

Application for a New Certificate Program in Health Communication  
School of Communication  
East Carolina University

1. A statement of the educational objectives of the program.

*Our certificate program addresses the dynamics of communication from perspectives such as the influence of interpersonal communication (e.g., physician-patient communication and its relationship to health outcomes); organizational communication (e.g., the effects of organizational structures and cultures on health communication processes); media (e.g., how people use media to learn about health issues and how media influence decision-making regarding health); and culture (e.g., how intercultural communication influences health outcomes). With a background in health communication, professionals may pursue a variety of opportunities within the healthcare arena.*

*Students will develop knowledge and skills designed to address at least two of the following areas:*

- *Evaluate the role of communication in health-related decision-making.*
- *Address communication issues that exist between and among patients, providers, and family members.*
- *Explain the dynamics of social support through health communication.*
- *Create and disseminate health information.*
- *Evaluate communication within health care organizations.*
- *Interpret the multiple influences of culture on health communication.*

2. A statement of the admission standards for the certificate program and a statement of the academic retention standards for the successful completion of the program.

*The certificate program is open to any student with an earned baccalaureate degree. Students must complete the course of study earning a grade of B or higher in all certificate courses to be awarded the certificate in health communication.*

3. A statement of the proposed course sequence associated with the certificate, including titles and course descriptions both for existing courses and any new courses that may be developed.

*The certificate will require completion of 12 s.h. of graduate credit hours from the courses listed below.*

- *COMM 6210 Media and Health Communication*
- *COMM 6220 Interpersonal Health Communication*
- *COMM 6221 Intercultural Communication in Health Contexts*
- *COMM 6224 Communication and Health Organizations*
- *COMM 6226 Communication Approaches to Health Advocacy*
- *COMM 6230 Introduction to Health Communication*
- *COMM 6240 Special Topics in Health Communication*

**Course Descriptions**

**COMM 6210. Media and Health Communication (3) P:** Admission to M.A. in communication or graduate certificate, or consent of graduate program director. Theory and research of issues involving media and health. Spring.

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**COMM 6220. Interpersonal Health Communication (3) P:** Admission to M.A. in communication or graduate certificate, or consent of graduate program coordinator. Theories and practices in various health care contexts, with emphasis on relationships among patients and health care providers. Spring.

**COMM 6221. Intercultural Communication in Health Contexts (3) P:** Admission to M.A. in communication or graduate certificate, or consent of graduate program director. Intercultural communication theory and research as they apply to health contexts. Fall, even years.

**COMM 6224. Communication and Health Organizations (3) P:** Admission to M.A. in communication or graduate certificate, or consent of graduate program director. Analysis and practice of communication in health care settings. Fall, odd years.

**COMM 6226. Communication Approaches to Health Advocacy (3) P:** Admission to M.A. in communication or graduate certificate, or consent of graduate program director. Theories and practices of advocacy in health contexts. Scheduling varies.

**COMM 6230. Introduction to Health Communication (3) P:** Admission to M.A. in communication or graduate certificate, or consent of graduate program director. Introduction to the area of health communication covering interpersonal, organizational and media issues. Fall.

**COMM 6240. Special Topics in Health Communication (3)** May be repeated for maximum of 6 s.h. with change of topic. P: Admission to M.A. in communication or graduate certificate, or consent of graduate program director. Examination of new or advanced topics in health communication. Scheduling varies.

4. The catalog copy for the certificate program.

### **Certificate in Health Communication**

*The graduate certificate in health communication provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to analyze, evaluate, and apply effective communication in health contexts. The courses in the certificate program examine research, theory and practices of communication.*

*This certificate is open to students enrolled in graduate degree programs as well as nondegree applicants holding a baccalaureate degree.*

*The program requires 12 s.h. of health communication course work with a minimum grade of B from the following: COMM 6210, 6220, 6221, 6224, 6226, 6230, and 6240.*

5. A statement of how the proposed course sequences associated with the certificate will meet the stated educational objectives.

