

ESTABLISHMENT OF A GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RISK AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION (ONLINE)

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors establish a Graduate Certificate in Risk and Crisis Communication, to be offered by the Department of Communication in the College of Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts, effective Fall 2019.

Background

Natural disasters, industrial accidents, mass shootings, terrorist attacks, and other such crises and emergencies regularly occur in the United States and internationally. Risk and crisis communication has become integral to public institutions and private companies that have had to think more proactively about contingency plans for such events. This has created a demand for individuals with specialized training and skills from a communication perspective. The proposed online graduate certificate program is designed to address this growing need for experts in risk and crisis communication. The program will provide students with an in-depth view of theory, research, and best-practices principles that can affect crisis management action plans. Students will be trained in research-based effective methods to oversee preparation programs, executive recovery plans, organize new policies, and update occupational health and safety standards.

The proposed program aims to attract both US-based and international students. It is anticipated that potential students will be employed by various government agencies, non-governmental organizations, or private firms that deal with issues of risk, including risk management and risk assessment, but who also need to learn how to communicate about those risks with wider and more lay audiences through a variety of modalities, including social media. The program is designed to appeal to both those who have had no formal training in communication as well as those who seek to advance their understanding of the field of risk and crisis communication.

Program Description

The program curriculum is based upon a systems approach to understanding and then managing complex organizations and events that become the focus of singular or ongoing risks and other crisis events. All functions and phases of crisis and emergency management will be addressed. Program core competencies include: Emergency event/crisis vulnerability and awareness; Emergency event/crisis planning; Emergency event/crisis management; Post emergency event/crisis activities:

Admission Requirements

Admission to this program is contingent upon acceptance to the Wayne State University Graduate School and Department of Communication. The application requires:

- (a) transcript of undergraduate degree, and if available graduate degree, coursework showing a minimum GPA of 3.0 ('B' average), and
- (b) 500-word statement of purpose presenting the academic and professional preparation for and interest in the graduate certificate, academic/ professional goals, and how completing the certificate helps achieve these goals.
- (c) International applicants whose native language is not English may also be required to submit TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or equivalent scores.

Preference will be given to applicants who have worked for at least two years in government institutions, non-government organizations, or private firms that focus on emergency management and response, health communication, or risk management.

Curriculum Requirements

Twelve credits of coursework as shown below are required. A course substitution may be allowed with a strong rationale for the change and consultation with a faculty adviser.

COM 7160: Crisis Communication (3 credits)

COM 7162: Risk Communication: Theoretical and Practical Approaches (3 credits)

COM 7170: Health and Risk Communication (3 credits)

COM 7172: Risk Communication: Disasters, Hazards, and Mass Media

All program courses are offered online.

Graduation Requirements

All coursework must be completed in accordance with the Wayne State University Graduate School and the regulations governing graduate scholarship and degrees. Students may enroll on a full-time or part-time basis but must complete requirements within six years of admission.

Program Administration

The graduate certificate will be housed in the College of Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts. Specific administrative tasks will be supervised through the Department of Communication, its director of graduate studies, and the department chair. This supervision includes program assessment. Similar to other graduate certificate programs in the department, a fulltime faculty member will act as the program adviser for all students in the program. The program adviser will assist students with their plan of work and course selection, and monitor student progress toward completion.

Budget and Resource Requirements

No additional budget or resources are needed for the program. The program will fall under the responsibilities of the director of graduate studies in the Department of Communication, and its courses will be staffed by current faculty in the department.

Accreditation

No specialized accreditation is required.

Approvals

The proposal was approved by the faculty and chair of the Department of Communication, the faculty council and dean of the College of Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts, and the New Programs Committee, Graduate Council, Dean of the Graduate School and the Provost.