

This assignment was created as part of the requirements for a writing assignment and is not meant to be published nor to represent the organization(s) listed herein.

How Brian Lamb School of Communication can Better Promote itself to Students

Leisl Vale

Brian Lamb School of Communication

Purdue University

lseigler@purdue.edu

Abstract

This study aimed to reveal how the Brian Lamb School of Communication at Purdue University can better promote itself to students. Data from a survey sent out to current Purdue students was analyzed to create specific and practical recommendations for the Brian Lamb School of Communication. An explanation of the instrument used and the quantitative data analyses are provided, as well as a discussion section which includes qualitative data analysis.

How Brian Lamb School of Communication can Better Promote itself to Students

Introduction to Problem

Purdue University is a public, coed university located in West Lafayette, Indiana. Founded in 1869, Purdue currently enrolls approximately 32,672 undergraduate students. The University is comprised of 13 schools, but is most recognized and awarded for its schools of engineering, management, education, and pharmacy (U.S. News and World Report, n.d.). Purdue is consistently ranked highly in many categories including most innovative schools (#6) and top public schools (#18). In fact, the school has earned the nickname the “Cradle of Astronauts” due to its success in aeronautics (U.S. News and World Report, n.d.).

However, Purdue is not strictly a STEM field-oriented school. Another one of its 13 schools is the Brian Lamb School of Communication (BLSC). Purdue offered its first communication related courses almost 100 years ago, but the Department of Communication was not founded until 60 years ago (Purdue University, n.d.). On July 1, 2011 the Board of Trustees approved the department to be renamed the BLSC and so, the school was born (Purdue University, n.d.). Although BLSC’s programs are ranked among some of the best in the United States, the school must still find ways to convince students to select a communications degree over others, especially STEM fields.

Since the Great Recession of 2008, the number of STEM field graduates has blossomed from “388,000 graduates in 2009-2010 to 5550,000 in 2015-2016,” showing a 43% growth rate (Wright, 2017). Although some states did not see as great a decrease in interest in humanities, many did. The increased interest in STEM fields has prompted legislators to pass finding bills that strongly favor STEM programs and that defund programs that do not lead to lucrative jobs (Wright, 2017). Two strong examples are California and New York, two of the leading STEM

graduate producers in the nation. California saw an increase in STEM fields of 39% and New York, 45% (Wright, 2017).

In light of the ever-increasing emphasis on STEM fields, the problem for schools such as BLSC becomes two-fold. First, how can BLSC convince students to move across the country for their programs? Second, how can BLSC better promote itself to undergraduate students in order to convince them to select a communications major or minor? Naturally, the follow up question to these is how can BLSC practically do this? To answer these questions, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:

H1: Freshmen will rate reputation of program equally as high as other class levels. Therefore, emphasizing this area will encourage incoming students to move across the country for BLSC.

H2: Students across all class levels will rate finding a job and future earning potential equally as important. Therefore, BLSC should use these angles to draw students to the major once enrolled at Purdue.

Method

Instrument

A college major survey was conducted on current students at Purdue University to determine how students perceive and choose certain majors. Students from across all schools at Purdue were allowed to participate. The questionnaire included a total of 19 questions. Questions varied in types and included dichotomous questions (utilized primarily for demographic information), open ended questions, and Likert scales. Responses were recorded anonymously, and the data analyzed.

Analysis

Because both proposed hypotheses compared multiple groups, an ANOVA test was run to test each. A total of three ANOVA tests were run using reputation of program, ease of finding

a job, and future earning potential as dependent variables and class level as the independent variable. Some qualitative analysis of open ended questions was also conducted for additional insight and support.

Results

Hypothesis 1

To test hypothesis 1, an ANOVA test was run testing for significance among class levels' rates of reputation of the program. Results indicate that there is not a significant difference among how various class levels rate the importance of program reputation (see figure 1 for means and standard deviations), $F(3, 94) = 1.340, p < .05$. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported, as it posed that students across class levels would rate program reputation equally.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	26	4.04	1.038
2	20	4.05	.686
3	21	3.67	.796
4	31	4.03	.407
Total	98	3.96	.759

Figure 1: means and standard deviations of ANOVA output for class level x program reputation

Hypothesis 2

To test hypothesis 2, two ANOVA tests were run to determine a significant relationship among class levels, ease of finding a job, and future earning potential. Results indicate that there is not a significant difference among how various class levels rate the importance of finding a job (see figure 2 for means and standard deviations), $F(3, 94) = 1.102, p < .05$. Thus, part one of H2 is supported.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Freshman	25	4.12	.881
Sophomore	20	4.35	.671

Junior	21	3.95	.973
Senior	32	4.03	.474
Total	98	4.10	.753

Figure 2: means and standard deviations of ANOVA output for class level x ease of finding a job

The second ANOVA test was run to determine a significant relationship among class levels and how each rates the importance of future earning potential. Results indicate that there is not a significant difference among how various class levels rate the importance of future earning potential (see figure 3 for means and standard deviations), $F(3, 95) = .247, p < .05$. Thus, the second part of H2 is also supported.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	26	4.00	1.020
2	20	4.00	.858
3	21	3.95	.669
4	32	4.13	.554
Total	99	4.03	.775

Figure 3: means and standard deviations of ANOVA output for class level x future earning potential

Discussion

This study aimed to discover how students currently at Purdue University felt about a communications degree and how they would suggest better advertising BLSC to the university as a whole. Based on the results discussed previously, as well as qualitative data analysis, the following recommendations are provided for BLSC.

