

**Department of Communications  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Bowie State University**

**Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
Three Points of Pride  
Undergraduate Program in Communications  
Bachelor of Science  
Bachelor of Arts**

The coronavirus pandemic wrought unprecedented challenges during academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, upending traditional education practices at institutions of higher learning worldwide. Bowie State University was no exception as students, faculty, staff, and administrators were forced to learn, teach, serve, and manage under a triple threat of a global disease, racial discrimination and economic depression.

As with all of the colleges and their departments at Bowie State University, the Department of Communications had to pivot in its assessment of instructional delivery to ensure that its nearly 600 undergraduate and graduate students continued to make progress toward their degrees. As a result of these adjustments, the department is pleased to present three assessment points of pride:

**1.** At the onset of AY 2019-2020, departmental faculty had varying degrees of comfortability with instructional technology. Some faculty were fully versed in online instruction and assessment while others rarely used Blackboard, iCAN, Qwickly Attendance Pro, Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, Microsoft Teams, among other platforms.

Through workshops and tutorials offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CETL) and Academic Computing, department faculty progressed from beginner to intermediate, intermediate to advanced and advanced faculty provided one-on-one support for other faculty. These improvements affected direct and indirect assessments such as attendance, assignments, tests, exams, feedback to learners, internship supervisor evaluations, midterm grades and final grades, among other measures.

**2.** The Department of Communications is responsible for teaching two General Education courses: COMM 101 Oral Communications and COMM 103 Public Speaking. One of these courses, COMM 101 Oral Communications, was taught as an in-person course for first-year students as part of the university's hybrid instructional model for AY 2020-2021. While approximately all 15 sections were taught in-person, one section was taught in the "high-flex" instructional modality, in which the instructor taught in-person and virtual students synchronously. This high degree of instructional delivery provided for greater engagement between students both on- and off-campus. A comparative analysis of student evaluations from both modalities (in-person and high-flex) and the effect on student learning outcomes will be used as an assessment tool.

**3.** As was the case with several universities globally, Bowie State University experienced a decrease in the number of returning students between Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. To retain students, the department acquired the names of students who had not registered for Spring 2021 classes and developed a survey to determine some of the reasons why students elected not to return. Faculty called, texted, emailed students and provided them with information regarding course registration, financial aid and university-loaned laptops and hot spots. The data collected from this outreach effort will be used to improve student retention rates among Communications students.

Submitted by:

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