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*The certificate courses contain the core curriculum of many graduate health communication programs. The courses in the sequence examine research, theory and practices of communication, including: interpersonal (COMM 6220), intercultural (COMM 6221), organizational (COMM 6224), advocacy (COMM 6226), media (COMM 6210), and other emerging topics in health communication.*

6. A statement of the need for the proposed program and the basis for such a need supported by either externally or internally derived data.

*In order to examine the target audience's attitudes toward a certificate program in health communication, an online survey study was conducted. This survey included simple questions about interest in an online graduate (MA) degree or certificate and concerns about online learning environments ([https://ecu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0lhob3KajMEIj4](https://ecu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0lhob3KajMEIj4)). The target audience was anyone who might be interested in taking online graduate level courses in health communication. A solicitation email was distributed to current undergraduate and graduate students at ECU as well as health professionals in North Carolina.*

**Survey Results:**

*One hundred and eighty six people participated in this online survey. Of 186 participants, 10% (n = 17) were male and 90% (n = 151) were female. A majority of participants (n = 127, 75.6%) were White/European American, followed by Black/African American (n = 25, 14.9%), Mixed (n = 4, 2.4%), Hispanic American (n = 3, 1.8%), Asian American (n = 3, 1.8%), and other (n =4, 2.4%). All the participants were from the United States, with 93% (n=157) residing in North Carolina, 4 (2.4%) in Florida, 2 (1.2%) in Virginia, 2 (1.2%) in South Carolina, 1 (0.6%) in Pennsylvania, and 1 (0.6%) in Maryland. The mean age of participants was 33.9 with a standard deviation of 12.6, the youngest participant being 18 years old and oldest 70 years old. A majority of participants were working professionals, with 54.8% (n = 92) employed full-time and 13.1% (n = 22) employed part-time. About a quarter of participants, 24.4% (n = 41) were students.*

*According to the survey, 68% of respondents indicated that they are interested in an online certificate program in health communication and 58.7% in an online MA program. A vast majority of students (80%) choose online instruction over a FtF instruction due to its flexibility, as it allows them to work on course material whenever they have time, they can complete the degree while working (69%), and they will not be limited geographically (52%).*

*When survey participants were asked why they would be interested in taking any online health communication courses, the two most popular answers were "better skill/knowledge for my job" (72%) and "advancement in career" (68%), followed by "exploration of personal interests" (49%), "required CE" (22%) and "taking advantage of corporate or institution funding" (19%). Many respondents perceived that an online MA degree or an online graduate certificate in health communication would provide them a better skill/knowledge for their jobs, and that it will help them advance their careers.*

7. A statement explaining how the certificate program will be delivered (on-campus (face to face), distance course (face to face off campus), and/or online (50% or more of the instruction is offered online).

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*The certificate program will be delivered face-to-face and online.*

8. Estimate the number of certificates to be awarded in the first five years.

*Year 1: 3*

*Year 2: 5*

*Year 3: 5*

*Year 4: 10*

*Year 5: 10*

9. A statement of how the effectiveness of the certificate program will be evaluated. A quality enhancement plan addressing how the program will be further improved should then be developed.

*We plan to assess the effectiveness of our certificate program through an exit survey, which will include questions about knowledge and skills gained during the program, and level of confidence in applying health communication in professional contexts. We will use this data to develop our quality enhancement program.*

10. The names of the faculty associated with or contributing to the certificate program, either by teaching one or more of the courses associated with the program or participating in the design of the course sequence. Adjunct faculty associated with the program should also include up-to-date curriculum vitae.

