The Department of Communication advances the study and practice of communication across a range of contexts, including face-to-face interactions, public discourse, mass media, and digital media. Our research and teaching enhance critical awareness of communication’s role in an increasingly global society.

Education

Undergraduate study in communication at the University of Washington has four foundations: communication literacy, communication inquiry, theory and concepts, and community engagement. We teach our students to think critically, respect diversity, and communicate effectively. We work actively to enroll a diverse set of students in our courses and in the major. Students come from all over Washington and even the world to study, and almost half of our majors are students of color. Our courses cover important traditions in communication alongside contemporary practices. Innovative teaching abounds, such as delivering speeches in the middle of Red Square on the UW's Seattle campus, partnering with community organizations on projects of civic engagement, and integrating new media technologies (blogging, Twitter, Facebook) into course content and assignments. We encourage our undergraduates to think globally by studying with our faculty in Italy, Spain, and Germany. Undergraduates also gain experience through our State Capital Reporting program, internships, community partnerships, national policy debate competitions, our honors program, and through doing independent and directed research.

The Department’s graduate programs include a combined Master of Arts and PhD in Communication, a Communication Leadership Master’s program with emphases in Digital Media or in Communities and Networks, and a Master of Communication in Native Voices. The Master of Arts and Doctorate of Philosophy in Communication prepare students to conduct original, innovative research on how communication manifests in a wide range of social domains. Communication Leadership is a graduate program that provides professional training in both creative storytelling skills and strategies to direct communication efforts across all sectors. The Native Voices Program is a center where students, faculty, and independent producers create documentaries and media research that contribute to the understanding and support of indigenous peoples.
Facility

Communication faculty are recognized nationally and internationally for their excellence in teaching, research, and service. They hold leadership positions across campus, including as UW Provost; a co-founder of WIRED, a support/writing/research group for female faculty at the UW; and as director of the Science, Technology, and Society Studies Graduate Certificate Program. Among others, our faculty members hold these honors:

UW Distinguished Teaching Awards (8)
President-Elect of the International Communication Association (ICA)
International Communication Association Fellows (3)
Pulitzer, Grantham, and Polk Awards for Outstanding Journalism
Editorship, Public Opinion Quarterly
Editorship, Oxford Bibliographies: Communication
Olof Palme Chair, Stockholm University
Washington State Professor of the Year, Carnegie Foundation
Public Relations Society of America PR Professional of the Year
Outstanding Professor Award, National Speakers Association
Hillier Kriegbaum Under-40 Award for Outstanding Career Accomplishments, by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (2)
Clarion Award, Association for Women in Communications
Carroll C. Arnold Lecturer (lifetime achievement award) National Communication Association

Research

The Department is home to two centers. The Center on Communication, Difference, and Equity is committed to building a more equitable world, in which our words, imagery, and attention are infused with understanding, respect, and justice. The Center for Communication and Civic Engagement explores communication processes and media technologies that facilitate positive citizen involvement in politics and social life; its Citizen Roundtable on Politics and Democracy Series includes the Becoming Citizens internships. Faculty are working on large scale projects, including: The Seattle Globalist, a nonprofit journalism publication that examines the ways in which the world converges in Seattle, with a specific focus on peoples underrepresented in the traditional media; Collaborating Against Human Trafficking, dedicated to finding constructive paths through multilevel tensions between cross-sector organizations; and the Freedom Registry, a collaboratively developed public database of organizations, agencies, and institutions working to address exploitation and modern day slavery within the United States.

Our faculty members have received research support from numerous public and private organizations, including the National Institutes of Health, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Annenberg Policy Foundation, Army Research Organization, Seattle CityClub, Microsoft Research, Imago Dei Foundation, Namaste Foundation, and National Science Foundation, among others.

Alumni

The Department’s 16,000+ living alumni include political and civic leaders, entrepreneurs, lawyers, journalists, authors, corporate and nonprofit specialists, educators, and entertainment industry success stories. Nine alumni share 13 Pulitzer Prize wins. A small number of alumni are honored annually through the Department’s Hall of Fame and Early Career Awards. The Department integrates its alumni into its educational and outreach activities through an Alumni Board, a quarterly newsletter, classroom visits, and a year-long Career Kickstart program of professional development opportunities. We also maintain close partnerships with local, national, and global organizations whose core values align with those of the Department and the University of Washington.