which can be translated into "less is more" when we post messages online or engage in written communications with students.

Description

Blackboard, an LMS (learning management system) solution, has been adopted by my university for online teaching over 10 years. Personally, I have an 8-year experience using Blackboard to teach Professional Communication courses virtually.

In my last-semester course evaluations, several students commented, noticeably, on the way of the instructor handling communications with the class on Blackboard. One student has this to say: "I always look forward to [his] announcements. They not only inform the student but educate them." Another student mentions that the instructor "gives detailed yet concise directions." Still another says that the instructor "overall demonstrated effective use of his communication skills (which should not be surprising for a technical communication professor, but still :))."

The students' comments may serve as proof, albeit indirectly, that the instructor knows how to communicate effectively in an online learning environment. The last student quoted appears to tell a bit more: that is, such effectiveness also has to do with the instructor's own training in professional communication. In the proposed presentation for the upcoming ABC-SWUS meeting in March 2023, I would like to share some of my own teaching experience, as well as knowledge and insights drawn from the current theories of professional communication, especially regarding Cyber communications. The presentation will be divided into three sections.

1) Less Is More

The wide-spread use of the Internet and Cyber communication may have already changed the cognition of modern-day humans in their way of processing and using information. As a result, the 21st-century college students are increasingly impatient with lengthy and complex written messages, demanding instead a "quick glimpse." As instructors, we must adapt to this new cognitive trend, which can be translated into "less is more" when we post messages online or engage in written communications with students.

2) Student Attitude

I have adopted a "student-attitude" teaching philosophy, a term borrowed from "You Attitude" in business communication. You Attitude stresses approaching communications from the reader's point of view, not from the writer's. In my class, it means understanding students' needs and situations and seeing things from their perspective. If the students demand, wittingly or

unwittingly, a quick glimpse, the instructor may have to take it as a "professional mandate" to meet that demand, if he or she really cares about their learning. In my case, I will have to constantly ask myself: Is this (message) clear to my students given their background? or how can I make it better without much verbiage? Often, I would go through a process of "document testing" to ensure a message to be posted will not be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

3) How to Do?

In the presentation, I will share some practical "how-to" tips, like style "commandments," which would help improve clarity by addressing the issue of wordiness in writing, among others and usability guidelines for Cyber communications, which could make it easier for the readers to access and process information. Some samples will also be shared in the presentation as a way to demonstrate how effectiveness can be achieved if we adopt a student-attitude and employ methods inspired from real-world Cyber communications.

"I'm Your Host!:" Podcasting to Build Business Communication Skills

Ashton Mouton, Sam Houston State University
Lindsay C. Clark, Sam Houston State University
Danica L. Schieber, Sam Houston State University
Kevin Kryston, Sam Houston State University

Abstract
This panel will discuss the benefits of implementing individual and team podcast assignments in business communication courses, both undergraduate and graduate designations. Podcasting assignments offer opportunities for instructors to implement new project and presentation formats for business communication instruction, and they also encourage students to develop writing, speaking, critical thinking, and teamwork skills.

Description
McArthur (2009) claims that our current college students are digital natives, eager to use a variety of media in both their personal and professional lives. As such, he argues, "Instructors must design activities that complement course subject matter and provide opportunities for students to engage with a variety of media" (p. 15). Podcast assignments are one method by which business communication professors can cover course materials while utilizing media.

Podcasting gives businesses the opportunity to tell their own story and to control the narrative (Bornstein, 2021). It can also be a helpful way for new entrepreneurs to reach out to new audiences about their businesses (Bornstein, 2021). Kazi (2022) explains the many benefits for businesses include reaching new audiences, improving conversion rates, building brand recognition and authority, and even an alternate revenue stream. Podcasts are easy and cheap for entrepreneurs to create and distribute, but they are also convenient for listeners to access; in fact, 33% of the United States population already listen to podcasts regularly (Kazi, 2022).

In the academic environment, podcasts help students learn course material (Merhi, 2015). Some colleges of business are also using podcasts as a way for their students to explore current issues in business. The University of Michigan's (2022) MBA students from the Michigan Ross School

of Business are encouraged to participate in any of the three podcasts that are hosted by the school. "Business and Society by Michigan Ross" features a panel discussion on a current business topic and then interviews a professor based on their research in that area. Another podcast by MBA students is "Business Beyond Usual" and focuses on business education and relevant topics. The Michigan Ross students are then able to learn more about current topics in business but also can promote their work on their resumes when applying for positions.

Other professors are utilizing podcasts for assignments to help students with knowledge retention and skill-building in the classroom. Taylor and Blevins (2020) employed the podcast to help students learn communication theories and then apply those theories to real world interpersonal, organizational, and business situations. Following the podcasts, the authors also saw improved assessment scores as well. Similarly, Van Meter, Schetzsle, and Howie (2019) encouraged marketing instructors to supplement their textbook readings with current podcasts to use as cases in the MBA classroom. They found it was a helpful way to apply marketing concepts to current business situations.

Arkhangelskaya, Lopanova, and Rudenko-Morgun (2021) conducted a study with the cadets of Emercom University to see how student-run podcasting could improve professional communication competencies. The authors found the students made improvements in all of the following areas: proper volume of verbal material; listening skills and the ability to accurately perceive the professional side of speech, explanation, analysis, optimal verbal response time; use of professional vocabulary and error recognition, detection, and correction; as well as constructive questioning and dialogue. Overall, the students demonstrated improved business communication skills and interest in education; student involvement in classroom educational activities increased as a result of the podcasting assignment.

Importantly, the students perceive them positively in the learning environment, and enjoy course material more when podcasts are included in the lessons and/or assessments (Merhi, 2015). As such, each of the four speakers on this panel implemented a podcasting assignment in their business communication classes. Two of the assignments were implemented in undergraduate courses (sophomore and junior designations) and two of the assignments were implemented in graduate courses. The panel will cover two individual assignments and two team projects.

Presenter 1 will discuss his sophomore-level assignment asking students to develop a podcast episode exploring a recent business-related innovation (i.e., a new practice, method, product, etc. developed and implemented by an organization or individual with organizational connections) of their choosing. The innovation can be related to technology, business practices or strategies, community or international outreach or impact, environmental impact, etc., and does not need to result in economic profit. To prepare, students were asked to listen to a new or favorite podcast and discuss its structural and presentation qualities. This discussion emphasized storytelling, detail and research, the use of enthusiasm in informative speech, the necessity of introductions and conclusions, among other topics.

Presenter 2 will discuss her graduate-level assignment, asking MBA students to research a topic on a management communication issue of their choice and then create an informative podcast. Topics that were commonly used include women in the workplace; work-life flexibility; benefits

and perks: what do employees really care about?; the new remote office, or welcome to the corner of my living room; the gender pay gap; and intergenerational communication issues. Students were asked to post their podcasts to the class discussion board so they could share with classmates and offer feedback.

Presenter 3 will discuss her junior-level team assignment, asking students to envision themselves as part of a corporate team tasked with launching a branded blog and podcast and demonstrating how the company can deliver information to consumers in a variety of creative formats. A major goal for businesses today is retaining current customers and clients while also attracting new ones. Businesses use various types of media to increase brand awareness, improve search engine optimization, deliver meaningful marketing, advertise their products and services, and engage with their consumer base. Over the course of the project, the teams must design the new media consistent with their brand, creating 3-5 episodes for the podcast and 3-5 entries for the blog under a consistent branded theme.

Presenter 4 will discuss her graduate-level team assignment, asking MBA students to analyze a communication case study and articulate a strategic response. In preparation, students complete the Gallup CliftonStrengths Assessment and analyze one of Gallup's podcast series Theme Thursday: Developing Teams and Managers. The podcast episode assignment (1) includes discussion of communication strategies informed by the students' CliftonStrengths Assessment results, (2) challenges students to think critically and apply theory from our readings, and (3) scaffolds the team's work towards writing a strategic email and developing an interpersonal strategy to address the communication conflict.

These comprehensive, multi-modal assignments allowed our students to develop writing, speaking, critical thinking, and teamwork skills. Importantly, the students also reported that they enjoyed the creativity of the assignments while simultaneously building skills that would help them become better communicators and business professionals.

During the course of the panel, we will demonstrate how podcasting assignments offer opportunities for instructors to implement new project and presentation formats for business communication instruction. Attendees will receive sample assignments and materials and have the opportunity to discuss how to implement podcasting activities into their classrooms.

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Integrating Transformative Digital Oral Communication Technology into Professional Communication Curricula to Meet ABET-mandated Student Learning Objectives

Kenneth Robert Price, Texas A&M University – Kingsville

Abstract
The purpose of this presentation is to examine the best pedagogical practices for the instruction of digital oral communication technology to STEM students in an online modality.

Introduction
The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) is an ISO 9001-certified organization that accredits college and university programs in applied and natural science, computing, engineering and engineering technology. ABET-established criteria for accrediting engineering program educational objectives are broad statements that describe what graduates are expected to attain within a few years after graduation. Two key Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) mandated by ABET are having professional communication classes instruct STEM students to effectively integrate digital technology into their writing as well as to apply oral and graphical communication theories and concepts in both technical and non-technical environments.

Remote Presentations Have Become the Norm
Even pre-COVID pandemic, up to 80% of corporate presentations were delivered remotely. Delivering an effective remote presentation is a completely different challenge than the same presentation in person. For example, the potential for an audience getting distracted during a traditional oral presentation is already quite high. This problem is amplified with remote delivery.

The foremost problem in supporting the online instruction of digital oral communication technology is in creating a worthwhile learning experience that mirrors the F2F classroom learning environment. Another challenge is in having the standardized resources necessary to

develop the oral communication skills engineering students need to master before entering the workplace. This presentation will address both of these problems, in addition to ways to avoid losing an audience to distractions in remote presentations:
- Presentation delivery
- Slide design
- Graphics
- Multimodal elements
- Computer slide programs

Statement of Purpose
The purpose of this presentation is to detail innovative pedagogical practices for integrating digital technology in an online modality into professional communication course curricula to fulfill the ABET SLOs of mastery of oral communication and integrating digital technology into professional communication.

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Managerial Communication Undergrad or Graduate Research/Report Project: From Proposal to Report to Presentation to Rubric

Marcel M. Robles

Abstract
This session will focus on activities to help students become better writers. Employers indicate that communication is one of the most important skills for business college graduates, yet most of our undergraduate and graduate business students need to improve their written and communication skills.

I will present a comprehensive research project for students that I use in my BBA & MBA courses in business writing. While the courses are similar, a distinct difference exists for grad students.

Description
Completing progressive assignments, students research, write, and present scholarly research. Five cumulative assignments lead to the final project:
1. The first assignment is to analyze and evaluate a research article related to the student's interest and future research topic (25 points).
2. Students compile an annotated bibliography of secondary sources related to the topic for the second assignment (50 points).
3. The third assignment has the student create a valid testing instrument for collecting reliable data to answer their research questions (25 points).
4. For the fourth assignment, students research, write, and submit a complete study proposal as it would be presented to a committee (50 points).
5. Fifth, graphics, tables, and other figures are created and handed in (25 points).
6. The sixth assignment in the progression is an Executive Summary that is written about the entire report (25 points).
7. The seventh assignment requires students to present the research process and findings to the class in a professional format (100 points).
8. The final project is to submit the publishable research paper (200 points).

Students receive all of the assignments and the rubrics at the beginning of the semester so they know the expectations of the final project and how each assignment will be evaluated. Students

also have other assignments and exams during the semester, so this comprehensive project encompasses 50% of their grade. All of the assignments and rubrics will be shared with session participants both hard copy and electronic copy for your personal revisions so that you can revise the assignments to be as relevant to your course as possible.

Objectives of the Managerial Communication and Research Course
Upon completion of the course, the student is expected to have mastered the following objectives:
1. Understand and discuss the roles research and communication play in organizations.
2. Demonstrate the importance of writing to a specific audience.
3. Generate and evaluate ideas leading to report topics.
4. Write clear objectives.
5. Identify and critically evaluate scholarly articles to include in a relevant literature review.
6. Cite and reference literature accurately using APA Style.
7. Develop an effective data collection instrument.
8. Write data analyses using effective critical thinking and writing skills.
9. Create ethical and effective graphics to support data.
10. Write clear and concise conclusions and recommendations based on data analyses.
11. Summarize information based on elements of thought and intellectual standards.
12. Develop, write, and orally present a formal business report.
13. Polish presentation skills.
14. Critically self-assess written and oral communication.
15. Engage in intellectual discussion regarding the impact that their own and others' input and feedback has on their ability to communicate as a manager.

