About Essential Concepts and Competencies:

Over the past two years, each of the Measuring College Learning panels has defined a set of essential concepts and competencies for undergraduate-level learning in its discipline. Essential concepts and competencies are deep understandings and complex skills that faculty believe are fundamental to the discipline, valuable to students, and worth emphasizing given limited time and resources. Essential concepts and competencies should not be seen as fixed, universal, or comprehensive. Rather, they are meant to be reasonable and productive frameworks that can orient discussions about teaching, learning, and assessment.
Students of communication should understand...

**Social Construction:** Communication, as a discipline, is predicated on the theory of knowledge that attends to jointly constructed understandings of the world. This theory holds that understanding and meaning emerge in coordination with other human beings and is dependent upon language as a fundamental system for the construction of meaningful reality.

**Relationality:** Communication is inherently transactional and collaborative; as a human behavior, to communicate is to engage with others, share meaning, make arguments, speak and listen, and transact together in a state of consubstantiality.

**Strategy:** Communication is a primarily intentional activity. It involves the capacity to read and interpret contexts and situations to readily tailor and develop messages. For centuries, scholars and teachers have theorized strategies for effective, intentional communication, and knowledge of those theories and concepts is essential.

**Symbolism:** Communication students study and understand the theories behind the semiotic formation of meaning; they explore the capacity of symbols to socially construct reality, form relationships, and express strategic intention.

**Adaptability:** Communication and communicators are adaptable. The knowledge that communication behaviors must change and the theories that explain such adaptation are fundamental to the Communication discipline.

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**Students of communication should be able to...**

**Engage in communication inquiry:** Formulate questions appropriate for Communication scholarship and engage in Communication scholarship using the research traditions of the discipline.

**Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context:** Locate and use information relevant to their audiences, purposes, and contexts, and select and present messages in creative and appropriate modalities and technologies to accomplish communicative goals.

**Critically analyze messages:** Identify meanings that are embedded in messages, articulate characteristics of mediated and non-mediated messages, recognize the influence of messages, engage in active listening, and enact mindful responses to messages.

**Demonstrate self-efficacy:** Articulate personal beliefs about abilities to accomplish communication goals and evaluate personal communication strengths and weaknesses.

**Apply ethical communication principles and practices:** Identify ethical perspectives, explain the relevance of those perspectives, and articulate the ethical dimensions of communication situations. Students should choose to communicate with ethical intention, propose solutions for (un)ethical communication, and evaluate the ethical elements of a communication situation.

**Utilize communication to embrace difference:** Articulate the connection between communication and culture and respect diverse perspectives and the ways they influence communication.

**Influence public discourse:** Frame and evaluate local, national, and/or global issues from a communication perspective and utilize communication to respond to such issues and advocate for courses of action.