

**COMMUNICATION
DEPARTMENT & PROGRAM REVIEW (2024-2025)**

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Section 1: Report on Previous Goals & Requests

COMM Previous APR Goals	What Happened (support with data/evidence)
Assess the need for hybrid courses	As of right now, we do not have many hybrid course offerings, other than Suzie Kristensen’s upcoming Summer 2025 COMM 218z class and Lisa Merritt’s upcoming Winter 2026 COMM 111z class. We believe it is still worthwhile to investigate the need for hybrid courses at the college, especially to appeal to students who are self-paced, yet still desire in- person instruction and interaction with peers and instructors half of the time.
Generate more opportunities for communication faculty to interact with one another	We are pleased with our progress on this goal. With the addition of two new faculty, the tide is changing. So far in AY 2024-2025, we’ve had two social gatherings, and we’ve met more regularly to work on assessment, scheduling, and DPR as a team. We have added more social gatherings to our agenda in the months to come, and we frequently communicate via group text. Having regular gatherings certainly helps build COMM faculty rapport.
Complete and use Communication Lab	We have not made progress in the completion of the Communication Lab. The designated space for this lab in Jefferson is currently being used as an office for part-time instructors, so the prospect of the lab is unlikely. As of right now, we have decided to abandon this goal.

Theatre Previous APR Goal	What Happened (support with data/evidence)
Restore the Theatre program	Sadly, with Lilli Ann Linford-Foreman’s retirement and a faculty search that did not result in candidates with a COMM <i>and</i> Theatre background, this goal is unattainable at the moment. However, we are going to interview candidates for a new full-time Communication position with Jon Bouknight’s retirement; the job posting signifies theatre experience as a preferred qualification. If we do not end up hiring a Communication faculty member who has theatre experience, we could have conversations with our FAC chair Jason Lamb regarding the prospect of hiring a PT Theatre instructor so that these classes are restored at COCC. Since Lilli Ann’s retirement, students have inquired about Theatre classes, so there seems to be an interest in bringing back these courses.

Section 2: Fulfilling Your Mission

Discipline Mission: *The Communication program at COCC changes students' lives by giving them the understanding and skills they need to be more appropriate, effective, ethical, and empowered in the workplace, as well as in friendship and family settings.*

Since our previous APR, we have focused on enhancing two of COCC's values: engaging our communities and championing diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and access.

First, we hired two new faculty members, Lisa Merritt and Nikki Truscelli, who began their new roles in Fall 2024. In Winter 2025, Nikki began teaching COMM 218z to the adults in custody at Deer Ridge Correctional Institution, assuming the previous role of Mike Artus. We have been fortunate to have Nikki want to continue what Mike began at DRCI. This clearly aligns with COCC's vision of engaging our communities and championing access and inclusion to all learners.

Similarly, in the academic years since our APR, we have been able to consistently staff the branch campuses with our faculty so that students have access to Communication courses no matter where they live in Central Oregon. In addition, we offer online sections for both Public Speaking and Interpersonal Communication each quarter, providing students another modality for taking their Communication classes. We are aware that many of our students work part-/full-time and/or have important family responsibilities (e.g., caring for a parent or child/ren). Offering more online courses in our schedule opens up access for students who cannot physically make it to campus and creates an educational environment that cultivates innovation and inclusion of all learners.

In many of our classes, students work with one another in groups, whether it's a practical exercise (e.g., practicing active listening) or something more theoretical (e.g., analyzing a hypothetical case study). Recently, one student commented, "I just had one of the best conversations I've ever had in my life" after an activity where pairs were tasked with listening to one another while other group members observed. This student commented that they were prompted to reflect on how COVID-19 affected their life. They mentioned that many of their friends have been through a similar experience, so they felt especially "seen" in the conversation by someone else in their group who was genuinely curious about the effects of the pandemic. In that moment it was clear that this student was changed in some way through this activity. We all have memorable moments like this one where students are changed in some way and realize that communicating well is an empowering part of being in close relationships, in workplace contexts, and in society. If people can communicate well, we will have stronger communities, relationships, workplaces, etc.

Section 3: College Goals and Initiatives

As a Communication discipline, we have a few examples of how we have worked to fulfill the COCC's plans, goals, and priorities. In addition, we have and are participating in statewide initiatives.

