This plan identifies the Department of Communication Studies’ approach to pursuing its Mission, aspiring to achieve unit Learning Objectives and, and evaluating the Master’s degree.

Department Mission Statement

The Department of Communication Studies is committed to promoting the growth of knowledge about communication and its use to achieve individual, group, and societal goals. Faculty and students investigate, produce, and disseminate relevant information about the multifaceted functions, processes, channels, and influences of communication historically and in the modern world. Our greatest challenges are to facilitate effective information exchange, intercultural sensitivity, relationship development, and social adaptation through human interaction, and to serve as active members of the larger communities of which department personnel are a part.

Department Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the Master of Arts program in Communication Studies, students should be able to:

1. Define communication in interpersonal and rhetorical contexts.

2. Analyze and evaluate messages and interactions in interpersonal and rhetorical settings.

3. Identify and explain historical developments and key theories in interpersonal and rhetorical communication.

4. Recognize and explain self-reflexivity in interpersonal and rhetorical contexts.

5. Evaluate critically research studies and published articles.

6. Recognize and explain multiple perspectives in interpersonal and rhetorical communication.

7. Conduct original research in interpersonal and/or rhetorical communication at a level appropriate for undergraduate students.

8. Recognize and assess ethical vs. unethical rhetorical and interpersonal communication.
Means of Assessing Student Progress

The Master of Arts degree includes four required courses, five for students who serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants. The Department graduate core entails:

- COM 710 Survey of Communication Studies
- COM 711 Rhetorical-Critical Research Methods
- COM 712 Empirical Research Methods
- COM 730 Theories of Communication
- COM 725 College Teaching in Communication is also required of GTAs

Through 2014, measures across all classes for determining the program’s success in meeting Objectives consisted of examination and paper or project grades in each class, final course grades, and— for degree completion— submission of an approved thesis or professional paper, or passing written and oral comprehensive examinations.

We learned in 2014-15, however, that course grades alone do not constitute adequate evidence for Assessment of a program’s efficacy. Beginning with 2015-16, therefore, Assessment of the Department’s M.A. program was revised to include:

1. Acceptance and presentation of papers, projects, etc. to refereed outlets. These can range from on-campus competitions, typically sponsored by the Graduate College but judged by faculty from across campus, to regional, national, or international conferences affiliated with disciplinary or interdisciplinary professional associations. Papers or projects typically begin in a class and are developed into submissions following faculty guidance.

2. Students develop graduate portfolios during the course of their four semesters. Portfolios include narratives on teaching and research, sample papers that reflect what students see as their “best work,” and a program assessment completed at the end of the second year of course work.

3. Progression from the UNLV M.A. program to the next level of education. Most immediately applicable is student movement to a doctoral program in Communication Studies. Department graduates have also pursued doctoral degrees (or other advanced credentials) in cognate disciplines (political science, psychology, sociology, history, education), though, and have continued work begun in the M.A. program as part of their advanced work. Similarly,