The Blackboard course will also be shown for online students to view the assignment video and modules.

Active Grading: Specifications Grading for Business Communication Courses

Traci Austin

Abstract
This presentation will explore how the technique of specifications grading can be coupled with the appropriate design and scaffolding of activities to balance an instructor's need to address required learning outcomes with their goal of empowering student choice and engagement.

Description
Many business communication instructors are aware of—and skilled employers of—active learning principles. Their classroom instruction, student activities, and assignments foster collaboration among students, encourage self-reflection, allow for individual choice and growth, and empower students to take charge of their own learning. It is difficult for many instructors, however, to continue the focus on active learning when creating processes for assigning grades.

As part of a fellowship focused on active learning, I have been researching an approach to active

learning that I can implement in business communication courses. This approach—specifications grading—is more student-centered, more intentional, and more supportive of continued student learning than the criterion-referenced, point-based grading system I have used through most of my years of teaching. The version of specifications grading I am exploring allows students to effectively choose a grade goal for the course and complete assignments based on that goal.

One challenge with this approach, however, is to ensure that students have met an appropriate mix of the learning outcomes required—by our college, department, and program—in the course. This presentation will explore how specifications grading can be coupled with the appropriate design and scaffolding of activities to balance an instructor's need to address learning outcomes with their goal of empowering student choice and engagement.

Introduction
In 2022, I was awarded a two-year fellowship to research and implement an active learning strategy in a business communication course. Up to this point, my classroom instruction, student activities, and assignments reflected attempts to incorporate active learning principles such collaboration, student choice, problem solving, self-reflection, and others. My approach to grading, however, has not. The criterion-referenced, point-based system I used for both assignments and overall course grade did little to foster learning, growth, or student engagement. As part of the fellowship, then, my goal is to investigate and implement an approach to grading that is more student-centered, more intentional, and more supportive of continued student learning. The option I chose to research is specifications grading.

Background
Students often come to BUAD 3335 with a hardened view of the nature and extent of their own communication skills; in other words, they've decided that they're either good at it or bad at it, based on their previous experiences in school. In addition, regardless of whether they fall into the "good" or "bad" camps in their minds, students often become anxious when faced with communicating, especially in professional or other formal settings. (Being told by their earnest instructors that their future professional success depends on their writing and speaking skills rarely helps.) By employing active learning approaches in the day-to-day journey of the course, my goal is to show students that everyone can communicate and do it well, and that everyone has room to grow and learn.

In my courses, these student-centered activities and assignments have culminated in a not-so-student-centered method for figuring grades for major assignments and, ultimately, the final course grade. Each major assignment a student turns in is returned to them with a number attached. No matter the extent or depth of an instructor's feedback or the relevance of the rubrics used to arrive at that number, it's still a number, and it seems to carry more weight in the minds of students than any qualitative feedback they may get. Thus, as many researchers and instructors have found, grades do not always motivate students or lead to effective learning (Schinske & Tanner, 2014).

In addition, the numbers a student receives often determine the trajectory of their success in the course. If early numbers are low, the student will have difficulty earning a high final grade in the course, even if their subsequent learning and growth are extensive. Likewise, high early numbers

often lead to a higher final grade, regardless of the amount and extent of the student's learning, effort, or engagement in later assignments.

Finally, the evaluative nature of many grading systems does not reflect the actual process involved in workplace communication. Employees do not receive grades on, say, a report written for a manager or a presentation planned for a client. Instead, if their work is not considered up to par, they revise it until it is satisfactory. If the work is sufficient, then further work is not often needed. To put it in academic terms, their work either "passes" or doesn't; the nuances of percentages, points, or letter grades are not relevant.

What is needed, then, is a grading system that 1) gives students more control over and engagement in their learning AND their subsequent grades; 2) more accurately mirrors the contexts and processes of business and professional communication; and 3) focuses on growth rather than evaluation. I believe that specifications grading may provide one solution to this issue.

Specifications Grading

In *Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time* (2014), Linda Nilson compares this approach to grading to the process that programmers go through when testing software. The programmers have a set of specifications with which to evaluate the software, and "[e]ither a program meets all these specs, or it doesn't. And if it doesn't, it fails and must be revised or abandoned" (Nilson, 2015, p. 56).

In specifications or specs grading, therefore, assignments, tests, etc. are assessed as either "satisfactory" (often a B or above) or "unsatisfactory" (or, as one instructor put it, "not-yet-satisfactory") (Malek, 2019). Instructors provide clear specifications, in the form of checklists or rubrics, for each assignment detailing what constitutes satisfactory and not-yet-satisfactory (Nilson, 2015; Darby & Lang, 2019). Satisfactory assignments receive very little feedback, but "not done yet" assignments receive extensive formative commentary in addition to the checklist or rubric.

The specs grading approach can be adapted to fit many different student and instructor needs as well as different disciplines and modalities. Many have developed "bundles" of assignments linked to course learning outcomes that also track to final course grades. Others have added elements like optional or required revision for "not done yet" assignments, "get out of jail free" cards or tokens to allow for missed or late assignments, and other innovations (e.g., Elkins, 2016; Nilson, 2016).

For the the purposes of the fellowship, I have chosen to create a system in which a student's final grade is based on a certain mix of satisfactory vs. "not done yet" assignments. For example, if there are five major assignments, earning "satisfactories" on all five will lead to the course grade of an A; earning four "satisfactories" and one "not done yet" assignments will lead to a B, and so on. An assignment can earn a "not done yet" designation if it doesn't meet the criteria—or if the student chooses not to complete the assignment at all. A "not done yet" assignment can move to "satisfactory" through revision. This means that a student can choose a "grade goal" and complete/revise assignments (or not!) based on that goal; it also means that a student can revise

their grade goal as the semester progresses.

Focus of the Presentation
One challenge with this approach, however, is to ensure that the pathways that students take to a certain course grade ensure that they have met the corresponding and appropriate mix of the learning outcomes required (by colleges, departments, or programs) in the course. In other words, if students can potentially choose to complete just certain assignments—and ignore the rest—how can I ensure that the ones they do choose will cover enough of the course's learning goals?

This presentation will explore an approach to addressing this challenge. Through appropriate scaffolding and ordering of activities, instructors can balance their need to address the required learning outcomes of the course with the goals of empowering student choice and engagement.

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Electronic Eloquence: Some Advice for Teaching the On-line Presentation

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Abstract
We have collected data from business practitioners on the question of what attributes make an on-line presentation successful. Based on that (and supplementary) data, we offer suggestions for what educators should do in teaching the on-line oral presentation.

Description
If we teach our students to make video presentations, what advice should we give them? What

attributes make a video presentation more (or less) successful?

Purpose and Significance
Since ancient times (e.g., Aristotle, trans. 2007), humans have tended to give and to evaluate oral presentations. Today, oral presentations continue to be regarded as an important activity in the practice of business (e.g., Beason, 1991; Blazkova, 2011; Dyer & Dyer, 1970; Galbraith et al., 2014; Heracleous & Klaering, 2014; Johnson & Stuckey, 2022; Jones, 2017; Lambert & Landau, 2015; McCarthy & Hatcher, 2004; Myers & Dessler, 1980; Van De Mieroop, 2009; Van De Mieroop et al., 2008). But, because of the growing prevalence of multinational organizations, which employ geographically dispersed workers; the growing prevalence of distributed work, which allows employees to remain in their homes rather than to assemble; and the recent experience of the COVID pandemic, which reduced or eliminated group gatherings, a large (and, we think, increasing) percentage of business speeches are delivered by means of a computer-based video conferencing system (e.g., Lifesize, Teams, Webex, Zoom).

The importance of video conferencing presentations presents business communication educators with two, interrelated questions: (1) Should business communication courses provide instruction for giving video presentations; and (2) If so, what should we tell our students about how to be effective on-line?

We assume that the first question should be answered affirmatively. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to begin the process of answering the second question. We do so by gathering data from experienced business practitioners.

Methodology
In this paper we report two kinds of data. Primarily, we report data from a survey of business practitioners. We supplement that data with interview and anecdotal data gathered while teaching.

The survey data come from adult learners enrolled in an executive-level MBA (EMBA) program at an elite American university. We developed a short survey, using both open and closed questions (a copy of the questionnaire will be attached to the completed paper) and administered the survey using an on-line system (SurveyMonkey). Grouped survey responses—and the experience of completing the survey—provided a basis for class discussions.

We collected data for two consecutive years. We received useable data from 63 persons. Thirty-six (57%) of the respondents were males; 27 (43%), female.

Our questionnaire asked each respondent to reflect on the oral presentations that he or she had observed, to identity one of the more successful examples, and to explain what made the presentation successful.

Findings
We are currently analyzing the data. Preliminary analysis suggests that successful on-line speakers demonstrate some of the same attributes of face-to-face speakers (e.g., logical organization), while also making some smart adjustments to the video-conferencing technology

by adopting a more interactive approach to speaking (e.g., using electronic "breakout rooms"). We anticipate extending the content analysis to explore issues of presence (Turner, 2022) and to consider the five classical canons of rhetoric (content, organization, style, memory aids, and delivery).

Summary
The paper is, at present, a "work in progress" (appropriate for submission as a proposal rather than a completed paper). The finished product will provide a substantial beginning toward identifying the attributes of successful on-line presentations and, therefore, toward developing appropriate classroom content.

Implications
This paper has value both for research and for teaching. With regard to research, this paper identifies and begins to answer an important question about contemporary business speeches (Cyphert, 2010)—what attributes contribute to on-line effectiveness? While many business communication instructors have, by this point in time, accumulated some experience in giving, teaching, and evaluating on-line presentations, we are not aware of any previous research that provides data from business practitioners.

With regard to teaching, the paper begins to address an equally important question—what should we be teaching our students about on-line speeches? Addressing this question has implications for courses and for teaching materials such as textbooks. We expect that our completed analysis will indicate that much of what we teach students about face-to-face presentation can be repeated in what we teach about on-line presentations. But the data are also likely to show that the best business presentations adjust and adapt to the new environment.

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The Proposal for the Study of the Military Veteran Transition, Through the Lens of Business Communication, to Improve the Civilian Job Search Experience

Kevin Sanford, Los Angeles Valley College
Jeffrey Archibald, West Los Angeles College
Geraldine E. Hynes, Sam Houston State University

Abstract
An increasing number of veterans continue to separate from the military and seek civilian employment. Many of these veterans find it difficult to resume or pursue civilian careers (Morin, 2011). Prior research has demonstrated that veterans would benefit from greater emphasis in

training programs on resume writing, job interview skills, and civilian workplace decorum and expectations (Sanford, 2018).

Statement of the Problem or Purpose

Over 200,000 veterans will transition out of the military each year (Wolfe, 2012). Many of these veterans find it difficult to resume or pursue civilian careers (Morin, 2011). This difficulty in obtaining civilian employment may be due to time and resource limitations caused by military obligations and transition requirements (Sargent, 2014; Troutman & Gagnon, 2014). However, it may also be due to military veterans feeling a sense of loss at their separation and confusion about their path outside the military (Sanford, 2018). As a result of this sense of loss, veterans may gravitate to career fields perceived as common or similar or to the military such law enforcement, security, or mechanical professions (Guo, Pollak, & Bauman, 2016). Compounding the problem is that veterans often do not reap the full benefits of transition assistance and training because it is minimized or not taken seriously (Sanford, 2018). The net result is that veterans' transitions into the civilian workforce may be rushed, perfunctory, and unfulfilling, with veterans not making full use of their military training and skills to optimize the job search and career development processes.

A personal toolkit of effective skills for business communication requires extensive development. Prior research has demonstrated that veterans would benefit from greater emphasis in training programs on resume writing, job interview skills, and civilian workplace decorum and expectations (Sanford, 2018). While veterans may have developed robust soft skills and job-related skills in their military careers, translating and utilizing these skills in the civilian job search and onboarding process may prove difficult and frustrating for veterans who experience feelings of incompatibility of their business communication skills. Over time, veterans may grow more comfortable and confident as they progress in their careers. However, theories in literature shows the transition process into civilian employment may also cause unnecessary stress and confusion and worsen feelings of loss and abandonment (Sanford, 2018). The question becomes, then, if a large number of veterans are having similar experiences and limitations, what business communication skills and techniques can be tailored to help veterans transition effectively and become more successful in the job search experience? This study proposes to address the military to civilian transition process through the lens of business communication and identify what training and skill development can improve the civilian job search and onboarding experience.

