

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fort Wayne Senate

FROM: Shannon Johnson, Chair  
Graduate Subcommittee

DATE: October 18, 2018

SUBJ: Health Communication Certificate

The Graduate Subcommittee approved on October 18, 2018 via email the attached document regarding a Health Communication Certificate.

The committee finds that the proposed concentration requires no Senate review.

Shannon Johnson  
Chair, Graduate Subcommittee  
Walter E. Helmke Library

Approving:

David S. Cochran  
Shannon Johnson  
Tanya Soule  
Brett Wilkinson  
Chao Chen

Not Approving:

Hank Strevel

Abstain:

**IPFW**  
**Request for a New Credit Certificate Program**

Campus: Purdue Fort Wayne

Proposed Title of Certificate Program: Health Communication

Projected Date of Implementation: Fall 2019

TYPE OF CERTIFICATE: (check one)

UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES – These programs generally require 12-29 credits of undergraduate-level academic work.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATES – These programs generally require 12-29 credits of graduate-level academic work or undergraduate academic work carrying graduate credit.

POST-BACCALAUREATE CERTIFICATES –These programs generally require 12-29 credits of undergraduate-level academic work, although students enrolling in these programs must have completed their baccalaureate degrees.

I. Why is this certificate needed? (Rationale)

A 2018 article in the Journal Gazette reported that between 2005 and 2015 the health industry in Allen County grew 30%, with 30,000 new employees working in the field (Blackman). While most think of doctors, nurses, surgeons, and pharmacists when thinking of health care related jobs, the industry is filled with patient advocates, health researchers, administrators, medical interpreters, etc., all jobs not requiring a degree in medicine.

Makary and Daniel (2016) found that the third leading cause of death in the United States is medical error. This definition may be vast, but their research pinpointed that systematic issues, such as when a patient is transferred from one specialty to another specialty, can cause a breakdown in communication, resulting in the death of the patient. JeriSue Petri (2018) shared that a majority of the medical errors occurring are a result of ineffective communication.

Can you imagine a doctor approaching you in the waiting room only to say “we weren’t told the patient was on blood-thinners, so he bled out on the table resulting in his death?” The health care system failed the patient and the patient’s family.

Another reason there is a breakdown in communication within the health care industry is based on the paradigm one uses to approach the field. Medical students may approach medicine as a science while therapists and care takers see health care as healing, which they see as an art; finally, there are those who approach healthcare as a business, worrying about the facilities bottom line. In these cases, the patient is the same but people taking care of the patient are coming from different perspectives. Individuals trained in health communication will be able to combine the perspectives to explain the patient their health needs, their health plan, and how to be able to afford and receive care.

To help address the systematic breakdown in communication as well as to be able to advocate for patients who can't advocate for themselves or even to teach doctors how to communicate with their patients, an interdisciplinary certificate in health communication is needed. Furthermore, with the arrival of IU Health to Northeast Indiana and the continuing expansions of the Lutheran Medical System and Parkview Hospital, the time is ripe in Fort Wayne, and for Purdue Fort Wayne, to implement this certificate.

## II. List the major topics and curriculum of the certificate.

Students can pursue a certificate in health communication by completing courses that fulfill the following tracks. (A sample list of courses based on tracks follows the application).

Tracks for all students include:

- Public Health
- Family
- Organizations
- Health Campaigns

Degree seeking students will be able to count courses towards certain majors towards the certificate program. For example, a masters in professional communication student can have 9 hours towards the certificate count towards their plan of study for successful completion of the program.

Curriculum will focus on the appreciative inquiry model set forth by the School of Nursing at the University of Virginia. Appreciative inquiry challenges students and professionals to "approaching challenging, high-stakes environments by encouraging positive energy, dialogue, inquiry and reflection to promote change, rather than by issuing mandates. We begin our conversations with a single, deceptively simple question: What do we look like when we're at our best?" (Accessed March 9, 2018). By centering curriculum around the appreciative inquiry, professors and students will be able to address the question "how can we change knowledge into behavior?"

Course work will include presentations, research, case studies, and reflection exercises. In a conversation with Petri, she said that the reflection strategy is where the transformation in health communication is taking place.

All students must complete and pass a thesis or project.

## III. What are the admission requirements?

To be admitted to the certificate program, students must be accepted as a graduate, or non-degree seeking student at PFW. The certificate can be used as a post-bachelor's certificate or a supplemental certificate to one's graduate education.

## IV. List the major student outcomes (or set of performance-based standards) for the proposed certificate.

Student outcomes are based on the Interprofessional Education Collaborative core competencies of practice from 2016.

By the time students complete the certificate, they will be able to:

1. Work with individuals of other professions to maintain a climate of mutual respect and shared values.
  2. Use the knowledge of one's own role to aid medical professionals in appropriately assessing and addressing the health care needs of patients and promoting and advancing the health of populations.
  3. Communicate with patients, families, communities, and professionals in health and other fields in a responsive and responsible manner that supports a team approach to the promotion and maintenance of health and the prevention and treatment of disease.
  4. Apply relationship-building values and the principles of team dynamics to perform effectively in different team roles to plan, deliver, and evaluate patient/population-centered care and population health programs and policies that are safe, timely, efficient, effective, and equitable.
- V. Explain how student learning outcomes will be assessed (student portfolios, graduate follow up, employer survey, standardized test, etc.) and describe the structure/process for reviewing assessment findings for the purpose of ensuring continuous improvement of the certificate.