First, we have participated in the initiative to plan courses in advance so that students know what to expect as they look ahead to classes they will need in their program of study. This collegewide initiative to institute long-term planning helps students have a clearer path in achieving their academic goals. In addition, we pride ourselves on offering courses across all campuses, including Deer Ridge Correctional Institution. Similarly, we offer many of our courses online for students who cannot physically come to campus and/or prefer this method of learning. Advanced course planning and a diversity of course offerings tie in with two goals in COCC's strategic plan: being a student-ready college and providing access to equitable opportunities.

Second, we are actively participating in two faculty subcommittees related to the statewide initiatives of Major Transfer Map (MTM) and Common Course Numbering (CCN) in Communication. Jon Bouknight is serving as COCC's representative for the MTM subcommittee, and Anne Zmyslinski-Seelig is serving as COCC's representative for the CCN subcommittee. Having representatives in these groups ensures that COCC's Communication faculty and the college are informed of any upcoming changes. Also, our college now has a voice in shaping important decisions that will affect our discipline and COCC more broadly.

Third, we are involved with Guided Pathways work, specifically regarding Trailhead Courses. Anne Zmyslinski-Seelig is on the workgroup for trailhead courses, and she is helping to pilot the instructor checklist for classes that will eventually be designated as "trailhead courses." She is piloting the checklist in Communication 218 (Interpersonal Communication). Ultimately, COMM 218 is unlikely to be designated as a trailhead course. Therefore, one unintended result of serving on this workgroup is that the Communication faculty have discussed developing an Introduction to Communication (COMM 100Z) course starting in Summer 2025 with the goal of launching the class in AY 2026-2027; this class would likely be designated as a trailhead course, as "Intro to [insert class title]" courses seem to be one of the best fits as trailhead goals. (See Section 7: New Goals and Resource Needs for more information about COMM 100Z).

Finally, in a few of our courses (e.g., COMM 219: Small Group Communication; COMM 250: Listening), instructors have partnered with local businesses for student projects and/or learning opportunities. There is more information on these partnerships in Section 5 (Strengths and Accomplishments). These relationships between our classes and our community help in working toward achieving the strategic plan goal of community engagement.

Section 4: Diversity and Inclusion Insights

Below we will cover three insights we gained from examining data collected by COCC. First, we will discuss BILAPOC attrition in Communication classes versus all of COCC classes. Next, we will delve into attrition in online and remote classes. Finally, we end with course success by instructional method: in-person, online, and hybrid.