Methodology

This qualitative study will answer the key inquiry through an exploration of the individual lived experiences of veterans as they pursued employment after the military. Phenomenological investigation of lived experience is common in the study of veterans and will provide the greatest insight into the social and emotional impacts of the research problem (Minnis & Stern, 2016; Sanford, 2018; Wilson, Leary, Mitchell, & Ritchie, 2009). Our research will explore how currently employed veterans in civilian organizations experienced challenges with effective business communication during the job seeking and onboarding processes. These challenges may include difficulties in translating military skills or terminology during the resume, application, and interview processes and problems adapting to civilian workplace expectations during onboarding.

Questions to be asked of the veterans are not limited to, but will include, exploratory questions such as:
-When seeking employment, what was your experience in translating military skills.
-When seeking employment, what was your experience with translating military terminology.
-In what ways did you experience a disconnect between your new employer and the military.
-What former military skills are you currently using in your employment.
-How does your military experience and skills help with your current employment.

Findings (as available)
The data analysis will be completed prior to the March conference.

Summary
An increasing number of veterans continue to separate from the military and seek civilian employment. Many of these veterans find it difficult to resume or pursue civilian careers (Morin, 2011). This may be due to military veterans feeling a sense of loss at their separation and confusion about their path outside the military (Sanford, 2018). As a result, veterans do not make full use of their military training and skills to optimize the job search and career development processes.

Prior research has demonstrated that veterans would benefit from greater emphasis in training programs on resume writing, job interview skills, and civilian workplace decorum and expectations (Sanford, 2018). While veterans may have developed robust soft skills and job-related skills in their military careers, translating and utilizing these skills in the civilian job search and onboarding process may prove difficult and frustrating for veterans who experience feelings of incompatibility of their business communication skills.
However, theories in literature shows the transition process into civilian employment may also cause unnecessary stress and confusion and worsen feelings of loss and abandonment (Sanford, 2018).

The question becomes, then, if a large number of veterans are having similar experiences and limitations, what business communication skills and techniques can be tailored to help veterans transition effectively and become more successful in the job search experience? This qualitative study proposes to address the military to civilian transition process through the lens of business communication and identify what training and skill development can improve the civilian job search and onboarding experience. This study will have implications for businesses, the military, and educational institutions. As data analysis identifies potential gaps in veterans' communication skillsets needed for civilian workforce transition, businesses must be prepared to bridge these gaps with tailored transition and onboarding programs.

Implications for Education and/or Business
This study will have implications for businesses, the military, and educational institutions. As data analysis identifies potential gaps in veterans' communication skillsets needed for civilian workforce transition, businesses must be prepared to bridge these gaps with tailored transition and onboarding programs. Additionally, the study may identify ways in which businesses can partner more effectively with military organizations to participate in transition training and

facilitate business communication skill development in veterans prior to the end of their service. For military organizations, the study is likely to point to ways in which military leaders can place greater emphasis on the refinement of soft skills and job searching techniques as part of the transition process for separating veterans. Further, the study may show the need for the military to engage in greater collaboration with local business organizations that facilitate feelings of worth, competence, and belonging among transitioning veterans. Finally, educational organizations – especially community colleges or universities operating on military bases – have a role to play in facilitating transition as well. This study is likely to show how skill development courses and seminars can expand the role colleges play in the development of veterans' communication skills and their successful transition into the civilian workforce. This will also serve to assist with contributing and connecting veterans to pathways in higher education (Archibald, 2021).

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Addressing Communication Apprehension among Autistic Professionals

Peter Cardon, University of Southern California

Abstract
Autistic employees face unique challenges in the workplace. This presentation presents research about the nature of communication apprehension for autistic employees. It also provides recommendations to create a professional environment for autistic employees that reduces communication apprehension.

Description
The workplace was built and designed for neurotypical employees, those who do not have autism. As a result, the workplace presents many challenges and obstacles for autistic professionals (Austin & Pisano, 2017). Despite aspirations for satisfying careers (Anderson et al., 2021; Ashbaugh, 2017; Baldwin & Costley, 2015), most individuals with autism tend to be unemployed or underemployed (Black et al., 2019; Burgess & Cimera, 2014; Bury et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2015). Many researchers suggest the primary barriers to successful employment for these individuals are social challenges (Black et al., 2019; Bury et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2015; Hayward et al., 2019; Krzeminska & Hawse, 2020; Lorenz et al., 2017; Morris et al., 2015; Richards, 2012). Individuals with autism experience a high degree of social isolation, lack of social support, and social anxiety in the in the workplace (Annabi et al., 2017; Annabi & Locke, 2019; Baldwin et al., 2014; Black et al., 2019; Bury et al., 2021; Johnson & Joshi, 2016; Lindsay et al., 2021). As a result, many autistic professionals report communication apprehension, the "fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 2001, p. 40), in the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2014; Lindsay et al., 2021).

This study addressed the nature and extent of communication apprehension among autistic professionals. It also explored the professional environment in which social self-efficacy can grow. It included a survey of 324 working autistic professionals and in-depth interviews with 11 autistic professionals. Using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA)-instrument (McCroskey, 1982), the survey revealed that autistic professionals exhibited high communication apprehension in a range of situations, including in interpersonal situations, meetings, group situations, and presentations and public speaking.

Predictability of communication situations appears to be a key explanation for various levels of communication apprehension. The PRCA-24 results showed that autistic professionals are comparatively (to the general population) more likely to experience CA in less predictable communication situations. Public speaking and presentations tend to have more predictability

because people can prepare their content or scripts ahead of time. Autistic professionals were 1.8 times as likely to experience high communication apprehension in presentation situations. Meetings are less predictable than presentations, but many meetings tend to have some structure because of agendas. Autistic professionals were 3.7 times as likely to experience high communication apprehension in meetings. The least predictable situations are interpersonal and group discussions. Autistic professionals were 4.9 times as likely to experience high communication apprehension in group discussions, and 5.4 times as likely to experience high communication apprehension in interpersonal interactions.

The interview participants described a professional environment that is composed of support, a comfortable cadence, and resilience. This environment fosters the ability for autistic professionals to build confidence in communication situations. At the heart of this environment is support, which is provided in the forms of managerial advocacy, belonging and emotional support from colleagues, social interventions to help with uncomfortable interactions, and knowledge and coping mechanisms from the neurodiverse community. This support enabled participants to overcome fears of speaking up in some situations and created the environment in which they could build communication skills.

The need for a comfortable cadence at work was described by participants as an essential foundation for confidence in social interactions. The right cadence involved working with familiar colleagues, scheduling that aligned with preferred times, and avoiding excessive work demands. This cadence aligns with prior work that suggests structure and routine are important for autistic professionals (Black et al., 2019; Hagner & Cooney, 2005; Krzeminksa & Hawse, 2020; Scott et al., 2015). This study, however, accentuated the importance of working with colleagues who are familiar, well known, and trusted. This theme emerged strongly in the survey open-ended items as well as the interviews. Many autistic professionals reported feeling much more confident in communication situations when they know their counterparts well, know how to interact with them, and trust that their counterparts understand them. Within this comfortable work rhythm, participants reported being at their best in communication situations and less prone to losing control of their emotions.

Participants also reported the importance of resilience—the ability to persist in the face of challenges at work. This involved self-advocating and determination. Like many studies (Hagner & Cooney, 2005; Müller et al., 2008; Soeker, 2020; Solomon, 2020), this study showed autistic professionals face the negative views and stereotypes of others. While some research has addressed disclosing one's autism to colleagues and others at work (Johnson & Joshi, 2016), this study highlighted the importance of autistic professionals taking charge of their professional environments, communicating their needs, and persisting in the face of negative views and stereotypes. All interviewees worked in what they considered stable and supportive work environments. It is likely that autistic professionals are most likely to build this resilience when they know they have support.

Overall, this research provided a roadmap for helping autistic professionals reduce communication apprehension and building confidence in communication situations at work. A professional environment with support, cadence, and resilience is the foundation for building social self-efficacy. The combination of support, cadence, and resiliency appear to constitute a

favorable professional environment in which autistic professionals can thrive in communication situations.

Enhancing the Instruction of Cross-Cultural Communication Through Business Diplomacy

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Abstract
In a globalized business world, it is important that employers learn how to conduct themselves diplomatically in every aspect of the global market. We, as educators, can teach our students this very important skill. Therefore, we will explore various ways to teach our students the important attribute of being a diplomat.

Description
In today's globalized world, businesses face geopolitical risks from many angles. The new field of business diplomacy is emerging to help manage these risks. Risks come from stakeholders' views and opinions of the business and dealings between other businesses or even non-business actors. This new field looks at managing the intersection of the strategic objectives of the company and the "environmental demands" of its community and audience (Falcão, Ramalho, & Nobre, 2021).

Falcão et al. (2021) outlines the distinctions and overlap of traditional two-way public relations and business diplomacy, concluding that management should consider them as two distinct jobs in the same arm of the company. Doh, Dahan, & Casario (2022) highlight the idea that keeping business diplomacy internal to an organization can help build a competitive advantage for the organization. The research also looks at the management skills and strategies of diplomats themselves in relation to their countries (Naray & Bezençon, 2017). Learning diplomacy is key to developing strategies for building strong relationships with governments, interest groups, and other important business partners as well as these global corporations.

As educators, we have the opportunity to prepare the next generation of global business leaders. To assist our students in mitigating these risks as they are hired into businesses that are focused on globalization, there must be a clear path that will lead them to the building of strong relationships. We need to make sure our students are prepared to integrate strategic thinking with practical solutions as they learn about and operate in cultures different from their own. Incorporating diplomatic skills into our lessons helps students to understand the complexities of a global business. Aiming to understand and teach these issues is rewarding in the academic environment and includes cross-cultural competencies, awareness, and knowledge of other countries and their political and operational systems.

How might we teach students these skills? Bridge & Radford (2014) explore a digital game, "Diplomacy," that gamifies the experience while bringing reality to the lesson. We will explore the myriad of ways to teach diplomacy and cross-cultural skills to undergraduate students., such as teaching with primary sources and visual data. Also, we will look at using the experiences of

people who have lived and worked with and in different cultures. We will look at connecting to online resources, such as the State Department and the American Foreign Service, to find materials for the instruction of diplomacy.

We will point out the many publications that exist in helping students learn about cultures different from their own. Some of these include "Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: The Bestselling Guide to Doing Business in More than 60 Countries" (Morrison & Conaway, 2006) and "The Elements of International English Style: A Guide to Writing Correspondence, Reports, Technical Documents, and Internet Pages for a Global Audience" (Weiss, 2005). We will provide demonstrations and resource links to show how teaching diplomacy in a business communication course can help develop the skills of our students in facing a complex international business environment.

Global companies today are eager to find employees who can help them improve their effectiveness in building bridges globally. Many competencies are involved in today's businesses needing to deal with the demand of acquiring diplomacy management. It is more important that students learn diplomacy now than ever before. Being diplomatic starts with empathy and treating your listener or reader as everyone wants to be treated. It then progresses to the ability to simplify the English used to accommodate everyone who is listening or reading. From there, hopefully, respect and relationships will flourish. Our goal is to help every prospective global business employee to become a diplomat.

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Identifying Your Freak Factor: An Activity to Develop Students' Professional Brand

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Abstract

While many students understand the value of crafting and protecting a company brand, they often have not given as much thought to the value of a personal professional brand. Moreover, they are often at a loss for where to start when identifying and developing their own professional brand. This presentation shares a one-session guided class activity to help students develop and articulate their professional brand.

Description

While many students clearly understand the value of crafting and protecting a company brand, they often have not given as much thought to the value of a personal professional brand. Moreover, they are often at a loss for where to start when identifying and developing their own professional brand.

A person's professional brand establishes who they are and what unique contributions they have to offer employers, customers, and others in their professional circle (Peter & Gomez, 2019). In the late 1990s, Tom Peters popularized the value of developing your own professional brand. Peters (1997) argued that employees should stop thinking of themselves as an employee at a certain company but rather as free agents, as entities that provide a unique contribution on their own not just as units within a larger company. The importance of intentionally crafting one's professional brand increased with the rise of social media in the 21st Century since information about individuals was more readily available and easily accessible (Girard & Pinar, 2021).

When prompted to consider the importance of personal branding, many business students quickly understand and agree that developing one's own brand is important. However, they often find it a challenge to clearly articulate their own brand or to develop a strategy for developing their brand—beyond, of course, not posting inappropriate photos or comments on social media accounts. The activity to be shared in this presentation provides a structure that helps students develop their personal professional brand and potential strategy for professional growth. This activity includes some brief homework, a guided in-class activity, and some optional follow-up homework.