Emphasize Program Reputation for Prospective Students

The first issue is how can BLSC encourage students to move across the country for a degree in communications? Students across class levels rated program reputation as an important factor when selecting a major. This demonstrates that this is a strong way to encourage prospective students to move across the country for a degree in communications at BLSC.

Purdue is already well known for many reasons and BLSC can capitalize on the overall reputation of the school by showing prospective students that the communications school is equally as reputable. Qualitative data analysis further supports this suggestion:

“I don't think people even know that BLSC is a reputable school. Maybe do more to make their students proud by announcing it more and building respect.”

“They could showcase some of the success stories from the school. As it stands right now most of the reputation the school has is based on its engineering department. If the BLSC can showcase some high profile individuals, it may help in increasing the attractiveness of the Communication degree.”

“Promote how great of a reputation it has and how many different things you can do with it.”

These are just a few student responses that demonstrate the importance of program reputation to students and that they, too, feel emphasizing BLSC's reputation is an excellent way to encourage new students to move to Purdue for a degree in communications.

Emphasize Ease of Finding a Job and Future Earning Potential for Current Students

Although some students may come to college with a major in mind, most will change their major at least once and many come into college undecided on a major. The next issue becomes: how can BLSC convince these students to select a major or minor in communication? Students across all class levels rated both ease of finding a job and future earning potential as important factors in selecting their major. Thus, BLSC should emphasize the types of jobs graduates get after graduation, as well as the earnings they can expect. Qualitative data analysis supports this recommendation, as well:

“Advertise more to other majors that a com minor could be extremely rewarding, and how.”

“Make more explicit the successful people that have graduated from BLSC”

“Specify possible career paths and unique aspects of the program.”

“Promote it through the jobs you can get with a communication major.”

“better marketing and thinking about how people can benefit not just theoretically, but by obtaining a career”

“They can get numbers on how easy it is to get a job.”

It is evident that students already at Purdue also agree that emphasizing these key factors could be a successful way to recruit undeclared students to consider a major or minor in communications.

How BLSC should Emphasize these Areas

The last question then becomes: how should BLSC go about advertising itself and emphasizing these factors? Open ended response questions from the survey provided the greatest insight into this question. Many students explained that BLSC does not have a very strong social media presence, a rapidly growing area of importance for business success: “It could better promote itself by utilizing social media more effectively.” Furthermore, some students suggested sending emails to a larger number of people on campus to get the word out about the programs BLSC offers and how even a few classes or a minor could benefit all students. The first suggestion for how BLSC can promote itself is to ensure that the school is using the currently most popular social media platforms among college aged students and keeping those accounts active. Content should revolve around program reputation, ease of finding a job, and future earning potential. These posts could feature successful alumni, high-profile faculty members, and stats on how communications degrees have benefited other students.

A second common suggestion by students was for BLSC to host more events on campus and to participate in more major fairs. Some students explained that they really do not know what BLSC actually offers and because they are already declared majors in another school, may never have considered even a minor because they did not know such a program is offered. One

student summed it up nicely, replying “Promote the career fairs and have more well know clubs and groups on campus from the school of communication. Being someone from another major, I have never heard of any of the clubs or prestigious groups in the com school.” Closely related, many students suggested posting fliers in more high-traffic areas of the university, such as the library or student center. The second suggestion for how BLSC can better promote itself on campus is for the school to ensure it has attention-grabbing, well-designed booths at career fairs and fliers posted on campus. The school could utilize these fairs and fliers to attract students to other BLSC events, such as alumni panels and informational forums. Panels and forums are excellent ways for students to hear first-hand and in person the benefits of a communication major or minor. Such panels and forums’ subject matter should aim to primarily revolve around the three aforementioned factors, as well as providing information on how to become a major or minor.

The last and most common feedback from students is that BLSC should catch prospective students earlier in the recruitment process. There are several ways to do this. First, many students suggested that the school visit high schools more often to promote itself alongside some of the more well-known schools, like engineering. A strong suggestion provided by one student explained, “I am unsure of the recruiting events currently employed, but crediting current students in visiting their local high schools to speak about the college and its advantages may be a good promotion strategy.” BLSC could also utilize social media to engage prospective students, as well. One student responded, “It would be a good idea to interact with potential students on accounts like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.” Thus, the final suggestion for BLSC is to make a stronger effort to promote itself not just to current Purdue students, but also prospective students by sending more recruiters into high schools and interacting with them on social media.

Conclusion

BLSC has much to offer for many students and any communications student knows the benefits even a minor can provide. The struggle is, of course, convincing other students of those benefits so that they will select a major or minor in communications. This survey and subsequent report provides several specific and attainable ways the BLSC can better promote itself and continue educating students for many years to come.

References

Purdue University. (n.d.) Brian Lamb School of Communication: about. Retrieved from <https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/communication/about/reputation.html>

U.S. News and World Report. (n.d.). Best college rankings: Purdue University- West Lafayette. Retrieved from <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/purdue-university-west-lafayette-1825>

Wright, J. (2017). STEM majors are accelerating in every state, just as humanities degrees are declining, *Emsi*. Retrieved from <https://www.economicmodeling.com/2017/09/01/stem-majors-accelerating-every-state-just-humanities-degrees-declining/>