

PROPOSAL FOR A
SPORTS COMMUNICATION MINOR
COMMUNICATION STUDIES DEPARTMENT

A. SUMMARY

The Communication Studies Department is proposing a minor in sports communication. If approved, it would be the department's first minor, and it would satisfy one of the university's stated goals: offering new programs that interest, attract, and retain students.

A sports communication minor would encompass the fields of sports journalism and sports information/media relations, and it would aim to prepare students for entry-level positions in those fields. It would also address a legitimate need. While the journalism industry in general is contracting, sports communication – fueled by the digital revolution – has emerged as a growth area. In recent years, several universities have launched majors and minors in the field. Our research indicates that no Michigan university has yet begun such a program, which would make UDM's program unique in the region.

Last spring the department got a glimpse of the potential demand for the program. The department co-hosted a Final Four sports-writing seminar and writing contest. The event brought to campus such writers as John Feinstein of the Washington Post and Bob Ryan of the Boston Globe, and the response from students interested in attending was overwhelming. More than one hundred students from dozens of high schools and colleges participated. The workshop was held the same semester that the department offered a three-credit course on Detroit sports history and journalism, which surpassed enrollment limits by 20 percent.

The minor would require 18 credit hours and would include four required courses, two of which are new. In addition, students would choose two courses from six electives, two of which are also new. (The new courses are marked with plus [+] signs, and their syllabi are attached.) We would not officially require students to do an internship or practicum, but we would strongly encourage students to take either CST 3450 (Journalism Practicum) or CST 4800 (Communication Internship) to gain field experience. At least one of the required courses (CST 3300 Sports Writing) will encourage a job shadowing experience. In the future, should we desire to change requirements for the minor, we would follow the same process we use to make changes to the major.

Teaching the minor's core courses would fall primarily to full-time faculty members Tom Stanton and Jason Roche. Both have extensive sports communication experience and industry contacts. Stanton joined UDM in August 2008, Roche in August 2009. Both are filling positions that have been vacant for several years. They are rebuilding the programs in journalism and broadcast, and, consequently, are in a

position to work the new courses into their rotations without adding additional faculty. The minor would not require new expenditures. It would be offered with the facilities currently used by the department, including the Briggs 110 lab and the studios in the basement of Briggs. The department would like to launch the minor in the fall 2010-11. Department majors, though welcome to take any CST courses, would not be able to minor in sports communication.

B. DESCRIPTION OF MINOR

1. Narrative catalog description

The sports communication minor gives students a solid foundation for succeeding in the growing field of multimedia sports journalism and sports information/media relations. The minor produces graduates who are prepared for entry-level sports positions with media outlets and with the media relations departments of professional teams and collegiate athletic departments. It also offers expertise to students who hope to pursue sports-related careers in other disciplines, such as business, law, English, history, and education. The minor requires 18 credit hours.

2. List of all courses

These four courses would be required, 12 credits:

*** CST 2030, News Writing and Reporting I, 3 credits**

An introduction to the exhilarating world of journalism and to writing for print and online newspapers. Students develop news judgment, learn Associated Press style, practice information-gathering skills, explore trends and issues in journalism, and write stories and blogs on deadline, some of which appear in The Varsity News, the student newspaper.

*** CST 2100 Video Production, 3 credits**

An exploration of the analog and digital tools (cameras, lights, video-recorders, related audio/video manipulation equipment) and techniques of video production in both controlled and location environments. Students learn production skills in the context of live and pre-produced video projects, and are introduced to editing.

+ CST 3300 Sports Writing, 3 credits

Students will learn the ins and outs of sports journalism. The course will cover sports reporting and writing for newspapers, websites, magazines, and books, including game coverage, sports features, round-ups, blogging and column writing. The course also will explore ethics, trends, and sports-news management.

+ CST 3305 Sports Broadcasting, 3 credits

The course allows students to explore the exciting world of sports broadcasting from several perspectives, including career preparation, accepted practices, ethical and business considerations, and broadcast production and writing. Students will practice preparation, writing, and sports announcing, and produce a portfolio/demo reel of their best work.