Before the activity, ideally for homework, students should familiarize themselves with some basic information about employment communication and job searching, such as how to discuss their professional abilities, attributes, and goals. Students would also benefit from some guidance on broad interpretations of their prior experience. Anecdotally, students often focus only on paid employment experiences when recalling their "prior experience," and overlook other valuable experiences like volunteering, professionally related hobbies, student organization leadership, and more. This preparation will provide a foundation that can be briefly referenced to refresh students' minds when beginning the activity.

The first stage of the guided activity asks students to identify their top five abilities or skills and

their top five attributes, as well as three to five of their prior experiences. Students' abilities represent the main skills they could bring to a potential employer, such as data analysis, marketing campaign development, photo editing, and more. Attributes refer to the students' characteristics, such as honest, flexible, innovative, and so on. Students should be encouraged to include a variety of prior experiences in their list. This first phase of the activity provides a baseline from which students can begin developing their brand. The information they write down in this phase is likely the basic information they usually consider when thinking about their professional background and potential future.

The second activity phase asks students to consider three less commonly discussed aspects of their professional brand that will help them articulate their "value add": their values, mission, and "freak factor."

Values: When articulating their professional values, students should consider what intangible aspects of a business or industry are important to them, that would motivate them to do the work, or that they would consider "deal breakers" in their professional dealings. For example, a student might value community service, environmental responsibility, or responsible production.

Mission: Students are often familiar with identifying the types of positions or even types of work they want to do in their careers. When defining their mission, students are asked to articulate what they want the result of their work to be. How do they want their work to make an effect in the world?

"Freak Factor": An important aspect of one's professional brand is identifying what sets them apart from others, and what makes them unique (Peters, 1997; Peter & Gomez, 2019). Using the term "freak factor" encourages students to think beyond the common responses about what differentiates students from one another.

Most of this guided activity can be completed individually, but it could be especially useful for students to share and discuss their personal branding notes, especially if they do so before writing about their "freak factor." One key to developing a memorable and effective personal brand is effectively articulating the "freak factor" or unique proposition. Over the years, students have often provided similar responses when asked to imagine why an employer should hire them over other imagined candidates. Students often point out that they are good leaders, have strong work ethic, always "go above and beyond," and so on—but importantly, students' responses are often similar. When students share their notes as they develop their professional brand, they are more likely to see and thus avoid writing down similar uniqueness factors.

After developing notes about these aspects of their professional brand, students can be prompted to identify or develop five key terms that they could use across their employment communication messages, such as their elevator pitches, resumes, cover letters, and so on. These key terms will help to create a cohesive theme that easily communicates and reinforces their brand.

Optionally, after drafting notes to articulate their professional brand, students might be assigned to use their branding notes to research potential career paths that they may pursue. In this research, students should be encouraged to investigate their "dream jobs" and the positions they

would need to pursue to get to their ideal positions.

In highly competitive job markets, students will benefit from being able to develop and communicate their professional brand more clearly. They will be able to more clearly explain the abilities, attributes, and prior experiences that they can bring to an employer. More importantly, they will be able to secure positions that are better aligned with their values, their professional mission(s), and their long-term goals—which should lead, in turn, to better outcomes for our students and their future employers. This presentation aims to share this activity with the audience so that our business students can be better prepared to begin their job searches and can more effectively develop and communicate their professional brand.

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Business Communication in a "Fishbowl" Reflection: Increasing Active Learning and Course Effectiveness while Lowering the Mask of Disconnection

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Abstract
Active learning is synonymous with learning by doing. There is power in learning by doing that has been amplified by a Confucian scholar "What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand (Xunzi, 340-245 BC). In the business communication class, hearing is not as powerful as seeing, seeing is not as effective as experience, and true learning must be active when students' experiences produce action and connection to the real-world workplace.

Description
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, students and teachers alike continue to wear face masks to reduce the transmission of this virus. Coupled with face masks are other restrictions such as social distancing. In the class BCOM 2525, students were expected to learn the content and do well just like all other classes that preceded them. The difference was that the professor enrolled

in a professional development class that required reflective practice. This led to rethinking and revamping classroom discussion strategies and student expectations. As educators, both the importance and the power of active learning are at the forefront of what we do (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many & Mattos, 2016). Educators want the students to experience authentic, relevant, multisensory means of learning that are meaningful to students' experience.

However, there are occasions when educators may become reluctant to apply the principles of active learning because it can be time-consuming (Ramirez-Loaiza, Sharma, Kumar, & Bilgic, 2017). Active Learning is grounded in the constructivist-based approach to learning, whereby the emphasis is placed on the student learning from experience. This is opposite to students being seen as passive or empty vessels to be filled with knowledge from the teacher. Active learning encourages students to discover, inquire, apply, evaluate, and create meaning. Thus, students will genuinely believe in and understand why and how meanings are developed. Furthermore, an active approach to learning involves both problem-making and problem-solving (Drew, 2021).

The purpose of this pilot study is to explore the use of the "fishbowl" method of active learning with business communication students. Business communication is the heart of what our students are expected to do when they enter the workforce. They need to learn how to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing. Hence, this active learning strategy is relevant to their needs as future business leaders. Sometimes they will be in the fishbowl, and at other times they are outside.

The fundamental reason why students go to college is to learn at all levels. Active learning gives the best return on investment; therefore, this topic is significant in the Business communication course. The "fishbowl" discussion strategy was developed by the Southern Poverty Law Center in response to the need for students to have civil discourse with each other about topics that can be uncomfortable and emotionally charged. In this active learning strategy, students are divided into an inner circle and an outer circle. Students in the inner circle are in the "fishbowl." Students in the outer circle are looking into the fishbowl. Students in the inner circle will lead the discussion. Conversely, students in the outer circle will listen to the discussion and take notes. This engaging active learning strategy is student-centered and helps students to be focused and engaged in the lesson. It goes beyond raising the hand to answer a question. It calls for reflective, critical, and divergent thinking skills that, in essence, will build students' comprehension of complex ideas and develop listening and discussion skills (Meierdirk, 2016). Students who are in the fishbowl have a discussion with each other in the fishbowl for a predetermined number of minutes. "Fishbowlers" may have divergent perspectives about the topic. Furthermore, observers in the outer circle get a chance to ask questions of the "fishbowlers" for a specified number of minutes. After the "fishbowlers have answered questions, the inner circle switches out with another group from the outer circle. This process continues until all groups get a chance to be in the "Fishbowl." This is a multimodal active learning strategy where students use multiple senses, moving from the inner to the outer circle and vice versa. Research supports using fishbowls as an effective way to engage students with various abilities and in multiple settings (Knoll, 2019; The Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022).

This study follows the case study design postulated by Yin (2002), a qualitative methodology. In qualitative research, the case study is one of the frequently used methodologies (Yazan, 2015). In

the case study design, a real-time event, strategy, or phenomenon is explored within its naturally occurring context with the hope of making a difference (Kaarbo & Beasley, 1999; Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir, & Waseem, 2019).

The data were collected by observing students' active participation in this fishbowl strategy. As educators, we are always looking for effective ways to improve student learning, and we have found that the best way to do so is through intentional planning. Based on the professional development (PD) course we were enrolled in this spring 2022 semester, we were introduced to the "fishbowl" discussion strategy. It was both tiring and boring just to have the regular few students participating in class discussions. In addition, the lecture method (less than 10% retention) was not working on getting students engaged in their learning. Therefore, preparation was made to introduce the fishbowl method.

First, a week before implementation, students were asked to provide feedback to make the class more interesting and engaging. Some students indicated that they would prefer to do more discussions, especially since the class is early in the morning, and many of them are still "just waking up."

Second, the suggestions were recorded, and after some fruitful discussions, we decided that the students would be sent a list of guiding questions to facilitate discussion of the next chapter in the textbook. The questions were developed as totems to assist with discussions of various parts of the assigned chapter. A mixture of 15 open-ended, analytical, and opinion-based questions was sent out to all students. Students were also provided detailed instructions on the fishbowl discussion format. Students were informed that they would work with their previously established groups to respond to three of the 15 questions sent to the class. Each group has five members and five minutes for the discussion. Since students were unaware of which three questions they would be assigned in the fishbowl, they had to be prepared to respond to any of the 15 questions.

Third, when students arrived at the class, they sat in their groups. At the start of class, students were reminded of the "rules of engagement." Then each group had to remove three questions (written on strips of paper) from a brown paper bag (random draw) containing the 15 questions. Once all the groups pulled the 3 questions (randomly) from the brown bag, they were given 3 minutes to discuss their responses with their group members in the interest of time.
Fourth, after three minutes, group one was asked to sit in the middle of the room. Students in the fishbowl (group 1) had to open the discussion by responding to the 3 questions drawn for 3 minutes. After these 3 minutes of discussing the questions in the fishbowl, students in the outer circle (other groups) had 3 minutes to ask the "fishbowlers" questions. For maximum participation points, each other group had to ask at least one question, and each member of the inner fishbowl group had to answer at least one question. After the timer went off, the inner group had to trade places with members of the outer group.
Reflective practice is not a new phenomenon in teaching and learning. This is active learning by the teacher/instructor, through and from lived experiences that lead to new insights into oneself and one's teaching practice (Finlay, 2008). Reflection is not a one-off practice for effective teaching to be consistent. Reflective practice must be deliberate, purposeful, and systematic for the lessons learned to be implemented consistently (Finlay, 2008). Reflection is a basic part of

effective teaching and learning, but it is not simplistic. The goal of reflective practice is to make the educator self-aware of one's professional knowledge, disposition, skill set, and action that sometimes will challenge and be challenged by others. The reflective process postulated by Gibbs (1988) captures the findings of using the fishbowl strategy in this Business Communication class.

Gibbs (1988) "structured debriefing" strategy for reflective practice supports active, experiential learning by doing activities. There are six stages (questions) of the reflective process, description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.
1. First, description—What happened?
2. Second, feelings—what were your reactions or feelings?
3. Third, evaluation—What was positive and what was negative?
4. Fourth, analysis—make sense of the situation.
5. Fifth, conclusion—what have you learned?
6. Sixth, action plan—what will be done differently going forward?

The use of reflective practice in this situation has implications for students being prepared to become business leaders in the future. Students need to be encouraged to work with others collaboratively. Students need to be allowed to share best practices and draw on others for support. This reflective practice changed how we, as instructors' approach active learning. Students' voices were heard, and appropriate changes were made to have students participate in the learning process. Learning must be tailored to the needs of our students, and the fishbowl active learning process facilitates high-impact, student-centric communication and positive interactions in the business communication classroom.

A New Frontier: Developing the Online Honors Course for Quality, Engagement, & Inclusivity

Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

Abstract
As educators, we continuously improve our classes as both subject matter experts and as lifelong learners ourselves. The directors of the newly revived Honors College asked this author to create an online section of an existing (non-Honors) course. This presentation details the course creation process, highlighting communication and critical thinking as central themes, along with the resultant course structure, reception by constituents, and post-course reflection

Introduction
Developing a new course can be both an exciting and a daunting endeavor. As educators, we continuously improve our classes as both subject matter experts and as lifelong learners ourselves. In Spring 2021, the author's institution embarked on the journey to create (or rather to revive with a much updated and improved "face") the Honors College. The Honors College had existed previously, though it had thoroughly faded from recent institutional memory. A committee formed and initiated discussions concerning building this new addition to the university.

In early 2022, the new Honors College co-directors asked this author to create a special online section of an existing (non-Honors) course according to the new Honors College guidelines. This presentation will detail the requirements for this course, highlighting communication and critical thinking as central themes, along with the resultant course structure, reception by constituents, and post-course reflection. The relevant literature frames the context for the creation of this course, as well as informs salient elements of course creation.

Literature Review

The National Collegiate Honors Council described the honors college experience as distinctive and learn-directed, as well as inventive and experiential, "[igniting] passion for lifelong learning and [encouraging] student creativity, collaboration, and leadership in the classroom and beyond" (NCHC, 2022, para.1). Honors College students develop lasting friendships and engage in memorable learning experiences that prepare them to excel in life after college. "Participation in honors programs appears to bring out the best in high-potential students, enabling them to maximize learning outcomes and enter society with an above-average potential to contribute positively throughout their adult lives" (Stohs & Clark, 2015, p. 241)

Honors Colleges have great potential to contribute to the academic and non-academic community. "Universities and colleges across the country are well-served by the comprehensive value of honors programs and the role they play in enriching the entire university community and beyond" (Heckler, 2015, p. 165). As such, providing university students with the opportunity to participate in an Honors College is a worth endeavor.

