

# University System of Georgia Comprehensive Program Review

## A. All Program Reviews

Please complete the following information. Note that the Degree/Major Name, Degree Acronym and the CIP Code MUST be the same as that listed in [Degrees and Majors Authorized](#).

Please complete the following information:

Institution Name: Southern Polytechnic State University

Date 07/16/02

Degree/Major Name: Master of Science with major in Technical and Professional Communication

Degree Acronym: MS

CIP Code: 23110100

Degree Level: Masters

College/School/Division: School of Arts and Sciences

Department: Humanities and Technical Communication

Were other closely related programs reviewed as part of this program review? For example, if the BA and the BS with majors in Political Science are reviewed at the same time, provide that information.

Yes

Provide the names of these other programs so that we may connect these reviews.

BA Bachelor of Arts With Major in:  
23110100 International Technical Communication

BS Bachelor of Science With Major in:  
23110100 Technical and Professional Communication

Were external reviewers used to evaluate the results of the program's self-study?

Yes

If yes, please describe their role.

As part of the review it conducts, the Academic Program Review Committee interviews faculty and students, reviews program assessment process and files, and looks at course syllabi, etc. Upon completing its review, the APRC sends a draft of its report (no longer than five pages) to the dean/director of the program or area having undergone review.

Year of Next Scheduled Program Review: 2006

Faculty Resources. Describe the faculty resources associated with this degree program by describing the faculty dedicated to the specific program, to the general education program, to services courses for other programs, etc. Include in your discussion the use of full-time and part-time faculty.

12 full-time faculty, 7 of which teach in the undergraduate and graduate TCOM programs. The other 5 teach general ed. courses (as do some of the TCOM faculty on occasion). Two instructors from the Advising, Testing, Tutoring, and International Center teach ENGL 1101 for international students.

Adjunct faculty (12, last year) are used to teach general education courses (including composition, literature, art and music appreciation). One adjunct is used to teach courses in the major.

In AY 03 a new asst. prof. is being added to teach composition.

For more information on this program review, contact

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Was this review...Triggered

## C. Triggered Reviews of Programs

Use the *Long Form*, and complete for each program undergoing review.

**Why was this program reviewed early? Briefly describe all that apply.**

The program is being reviewed because the BA/BS had a low graduation rate. Graduation rates for the MS were satisfactory, as shown:

AY*	96	97	98	99	00	01	02
Grads	30	23	38	37	31	34	19(to date)

## **MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Quality**

The primary strength of the programs is the faculty. They are well qualified, both academically and professionally, and they have shown an ability to contribute to their field through publication and research. Students and alumni see the faculty as having real experience in the subjects they teach, and the ability to translate this experience into quality teaching. Students clearly expressed satisfaction with the degree to which individual faculty made themselves available for consultation and assistance during laboratory sessions, and outside class.

The track record in placing graduates in industry is excellent. Of particular note is the broad range of positions obtained by graduates. They are not restricted to technical writing, but rather are employed in diverse fields such as graphic design, web design, information management, etc. This reflects well on the education received by the graduates. They are not narrowly educated, and can adapt to changing demands. Also, the range of jobs offered reflects the broad nature of the field, which has implications for curriculum design and the future direction of the program.

The program has an unusually good program of Outcomes Assessment. It consists of a series of exit interviews with graduates, plus contact with practitioners and alumni in industry. The first stage measures the immediate impact of the program while the second brings the faculty in touch with the changing needs of practice and future trends in the field.

Overall, the perception of the program is that it is an excellent one which gives an individual more than sufficient skills and knowledge necessary to successfully practice in the technical communication field. Students were complimentary of their classroom and studio experience, alumni were well satisfied with

their progress after graduation and employers were quite happy with the skills and productivity of the individuals they had hired. In particular, employers noted that the graduates they had hired were quite adaptable to new demands and systems, and that they were not the least bit intimidated by technical knowledge that was new to the them.

The TCOM program has an unusually good program of Outcomes Assessment. It consists of a series of exit interviews with graduates, plus contact with practitioners and alumni in industry. The first stage measures the immediate impact of the program while the second brings the faculty in touch with the changing needs of practice and future trends in the field.

### **Productivity**

Enrollment fluctuates somewhat, with an overall rising trend. The graduate program is quite healthy, having over 70 students at this time. This number is down slightly from previous years, but not significantly. The undergraduate program enrollment is rising, as is the number of graduates. Over the last 3 academic years, there has been an average of 11 degrees awarded per year, and the overall trend since 1997 has been up.

Recruitment has traditionally been a weakness at SPSU, and TCOM is particularly hard to recruit for because the field does not have a high profile, nor is it well understood by potential students.

Action plan:

1. Step up university efforts to recruit students.
2. Establish contacts at area high schools.
3. Establish programs to increase awareness of technical communication among key target audiences.

## **Viability**

Recommendations on whether the program should be continued as is, continued and improved (enhanced, expanded, curtailed, or consolidated) or eliminated, addressing major questions:

### **A. Continue and strengthen the program**

The MSTPC program clearly fits SPSU's mission "to provide the residents of Georgia with university-level education in technology . . . [and] arts and sciences." Technical communication is a fine blending of technical skill with the art of communication.

The program has been in demand and been productive in both graduation and employment rates. It has graduated an average of 32 students per year over the past six years and has at least 70 students per year enrolled every year since 1994. A recent survey found that 95 percent of our graduates have found professional employment, even during the economic slowdown of the past couple of years.

Few MSTPC courses overlap with other courses in the university. One possible overlap is between TCOM 6110 Project Management and MGNT 6050 Project Management, but for the great majority of courses, there is nothing else even remotely like them at SPSU.