Fig 1. BILAPOC Attrition: All COCC Classes

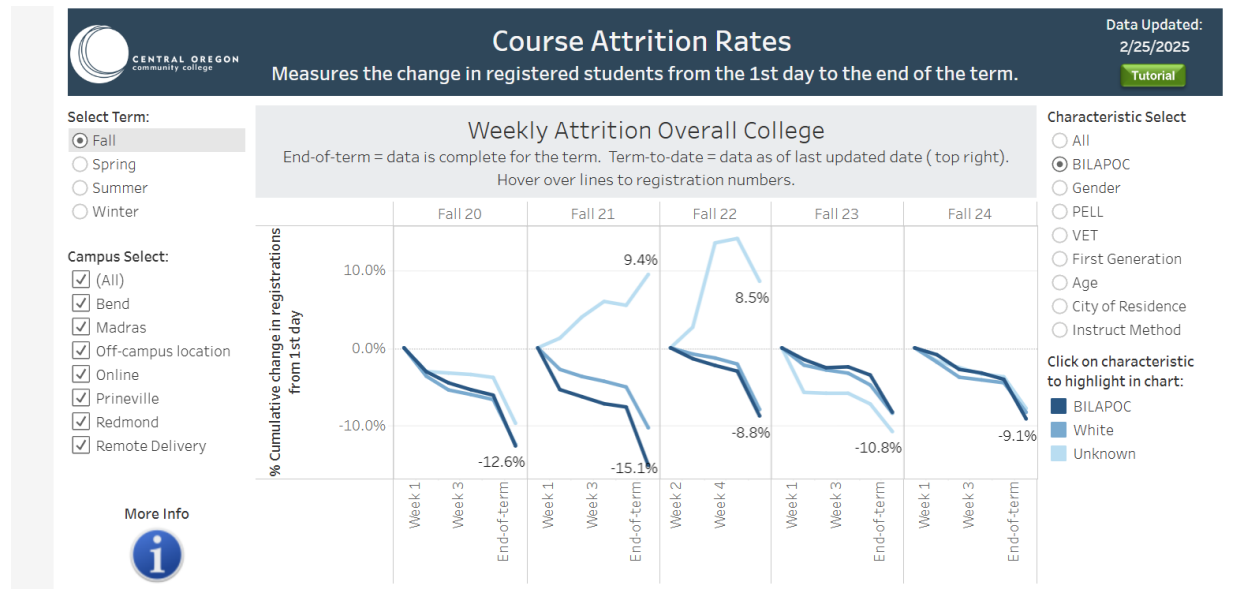
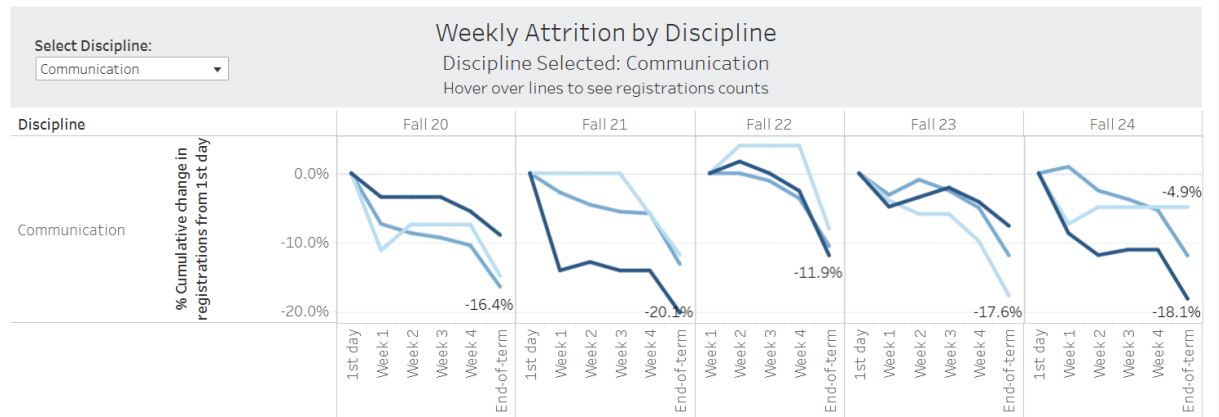


Fig 2. BILAPOC Attrition: Communication Classes



We examined Course Attrition Rates (the change in registered students from the first day to the end of the term) in regard to BILAPOC students across the college overall (Fig 1.) compared to the Communication discipline (Fig 2.). In the charts above, we included attrition rates in Fall 2020-2024 across the college, along with attrition rates in Fall 2020-2024 in Communication specifically. The darkest blue lines represent BILAPOC students, the blue lines represent white students, and the lightest blue lines represent unknown student backgrounds. Looking at the last two fall terms, the full college attrition rates for BILAPOC students were -10.8% (Fall 2023) and -9.1% (Fall 2024). For Communication

specifically, the attrition rates for BILAPOC students were -7.6% (Fall 2023) and -18.1% (Fall 2024). The Fall 2024 numbers are concerning, and to be more specific, we lost 23 of the original 127 BILAPOC students enrolled in COMM classes in Fall 2024.

Even though this sample size (N = 127) is clearly smaller than the sample of BILAPOC students enrolled across the college, we still want to be mindful of how we plan to retain BILAPOC students in our classes. We plan to keep utilizing the college’s Early Assist program to keep as many students in our classes as possible. In addition, developing and maintaining a welcoming atmosphere, especially in the early weeks of the term, is of the utmost importance. Finally, we want to continue attending and participating in campus-wide trainings through CAFE and the Diversity and Inclusion office to learn about reaching diverse student groups and to ultimately implement strategies that will not only lead to better retention, but also lead to a better sense of belonging in the class, at the college, and even in the students’ chosen pathway.