Development of Honors programs and courses must be thorough and intentional, with consideration of not only the positive aspects but of potential pitfalls. Administrators and instructors must beware of making the assumption that "they're honors, they're very bright students, they can survive without the resources" (Gardner, 2015, para. 28). Honors College students may historically be high-achieving academically, but they need guidance and care just as other students do. Engaging students in non-standard times, such as that presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, can be challenging for even the most-prepared institutions, students, and faculty. Dotter and King (2021) speculated that the following challenges would need to be addressed:

- Ensuring students' physical and mental health
- Maintaining student engagement
- Ensuring participation in honors classes/activities in spite of varied external demands
- Boosting student morale

In recent years, new developments and suggestions for Honors College structure have emerged. Yarrison (2021) suggested that honors programs shift from in-person only offerings to a more democratic and inclusive system that would allow for virtual and remote classes. While this suggestion was spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, it brings about a valid concern that honors programming may be excluding students who could both benefit from such inclusion, as well as enrich the program, university, and community as a whole. Yarrison (2021) continued with the diversity: "honors programs are rarely diverse, because they are usually not inclusive." Radasanu

and Barker (2022) furthered this point by stating that "when students come from similar backgrounds…holistic educational aims are not well served" (p. 42); diversity enriches the learning experience. By allowing for diverse course delivery and participation options, students who may not be able to attend in person, such as non-traditional students, working students, and off-campus students would have more flexibility in joining this valuable learning experience.

Course Development
The course of discussion was ECON 2313H Principles of Macroeconomics. A special designation of "H" after the course number indicated the Honors status of the course. This course would join the four-course rotation of honors offerings at the author's two-year institution. Each of the other offerings also comprised general education content, making them easily integrated into the course requirements of students of nearly any major field of study. Students with a minimum 3.50 cumulative GPA were eligible to both join the Honors College (and receive a scholarship) and join the Honors classes. The other honors courses were created with in-person formats, though, making ECON2313H the first online Honors College course offered at this institution.

In developing the Honors Principles of Macroeconomics course, consistency in course content with the traditional Principles of Macroeconomics course was required to be in compliance with the state course transfer system's course description, though assignment composition and delivery would differ with a focus on structure and objectives related to critical thinking and sustained virtual engagement. In fact, the mission of the Honors Program at this university is to "provide a vibrant educational environment for innovative teaching and learning within an interdisciplinary curriculum sparked by creative, critical inquiry and respect for a multiplicity of thoughts, experiences, and identities" (Supratman, 2022, page 1). While instructors have much latitude in developing these honors courses, a set of objectives guided their creation (Table 1).

Table 1
University Honors College Course Objectives

- To help students develop effective written communication skills (including the ability to make effective use of the information and ideas they learn).
- To help students develop effective oral communication skills (while recognizing that not all
students are comfortable talking a lot in class).
- To help students develop their ability to analyze and synthesize a broad range of material.
- To help students understand how scholars think about problems, formulate hypotheses, research those problems, and draw conclusions about them; and to help students understand how creative artists approach the creative process and produce an original work.

To help students become more independent and critical thinkers, demonstrating the ability to use knowledge and logic when discussing an issue or an idea, while considering the consequences of their ideas, for themselves, for others, and for society.

These objectives spoke strongly to the development of communication and critical thinking

skills, which in combination with Dotter and King's (2021) stated challenges (physical and mental health, student engagement, sustained participation, and student morale), formed the basis for the creation of Honors Principles of Macroeconomics. Assignment categories for this class included the following:

- "In-the-news" interactive discussions (video, written, research)
- Intensive current events written assignments
- Exams with more critical thinking (short answer) questions than objective multiple-choice

This presentation will cover each of these assignment types in-depth and will provide examples of each, as well as student feedback regarding the course in general. Focus will be on student participation and engagement via the development of communications- and critical thinking-based assignments. A reflection on possible course improvements will follow.

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Developing an Instructional Unit on Organizational Culture: Utilizing Consulting Case Studies in the Classroom

John McGrath, Trinity University

Abstract
This paper describes the development of an instructional unit on organizational culture that utilizes consulting case studies from the field of safety communications. Safety culture is

described and linked to accident rates and the analysis of adequate instructions and warnings. Two case studies are used to illustrate concepts related to culture and effective safety communications.

Introduction
Disseminating communication research through consulting helps improve the day-to-day practice of communication and illustrates to outside audiences and our students the relevance of what we do. Using consulting examples in the classroom can also help illustrate concepts from the text or other assigned reading. An example from the realm safety communication consulting, which focuses on how organizations communicate safety information to their employees and customers, can provide a new and interesting addition to the organizational communication course. The goal of this proposal is to outline the development an instructional unit on organizational culture that utilizes case studies from safety communication consulting.

Background
Every year in the United Sates, thousands of people die on the job and millions more are injured (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2021) Inadequate instructions, warnings and safety training are often linked to the cause of serious accidents at industrial workplaces such as factories or construction sites (Gib, et al. 2015). Many of these deaths and injuries could be prevented with improved safety communication programs, so the research contribution in this area could not be more important (Mohandes, et al. 2022).

Organizational Culture
Research on organizational culture provides a framework for consultants to use when helping organizations improve safety practices, where organizational culture is defined as a system of shared values, beliefs and expectations that influence how people behave in organizations. Moreover, work environments have different psychological contexts and attitudes about safety, often described as safety cultures. Stronger safety cultures promote safety-first attitudes and otherwise prioritize and reward safe behavior, whereas weaker safety cultures have a lax attitude toward safety, fewer resources devoted to safety, and may even develop the norm of permitting unsafe behavior. Indeed, research has linked weaker safety cultures with higher accident rates (Kim et al, 2016, Hale, et al. 2010).

Safety Communications Consulting
Consultants analyze the extent to which an organization values safety, as manifested through various channels used (or not used) to send and receive messages about safety, including mission statements, speeches, safety meetings, face-to-face training, instructional videos, emails, posters, manuals, websites, warning signs and warning labels. Channels are analyzed in terms of access, clarity, credibility and contextual influence, all in order to make recommendations for improvement. OSHA standards can provide additional criteria for analysis. For example, manufacturers of chemical products must meet the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard that requires products to include specific warning labels, safety data sheets, and employee training regarding the risks of handling hazardous chemicals.

Many consumer and industrial products can also cause injuries if not used according to instructions and warnings. Product manufacturers should use a hazard control procedure that

follows a design, guard, warn sequence in order to reduce the possibility of injury. The first and best strategy for controlling hazards is to design them out – to eliminate them. If a different design is not feasible or available and if it was not practical or possible to guard against the hazard, a final strategy should be to provide adequate warnings about hazards. Organizations have an obligation to provide the best possible warnings for their customers who will be using their products (Wogalter, 2006), and those that do could be described as having a strong safety culture.

Here again, the research literature provides an avenue for applying communication science to the analysis of warnings, and linking the analysis to an organization's safety culture. Warnings have been studied extensively, resulting in a set of standards that provide research-based guidelines for designing effective safety messages for organizations that value safety in product design. The American National Standards Institute Product Safety Sign and Labels Standard (ANSI Z535.4) recognizes that safety messages should capture product users' attention through the use of signal words (e.g. Danger, Warning, Caution), bright colors, and images. Warnings should also be specific about the nature of the hazard, how to avoid it and the consequences of not avoiding it. In addition, warnings that utilize pictures, images or pictographs have been proven to capture attention and improve warning label effectiveness. Finally, a warning label or sign should be located in an area where it can be easily seen, read and understood. Additional research-based guidelines are available for writing instruction manuals (ANSI Z535.6). Although some of these guidelines may sound obvious, unfortunately, many organizations do not take the time to carefully consider how to formulate their safety messages and some products are more likely to cause injury because of their inadequate warnings and instructions. Furthermore, many organizations are simply unaware of available ANSI standards that could make their products safer, and so the consultants role should be to help implement the guidelines for all relevant manufactured products, before they are marketed.

Classroom Application

The topic of safety communications is probably not on the radar for most communication teachers, but it does fit well in an organizational communication course. Such courses often cover the topics organizational culture and technical writing. Discussing safety culture and workplace accident rates in connection with organizational culture can be a new, interesting, real world example of the importance of formulating effective safety messages. In addition, demonstrating the application of the ANSI 535.4 research-based guidelines as best practice in technical communication could be a helpful supplement to the pedagogy of a unit on technical writing (McGrath, 2022).

To make this topic come alive in the classroom, particularly in relation to the study of organizational culture, this instructional unit will include defining safety communication as an area of research as described above, and then forthcoming will be two case studies that illustrate the application of concepts from organizational culture, safety culture and safety consulting. The case studies will describe accident investigations in the workplace in situations where the effectiveness of safety messages needed to be evaluated.

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Business Communication in a Virtual Workplace

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Abstract
The workplace is changing right before our eyes. It is crucial that students be properly prepared for a fully virtual or remote work environment. This presentation will provide practical suggestions for how educators can help students learn how to communicate effectively in a virtual environment, develop an executive presence virtually, and highlight relevant digital skills to potential employers.

State of the Problem/Purpose
Technology has changed the way work is done in recent decades. However, the shift became even more evident in response to COVID-19. Overnight, employees went from reporting to an

office to working from their dining room tables. While many tech skills have been learned in a trial by fire manner in recent years, fundamental changes to how employees work and interact with one another are occurring.

The virtual workplace is nuanced. With technology-mediated communication, workers are navigating unique situations that do not exactly mirror the traditional face-to-face work environment. This raises the question, "How do we prepare students for a virtual or remote workplace?"

For the purposes of this presentation, remote work will be defined as having the opportunity to work from home one or more days a week. This new virtual workplace extends from the interviewing process, to attending and hosting business meetings, giving presentations and having formal and informal discussions with their coworkers and superiors. In short, how do we help students develop professional and executive presence in a virtual environment?

According to Shirey (2013), executive presence is the "confidence to express ideas with conviction and the ability and desire to engage and influence others in the process." (p.xx). Many universities help students to develop executive presence and even to enter the workforce with confidence through resume reviews and mock interviews and courses on how to give effective presentations and even negotiation. But how does this translate to a situation where the workplace is completely virtual?

According to recent research conducted by McKinsey, remote work is here to stay and is expected to increase in the years to come. In fact, they found that 58% of their respondents had the ability to work from home for all or part of the week. Perhaps even more telling is that 87% of their survey respondents said that they would take the opportunity to work from home if it was offered. As a result of their study, McKinsey states that "we view these data as a confirmation that there has been a major shift in the working world and in society itself."

This presentation will provide recommendations in three key areas:
1. How to communicate effectively in a virtual environment
2. How to have executive presence virtually
3. How to highlight relevant digital skills on resumes

Methodology
The researchers will analyze secondary data to further understand the shifting workplace dynamics. This will allow for teaching recommendations to be generated that the audience can implement in their classes.

Findings
Data will be analyzed prior to the March 2023 conference.

Summary
The workplace is changing right before our eyes. It is crucial that students be properly prepared for a fully virtual or remote work environment. This presentation will provide practical suggestions for how educators can help students learn how to communicate effectively in a

virtual environment, develop an executive presence virtually, and highlight relevant digital skills to potential employers.

Implications for Business
From the interview process to the day-to-day work environment, corporations are shifting to being fully remote or a hybrid work environment. This innately changes the skillset needed to be successful in today's workplace. In many industries, workers are now being expected to come in with this technology adeptness. Preparing students for this new work environment will enable organizations to operate more effectively due to their workforce having the desired skillset.

Ozimek (2020) also suggests that remote work is here to stay and that overall, the transition to working remotely has gone better than expected. He also notes that there are benefits of remote work such as increased productivity and greater autonomy for workers. However, in order to compete and be successful in this work environment, employees must have the skills needed to display virtual executive presence.

Implications for Education
As educators, we aim to prepare students for the workplace. Now more than ever, that must include a deep understanding of how to navigate a virtual workplace. This necessitates covering course concepts with the additional layer of how a digital environment impacts the concept. For example, students must be taught how to effectively communicate with a manager or co-workers in both face-to-face and technology-mediated environments. There are unique concerns that arise in a digital environment. This presentation will consider how to help students navigate these differences so that they can be set up for success in a virtual work environment.

