

Concept Paper Template for New Degree Program Proposal

Pre-vetting Information

I. Title/Department/College/Proposer Contact Name and Contact Information

Health Sciences Communication, M.S.

Joint degree between School of Communication, College of Liberal Arts and the Wegmans School of Health and Nutrition, College of Health Sciences and Technology.

Proposers: Tracy Worrell trwgl@rit.edu (COLA), Barbara Lohse baliht@rit.edu (CHST), Elizabeth Ruder ehriht@rit.edu (CHST), Pat Scanlon pmsgsl@rit.edu (COLA)

II. Describe goals and justification for proposed program (1 page)

The Master of Science in Health Sciences Communication (HSC) is designed for individuals seeking specialized academic training in designing, evaluating, and implementing effective, evidence-based communication strategies and messages to address the health needs of diverse audiences. Students will also gain knowledge on appropriate social and behavioral science research design and methodology. Graduates of the program will be prepared for a variety of positions including those in public health, hospitals and other healthcare settings, federal agencies, foundations, corporate wellness entities, and to further their medical careers.

This unique joint degree program will meet a number of current and future student needs. With two foci, Communication and Technology and Health and Nutrition, students will be able to choose a track that will best serve them in their future career.

a. Justification:

- i. Adding a degree program in Health Sciences Communication is a logical move for RIT for a number of reasons. First, the faculty and the majority of curricular elements, both within the School of Communication and College of Health Sciences and Technology, already are in place. Second, the job market for health care and related fields is projected to explode in the coming decades¹. Third, Health Communication is a rapidly growing academic sub-discipline within the Communication field, one likely to attract not only future scholars but also the sort of grant dollars so integral to RIT's growth and stature. Communication is a cornerstone to establish health literacy, a key issue for successful healthcare practice. Fourth, this degree program will meet the professional needs of a number of our students in the College of Health Sciences and Technology as well as healthcare professionals. Finally, having a focus on science and behavior change provides an innovative program that transcends the traditional approaches to health communication.
- ii. The focus in Communication and Technology will provide students with a foundation in theory and the practice of effective health sciences communication. With new communication technologies continuing to emerge (e.g. interactive apps, personalized messages via

smartphone), we are seeing novel and distinctive opportunities for behavior change intervention. In addition, with the increasing risk and frequency of health crises (e.g. EBOLA, SARS) there is a large need for well-trained health communicators (interpersonally; clinician/patient and publicly; health campaigns). In the United States of America's Healthy People 2020 report, Health Communication is listed as an objective of importance to improve population health outcomes and to achieve health equity. Health communication is discussed as "central to health care, public health, and the way our society views health." Communication students with an interest in furthering their education within the health sciences will become leaders in this endeavor.

iii. The focus in Health and Nutrition will enable students to practice a health literate approach to communicate health and nutrition issues and apply behavioral strategies in the practice of nutrition, health coaching, wellness management, and exercise science for public and professional audiences. In addition, the Commission on Dietetic Registration requires a Master's degree in any major by 2024 to be eligible for the Registered Dietitian credential. Accreditation of any program meeting this requirement must include fulfillment of several standards pertinent to health sciences communication. Related standards include:

- Use current informatics technology to develop, store, retrieve, and disseminate information and data.
- Apply evidence-based guidelines, systematic reviews and scientific literature in the nutrition care process model and other areas of dietetic practice.
- Demonstrate professional writing skills in preparing professional communications
- Design, implement and evaluate presentations to a target audience
- Demonstrate effective communications skills for clinical and customer services in a variety of formats
- Develop and deliver products, programs or services that promote consumer health, wellness and lifestyle management.
- Deliver respectful, science-based answers to consumer questions concerning emerging trends

iv. The proposed Health Sciences Communication, M.S. demonstrates fulfillment of a number of objectives from the RIT 2015-2025 Strategic Plan. For example,

1. Enhancing skills such as critical thinking, written and oral communication, as well as collaboration (Objective I.1.1)
2. Develop opportunities for students to work on interdisciplinary projects of their own design (through capstone and final project) (Objective I.2.6).
3. Ensure that graduate programs include innovative curricula, capstone projects, cooperative education, and international collaboration (Objective II.4.1.).