Learning outcomes will be assessed through two means.

First, to complete the program, students will have to demonstrate that they meet and exceed the outcomes by participating and passing a health scenario. The student will be assessed by 1/3 of the interdisciplinary health communication certificate committee and two outside representatives.

Based on student scores during the scenario, curriculum will be reviewed to strengthen curriculum towards a competency that has an 80% or below passing rate. An independent committee of health communication certificate faculty will assess the scores and make recommendations to the committee regarding strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum.

Second, surveys will be sent out every five years to graduates of the program. These surveys will assess if the certificate curriculum prepared them for their current position, has had an impact of patient/provider care, and assisted in bridging the gap between communication theory and health care.

- VI. Describe student population to be served.

The certificate will be opened to all graduate students interested in pursuing a job in the health field. Students must be in good standing to be eligible for the certificate program.

The certificate will also be opened to the general public. Interested individuals should apply to PFW as a non-degree seeking student.

VII. How does this certificate complement the campus or departmental mission?

This certificate will complement the department of communication, the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as PFW missions.

First, the certificate complements the department's mission by demonstrating how the "interdisciplinary nature reflects the complexity of a world facing challenges." The health field is in a state of flux as patients demand better communication from providers and how the make-up of patients is influencing communication. Furthermore, Fort Wayne is in a vortex of health epidemics (flu, opioids addiction, and IMR). By offering this certificate, the department will be equipping students with the knowledge and skills to help design campaigns, research solutions to health epidemics, and present information in an engaging manner.

Second, the certificate will complement the College of Arts and Sciences mission. The college wants to offer their students a diverse liberal arts education. This certificate will offer current and potential students with knowledge from various fields (Public Policy and OLS to begin) in how they approach and study health increasing a student's breadth of knowledge. The certificate will also showcase how COAS students can communicate effectively and develop solutions to current and future problems.

Finally, the certificate will promote the university's mission. PFW wants to be known as the hub in Northeast Indiana for cultural, intellectual, and economic global competitiveness. Offering a certificate will attract potential students as this certificate will provide them with the skills and knowledge to work with various communities within Indiana, the Midwest, or countries around the world. Having a certificate in health communication would also help and support the growth of the health care industry in our region. We will be able to keep a lot of our alumni local as they continue to work towards making Northeast Indiana a healthier environment.

VIII. Describe any relationship to existing programs on the campus or within the university.

Because the nature of the certificate is interdisciplinary, many degree granting programs across the university will be impacted by the certificate offering. Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences as well as the College of Education and Public Policy and College of Engineering, Technology, and Computer Science have programs that currently, or in the past, have offered courses that will enhance the program.

One goal of the certificate program is to offer additional tracks as the certificate program grows. One track will incorporate more informatic based courses as the area of Health and Informatics continues to grow and flourish in the field of communication.

The College of Education and Public Policy could see their public policy program and some of the education courses benefitting from this certificate. Master of Counseling students may find the skills and knowledge from the certificate program to be beneficial when seeking positions within the counseling field.

The College of Engineering, Technology, and Computer Science should also benefit from the program. This impact may be seen more in the Organizational Leadership program, as courses such as Health Safety and Security will be more in demand.

At some point, I would like to work with the Office of International Affairs to set-up a summer exchange program where I (or someone else) can lead a group of students in studying health issues in other countries. This program will expose students to the diversity of how countries/doctors approach health as well as how health problems are communicated to the general public. The Department of Public Health at Purdue West Lafayette started an exchange program last year and I propose using this program as a model for a future PFW program.

IX. List and indicate the resources required to implement the proposed program. Indicate sources (e.g., reallocations or any new resources such as personnel, library holdings, equipment, etc.) \*

Based on this proposal, at some point high-tech televisions and computers may be needed in order to stay abreast of and keep up with new health care technology as well as compliment and support a health informatics program.

I propose the Department of Communication house the certificate program, so no new advisor or chair will be needed. However, as the demand for the certificate grows, a faculty line in Public Relations will be needed so that a health campaigns track can be offered and so that a health communication minor can be offered for undergraduates.

X. A Liaison Library Memo  
See document at end

XI. Describe any innovative features of the program (e.g., involvement with local or regional agencies, or offices, cooperative efforts with other institutions, etc.)

As I (Sarah Symonds LeBlanc) have researched and met with members of the community, the reception of the health communication certificate idea has been warmly accepted. JeriSue Petri, Chair for the Council on Professional and Faculty Development, member of the Association for Hospital Medical Education, and alumna of IPFW, says that Fort Wayne, much less other areas of the country, needs this program. With successful implementation and growth of the program, we could possibly present the program as a model for other universities at national conferences, such as for the Association for Hospital Medical Education.

But on a local level, Fort Wayne is the hot seat of health epidemics. This could be where the high demand of trained health communicators could flourish. The Pre-Natal and Infant Health Network is working on decreasing the infant mortality rate. The Opioid Task Force is investigating ways to fight the opioid and heroine epidemic. The Children's Health Initiative Program is working to implement programs on early childhood and pre-K access, focusing on issues such as toxic stress, poverty and children, social determinants, importance of early childhood development, and advocacy. All these programs and crises can use trained communicators to assist in their efforts.

This program could strengthen partnerships between major health providers such PFW and Parkview, Lutheran, and IU Health. It will also build and strengthen relationships with the Allen County Department of Health, many non-profits, and educational programs such as the Fort Wayne Medical Education Program.

#### References

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