While some students may be familiar with video technology, they may not know the proper protocol and process for conducting business in a virtual work environment. By including this as standard part of the business curriculum, we can help to better prepare students for the new work environment in which they will be entering.

With the prevalence of technology in today's workplace, it is important that students know how to effectively highlight their digital skills on their resumes and in interviews. Sometimes students do not realize the need to highlight skills that they perceive to be commonplace. As instructors, we can help guide them in how they tell their professional story on their resume and help them tie class and extracurricular experiences to their job search.

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Communications and Controversy: A Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Posts

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Abstract

Sentiment analysis tools may be leveraged to monitor discussions on social media platforms. Such tools can provide meaningful insights about organizations and their public image. This research illustrates that organizational communication can have immediate, measurable impacts on public perception. By using sentiment analysis tools organizations may swiftly identify the impact of their communication and potentially take action to counteract negative public sentiment when it occurs.

Purpose

This study employs an analytics-based approach and performs natural language processing—in the form of a parsimonious rule-based model for sentiment analysis—to evaluate changes in public sentiment of three reputable corporations surrounding the release of controversial press communications. This paper explores the potential implications that leveraging sentiment analysis tools may have on our understanding and assessment of the impact that corporate communications may have on a given organization's public image.

Literature & Background

With the proliferation of Web 2.0 technologies, including social media, the diffusion of information by consumers, critics, and news outlets has increased at an ever-increasing rate. As such, social media represents a vast collection of information about opinions, feelings, and sentiment, generated in real-time by a diversity of users. The strategic importance of social media monitoring and how sentiment analysis tools can be used to evaluate the impact that the diffusion of information over virtual channels has on a company's reputation has been studied in a variety of contexts (Colleoni, Arvidsson, Hansen, & Marchesini, 2011; El Barachi, et al., 2021; Prichard, et al., 2015).

Although sentiment analysis is a popular tool for market research and evaluating public perceptions on various topics, little research has investigated the impact that sensitive corporate communications in times of crisis and controversy have on public opinion. This study attempts to address this gap by looking at three companies from three different industries and evaluating the trends in sentiment associated with their respective controversies.

Methodology

This study implements an inductive methodology that can be classified into four core steps: 1) Identify relevant corporations to investigate 2) Leverage custom python code to scrape the relevant text-based posts from Twitter 3) Employ a parsimonious rule-based model (VADER) to classify the sentiment polarity of each tweet 4) Perform exploratory analysis to evaluate public

sentiment towards each company over time.

Analysis & Findings

This paper investigates the sentiment over time associated with three companies from three different industries, Crumbl Cookies, Spotify Technology S.A., and Uber Technologies, Inc., that experienced various public controversies associated. We scraped a total of 5,789, and 10,028 and 6,967 tweets over the 11-month time period for Crumbl, Spotify and Uber respectively. After scraping the text-based posts, we leveraged the VADER sentiment analysis tool to rate each tweet on a scale of -1 (very negative sentiment) to 1 (very positive sentiment) (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014). These scores were then aggregated by month to provide insights into the sentiment patterns for each of the three companies.

Crumbl Cookies

The first company this paper investigates is Crumbl Cookies, a Utah-based cookie franchise with over 550 locations nationwide. Founded in 2017, Crumbl experienced rapid expansion and quickly captured a large share of the cookie market. In early 2022, local competitors with similar product offerings entered the stage, and on May 10, 2022, Crumbl filed a lawsuit against Dirty Dough and Crave Cookies. The suit claimed, "the defendants both formed businesses copying Crumbl's processes, trademarks, and trade dress in a confusingly similar way," and that they had "unique ties" to Crumbl (McGowan, 2022). Press releases regarding the suit resulted in a significant amount of backlash on social media against the company for leveraging its position as a billion-dollar company to squash competition (Asay, 2022).

As can be seen in Figure 1, Crumbl boasts an average sentiment score of 0.295, which suggests that Crumbl is typically discussed on Twitter in a fairly positive light. Despite a pattern of diminishing sentiment over several consecutive months, Crumbl's image appears to recover in April 2022. However, the impact of the lawsuit and the surrounding controversy on the public's sentiment towards Crumbl is clear. Immediately after the lawsuit was filed in May, a clear dip in the aggregate sentiment score is visible. This trend continues throughout the summer, ultimately reaching its lowest point of the eleven-month period in July. However, this negative pattern does not continue indefinitely as Crumbl's sentiment score appears to recover to 0.28 the following month in August.

Spotify Technology S.A.

Spotify is a Swedish media company with over 433 million monthly active users (as of June 2022) and is one of the largest music streaming service providers (About Spotify). In December 2021, a coalition of scientists, medical experts and others sent Spotify a letter highlighting false and misleading claims that popular Spotify-based podcasters were making on their podcasts, such as encouraging people not to get vaccinated and promoting ivermectin as a treatment for COVID-19, despite FDA and CDC warnings to the contrary (Hernandez, 2022). Following a press release regarding the issue in January 2022, Spotify was highly criticized for their weak response (Sisario, 2022). In February 2022 Spotify announced that they would implement changes to guard against COVID-19 misinformation.

Similar to the Crumbl Cookies, the negative impact of Spotify's response to their controversy is immediately evident in their Twitter sentiment score in the three months following the

announcement of the letter. Spotify's sentiment score ultimately hit its lowest point in the 11-month period during February 2022 at only 0.173. Despite the initial drop in the company's sentiment score, Spotify's response appears to have triggered a wave of positive sentiment in March and April, ultimately leveling to its average score in the months following. This situation presents a model of an effective response that reversed the trend associated with negative public opinion.

Uber Technologies, Inc.

Uber Technologies is a well-known mobility as a service provider that facilitates services such as ride-hailing and food delivery. In July 2022, there was an international investigation launched into Uber's aggressive entrance into countries and cities around the world, citing that Uber frequently challenged the reach of existing laws and regulations, used stealth technology to thwart regulators and law enforcement, and controversially courted prominent political leaders (Washington Post). The investigation—based on more than 124,000 emails, text messages, memos, and other records—dubbed The Uber Files, ultimately resulted in significant public scrutiny of the corporation (Davies, 2022). On July 1, 2022 Uber released an official statement regarding the controversy (ICIJ, 2022).

Contrasting to the scores of both Crumble and Spotify, Uber has a relatively neutral average sentiment score. This suggests that approximately half of the posts associated with Uber on Twitter reflect negative sentiment to varying degrees, and the other half reflect a positive sentiment. This careful balance of public image points to the importance of monitoring user sentiment, especially in industries where the user experience is critical. The impact of the Uber Files investigation is clearly evident in Figure 3, however the impact does not appear to have long-lasting effects. In June 2022, a dip in public sentiment began to appear as news of the Uber controversy continued to generate more discussion online, and then in July Uber experienced its most significant drop in public sentiment previously recorded. This drop resulted in Uber's overall sentiment score dropping below zero, suggesting that more than half of the posts referencing Uber in the month of July reflected negative sentiments. Similar to the patterns with Crumbl and Spotify, Uber was able to rapidly address the issue and recover from the dip in public opinion the following month.

Conclusion

The findings from this research suggests that organizations should monitor social media outlets to understand current public opinion about them. This research demonstrates that organizational communication can have instantaneous and quantifiable impacts on the public perception of that organization. Using analysis tools like the sentiment analysis one demonstrated here can assist organizations in immediately understanding the impact of their communication and strategically acting to offset negative public sentiment when it occurs.

The Impact of Communication Medium on Apology Effectiveness

Kristen Wilson, Eastern Kentucky University

Abstract

We've all been there—a mishap, an ethical lapse, or even something out of our control happens, and the burden now falls to us to convey an apology to those transgressed. How should one proceed, and what should one include so that the apology is well received and interpreted to be sincere? Further, if the message remains the same (and includes all the elements required for an apology to be deemed effective), what impact does the chosen communication medium have on the overall apology perception?

Description

We've all been there—a mishap, an ethical lapse, or even something out of our control happens, and the burden now falls to us to convey an apology to those transgressed. How should one proceed, and what should one include so that the apology is well received and interpreted to be sincere? Luckily, a plethora of research exists surrounding the art of crafting an apology and the components that are deemed integral and effective, as will be briefly discussed below. But this researcher wonders, is the effectiveness or sincerity of an apology impacted by how it is received? In other words, if the message remains the same (and includes all the elements required for an apology to be deemed effective), what impact does the chosen communication medium have on the overall apology perception? Should this be of notable concern to the one writing the apology? This proposal discussed the beginning stages of a study being developed to examine this phenomenon.

When violations of trust occur in an organizational setting, whether in negotiations or day-to-day business, an apology is often well-suited as a beginning measure to repair that trust. In fact, apologies are often viewed as the key verbal tool aimed at improving communication and an initial step in repairing relationships (Lewicki et al., 2016). While some research commends apologies as "cheap talk" with little value toward repairing relationships (Farrell & Rabin, 1996) or, at a maximum, only a supplement to relationship reparations (DeCremer, 2010), other research suggests the effectiveness of an apology is dictated and can be directly improved by including certain elements. These elements can include taking ownership of the issue through a verbal account of the situation (what the violation entailed and why it occurred) and the associated consequences (Bies & Shapiro, 1987). What is included in the apology is certainly important to those receiving it and ultimately impacts the receiving party's overall perception of the person from which the apology originates.

While the literature in apologies is vast, from social psychology, to organizational behavior, to applied areas, and much in between, more recently, research points us toward a more structured paradigm for which elements those transgressed perceive as effective in an apology. Most notably, perhaps, is the study by Lewicki, Polin, and Lount, which suggests that there are six apology components (Lewicki et al., 2016), all of which contribute significantly to the effectiveness of an apology (see Table 1). It is also of note that the results vary between the context of the situation; specifically, if it is deemed as a competence violation or an integrity violation.

Expression of Regret A statement in which the violator expressed how sorry they are
Explanation A statement in which the reasons for the offense and described
Acknowledgement of Responsibility A statement which demonstrates the violator understands their part in the offense
Declaration of Repentance A statement in which the violator expressed their promise not to repeat the offense
Offer of Repair A statement extending a way to work toward rebuilding trust
Request for Forgiveness A statement asking for the victim to pardon the violator's actions

Table 1: Apology Components and Definitions (Lewicki et al., 2016)
Currently, this researcher is working to replicate the 6-Component Apology Combination study conducted by Lewicki and colleagues, introducing a new factor—communication medium. Participants will be assigned to different conditions, including violation type (competence violation vs. integrity violation), apology components, and medium type. The medium types being considered are text only, including a social media post and an email; audio, as recorded for a voicemail or podcast; and visual, represented by a video recording of the apology from an individual. Gender is also being considered as an element for inclusion at this time, as certain mediums would reveal an individual's gender (e.g., oral and visual mediums), which may or may not match the gender of the individual receiving the apology. Specifically, each participant will be randomly assigned and presented with a trust violation scenario (one competence- and one integrity-based; adopted from prior research) and a definition of apology components coupled with an apology statement. Participants will then be asked about the apology efficacy, including three questions: How effective would this apology be at dealing with the violation; How credible would this statement be; and How adequate would this statement be?

Moving forward, this researcher hopes to solicit input and feedback from peers attending the 2023 Association for Business Communication Southwest Conference to refine the study. If invited, initial data (assuming it is available at that time) and examples of the experimental conditions will be presented at the conference.

Pandemic Impact on Internships: How Effectively Did Business Interns Pivot to Meet the Moment?

Lorelei Ortiz, St. Edward's University

Abstract

This presentation explores pandemic impact on internships during the Spring 2020 semester when Covid lockdowns began. Using anonymized data from a Spring 2020 Business Internship course, this study details the breadth of the impact and uses employer exit survey data from intern performance reviews to assess how effectively business interns were able to pivot to successfully complete the internship. The presentation concludes with practical suggestions for student internship success.

Description
According to economic research by Fu (2021) and Konkel (2021) of Indeed.com, internships have historically provided college students and new hires valuable opportunities to explore and

develop professional networks, discover career interests, and potentially receive full-time job offers. In fact, as the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) points out, 70% of employers make full-time job offers to interns, and 80% of students accept these offers. Internships also provide indispensable opportunities for college students to gain practical work experience and insight into workplace environments to help prepare them for professional success and job readiness after graduation (Konkel, 2021; Ortiz & MacDermott, 2017; Ortiz & MacDermott, 2018). The Covid-19 pandemic, however, brought many changes and challenges to traditional internship structures across all industries, both domestically and globally, and changed the nature of internships almost overnight (Klein & Scott, 2021; Teng et al., 2022; Youngblood, 2020).