4. Using existing program structures and course work, create innovative, interdisciplinary graduate degree packages, such as minors, Ph.D./MBA pathways, and co-curricular options for Ph.D., MFA, and MS degrees. (Objective II.4.2).

b. Program Goals – each track may have specific goals related to their areas, but overall program goals include:

- i. Demonstrate how to most effectively communicate health information for all levels of the socioecological model, including intra-individual, interpersonal, and community levels.
- ii. Develop skills to analyze and understand data used to develop, maintain and evaluate program to establish and support evidence-based practice.
- iii. Develop further understanding of theories related to health communication and behavior change to apply those theories within the marketplace or within scholarly research.
- iv. When necessary, help students meet specific credential requirements by providing them with a relevant master's degree within their field.

III. Description of the new program: Summarize program curriculum and other program aspects (1 page)

The MS program of Health Sciences Communication will consist of two possible core tracks; Communication and Technology and Health and Nutrition.

Curriculum: The overall curriculum will require the completion of 36 units of coursework with four required courses (12 units), the Communication and Technology core will require three elective courses (9 units), three professional core courses (9 units) and a thesis or practicum (6 units). The Health and Nutrition core will require four professional core courses (12 units) and the 12-unit Dietetic Clinician internship for students planning to sit for the Registered Dietician exam (to meet the new ACEND regulations) or two elective courses (6 units) with a thesis or practicum (6 units) (select students may choose to take three electives (9 units) with a practicum (3 units) with director permission). The degree can be completed in three academic units of time.

The four required courses are:

COMM – 7XX Health Communication

COMM – 703 Research Methods in Communication

COMM – 706 Crafting the Message

One of either SPSY – 640 Statistics or COMM – 710 Visual Communication

Professional Core for Communication and Technology

COMM – 702 Communication Theories

Choose two of the three:

COMM – 7XX mHealth

COMM – 7XX Critical Practice in Social Media

COMM – 705 Technology-Mediated Communication

Professional Core for Health and Nutrition

WSHN – XXX Health and Nutrition Education and Evaluation

WSHN – XXX Dissemination of Health and Nutrition Information

WSHN – XXX Community Nutrition & Public Health Policy

WSHN – XXX Readings in Dissemination & Implementation Science

Potential Electives

WSHN – XXX Dissemination of Health and Nutrition Information

WSHN – XXX Community Nutrition & Public Health Policy

WSHN – XXX Readings in Dissemination & Implementation Science

COMM – 714 Strategic Communication

COMM – 7XX Critical Practice in Social Media

COMM – 702 Communication Theories

COMM – 705 Technology-Mediated Communication

COMM – 710 Visual Communication

COMM – 711 Persuasion in a Digital Age

MKTG – 761 Marketing Concepts

MKTG – 772 Marketing on the Internet

HLTH – 717 Bioethics

HLTH – 700 Research Methods and Data Analysis

SERQ – 710 Evolving Contexts in Service

SERQ – 712 Breakthrough Thinking, Creativity & Innovation

PUBL – 620 Information and Communication Policy or PUBL – XXX Health Policy

ISTE – 608 Database Design & Implementation

Other courses may be applied with advisor approval.

IV. Describe new program's fit with RIT Academic Portfolio Blueprint Characteristics and criteria (0.5 page)

This degree would fit with all of the criteria and elements of the RIT Academic Portfolio characteristics and criteria. To highlight a few particular strengths:

- a. Scholarship, research and creativity – The opportunities available for students under this new degree program are unique with limitless scholarly potential. Both students and faculty will be in

positions to draw on experts within the health and communication fields to enhance the quality of scholarship and research in these areas. Having a thesis option will allow students to work with faculty in both colleges to conduct original research that will be important to the field of health sciences. The Rochester area comprises a wealth of institutional and human resources in health care, so it presents many opportunities for intellectual and professional exchange, including opportunities for external funding.

- b. **International and Global Education** – Given the rise of global health crisis, this new degree program will train students to have a broader understanding of health issues and provide them with tools to conduct research to enhance cross-cultural understanding and awareness. A number of faculty at RIT do global health communication research, opening up opportunities for students to undertake research or practicum projects in foreign countries.

