

**Department of Apparel, Housing, and Resource Management
College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences**

**Consumer Studies Area Plan:
Discipline-Specific Visual Expression, Written, and Spoken Communication**

Because Spoken, Visual, and Written Communication (SVWC) is important in the jobs graduates of the Consumer Studies option take, all of these elements are already included in the curriculum. This report describes what the SVWC is currently. The specific activities are not fully described because the actual projects vary each term based on the class size.

GOALS and OBJECTIVES:

Graduates of the Consumer Studies Option will demonstrate through required class assignments the ability to:

1. Develop and present a verbal presentation appropriate for a professional setting that is rated by the course instructor at a C or higher level.
2. Develop and present a variety of visual products appropriate for a professional setting (ranging from PowerPoint presentations that support verbal presentations to stand-alone posters) that are rated by the instructor at a C or higher level.
3. Develop and present written products appropriate for a professional setting (ranging from research presentations for professionals to materials for lay audiences) that are rated by the instructor at a C or higher level.

PLAN:

Freshmen

The Consumer Studies program rarely enrolls freshmen. Most students transfer into the program later in their VT careers. Thus, most students focus on the university core as freshmen.

Sophomores

At the sophomore level, four AHRM courses are required. Through these courses, students begin to learn and practice SVWC skills.

* AHRM 2504 Resource Management for Individuals and Families – This is currently a Writing Intensive course. Students complete three writing assignments during the semester, and they both provide and get feedback from peers on their writing.

* AHRM 2404 Consumer Rights – Students write 10 pages in 1-page increments as they report on and react to current consumer events. Working in groups of approximately five students, they complete a comparison shopping project that involves product analysis and selection. The collaborative work includes a paper and a group oral and visual presentation to the class of 150 students, requiring each student to use a microphone.

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Juniors

Third-year students focus on two out-of-the-department courses to enhance their written, visual, and spoken communication skills. These courses have been part of the curriculum for a number of years.

* COMM 2004 Public Speaking. In this class, students learn basic skills of public speaking; speech organization and delivery; emphasis on in-class delivery of speeches.

* ENGL 3764 Technical Writing. Students learn principles and procedure of technical writing; attention to analyzing audience and purpose, organizing information, designing graphic aids, and writing such specialized forms as abstracts, instructions and proposals.

Seniors

Seniors take two AHRM courses that serve together as the capstone for the curriculum and provide opportunities for demonstrating skills in a range of written, spoken and visual communication forms.

* AHRM 4404 Consumer Protection – Students complete a research-based paper on a current consumer issue. They also individually make presentations to the class on that issue. This presentation typically involves visual aids, such as PowerPoint or posters and handouts. There is an opportunity for the class to ask questions and discuss the issue under the presenter's leadership.

* AHRM 4414 Professionalism in Consumer Affairs – Students are encouraged to use the consumer issue that was the focus of their research papers in AHRM 4404 for the projects in this class. They each develop a poster, flyer, brochure, and an op-ed piece as written and visual communication tools. Individually, or in groups, they prepare and lead a class segment where they teach information and lead class activities on a topic related to their future careers. Finally, groups of students form pro and con teams to debate a consumer issue.

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Student submissions for required elements of the capstone courses (AHRM 4404 and AHRM 4414) will be reviewed to determine whether or not the student achieved a rating of C or higher. The program assessment will report the number and percent of students achieving that goal.

To document the work, each year a randomly selected sample of 10% of each project will be kept, primarily in electronic form (e.g. digital pictures of posters). The sample will be drawn from each group of final projects; a single student may or may not have more than one item included.

The items reviewed for each objective will be:

Objective 1: Videotape of a verbal presentation on a consumer issue in AHRM 4404 and on one of the assignments in AHRM 4414. This will require that all student presentations be videotaped so all are evaluated under the same conditions. After the sample is drawn, the remainder of the presentations will be discarded.

Objective 2: Visual presentation used in a verbal presentation in AHRM 4404 or AHRM 4414. The first choice will be the visual used in AHRM 4404. If there was none, the poster, flyer and brochure from AHRM 4414 will be selected.

Objective 3: Research paper completed in AHRM 4404, and the brochure and op-ed piece completed in AHRM 4414.

Additionally, some of outcome assessment items listed above will be periodically reviewed by consumer affairs professionals to assure that the items and the level of proficiency achieved continue to meet the needs of the profession.