Researchers and experts are still assessing the impact of the pandemic on internships; yet, recent studies are already highlighting some interesting findings. Internship listings data from Indeed.com show that internship job postings on Indeed's U.S. website through April 13, 2021 declined, with the share of internship postings per million down 39% and 15% from the same dates in 2019 and 2020, respectively (Fu, 2021; Konkel, 2021). However, remote internships increased during the pandemic, with 20-25% of internship postings mentioning remote work during 2020 and 2021, up from only 3% in March 2019, almost a sevenfold increase (Fu, 2021; Konkel, 2021). Research by Hiring Lab also found that remote postings doubled during the pandemic (Kulko, 2021). These findings are consistent with studies from the National Association of College and Employers (NACE) which found that only 22% of college students took internships in 2020, with half of those internships being in-person and many moving online as the pandemic progressed (Gray, 2021).

To further grasp the impact of Covid on internships there must be some understanding of access and quality of internships (Gray, 2021; Konkel, 2021) which are essential to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives of both academic institutions and organizations. Preliminary research such as the 2021 NACE study found that online interns were more likely to be continuing-generation, have higher GPAs, come from upper-income families, and be non-STEM majors than in-person interns (Gray, 2021). In terms of internship quality and takeaways, online interns in the NACE study reported lower satisfaction, career and academic developmental value, 21st-century skills development, network development, and high-skill tasks than in-person interns (Gray, 2021). Yet, other studies such as Teng et al. (2022) found that online interns working remotely reported high levels of satisfaction in terms of soft and technical skills development and learning gains. Also relevant is the question of whether the pandemic shift to remote internships impacted internship compensation. The NACE research found that online internship positions were more likely to be unpaid compared to in-person positions, at a ratio of 42% to 34.9%, respectively.

The purpose of this presentation is to further explore pandemic impact on internship opportunities and the nature of internships such as the shift from mainly in-person internships to virtual in 2020, with emphasis on what impact these shifts had on employer expectations around soft skills such as oral and written communication, teamwork, organization, time management, productivity, and dependability. In addition, this presentation will explore whether the types of activities required by the internship, the length of internships, and weekly hours worked during the internship changed at the outset of Covid lockdowns in March 2020. Using anonymized data from a Spring 2020 Business Internship course, this study details the breadth of the pandemic

impact and uses employer exit survey data from intern performance reviews to assess how effectively 21 business interns were able to pivot to successfully complete the internship, including their overall performance on key soft skills metrics.

The presentation will conclude with discussion and implications as well as practical suggestions for preparing students for success in the ever-changing landscape of internships, expanding on Forbes Council (2022) and Youngblood (2020) best practices which include but are not limited to the importance of communication between employer and intern, setting and managing realistic expectations, and making interns feel part of the organization regardless of in-person or virtual. ABC members will gain a deeper understanding of specific changes and challenges to internships, how effectively interns pivoted to meet the moment, and how we can best prepare students for internship success as the residual effects of the pandemic continue to generate volatility in workplace environments.

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Exploring challenges to engage Corporate Communication students in a post-COVID-19 world at a minority serving institution with a large number of transfer and non-traditional students

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Abstract
As colleges and universities return to face-to-face instruction following the COVID-19 pandemic, Corporate Communication professors face many challenges as they are experienced by the authors of this proposal. It seems that the pandemic has changed the way we prefer to work, learn, teach, and live. This project aims to uncover the changing and challenging nature of learning and teaching Corporate Communication with the goal to provide remedies and strategies to keep the major alive and robust.

Proposal Purpose
As colleges and universities return to face-to-face instruction following the COVID-19 pandemic, Corporate Communication professors face many challenges as they are experienced by the authors of this proposal. In the university where the authors work, which is a minority-service institution with a high number of transfer and non-traditional students, new enrollment numbers for the fall 2022 semester show an overall drop in registered students, as well as an increase in those registered for online sections and a general decrease in the registration for face-to-face classes. It seems that the pandemic has changed the way we prefer to work, learn, teach, and live. Scholars who study teams observe that the pandemic has changed what we know about virtual teams and how virtual teams used to function pre-COVID-19 (Feitosa & Salas, 2021). Their observations raise the possibility that our students' increased preference for online courses may be a reflection of workplace trends on remote work. Given our students' preference for online learning, it is important to understand what students appreciate about online learning during the pandemic (Chakraborty et al., 2021), and to evaluate how current scholarship on students' recent online learning experiences compare with our students' experiences. This proposal aims to uncover the changing nature of learning and teaching Corporate Communication with the goal to provide remedies and strategies to keep the major alive and robust.

Methodology
The study is currently underway. We are in the process of collecting data from our Corporate Communication majors to understand how the pandemic has affected their approach to education and work. Many of our students are full-time or part-time employed. To understand the reasons for changing outlooks, we are using an exploratory online survey to identify major themes in the students' responses. We are interested to know:
• if the students' priorities have changed since the beginning of the pandemic;
• how they manage their school and work;
• what new skills and knowledge, if any, they believe would benefit them in terms of current and future employment; and
• how the program can better support student success.

Preliminary Findings
As we are still collecting data, we can report on some studies that have been published recently on the effects of the pandemic. Specifically, Treve (2020) reported that with the start of the pandemic, colleges and universities faced many challenges that affected the quality of teaching. The success of the switch from face-to-face instruction was dependent on how well colleges and universities could maintain interaction between students and faculty using available technology, how competent teachers were with technology and innovative pedagogies to engage students, the ability of a teacher to change and adapt to a new way of teaching, availability of specialized equipment and technology to teach creative arts and other subject that were traditionally taught face-to-face, and, because of the changing workplace, the need for "upskilling and reskilling programs" as a result of switching to telecommuting or layoffs (p. 217; Pulsipher, 2020, p. 1). Globally, the pandemic led to increasing inequalities in education attainment in developing countries because of the availability of needed technology; negatively affected less-proficient students who struggled with the taught subjects and the technology; decreased the number of international students because of travel bans; reduced vital face-to-face collaboration needed in medicine, for example; and potential "risks that students [would] have lower output and achievement outcomes online" because of increased cheating and decreased engagement and concentration in online classes (Treve, 2020, p. 218, 221).

Similar to Treve (2020), Bhagat and Kim (2020) report that the pandemic has created a number of serious challenges to higher education, including technology access for learning and teaching, quality of online education, new financial burdens for students and colleges and universities, and student engagement issues with online learning.

Implications for Corporate Communication Pedagogy
Corporate communication programs, facing dropping enrollment numbers as students return to work and, in some cases, witnessing fundamental changes in how organizations maintain their operations by offering workers more flexibility in where and how to work, should proactively reexamine their curricular offerings in terms of content and delivery. If virtual work is gradually taking over the corporate sphere, then courses should reflect that. Online classes, as a preferred delivery mode by many students, should reflect the best practices of online teaching in terms of access and management. First and foremost, instructors should help students gain access to laptops that they may need to engage in online learning and to train them on how to use online

learning tools (Atout et al., 2022). For example, nontraditional students may face more challenges than traditional students in exploring and adapting to new technology tools. Bhagat and Kim (2020) suggest assessing "students' engagement capacity to obtain a precise understanding of whether each student can practically adapt to online delivery plans of the educators" (p. 368). Student engagement in asynchronous online courses is one of the major challenges instructors currently face. Adequate instructor training and clear expectations of what levels of engagement are expected in an online course are a must to ensure consistency across multiple sections and courses. Offering additional live tutoring hours and flexible office hours is another way to help students who work during the day (p. 368). Finally, preparing materials for diverse learning styles is a way to enrich teaching content and offer students more ways to learn and engage with course materials to ensure students' success.

The Business Communication Discipline: A content analysis of the top-ranked U.S. colleges of business websites

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Abstract
The web presence for any entity sets the proverbial stage for interested visitors searching for information. Values, culture, activities, and future directions are communicated directly or indirectly via online material. In this presentation, we explore how business communication as a discipline is framed by university/college websites. Data were collected and analyzed from the websites for the top 29 colleges of business according to the U.S. News and World Report.

Introduction
The web presence for any entity, be it a for-profit organization or a non-profit organization, sets the proverbial stage for interested visitors searching for information on that entity. Visitors learn much from an organization's website both indirectly and directly. Values, culture, activities, and even future directions can be communicated directly or indirectly via online material. In the discipline of business communication, students learn about direct and indirect professional communication, as well as verbal and nonverbal communication. In this paper, we will explore how business communication as a discipline is framed by university/college websites.

A review of the relevant literature informed the research questions and structure of this paper. Areas included in the literature review are the role of web materials in organizational communication and framing business communication as a discipline.

Literature Review
To best frame our approach, we reviewed literature related to two main areas: the role of web materials in organizational communication and framing business communication as a discipline. Each area contributed to the development of the research questions and application to the field of business communication.

Web Materials and Organizational Communication

Content posted on websites has historically taken a static characteristic, being updated periodically, but not allowing for regular interaction. In recent years, engaging customers and other constituents via embedded communication channels, such as chat features and social media accounts, has become the norm on organizational websites. Saffer, Sommerfeldt, and Taylor (2013) found that the interactive nature of Twitter, a popular social media tool, can be an effective tool for public relationship building in organizational communication strategy. Mergel (2013) encourages social media usage to engage with target audiences, but cautions the importance of both quantitative and qualitative measures to assess impact and relevance, keeping mission and purpose in mind.

Vinsonhaler and Scheffelmaier (2006) developed a tool, the Internet Commerce Evaluation Scale (ICES), to evaluate the effectiveness of business websites. While the ICES is designed to evaluate websites selling products, the foundational elements important in the tool are transferrable to a university or college website. These elements include navigability, human contact information, a catalogue, coherence and organization, standardization, and efficiency.

Amplified Marketing (2022) suggested using "SMART" goals in developing and maintaining a website. These include Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely goals. When considering what content should be included on a university website, the mission and goals of the specific college unit should be considered. The goals of a business department typically involve the requirements for accreditation. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2022) accredits over 950 business schools globally and includes references to many soft skills amongst its guiding principles, such as communication and peer engagement.

Framing Business Communication as a Discipline
Bateson (1972) introduced the concept of "framing" as a means of developing and setting boundaries around a message or set of messages. This framing theory defines the process of message delivery and "influences the choices people make about how to process that information" (Arowolo, 2017, para. 3). The manner in which universities and colleges of business frame business communication via their web presence informs the discipline's perceived value to the business field and others.

Locker (1998) frames business communication as an important and relevant field of study and underscores its value as a foundational course of business study, highlighting the value of appropriate and effective communication with customers, communication theory, organizational communication, and evolving communication mediums. At the same time, Locker (1998) presents the challenge of maintaining business communication as a stand-alone course.

Business communication is frequently a discipline that is integrated within other disciplines, or that becomes a co-discipline (Dubinksy & Getchell, 2021; Zorn, 2022). If business communication is not treated as a discipline of its own accord, critical knowledge and skills may be missing from the business curriculum, as well as research in the area of business communication may not be well-informed on the field as a specialization (Zorn, 2022). Dubinsky and Getchell (2021) made the case for business communication occupying an equal footing with professional communication studies in both English and business programs to "offer a broader and more inclusive perspective on some of the more critical socioeconomic challenges facing

business education and society" (Dubinsky & Getchell, 2021, p. 461).

Research Questions
The research questions for this paper are based upon both the literature review and professional experiences in the business communication discipline. One central question serves as the focal point of our research, with a series of supporting secondary questions to follow.

Central Question:
How is the business communication discipline framed in business colleges in the United States?

Secondary Questions:
How do business colleges in the United States present their offerings via website?
What relationships exist between the descriptive characteristics of the business colleges and their business communications-related offerings?
How is multimedia utilized in the framing of business colleges in the United States?
How is social media utilized in the framing of business colleges in the United States?

Data Collection
To investigate our research questions, we utilized the top undergraduate business programs list as selection criteria for data collection. We sourced this list from the U.S. News and World Report 2022 Best Business Programs and included the programs ranked #1 through #23 and was comprised of 29 colleges and universities. Several of the rankings were shared by more than one institution, and as a result, our list included 29 institutions rather than our target of 30.

To collect data, we utilized the respective undergraduate (or general) business college (or department) website for each institution, along with the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) from the most recently available set of data, academic year 2020-2021.