Centrality – As previously mentioned this degree program fits with a number of objectives from the RIT 2015-2025 Strategic Plan. The collaboration of the School of Communication and Wegmans School of Health and Nutrition will not only increase the reputation of each but also allow RIT to become more nationally known in the areas of health sciences and communication.

- c. **Quality** – A number of faculty in the School of Communication have expertise in the area of health and communication. All of the required courses (except one) are already in place within the curriculum with highly qualified faculty. The Wegmans School of Health and Nutrition faculty are all credentialed in nutrition or exercise science. Plans for two new hires include a credential requirement. By utilizing a thesis or practicum option students will not only be well prepared academically but they will be able to tailor their experience to precisely fit their career aspirations. The thesis option will support student and faculty scholarship whereas the practicum will allow for more experiential learning necessary in many fields.

V. Synergy with other programs (0.5 page): Describe curricular linkages with other academic programs and associated interdisciplinary connection. Provide evidence of Dean support when program uses specific courses, resources, etc. from another college

- a. This is a truly interdisciplinary graduate degree with as it incorporates two schools in two unique colleges on RIT's campus. Courses will also be offered from additional programs outside of the College of Liberal Arts and College of Health Sciences and Technology. The new Wegmans School of Health and Nutrition pairing with the School of Communication will have the added benefit of allowing for collaboration with the new onsite health clinic. The new clinic may utilize this pool of ready student practitioners and communicators for both clinical and creative work providing complete cross campus synergy. Potential students will come from a variety of undergraduate programs including Communication, Nutrition Management, Biomedical Sciences, and Advertising and Public Relations, as well as others.

VI. Administrative structure for the new program (0.5 page)

- a. The new program will be housed in both the School of Communication and Wegmans School of Health and Nutrition. The graduate director for the School of Communication will advise students

on the Communication and Technology track and the head of the Wegmans School of Health and Nutrition will advise students on the Health and Nutrition track within the program.

VII. Enrollment Management Expectations and Sustainment (0.5 page): Discuss projected enrollment, program marketability and future sustainability of program based on requested input and guidance from Enrollment Management and Career Services

After meeting with Diane Ellison of Enrollment Management and Career Services it is anticipated that the Health Sciences Communication M.S. program would enroll 9-12 new students per year based on the following assumptions:

- *Most courses will be offered on-campus and attract primarily full-time students, though the degree can be completed by part-time students who are able to take daytime courses.*
- *Students are able to enter the program only in the Fall or Spring semester.*
- *Most full-time students will enroll in 12 credits per semester, the program is 36 semester credits and will take 18 months to complete.*
- *Scholarship support is limited to RIT central funding of 25 - 30% of overall tuition revenue redirected to scholarship through Institute Graduate Scholarship allocation. Any additional funding for graduate students will come from research grants and outside resources.*
- *Targeted marketing, as well as the development of partnership agreements with appropriate professional partners and organizations, and external colleges and universities will be critical to marketing and enrolling students.*
- *The timing of the approval process will affect projections for the first year; to achieve the stated goal, program marketing should begin 9 – 12 months prior to the start date.*

We (the proposers) anticipate that the 9-12 new student number will increase based on the built in student pool from the Nutrition program (particularly as we move closer to the 2024 Master's degree requirement) as well as the Health Communication track within the Communication program.

VIII. Impact on Resources (0.5 page): Describe impact of proposed program on resources:

- **Utilization of Existing Resources:** Elaborate on how this program will use resources already assigned to the academic unit / college (space, faculty / staff) etc. and the plan for reorganization or re-allocation of resources.

The Health Sciences Communication M.S. will rely on existing School of Communication faculty, existing Wegman's School of Nutrition faculty as well as new hires (already approved) within the School of Nutrition. There will be little cost in reassignment of faculty teaching courses in the new program as many of the required courses are already being taught at the graduate level. Space and other resources will not be a cost for the program to begin.

- **Cost Model Analysis:** summarize 5-year revenue and cost projections taken from **Concept Paper Cost Model Template**.

Proposers worked with Leanne Hill of the Office of Budget and Financial Planning Services to provide the attached model template.

