

What If:

A Comparison and Contrast of Graduate and Undergraduate Schools

Rhianna Ruth Chandler

Oklahoma Baptist University

Abstract

This paper explores three graduate programs: George Mason University, North Dakota State University, and North Carolina State University. The universities vary in their fields of specialization, as well as the requirements for a degree. This paper also explores two undergraduate programs, Cameron University and University of Central Oklahoma, with Oklahoma Baptist University. It explores similarities and difference in each school. This paper suggests a Gender and Communication course be added to Oklahoma Baptist University's Communication curriculum.

Graduate Schools

George Mason University

George Mason University is in Fairfax, Virginia. According to their website, a Masters in Communication has four main fields of study: “Strategic communication / public relations, health communication, science communication, [and] individualized communication studies” (Communication College of Humanities and Science, para. 3). Regardless of specialization, each student focuses on, “Two program core courses, two methods courses, two theory courses, one practicum course, two specialization or concentration courses, and three elective courses” (Communication College of Humanities and Science, para. 3). Students then choose from specific courses they want to take in each category.

The two required method courses are Introduction to Graduate Studies and Communication Studies Project. Research Methodologies in Communication is the only required of the fourth method course options. Students can choose from ten theory courses, subjects ranging from persuasion to science. The eleven practicum courses focus on real world application, such as internships. There are multiple courses per specialization, each varying in topic. Any courses taken outside of these categories will count for electives. A three credit thesis options is available as well. The whole program is 33 credits.

North Dakota State University

North Dakota State University is in Fargo, North Dakota. According to their website, the program requires 30 total credits. This university also has a PHD program in Communication Studies. The program is for students who are looking to join the workforce as well as those seeking further education (NDSU Communication).

NDSU has less options for specialization. The general layout for the degree is very similar to GMU. Communication Theory and Research Methods in Communication are the two required Core courses. There are six possible courses for the Research Method section with no required course. The website does not give the possible specialization electives. Each graduate must also take two thesis courses as well as one exam course (NDSU Communication).

North Carolina State University

North Carolina State University is in Raleigh, North Carolina. Dr. Andrew R. Binder, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Programs says this program, “Prepares students to address complex communication issues from a strong, theoretically grounded, and methodologically driven perspective” (Courses, para. 1). This program is 36 credits, and is available to full and part time students.

There are three courses required to fulfill the Core Courses: Critical & Interpretive Inquiry in Communication, Human Communication Theory, Quantitative Methods, and Qualitative Research. Students are required to take two out of the three methods courses, along with Communication Theory. The rest of the degree is filled with electives allowing students to tailor their degree to their preferences. Courses include History of Rhetoric, Gaming and Social Networks, Public Relations Theory, etc. (Courses).

Preparation for Programs

I feel I am prepared for this program because I have learned skills such as research, theories, and general communications at OBU. I am capable of taking the required Research Methodologies in Communication from having taken many research classes, such as Western Civilization, Composition 1 and 2, Political Communication, and similar classes. I have also learned many communication theories, such as Fisher’s Model, Social Identity Theory, Agenda

Setting Theory, and many more. General terms from classes would be expanded on in these programs. For example, I have learned about Persuasion in Introduction to Argument and Debate, as well as on the debate team. These general ideas would be expanded in the theory course of Persuasion Theory.

Undergraduate Schools

Cameron University

Cameron University is in Lawton, Oklahoma. The undergraduate program has two areas of concentration: Journalism / Media Production and Communication Studies / Public Relations (Cameron University). The Communication department has many different department activities available for students, such as AggieCentral.com (the online campus newspaper), CUTV, Lambda Pi Eta, and as well as others.

The degree program for a Communication degree requires 124 hours, which is four less than what OBU requires. Students need 44-46 hours of general education courses, such as ENGL 1113, ENGL 1213, Health and Wellness, and Economics. Students also have to take 1-3 hours of a university introduction class. Each student needs 22 hours of required core courses. Some options include Introduction to Mass Media, TV Studio Production, and Media Literacy. There are also 21 hours needed in the specific concentration. A Communication degree with a focus on Journalism and Media production has classes such as Broadcast Performance, Radio Production, and News Writing. 18 hours for a minor are structured in if a student chose to have one. The remaining courses are general electives (Cameron University).

University of Central Oklahoma

The University of Central Oklahoma is in Edmond, Oklahoma. The undergraduate Mass Communication program has 5 possible degrees: Interpersonal, Organizational, Professional

Media, Photographic Arts, and Strategic Communication. The program has activities for students such as Oklahoma Broadcast Education Association and the UCO National Student Advertising Competition Team (University of Central Oklahoma Mass Communication).

The Interpersonal Communication degree seems to be the most similar to OBU's Communication Program. The program needs 124 hours to be complete. Students needs 42-44 hours of core classes, such as a lab science and American National Government. There are 33 hours of required courses such as Nonverbal Communication and Family Communication. There are 9 credits needed for Communication Electives including Communication and Religion, Masculinity in the Media, and Couples Communication. Six credits of any other Communication classes are required, as well as 8 hours of foreign language (University of Central Oklahoma Mass Communication).

Differences in Universities

Cameron and OCU have specialization in their degree plans. Cameron has Journalism and Public Relations and OCU has five specializations. OBU does not have specializations, but do have degrees in Journalism like Cameron. OBU also has a Digital Media Art degree where a person can focus on photography like OCU. They also have different core classes, such as OCU and Cameron have focuses on Economics, American History, and Political Science. OBU requires faith based classes such as New Testament, or Western Civilization, and the others do not.

Proposed New Course

A beneficial course for OBU would be Communication and Gender. UCO has this class, and it is described as being, "Designed to investigate gender and communication issues in interpersonal, intercultural, and professional contexts" (Communication and Gender). The

course objectives include examining current research, studying impact of gender on society, and reflecting upon personal biases.

OBU Communication courses typically have a section where gender is discussed. For example, in Communication and Conflict, there was a section where gender was explored in relevance to conflict. I believe this would be a good class for people who are interested in gender studies. I personally enjoy learning about the differences in gender in each of my classes, and I would love to take class specifically focusing on gender.

References

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