Preliminary Results
Data will be analyzed using mixed methods research, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Based on the preliminary analyses completed thus far, 29 colleges of business were fully accredited by AACSB (100%). Of these schools, 6.89% offered business communication certificates, 20.69% offered a communication lab to improve verbal and written business communication, and 24.14% offered business communication consulting services related to problem-solving using business communication. When examining their websites, 62.07% had multimedia including 6.90% with animations/GIFs, 13.79% with mp3/sounds such as podcasts, 65.52% with static graphics such as logos and pictures, 20.69% with blogs, 31.03% with videos, and 0% with public newsletters. Only one college displayed visual brochures of their business communication curriculum offerings, and four displayed news stories about business communication faculty or students. When examining the social media offerings of the colleges, 65.52% had social media engagement, including 62.07% with Facebook, 58.62% with Twitter, 58.62% with LinkedIn, 51.72% with Instagram, 44.83% with YouTube, and 6.90% with other social media accounts (i.e., Flickr, TikTok).

Discussion/Expectations
Preliminary findings suggest that very few of the top-ranked colleges of businesses offer

business communication certificates, even though they offer a variety of other certificates related to data analysis, finance, accounting, and leadership, among other discipline areas.

Communication labs or centers provide students with additional extracurricular trainings in business communication and to become more competent in business speaking and writing. Several colleges had case study competitions that enabled students to practice and compete using their business communication skills. When examining consulting services offered to their local communities, colleges were embracing communication skills as a "soft skill" that can be used to solve real-world organizational problems related to communication.

The majority of college of business websites had multimedia features in their websites, with a high frequency of static graphics, videos, and blogs. These websites, were better able to communicate their values, missions, and value to a greater extent than those who did not use multimedia.

Of those websites with social media presence, the highest frequencies included Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. With these social media platforms, colleges of businesses hope to brand up their reputation and educational services to recruit new students, retain current students, and connect with business alumni, and the local communities.

With additional qualitative and quantitative analytical findings, we hope to further identify the business communication presence and value across the colleges of business. We plan to identify the variety of business communication curriculum offerings by each institution, learning what other communication courses such as persuasion, written communication, or digital communication, are offered besides the traditional business or management communication.

With our findings, we will be identify the frequencies of the offerings, determining how business communication fits into the curriculum of the top-ranked undergraduate business colleges in the U.S. Additionally, qualitative text analysis will examine web pages that are specifically based on business communication, to determine how the discipline is framed qualitatively, speaking.

Our findings will have practical implications for business communication educators and administrators. First, by knowing the communication offerings of business colleges, we will be able to make specific recommendations to improve students' business communication skills and business communication curriculum offerings. Second, our findings can inform the business communication discipline about how it has been emerging among business college websites.

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Celebrating 50 years of ABC-SWUS with FBD: The Past and Future of Business Communication

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Abstract
This session will celebrate the 50th anniversary of ABC-SWUS and FBD meeting together to promote business scholarship especially in the area of business communication. An analysis of themes of research presented over the past fifty years will be discussed. In addition, future proposed themes of research in business communication for the years ahead will also be discussed.

Introduction
In 1974 the Southwest ABCA met with two other business organizations as one of the three

founding members of the group that later became the Federation of Business Disciplines. In 1998 the renamed ABC-Southwestern United States held its 25th meeting in Dallas. This year in 2023 the ABC-SWUS and FBD are celebrating our 50th anniversary of the association.

The purpose of this session is to provide a review of our association over the last 50 years including some of our areas of research and growth as well as an opportunity to look at future trends for business communication heading into the next fifty years of the association. The two-pronged approach will involve a look through secondary resources for trends for the future of business communication. In addition, previous proceedings of ABC-Southwestern United States which include a proceedings for every year of the association as well as programs for those years will be examined for topics that have been of interest in the past as well as those that have continued over the years.

The Past

The association has had three distinct names over the past fifty years. Prior to the first meeting with FBD in 1974 until 1984, the business communicators were known as Southwest ABCA. From 1985-1996 the association was renamed as ABC-Southwest. In 1998 the association was renamed as ABC-Southwestern United States or ABC-SWUS to align with the international focus of the umbrella group the Association for Business Communication. The Federation of Business Disciplines (FBD) was known as SWFAD (Southwestern Federation of Administrative Disciplines) prior to its renaming to better fit its scope as an association which draws presenters from across the nation rather than from just one region of the country.

Early names in the association included these individuals who presented in both 1974 and 25 years later in Dallas in 1998: Sam J. Bruno, Raymond V. Lesikar, Phillip V. Lewis, Jack Lord, and John D. Pettit, Jr.

Distinguished Papers for research were started in 1984. The theme of the first distinguished paper for business communication was Telephone Apprehension: An Initial Study of Etiology by N. L. Reinsch and Phillip V. Lewis.

In 1992 ABC-Southwest decided to start Outstanding Researcher and Outstanding Teacher Awards to be given each year to outstanding individuals in the association. The award included a plaque and a check. The first Outstanding Research was Debbie D. DuFrene and the first Outstanding Teacher was Beverly H. Nelson. In later years the award was changed to one award each year and alternating between the Outstanding Researcher and the Outstanding Teacher. When this took place, the cash award was doubled to $200 each year.

A more complete study of the conference themes will be conducted over the fifty year period by examining the yearly conference proceedings and programs.

Additional information such as ABC-SWUS leaders that also served in leadership roles in ABC will also be discussed. For instance, leaders in ABC-Southwestern United States that went on to become the president of the international umbrella organization, the Association for Business Communication included Betty S. Johnson, Lamar Reinsch, Marsha L. Bayless, Roger N. Conaway, and Geraldine Hynes. ABC-SWUS leaders who served as ABC Southwestern United States Vice President on the Board of ABC included Marlin Young, Marsha Bayless, Roger

Conaway, Debbie DuFrene, and Lucia Sigmar. Other at-large Board members included Tim Clipson, Donna Luse, Marsha Bayless, as well as others that will be determined.

The Future
Business communication includes a wide area for research. By analyzing secondary research and looking at future trends, the researchers will attempt to determine popular topics and trends for future business communication research.

The presentation will conclude with an examination of research trends and ideas for business communication in the future in such categories as business communication and technology, oral communication, leadership communication, virtual communication, and team communication.

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Incorporating Artificial Intelligence Sentiment Analysis into the Business Communication Curriculum

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Abstract
Artificial intelligence and data visualization are becoming commonplace in the 21st century business environment. In particular, sentiment analysis scoring and opinion mining are two rapidly growing areas of natural language processing used in businesses to identify trends, patterns, and outliers in large data sets to make data-driven decisions. Business communication practitioners and business students need skills in the fundamental analysis of social media, and product reviews.

Description
The data-driven business world has existed for decades (Fitzgerald & O'Kane, 1999). However, business analytics has now become a driving force in the modern workplace since the Great Recession of 2008-09. As organizations have moved through a digital transformation, Big Data has become critical in gaining operational insights into problem-solving and decision-making (Lau, et al., 2012) and can include but is not limited to raw sales and marketing numbers or business communications, such as Tweets, product reviews, and emails. Since 1998 sentiment analysis of emerging social media has grown to be an integral part of marketing communications (Sanches-Nunez, de las Heras-Pedrosa, Pelaez, 2020). However, in the 21st century, the sheer volume of such data can lead to "information paralysis," leaving company leaders overwhelmed and unsure of what actions to take. To prepare business students for the modern workforce, business colleges must ensure that students are not only well-versed in the methods and tools for deciphering business intelligence problems, particularly those underlying problems embedded in social media and other forms of marketing communication.

Numerous approaches over the last couple of decades have arisen to address the need to make data-driven decisions in the workplace. For example, programming languages such as Google's Python and R take vast amounts of data and perform statistical calculations to reveal hidden insights. For non-data scientists, these numbers and raw statistical measurements can be challenging to interpret. Therefore, business intelligence platforms arose to transform copious raw numbers into easily understood visualizations. Platforms such as Tableau and Microsoft's Power BI have now become mainstream in communicating complex information to decision-makers who are not data scientists. These platforms allow for the creation of interactive dashboards that display high-level representations of insights from Big Data with techniques to drill down into the underlying details.

Business communication as textual prose does not lend itself well to statistical analysis or to visual presentation. Regardless, the ability to determine the sentiment of a message, whether an email thread, text chain, social media post, or product review, can be critical knowledge to organizations. Sentiment analysis of business communication has historically been performed by the manual, time-consuming classification of advertisements, marketing material, emails, memoranda, and other material (Mantyla, Graziotin & Kuutila, 2018) with sentiment analysis conducted as a post-event process to guide future events well after the fact. However, social media and other electronic messaging have dramatically increased communication volume, velocity, and veracity in virtually all business areas. Therefore, the need to perform near real-time analysis of data arose, along with the tools to interpret that data. Business graduates will need a fundamental knowledge of these tools, and the critical thinking and analytical skills to interpret Big Data to be competitive in the business world.

Using artificial intelligence (AI) methods and tools, business graduates will be expected to decipher the message's intent and emotion for crucial business insights. Social media platforms within organizations such as Yammer or Slack allow management to monitor the reception of initiatives, policies, and processes introduced in an organization. Twitter and Facebook can reveal the external reception of organizations' products, initiatives, and policies. Customer relation management systems such as Salesforce.com or internal databases track client interactions. Product reviews on sites such as Amazon or Wal-mart.com use Bizarre Voice's database system to capture the market's perception of products. These channels all have recorded narratives that lend themselves to sentiment analysis that new entrants in the business workforce will be expected to monitor. The insights gained from business analytics can greatly enhance quality control, spur product innovation (Stubbs, 2014), and, more importantly, give companies a competitive advantage (Duan, Cao, & Edwards, 2020).

Advances in business communication technology have made it necessary for educators to stay current with evolving practices in the management of workplace communication; moreover, incorporating technical, hands-on, collaborative learning experiences in the classroom can enhance students' understanding of not only the communication process, but also their critical thinking skills and analysis of the communication product, thus adding considerable value to their education and future employability. The rise of data analytics platforms, such as Python and business intelligence tools like Tableau, assist researchers and practitioners in analyzing their organization's data, and can provide a foundation in data analysis for current and future business

students. These business analytics platforms interface through computer services and allow non-technical business practitioners to perform critical, complex analyses with minimal training. This paper describes a pedagogical approach and resources to introduce business communication practitioners and students to the concept of sentiment analysis with AI and interpretation with Python and Tableau business intelligence platforms. With the TabPy Server, Python is then able to operate inside the Tableau data visualization application. This process allows students to simplify sentiment scoring of textual data on various analytic platforms, and to create and interpret various data visualizations that can efficiently communicate complex data to stakeholders.

Virtual Reality and the Communication Classroom

Trey Guinn, University of the Incarnate Word
Susanna Alford, University of the Incarnate Word

Abstract
In this presentation, I will share my experiences and learnings introducing VR headsets into communication courses through activities like mock interviews, "dyad dates," and delivering ted-style presentations. I will discuss what I have learned about VR headset, including implementable practices and potential hazards.

Description
High-immersion virtual reality (VR) technology is often associated with gaming. Yet, it is increasingly popular in educational contexts due to its potential to engage and motivate learners. Education is not the only space where VR has been considered. Counselors and psychologists were early adopters of Virtual Reality (VR) equipment to help clients manage phobias including public speaking. Often paired with Cognitive Behavior Therapy, therapists found VR an effective mechanism to reduce public speaking fear and one that was well-received by clients (Wallach et al., 2009).

Communication educators would be wise to consider this work, especially given the reality that many individuals struggle with speech anxiety, social anxiety, or a combination of the two. This reality seems to have only been heightened during COVID, when many people found themselves in quarantine, isolation, or simply consuming more media than engaging with people.

There are some examples of communication scholars thinking and talking about VR's educational potential for students in public speaking courses who struggle with anxiety (Davis et al., 2020). Virtual reality has potential in the educational space that goes beyond helping students address communication apprehension due to the situated and embodied learning inherent with VR (Gallagher et al., 2020).

Digital connection, metaverse, and virtual reality is all around us. Even still, integrating VR in the communication courses is not (yet) commonplace, and perhaps it may take a long while before getting there. At minimum, communication educators should know what VR is and its potential influence. This presentation will highlight just a few ways that communication educators can begin thinking about and potentially introducing virtual reality into the classroom in safe, fun, and effective ways. Specifically, I will share my experiences and learnings

introducing VR headsets into communication courses through activities like mock interviews, "dyad dates," and delivering ted-style presentations. I will discuss what I have learned about VR headset, including implementable practices and potential hazards.

With any remaining time, the presenter will open the floor for conversation related the pedagogical, theoretical, and pragmatic issues related to VR in the classroom.

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