Communication Studies Major

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
The Undergraduate Major

Communication shapes our world – our relations with friends and family, our success at work, and the way we participate in public. Our communication shapes our identity and often determines the quality of the world in which we live.

Undergraduates pursuing a BA or minor in Communication Studies study the range of communication contexts. For instance, students learn to understand communication in families, friendships, schools, organizations, cultures, social movements, politics, and the media, to name a few. Students sharpen their practical communication skills as they learn the foundation of ethical and effective communication.

Our students know that they are preparing for a future where they can expect to change careers several times over. They know that, no matter what career they choose, their ability to understand and practice effective communication will determine their satisfaction and success. Studying communication offers excellent preparation for careers in business, education, counseling, law, politics, health care, non-profits, the arts, and more.

Common Emphases in Communication Studies: Charting Your Own Path to the Future

Communication Studies majors are given a good deal of choice in developing a curriculum that meets their personal, professional, and public goals. Starting from our detailed curriculum and faculty advice, many majors find the flexibility of the curriculum appealing. They know they can shape their major or minor to fit their goals and interests. Our students usually develop a focus around one of four interest areas:

Communication and Culture: Are you interested in a career bridging cultural difference, reclaiming identity in organizations, teaching others about intercultural dialogue, or advocating for a more diverse, just, and equal community? Do you want to be a more ethical participant in the globalized world? Our courses promote an ethic of inclusivity, racial and social justice, reciprocity, and mutual transformation in the encounter of difference.

Interpersonal and Family Communication: Are you interested in a career involving event planning, human relations, family dynamics, parenting, education, or counseling? Do you want to explore gendered relations, issues of family diversity, the “dark side” of relationships, or enhance your conflict management and persuasive abilities while interacting with others? This concentration offers an in-depth look into the changing nature of family and relationships within our global society.
Rhetoric and Communication Ethics: Are you interested in persuasion, the impact of public communication on society, politics, ethics, or social action? Do you want to learn more about how to win arguments or how to persuade others ethically and effectively? This concentration prepares you to study how ordinary (and extraordinary) people have used the art of public persuasion to change policy, set precedents, or operate democratically in the world.

Organizational Communication: Are you interested in leadership, teamwork, persuasion, and negotiation in organizations? Are you interested in a career in business, human resources, public relations, or advertising? Do you want to learn more about how to market yourself in the changing economy? This concentration explores the meaning of work, and helps students practice the communication skills that they will need to do well at any job.

A Minor in Communication Studies
A communication minor attracts students across campus, complementing study in traditional majors such as English, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, and Philosophy. Our minor helps prepare students who are preparing for a variety of professional careers such as law, medicine, or education.

Internships
Internships provide valuable hands-on experience for majors who wish to apply their communication skills in the organizational world before leaving DU. Time spent serving as an intern offers students excellent opportunities to study public discourse and communication ethics, as well as interpersonal and family communication dynamics, and intercultural communication.

Why I Majored in Communication
Caroline Davidson, 2009

I was originally a Journalism major, but decided that something with a broader base of applications would be a better choice. At the time, I was not certain what career path was right for me so choosing a major that had the potential to lead to many different career paths was essential.

I have learned many important and useful skills in my communication classes. The most important ones have been gaining the ability to think critically and express myself effectively in both written and oral communication. I also learned how essential communication is to our everyday lives.

I recently got accepted and started taking classes in the 3 +2 graduate program here at DU. I am working to get my masters in business administration with a concentration in integrated marketing communication. The skills I learned as a communication major will help me be successful in the future and will allow me to communicate more effectively in advertising and marketing.

“While fulfilling my Communication major at DU I had the opportunity to intern at Girls Inc. of Metro Denver. The experience was a great way to get real life experience and put my communications degree to use. During my internship I played a big part in planning an annual event for Girls Inc. and I look forward to returning this year and helping out again! I felt prepared and confident during my internship communicating with a diverse group of people, contacting sponsors and learning about all that goes into organizing and putting together an event for a non-profit organization. My experience at DU and what I learned in my major gave me useful skills and knowledge to put to use in the “real world”. -M. Isabel Keegan
Scholarships

DU offers a variety of institutional and outside resources to fund your education. Students are automatically considered for merit awards when they apply, which range from $3,000 to full tuition. The DU Financial Aid website lists many links for undergraduate scholarships through outside public and private institutions. Student-employment, on and off-campus, is a popular financing option. A limited number of scholarships are also available for DU debaters.

Make the Most of Your Study Abroad Experience

Classes in Communication Studies prepare you to make the most of University’s Cherrington Global Scholars Study Abroad Program. Students can study abroad at no cost beyond regular tuition, and with travel expenses paid by the University. Students return from countries such as Japan and Italy with a much better understanding of the nuances of intercultural communication and an enriched set of aspirations for their communication studies and personal lives.

Graduates of Communication Programs go on to Careers as:

- Business Executive
- Teacher
- Counselor or Therapist
- Clergy
- Community Organizer
- Non-profit Administrator
- Sales and Service Representative
- Legislative Liaison
- Attorney
- Campaign Director
- Human Resources
- Social Worker
- Law Enforcement

For more information, contact the Department of Communication Studies or visit our website at www.du.edu/comm.

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“**My time studying in Tokyo as a Cherrington Global Scholar** enriched me in ways that are difficult to put down on paper. Studying Communication and Culture broadened my worldview, and helped me to understand how I, as an individual, fit into society. As I transitioned from life in the US to life in Japan, and as I met new friends and colleagues, I often found myself thinking about concepts and ideas discussed in my previous communication classes. I was pleasantly surprised when much of the same material I had been exposed to at the University of Denver was taught in communication classes at one of the most well respected universities in Japan.”  ~Riley Smith

A Major that Makes a Difference in the World

Communication majors may work first-hand with faculty who are solving social problems. For instance, Dr. Willer’s research focuses on adolescents’ (anti) social communication in relation to their group identities, as well as their individual and relational well-being. In particular she studies social aggression (e.g., gossip, social exclusion, peer manipulation) and inter/intragroup conflict, in contexts including girls’ cliques and gangs. Dr. Willer teaches a course titled “The Dark Side of Relationships,” which focuses on both the negative and positive functions of a number of communication phenomena and processes. For example, the course spotlights topics such as violence and abuse, privacy and secrets, jealousy and envy, and social aggression and bullying.

First Year students in our Race, Place, and Cultural Memory seminar conducted oral history interviews in Northwest Denver with local residents.