



UNC
COLLEGE OF
ARTS & SCIENCES

April 14, 2015

Professor Abigail Panter,
Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula;
Nick Siedentop,
Director of Curriculum;
3010 Steele Building, CB#3504
College of Arts and Sciences
UNC-Chapel Hill

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KEN HILLIS
Chair and Professor
Media and Technology Studies

Dear Professor Panter and Director Siedentop,

As suggested by Senior Associate Dean Terry Rhodes, I write to seek your approval for a proposed name change for our Department as an academic unit only.

During the department's February 25th, 2015 Faculty Meeting, the Communication Studies faculty approved the proposal to change its name from "Department of Communication Studies" to "Department of Communication." Following a robust discussion faculty voted on the proposal. The vote was 23 in favor with one abstention. There were no negative votes.

When the department was formed, in 1993, communication was not yet perceived or acknowledged as so central a dynamic across all registers of everyday life as it is today. In part this shift in understanding flows from the rise of communication practices through networked information technologies yet it also reflects the markedly increased public recognition of the merits and value of competent and efficient modalities of communication practices across business, professional, institutional and personal settings.

When the department was formed, faculty hailed from many disciplines. Media studies scholars, for example, may have earned their degrees in film studies, cultural studies, geography, and sociology in addition to other disciplines. Interpersonal scholars were often trained in social psychology whereas some of our rhetoricians had studied in English departments. Today, however, the majority of our new faculty, while interdisciplinary in their research orientations, has acquired their degrees in departments of Communication.

The 1993 inclusion of "studies" provided the then-new department a rubric for indicating the value of closely examining a host of new problems strongly articulated to issues of communication. More than twenty years later, however, communication has come into its own as a field of research. Nationally, our peer departments recognize this as witnessed by Departments of Communication in peer institutions such as Stanford, Cornell, University of Utah and University of Washington. That communication has

come into its own is further reflected in the University of Colorado-Boulder's recent establishment of a School of Communication.

The discipline of Communication is on the rise (a fact reflected by our almost 900 strong student body) and has established itself as a fully legitimate field of enquiry. The once-legitimizing function of "studies" is no longer required and its inclusion in our name works against the best interest of the department.

Since taking on my duties as Chair, I have spoken with several colleagues at Carolina and at peer institutions about this topic. I am convinced that the new name more meaningfully reflects the research agendas of our faculty as well as the mature state of the discipline of Communication. It will also make us more competitive in recruitment of faculty and of graduate students.

I hope the department's proposed change in name meets with your approval. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to be in touch. I look forward to working with you moving forward on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Hillis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Hillis
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