Fig 3. Online and Remote Delivery Attrition: All COCC Classes

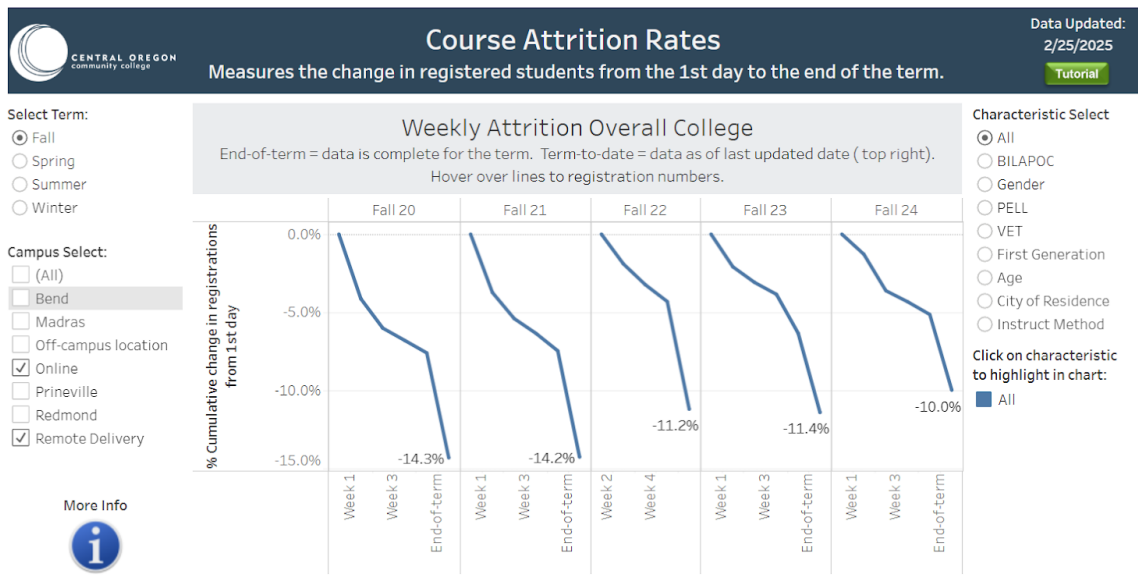
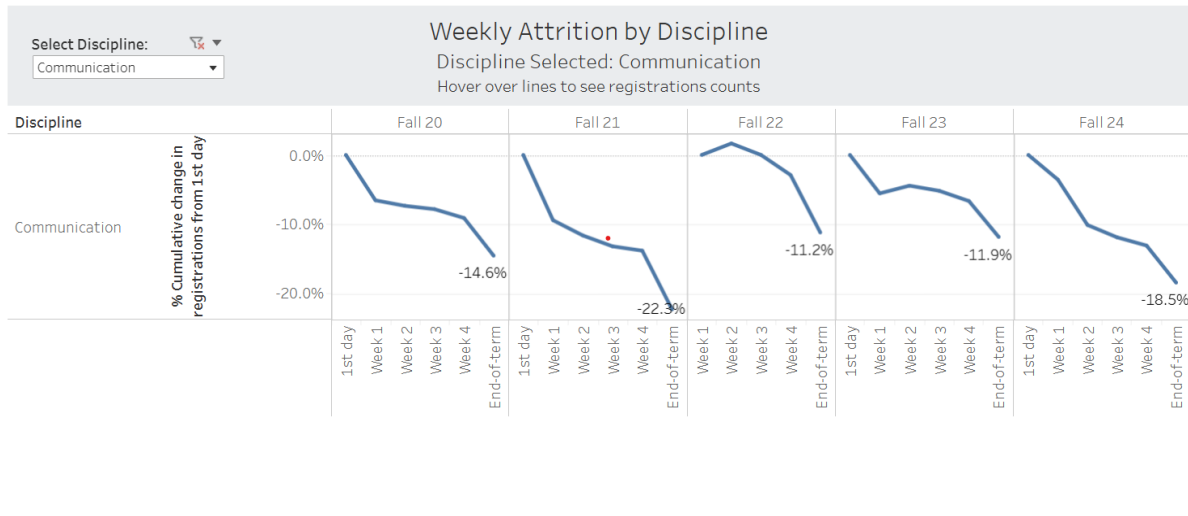


Fig 4. Online and Remote Delivery Attrition: Communication Classes



After delving into attrition a bit more, we decided to look at our attrition in online and remote course offerings. Comparing Fall 2020-2024, we found that our attrition in our online and remote offerings is higher than the rest of the college (Fig 4.), especially in Fall 2021 and Fall 2024. Determining ways to keep online students engaged and enrolled in our classes is an opportunity for growth, and we intend to have conversations about this data as a group. Similar to what we mentioned above, we want to continue professional development efforts focused on online student retention.