Health Sciences Communication M.S.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL PROJECTION

Year	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	5 Year Total
Proposed Student Enrollment	9	18	20	22	22	23
CH Consumed	162	332	367	402	419	1,683
Undergraduate Academic Advisor FTE Allowance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Program Uses Existing Courses	YES					
Revenue						
Tuition	290,373\$	616,433\$	705,058\$	799,132\$	861,903\$	3,272,899\$
Unfunded Aid	(72,593)	(154,108)	(176,265)	(199,783)	(215,476)	(818,225)
Net Tuition	217,780	462,325	528,794	599,349	646,427	2,454,674
Direct Department Controlled College Expenses						
College Faculty Allowances						
CHST	15,502	32,481	36,646	41,245	44,037	169,911
COLA	33,089	69,261	78,677	88,146	94,194	363,368
Total College Faculty Allowance	48,592	101,742	115,323	129,391	138,232	533,279
College Non Instructional Allowance						
CHST	1,814	3,801	4,289	4,827	5,154	19,886
COLA	935	1,957	2,223	2,490	2,661	10,265
Total College Non Instructional Allowance	2,749	5,758	6,512	7,317	7,815	30,151
Direct College Controlled Expenses	51,341	107,500	121,835	136,708	146,047	563,430
College Overhead (Not Department Controlled)	34,479	72,216	81,670	91,772	98,015	378,152
Total Overhead	34,479	72,216	81,670	91,772	98,015	378,152
Total College Responsibility Expenses	85,819	179,716	203,505	228,481	244,062	941,582
Total Surplus/Deficit at College Level	131,960\$	282,609\$	325,289\$	370,868\$	402,365\$	1,513,092\$
Contribution at College Level	60.59%	61.13%	61.52%	61.88%	62.24%	61.64%
Academic Affairs Allocation	9,751	20,420	23,114	25,958	27,726	106,969
Total Surplus/Deficit at Academic Affairs Level	122,210\$	262,189\$	302,175\$	344,911\$	374,639\$	1,406,123\$

Contribution at Academic Affairs Level	56.12%	56.71%	57.14%	57.55%	57.96%	57.28%
Fully Allocated	22,272	46,638	52,827	59,298	63,344	244,379
Total Surplus/Deficit at Fully Allocated Level	99,938\$	215,551\$	249,348\$	285,612\$	311,294\$	1,161,744\$
Contribution at Fully Allocated Level	45.89%	46.62%	47.15%	47.65%	48.16%	47.33%

IX. The proposer is expected to complete this cost model template and provide all of the tables and data to the Provost when moving concept paper to Provost for Approval to develop full proposal.

X. Conclusion

As mentioned, adding a Master of Science in Health Sciences Communication is a logical move for RIT. This program will allow interdisciplinary growth of RIT's brand in the fields of Health and Communication. We will draw students interested in designing, evaluating, and implementing effective, evidence-based communication strategies. Graduates of the program will be prepared for a variety of positions within both the health and communication industries. As so many resources for this program are already in place, the economic cost to RIT is negligible. The job market for health care and related fields is projected to explode in the coming decades putting RIT at the forefront for the unique program of combining Health Sciences and Communication. Finally, with the 2024 master's degree requirement for registered dietitians as well as the increase in students seeking health communication degree programs, it only makes sense to offer a program for our best and brightest to continue here at RIT.

¹ "According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment is expected to increase 21% for health educators and 12% for public relations specialists in the 2012-2022 decade (www.bls.gov)."

Pat, Barbara, and Tracy,

Thank you for taking time to meet with me and discuss the details of concept paper for the MS Health Sciences Communication.

Therefore, the information I provided previously based on a full-time, campus-based MS degree remains relevant. Since all courses will be offered on-campus the market will be limited to full-time students and part-time students in the local area. As indicated in my previous email, we would anticipate 9 – 12 new students per year in this campus-based program. To achieve the goals for the program, in terms of enrollment and the market you intend to serve, we recommend that you simultaneously develop a BS/MS and/or accelerated MS option for BS Nutrition Management graduates from both RIT and elsewhere to address the upcoming change in certification requirements.

We anticipate the program will require aggressive marketing and recruitment to develop and establish an RIT presence in a market where there is significant competition- including the competitor set you have identified, as well as communication programs in the region. Targeted marketing, as well as the development of partnership agreements with appropriate professional partners and organizations and external colleges and universities will be critical to marketing and enrolling students.