**Graduate Faculty**

**Areas of Specialization**

**Rebecca Dumlao**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 1997, University of Wisconsin, Madison

*Family communication; communication and community engagement.*

**Cindy Elmore**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 2003, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

*Journalism; journalist job satisfaction and turnover; gender differences in journalism content; and the military newspaper, the Stars and Stripes.*

**Festus Eribo**, Professor  
Ph.D., 1989, University of Wisconsin, Madison

*International communication; media ethics; and press freedom.*

**Todd Fraley**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 2004, University of Georgia, Athens

*Media and democracy; politics of representation; alternative media; and popular culture.*

**Linda Freeman**, Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., 2011, University of Minnesota

*Interpersonal communication; social media; social support; self-disclosure; close relationships*

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**John Howard**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 2003, Bowling Green State University

*Language and social interaction; institutional and mediated discourse; and organizational communication.*

**Glenn Hubbard**, Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., 2008, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

*Broadcast journalism; converged journalism education; audio/video production-value effects; radio localism effects.*

**Jin-Ae Kang**, Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., 2009, University of Alabama

*PR ethics & social responsibility, PR leadership, international PR; health communication, health related crisis communication.*

**Linda Kean**, Director/Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 1998, University of Wisconsin, Madison

*Health communication; campaign planning; and media effects.*

**Kris Kirschbaum**, Assistant Professor  
Ph. D., 2008, University of New Mexico

*Health communication; intercultural communication; interpersonal communication among medical providers; communication training to improve patient safety; mixed method research.*

**Brain Massey**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 1997, Florida State University

*Print, web, and multiplatform journalism; journalists' job satisfaction; organizational change in the news industry.*

**Aysel Morin**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 2004, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

*Rhetoric; culture; political discourse; nationalism; and identity.*

**Laura Privera**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 2002, Bowling Green State University

*Gender and cultural communication; health communication; and communication pedagogy.*

**Sachiyo Shearman**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 2004, Michigan State University

*Culture and communication; conflict and negotiation; health communication; social influence; and diffusion of innovation.*

**Eric Shouse**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 2003, University of South Florida

*Rhetorical and critical theory; and the role of humor and stand-up comedy in popular culture.*

**Deborah Thomson**, Associate Professor  
Ph.D., 2005, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

*Rhetorical and critical theory; performance studies; media studies; health communication.*

**Mary Tucker-McLaughlin**, Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., 2010, University of South Carolina

*Television news representations of women; broadcast journalism; collective memory; mass communication.*

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**Tulika Varma**, Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., 2011, Louisiana State University

*Crisis communication strategies; stakeholder  
relationship management; health  
communication and social media; international  
PR*

11. The name and curriculum vita of the faculty member who will be designated as the coordinator of the program for purposes of communication with the Graduate School.

*Dr. Laura Prividera (vita attached)*

12. The unit offering the certificate program must specify what professional license, if any, for which the certificate qualifies.

*N/A*

13. The Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) title and six-digit code (descriptions available at: [www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/acadprograms/programdev.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/acadprograms/programdev.cfm)).

*Communication Studies/Speech Communication and Rhetoric (09.0101)*

14. The minimum number of weeks required for a student to complete this certificate. Fall and spring semesters count as 15 weeks each and a regular summer term counts as 5 weeks. Prerequisites should be considered in determining this number.

*A student taking all 12 s.h. in the same semester would be able to complete the certificate in 15 weeks, but we anticipate that students are more likely to complete the certificate program in 30 weeks.*

Distance Education Certificates Notification The development and delivery of distance education certificates are institutional responsibilities. Units planning to offer a sequence of courses for certification, licensure, etc. via distance education should notify the Division of Continuing Studies for assistance in drafting the necessary forms for submission to UNC GA. The Academic Program Development Collaborative Team reviews these notifications to determine if they represent a SACS substantive change. SACS and UNC GA require notification in advance so that such information on these activities can be made accessible through a Web site maintained by UNC GA.