Fig 5. Course Success by Instructional Method: All COCC Classes

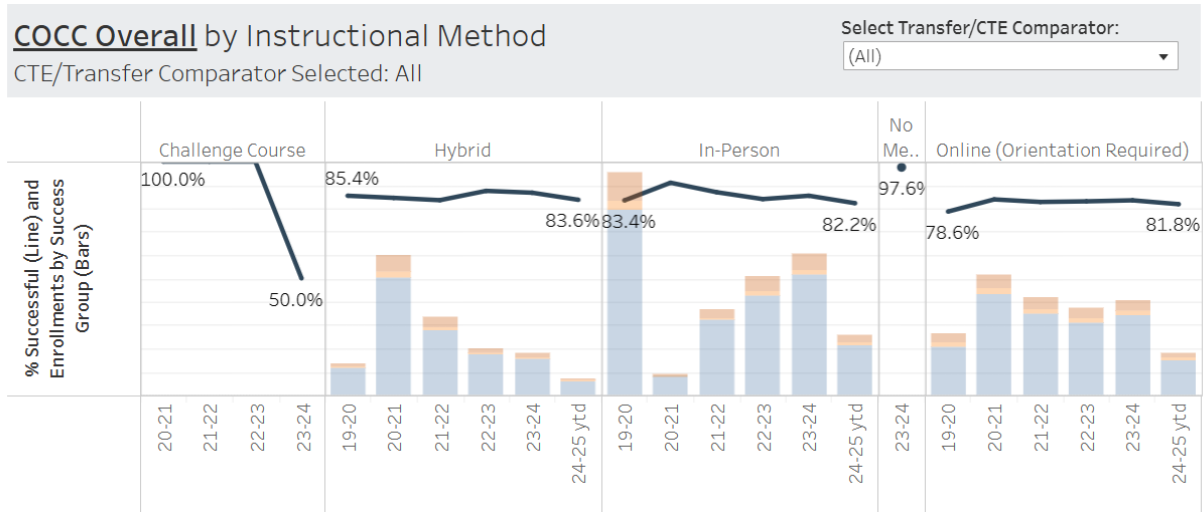
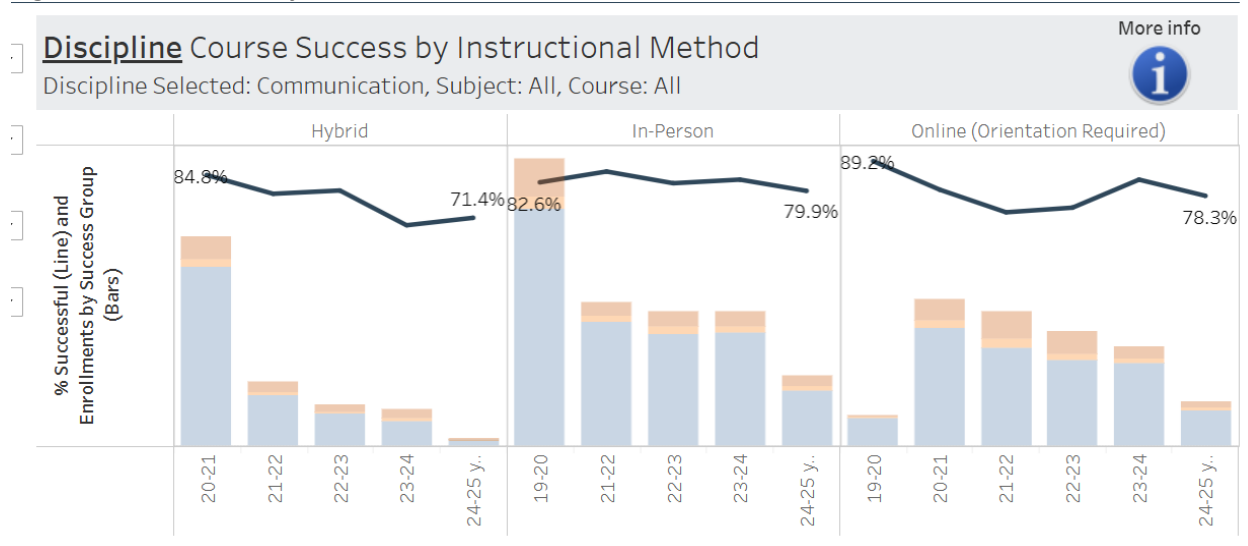