While you indicated in our meeting that you are not interested in an online program at this point, we encourage you to explore this option as an opportunity to expand the market, address the needs of working professionals and employers, and to leverage existing online programs and courses.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need additional information.

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From: Diane Ellison
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2016 5:46 PM
To: Patrick Scanlon
Subject: RE: Concept Paper: MS in Health Sciences Communication

Pat,

Thank you for calling to remind me of this email and your concept paper draft, I am sorry for the delay in getting back to you. It has been a busy January, and I did overlook the email you sent on January 12.

I have reviewed the concept paper (is the one I have the most up-to-date draft?), and have a few questions. I'm not sure if you can answer these by email, or if you'd prefer to talk by phone or if you will be back soon, in person. Here are some of the questions I have:

Who is the target market for this program? Working adults? Recent graduates of four year degree programs?

What is the delivery model? On-campus courses? If so, daytime or evening? Online courses? If so, can the degree be completed entirely online?

What is the RIT value proposition and unique market position, given the competition? Where do you see the potential for attracting students who have the academic ability, interest/motivation, and resources to afford the program?

I've been reviewing competitor programs, and there are a significant number. In general there seem to be very different types of programs going after different markets:

- 1) Online programs geared toward working professionals (eg. Northwestern U, Boston U, Illinois U, Johns Hopkins U, U of Missouri, Southern New Hampshire)
- 2) Campus based programs that focus on public health and/or connect to medical schools and seem to be geared more toward full-time students: (GW, Tufts/Emerson joint program, Michigan State)

I'm guessing based on the information I have that you are going after #2, can you confirm if this is the case? If yes, I anticipate the program will require aggressive marketing and recruitment to develop and establish an RIT presence in a market where there is significant competition. In addition, if most courses will be offered on-campus the market will be limited to full-time students and part-time students in the local area.

If this is proposed as an on-campus program, enrollment projections would mirror the enrollment in the CMT MS program over the past few years, 9 – 12 new students per year. This is based on the following assumptions:

- Most courses will be offered on-campus and attract primarily full-time students, though the degree can be completed by part-time students who are able to take daytime courses.
- Students are able to enter the program only in the Fall or Spring semester.
- Most full-time students will enroll in 12 credits per semester, the program is 36 semester credits and will take 18 months to complete.
- Scholarship support is limited to RIT central funding of 25 - 30% of overall tuition revenue redirected to scholarship through Institute Graduate Scholarship allocation. Any additional funding for graduate students will come from research grants and outside resources.
- Targeted marketing, as well as the development of partnership agreements with appropriate professional partners and organizations, and external colleges and universities will be critical to marketing and enrolling students.
- The timing of the approval process will affect projections for the first year; to achieve the stated goal, program marketing should begin 9 – 12 months prior to the start date.

If I've guessed wrong on some of these assumptions, or the program is proposed as an online program let me know. If it is different, how well does the program delivery/design meet the needs of the market – for example, if you are doing a 6-credit thesis or practicum, will that work for part-time/online/working professional students? Many of the online programs seem to be time-shortened – 10 courses, completed entirely online (or Saturday courses at Northwestern) and sometimes accelerated formats.

I've tried to provide helpful information but welcome a conversation if you think it would be helpful to clarify and be sure I understand the proposed program. I am here this week, it's a little crazy getting the last-minute students here and enrolled, but if you suggest a time I can be sure to be available.

Diane

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**Health Sciences Communication M.S.
SUMMARY REPORT**

Fiscal Year	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	5 Year Total
Avg Enrollment: Students (FT + PT)	9	18	20	22	23	93
Revenue (Net of Aid)	\$ 217,780	\$ 462,325	\$ 528,794	\$ 599,349	\$ 646,427	\$ 2,454,674
Faculty Expense	\$ 48,592	\$ 101,742	\$ 115,323	\$ 129,391	\$ 138,232	\$ 533,279
Total Expense	\$ 117,842	\$ 246,774	\$ 279,446	\$ 313,736	\$ 335,133	\$ 1,292,930
Contribution Margin Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ 99,938	\$ 215,551	\$ 249,348	\$ 285,612	\$ 311,294	\$ 1,161,744

