

Communication

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Professor Tim Meyer started at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay in August 1982, and 30 years later he retired in August 2012. Professor Meyer was the Chair of the Budgetary Unit, which included the Communication Sciences, Communication, and Information Sciences programs for 12 years before he became the Chair of the Communication Department full time for the last five years of his career. We sat down with him to find out more about the role he played in the Communication Department, his advice to students, and his retirement plans.



Looking back on your career, what courses did you like teaching the most? Out of a laundry list of courses, the class I have always taught since 1971 dealt with advertising campaigns. It consisted of various components over the years and was updated every year. The other one that I used to teach was Elements of Electronic Media, which looked at how and why things are put on the big screen. One of those topics that students always remember is the willing suspension of disbelief. That's how you can look into a premise that's not really realistic, enjoy yourself for two hours, and walk away feeling really good, like you spent your time in a worthwhile way. I always hear back from students about these courses because it always has resonated and connected with them.

What would you say your biggest role was in the Communication Department? Seeing that students were able to graduate. Bottom line: that was my goal. I also spent a lot of time recruiting students during Campus Preview Day, Phuture Phoenix programs, and a lot of things in the community. There were a lot of payoffs from these activities. I would walk out of Campus Preview Day watching the reactions of the parents and prospective students. I could tell when they came in and sat down that they didn't know what to expect, but when they were leaving, they knew their kids were coming here.

What would you regard as your most important achievement? I think the large number of satisfied, well-prepared graduates and the role that I played in that regard. Also, the fact that employers over the years would contact me when they were looking for interns. Finding viable internships is one of the things I liked doing and it worked particularly well.

What do you miss about the Communication department? Oh, a lot! As you might expect, it's the interaction with students. That's what I miss on a really regular basis.

What do you see as the future of the Communication department? What I really like about the changes is that it's formalized. That's very important, so students have that stability. They can look at a document, know what they have to do, and they can figure a lot of that out on their own. The second is that the curriculum is still very adaptable. It's a big advantage for future and current students.

What advice would you like to give to current and prospective Communication students? My best piece of advice is that, regardless of what you may have heard about certain professors and certain courses (e.g., too hard), you should still take the courses. Number one, you'll immediately find it's not so bad, and two, when you're done, you'll be going, "I'm glad I took this course." That's the first piece of advice. The second piece of advice is to think about doing internships. Don't be afraid to do an internship that isn't the dream opportunity you're looking for. Yeah, you'd like a paid internship, of course, you would, but as an unpaid intern, you will come out of it with something to show, a portfolio. Students have to be aggressive and be willing to put in some time and effort. Apart from that, ask questions, the internship supervisors will be glad you did. If they don't have time, they will tell you to back off for now, but they won't forget you. You are cheating yourself if you don't do that.

What plans do you have for retirement? I'm transitioning. It's the first time in my life since I was four years old when September rolled around that I'm not "going to school" in one capacity or the other. I don't know what it is like. As far as plans, we just started talking about some travel plans, and that's really nice not having to schedule things around school breaks. We have two daughters and grandchildren we'll be spending more time with. I should also mention that the hardest part of retirement is my wife trying to adjust to the fact that I am around (he smiles). The bottom line is that I am driving her crazy.