Fig 6. Course Success by Instructional Method: Communication Classes



Lastly, after noticing the attrition rates in our online/remote courses, we decided to look at the course success rates for these classes. In the AYs 2021-2022 (73.2%) and 2022-2023 (74.6%), we experienced a drop in online student success, especially compared to the college averages in those years (2021-2022 = 82.71% and 2022-2023 = 82.87%). Since those years, our student success rate has increased (2023-2024 = 83.4% and 2024-2025 = 78.3% as of right now). Our online course success rate has improved, but it is still helpful to keep this data in mind to make sure that we are creating an atmosphere that promotes student success in our online classes.

Section 5: Strengths and Accomplishments

Our discipline has many strengths and accomplishments to report. First, a primary accomplishment is the successful hiring of two Communication faculty members, Lisa Merritt and Nikki Truscelli, who began their role in Fall 2024. Additionally, as a collective, we offer a variety of unique Communication specialties, or areas of focus within the discipline. Justin focuses on risk communication, Lisa specializes in group communication and public speaking, Anne focuses on interpersonal communication, Nikki in relational communication, and Jon in rhetorical and intercultural communication. Additionally, as a collective we offer a variety of course types and modalities (online, in-person, weekend courses). Finally, our discipline is committed to professional development and many of our members attend CAFE trainings on allyship and various pedagogy practices, Safe Zone trainings, and various DEI-related trainings on campus.

The Communication Curriculum has been updated since the last review. A new class was added to the Communication offerings, COMM 244-The Rhetoric of Conspiracies. This class was first taught in Winter 2025. Another course, COMM 255-Free Expression and Public Assembly, was updated to become a 4-credit class that now satisfies the Cultural Literacy requirement. This revised course was first offered in Fall 2024. Jon Bouknight is to thank for these updates to our Communication course offerings.

Outside of collective accomplishments, our discipline is proud to highlight individual areas of accomplishment:

- Anne Zmyslinski-Seelig participated in the Faculty Leadership Training program during the 23-24 AY, and Nikki Truscelli is currently participating in this training during the 24-25 AY.
- In statewide initiative roles, Jon Bouknight is currently serving on the MTM subcommittee, and Anne Zmyslinski-Seelig is currently serving on the CCN subcommittee.
- Justin Borowsky is the Chair of COCC's Faculty Senate.
- Justin Borowsky continues to hold close partnerships with various organizations in the community, including Search and Rescue, linking his passion for risk communication as a way to benefit those navigating potential danger.
- Nikki Truscelli has been seeking out community partnerships, such as Touchmark Senior Living Community, and created a community-engaged learning experience in her Listening course in Fall 2024 where students visited the Touchmark Community to listen to the older adults.
- Nikki Truscelli is serving on the CAFE Advisory Board for the 24-25 AY.
- Lisa Merritt incorporates a "Do Good" Group Project in COMM 219 requiring students to develop, create, and conduct a problem-solving project, fundraiser, or service project for a local level cause/organization that does "good" in a philanthropic nature. She has applied to be part of the upcoming Ponderosa Project workshop to learn how to integrate sustainability into her group projects. She also applied to be a Guided Pathways Subject Matter Expert.

Our final strength to emphasize is that Communication classes are a great fit for field trips and interactive experiences. Below are some photos of Jon Bouknight's students in action during COMM 241 (Media, Communication, and Society) on their field trip to the World's Last Blockbuster in Winter 2025. Lisa Goetz-Bouknight captured these moments during the field trip.



