



## Communication | 2013-2014 Assessment Plan

One of the learning outcomes of the Communication program is that students will demonstrate that they can work collaboratively with others. Our assessment plan is to target that outcome. The primary pedagogical tool for accomplishing this is group projects in many of our classes. The program has recently revised its curriculum in part to tighten up its prerequisite structure. In the past a looser prerequisite structure meant that students more experienced with group work were often working in groups with more experienced students resulting in some friction. Our assessment plan is in part an effort to find out if the tighter prerequisites have reduced that problem. Our method of direct assessment is to collect data how faculty are judging the success of group projects and the individuals within the groups.

In the fall of 2013 we collected data from 8 courses (5 lower level and 3 upper level) containing a total of 60 group projects. Individual instructors reported their project grades to the chair. Of those 60 projects, 11 projects were judged to be disappointing by the instructors and 9 individuals were identified as in some way failing the learning outcome. Of the 11 problematic projects 10 were in lower level courses where students are expected to be encountering their first experiences with group work and only 1 project in upper level courses where students are expected to be building on prior experience and consolidating their group skills. Of the individuals identified as problematic 6 were at the lower level and 3 at the upper level.

These results pose the question of what can be done about students who experience problems in group work in upper level courses. Is it because the students somehow haven't had prior work in groups (transfer students perhaps, or students taking courses out of order) or is it because our teaching in their prior experiences failed them in some way. One way to answer this question is to track their performance over time. We plan to repeat the method used in the fall again in the spring to gather the data that might answer that question.