Students would select at least one course from this list, 3 credits:

* CST 2400 Principles of Public Relations, 3 credits

Introduction to public relations, which includes its evolution, needs, environments, and basic practices of public relations. Exposes students to PR writing assignments through the use of case studies. The first of a group of public relations courses and a useful elective for those who wish to gain an acquaintance with PR.

* CST 2410 Principles of Advertising, 3 credits

Overview of advertising with attention paid to market research, media selection, and the creative processes involved in advertising. Emphasizes product and service advertising. It also analyzes the social impact and role of the advertising industry in business and society.

* BUS 3120 Principles of Marketing, 3 credits

A study of the principles, concepts, functions, institutions, and environment of marketing as a social organization that fulfills distribution of goods and services through effective and ethical communication and distribution systems. Marketing topics to be covered include: new product development, market research and demand assessment, promotion, advertising, pricing, distribution, and global and Internet marketing.

* BUS 3880 Sports and Entertainment Marketing, 3 credits

The marketing of sports, as well as entertainment – music, movies, video games, etc. – has grown in importance as these leisure-time activities have had an increasing impact on pop culture. This course will examine the relevant data and theory in each of these areas, including the global marketplace. In addition, the course will connect ethics and social corporate responsibility to the marketing of sports and entertainment.

Students would also select at least one of these courses, 3 credits:

+ CST 3310 Sports Information and Public Relations, 3 credits:

This class offers a thorough exploration of the field of sports information and public relations, including developing media releases, handling media relationships, compiling statistical information, planning major events, and producing such publications as media guides and yearbooks. It is geared toward those interested in working in sports communication for professional teams or college athletic departments.

+ CST 3315 Detroit Sports History and Journalism, 3 credits

Detroit boasts a rich sports heritage. Some of the nation's most significant athletic icons – Ty Cobb, Joe Louis, Hank Greenberg, and others – made their names in Detroit. At the same time, Detroit has produced some of the country's best-known sports writers, including Harry Salsinger, Wendell Smith, Joe Falls, and Mitch Albom. This course blends both subjects: Detroit sports history and sports journalism. Focusing on the 20th Century, it will explore the city's influential athletic figures, outrageous characters, and famous teams through the journalists who covered them. It will also delve into the impact of those individuals and teams on the city.

3. Delivery format of all new courses

The new courses would be offered during daytime hours. They may also be offered as evening classes. Online delivery is not planned immediately but would be considered in the future.

4. Academic integrity and intellectual merit

The sports communication minor would be a specialized outgrowth of our journalism program, and it would be consistent with the academic integrity and intellectual merit of the communication studies major.

5. Unusual characteristics

The program would be distinctive. We are unaware of any other Michigan university that offers a similar major or minor. This has the potential to attract students and gain positive attention, and it would serve a legitimate need. Sports communication is one of our industry's growth areas.

6. Impact on related departments and concentrations

We see the impact as universally positive. The minor would complement degrees in other areas, such as business, education, English, history and law. It would also allow students who may be cautious about committing to the rapidly changing field of journalism to develop skills in the field while pursuing a major they view as more marketable.

C. MISSION

According to the mission statement, the University of Detroit Mercy “exists to provide excellent student-centered undergraduate and graduate education in an urban context. A UDM education seeks to integrate the intellectual, spiritual, ethical and social development of our students.”

This minor would complement the mission.

First, the program would be student-centered. Communication studies courses are by their very nature student-centered. Particularly in the skills area, faculty members work directly with students to develop their abilities, often through personal, coaching relationships. The sports communication minor would continue this focus.

Second, it would capitalize on UDM's urban location. Detroit is ideal for this program. The city is rare in that its metro area plays hosts to teams from all four major professional sports and several major universities. The program would seek to involve students in our urban setting through interaction and involvement with the region's professional and amateur teams and its numerous sports communication professionals.

D. OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES, AND ASSESSMENT

1. Program objectives and learning outcomes

The program would aim to give students a solid foundation for pursuing a career in sports communication, including sports journalism and sports information/media relations. This minor would support the department's major learning objectives because students who complete the minor would be able to demonstrate entry-level skills in at least two areas of applied sports communication; show understanding of one or more of the theories underlying media communication; and recognize and interpret research methods used in the sports communication disciplines.

2. Assessment

We would assess student achievement and the success of the program through portfolios that students would submit in their final semester. The portfolios would compile multimedia documents that demonstrate the scope and quality of student knowledge and skill in the sports communication field. This would be a non-course requirement, and the department chair would determine whether the requirement has been met. A committee of alumni would review the portfolios and offer feedback to the student and the department.

E. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

This program does not require any new university resources, faculty members, staff, or facilities. It would not add any costs.

1. Market and need

a. A recent Penn State survey of 384 journalism and mass communication programs demonstrated the growth in sports-related courses and forecast continuing growth in the area. The evidence of local demand is largely anecdotal based on conversations with UDM students, the number of students interested in covering sports for The Varsity News, enrollment in a winter 2009 course on Detroit sports history and journalism, and participation in a Final Four basketball writing seminar, which drew more than one hundred college and high school students to UDM last spring.

b. Program competition: Our research uncovered no other Michigan university that is offering a minor or major in sports communication or sports journalism. Several universities, however, offer programs in sports studies and sports management.

c. Market area: We anticipate drawing from the same market as the university.

d. Potential partners: UDM has several well-placed alumni who work in sports media or for sports teams, including Pete Skorich, vice president of broadcasting for the Pistons, and Reginald Hall, a sports producer at Channel 7. In addition, Prof. Tom Stanton, a baseball author who will be teaching several of the courses, has numerous state and national contacts in the sports industry.

e. Market share: As noted elsewhere, the program has no area competition.

2. Students

a. Typical student: While this program could attract some students to the university, it would draw primarily from those already attending the University of Detroit Mercy. We anticipate this would be most popular with full-time students, especially those in the athletic program.

b. Many UDM students do not have a declared minor. We believe this minor would most likely draw from that population and, thus, would not adversely impact other programs.

c. The program could attract new students to the university, but they would not have any different needs from the current student body.

d. The body of students studying in the Communication Studies Department is already one of the most diverse on campus. Given the strong lure of sports across cultural boundaries, this minor would further increase that diversity.

e. The proposed minor is not an expansion of a present program. It represents a niche and specialty within the present program.

3. Faculty

a. Within the Communication Studies Department, the primary faculty would be Prof. Tom Stanton and Prof. Jason Roche, both of whom have considerable experience in sports communication and can teach the required courses for the minor, as well as selected electives. Prof. Michael Bernacchi of the College of Business teaches two of the electives, and several adjunct faculty members are available to teach the electives not taught by Stanton or Roche.

b. No new faculty members would be needed. The additional courses would be accommodated through adjustments in the frequency of current class offerings.

c. Sports communication is a diverse field, and many of the top sports communicators in Detroit and beyond are from minority populations. Should the program necessitate additional faculty or adjunct faculty there would be a tremendous opportunity to diversify our teaching staff.

d. None of the areas would require new full-time or part-time faculty.

4. Administration and support

- a. The minor would be administered within the current structure of the Communication Studies Department.
- b. No additional support personnel would be required for this program.
- c. No academic support beyond the normal would be required for this minor.

5. Library resources

The library already offers the materials needed to support this minor. Its online subscriptions include the publications students would use. No new library resources would be needed.

6. Facilities

Though in desperate need of being updated for all communication studies courses, the Briggs 110 lab and the studios in the basement of Briggs would be sufficient for the minor program. No additional facilities would be needed.

7. External support

- a. No accreditation is available in this field.
- b. No external consultant has reviewed this proposal.
- c. External funding has not been received and is not anticipated.
- d. No resources would be reallocated from existing programs.

8. Operating revenues and costs

This section does not apply. No additional revenues would be needed, and no additional costs are anticipated.

9. Approval process

No endorsements were sought or are being offered.

10. Appendices

Syllabi for four new courses.