**Master of Arts in Communication with an emphasis on Health Communication  
Health Communication Graduate Certificate  
Distance Education Feasibility Study Summary**

**SOC's MA Program Overview:**

The School of Communication started its Master of Arts Program in Communication with an emphasis on Health in the fall of 2006. We are now in our seventh year. We have graduated over 60 students. Currently, we have 20+ full-time and part-time students. After graduation, some students pursued a teaching career in academia or continued studying in other fields, while many found their jobs in health communication related fields. There are 17+ Graduate Faculty members in the School of Communication and so far nine faculty members have rotated to teach various graduate courses.

**Review of Other MA Health Comm and Certificate Program:**

There are not many MA or certificate programs in health communication offered online. There are two fully online MA programs in Health Communication: Boston University's Health Communication program (website: <http://healthcommunication.bu.edu/>) and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (website: [www.hcom.illinois.edu](http://www.hcom.illinois.edu)). These are both new programs. The inaugural class graduated from the Master of Science in Health Communication (MSHC) at Boston University in the Spring of 2010. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Health Communication Online Master of Science (HCOM) program celebrated its first graduating class in May 2012. There is a potential for the School of Communication's MA program to be successful in an online environment.

There are varieties of ways that certificate programs are offered. The certificate program requires different amounts of course work: it ranges from a 1 or 2 course (3 or 6 credit hour) certificate, 4 or 5 course (12 or 15 credit hour), and to 5 to 6 course (15 to 16 credit hour) programs. University of Utah, for instance, offers the Integrated Marketing Communication Certificate (one semester program) and Conflict Resolution Graduate Certificate Program (two semester program). ECU College of Computer Science's Department of Technology Systems offers four 15-18 credit hour certificate programs in such topics as Computer Network Professional and Website Developer to cater the needs of individuals who are interested in knowing in-depth computer related skills and those who would like to teach at community colleges. The most common and popular type seems to be the four-course (12 credit-hour) certificate program.

**Survey Study:**

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Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME - <http://www.accme.org/>) states that “40% of CME activities were online as of 2010, and archived online courses were by far the most popular among physical participants”. According to an article posted in American Medical News (Dolan, [amednews.com](http://amednews.com)), online CME (continued medical education) is becoming more popular than ever among health professionals. There is no denying that an online/DE delivery method of education is valued by working health professionals.

Participants were asked which course they would be interested in taking out of 12 courses listed in the survey – Interpersonal Communication in Health Contexts (n = 91, 58%), Organizational Communication in Health Contexts (n = 88, 56%), Intercultural Communication in Health Contexts (n = 72, 46%), Media and Health Communication (n = 76, 48%), Health Advocacy (n = 97, 61%), Family Communication and Health (n = 90, 57%), Health Campaign (n = 45, 28%), Health Journalism (n = 53, 34%), E-health / Health and New Media (n = 61, 39%), Health and Public Relations (n = 92, 58%), Ethical Communication in Health Contexts (n = 69, 44%), and Legal Communication in Health Context (n = 72, 46%). Two participants selected the “other” option and wrote “Medical Terminology” and “Public Health Management related courses with an emphasis on personal and instructional management protocols”.

At the end of the survey, many of the participants provided their comments and feedback. Majority of those comments are in support for the online/DE MA and certificate program. Some indicated the concern about certificate program, stating that certificate program is not going to be enough and not popular among health professionals.

### **Conclusion:**

This study recommends that the School of Communication aim to establish an online MA program as well as an online certificate program in health communication. East Carolina University set forth five strategic directions: “Education for a New Century”, “The Leadership University”, “Economic Prosperity in the East”, “Health, Healthcare, and Medical Innovation”, and “the Arts, Culture, and the Quality of Life”. As a part of “Education for a New Century” initiative, ECU promises that “we prepare students to complete and succeed in the global economy” and that we “tailor programs to the needs of working adults through weekend and distance education models.” Also, as a part of “Health, Healthcare, and Medical Innovation” initiative, ECU pledges to “expand our research in health sciences with a particular emphasis on the health concerns of the reason and state”. These goals correspond to the direction where the SOC’s online MA/certificate program heads.