

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Graduate Programs in UCSB's Communication Department Ranked Best in Nation by National Communication Association Survey

With just 14 tenure-track faculty members and 22 graduate students, the Department of Communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara is more a boutique than an assembly line when it comes to conducting research and awarding doctoral degrees.

But as a survey recently conducted by the National Communication Association clearly shows, one need not be biggest to be the best.

Conducted in the 2003-2004 academic year, the study asked NCA members to judge the reputations of 132 doctoral programs in nine specialty areas of communication. In the five areas in which it was considered, UCSB ranked first, first, second, fourth and 17th.

"For a faculty as small as ours, these results are extraordinarily gratifying," said department chair Michael Stohl. "The rankings are evidence of the strong intellectual impact of our research and the wonderful reputation department faculty have as scholars and as mentors of outstanding graduate students."

It is a reputation that has grown remarkably over the past few years. UCSB's rankings were significantly higher in every area in 2004 than in the NCA's previous survey, released in 1996.

In the area of "interpersonal and small group communication," UCSB's ranking jumped from ninth to first; in "intercultural/international communication," it went from eighth to first.

In "organizational communication," UCSB improved from 12th to second. In the area of "communication and technology," not a category in 1996, UCSB is ranked fourth. And its media program, included under the "mass communication" heading and not ranked in 1996, was ranked 17th.

UCSB was not considered in the categories of critical cultural studies, political communication, health communication or rhetorical studies because the department either doesn't do work in those areas or doesn't have sufficient faculty there.

Also ranking high overall were the University of Southern California, the University of Illinois, the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University.

The department's faculty was thrilled and gratified to learn that its efforts were so highly valued.

"I think it is extremely impressive how a department can obtain such high esteem from its discipline with limited resources," said Ronald Rice, recently appointed Arthur Rupe Professor of the Social Effects of Media, 2006 president-elect of the International Communication Association (ICA), and a co-chair of UCSB's Center for Film, Television and New Media. "It speaks to the collective contributions and efforts of the students, staff and faculty."

Howard Giles, the department's director of graduate studies and a fellow and past-president of the ICA, said it is gratifying to find the department's research and instruction in international relations and cultural diversity so acclaimed. "Given current national and global events, it is rewarding to see that our research and mentoring in these domains is valued so highly."

David Seibold, past department chair and recently selected as a National Communication Association Distinguished Scholar, said that the department derives its strength, not just from its faculty and graduate students, but from the UCSB

administration, collaborative faculty in other departments, and the generous support of benefactors such as Arthur Rupe and Sara Miller McCune, who have endowed department chairs and supported graduate fellowships.

Stohl said UCSB's high marks are particularly impressive in light of the small size of the Department of Communication faculty.

"We are often competing against departments that have as many as 35 or 40 faculty, or indeed, against colleges of communication with many more than that," Stohl said.

With the honor comes pressure to continue to make the department even better, Stohl said.

"To be so highly evaluated by our peers across the country is a joy as well as a challenge," he said. "We will continue our efforts to maintain and enhance the level of excellence that has been achieved."

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