The COMM 241 class also traveled to a local independent record store in Winter 2025. Lisa Goetz-Bouknight snapped this photo of the students interviewing the owner.



Our classrooms are also a place where students work in groups quite often. Below are photos from Jon Bouknight's COMM 115 (Intercultural Communication) class working together (and having fun!) with a simulation in Spring 2025.





Section 6: Challenges

The Communication Discipline sees challenges and opportunities for growth in the following three areas: landing a new hire who can teach many of Jon Bouknight’s course offerings, ensuring that we have classrooms that facilitate interactive pedagogy practices, and ensuring that branch campuses have sufficient Communication course offerings every quarter.

First, with the retirement of Jon Bouknight, our Department is left to fill many courses that the other faculty do not feel competent to teach (specifically: Media Communication, and Society, Argumentation and Discourse, and other rhetoric-focused courses). While we intend to hire someone who will be able to fill these course offerings, Jon holds a critical role in the discipline with the classes that he teaches, and if left unfilled, will leave many classes missing from the schedule.

Second, given the interactive nature of our discipline, many of our faculty appreciate having classrooms that offer flexibility for small-group work and space to embody various communication skills in practice, while not being bothered by a neighboring group. The classrooms in Jefferson and Deschutes, where many of our faculty teach, have limited space and often inconsistently functioning technology. For example, faculty teaching in Deschutes 7 had a series of troubles with failing projectors in the Fall 2024 quarter, despite the attempted support to fix the concern from IT.

Finally, with the growth of the branch campuses, there is an uptick in need for classes in Madras, Prineville, Redmond, and Deer Ridge Correctional Institution. Our faculty is feeling challenged in how to meet the demands of the growth of these campuses, while also ensuring sufficient courses (days/times) are available in Bend. This becomes particularly challenging during the winter months, when travel out of Bend is more challenging and often inconsistent. Moreover, our faculty want to ensure that the division of teaching at the branch campuses is equitable across all faculty as the transportation time can begin to feel like an additional workload.

Section 7: New Goals and Resource Needs

Goals	Timeline for achieving goal	Resources needed
<p>1. Engage in community-based pedagogy and partnerships.</p> <p><i>This goal aligns with the Guided Pathway initiative in that these partnerships could help students feel more engaged with their local community and potentially feel a sense of belonging. In addition, this goal plays into COCC's strategic plan in engaging communities and empowering students.</i></p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Just time. We need to reach out to various businesses and organizations if they are relevant to our classes and/or plan specific outings or projects related to these groups.</p>
<p>2. Modernize (as much as possible) Deschutes and Jefferson classrooms, especially so that all students are in environments conducive to learning (especially technology in said buildings). As part of this modernization, students have raised the idea of having a printing option at the mid-level of campus (e.g., Jefferson, Modoc, Deschutes, etc.) as opposed to having to make the trek from Grandview, Pioneer, or Barber Library.</p> <p><i>This goal aligns with a few elements of the strategic plan: empowering students, achieving excellence, and access. We want to prepare students in the best way possible, and part of that relies on classrooms that are conducive to a comfortable and reliable learning atmosphere.</i></p>	<p>Begin to investigate and assess and document the current status of teaching technology in 25-26 AY. Additionally, begin conversations with necessary parties in 25-26 AY regarding possible access to printing for mid-campus (i.e., IT).</p>	<p>This goal may require financial resources from the Department/college as it relates to updating some of the current classroom technology and finding a printing option for students who have most classes mid-campus.</p>
<p>3. Create an Introduction to Communication Course (COMM 100Z).</p> <p><i>This goal helps to advance the Guided Pathways initiative of identifying and teaching trailhead</i></p>	<p>Introduction to Communication Course (COMM 100Z) - beginning in Summer 2025. We'd like to designate this class as a trailhead course.</p>	<p>Time and possible stipend opportunities over summer for the creation of COMM 100Z.</p>

<p><i>courses. Currently, Communication does not have a class that fits all that well into the ideal mold of a trailhead course that connects students to their pathway. Creating and eventually teaching this course will also likely lead to developing more community partnerships, as much of this course will relate to the questions, "What can I do with a Communication degree?" and "Where can I work?"</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, this goal ties into the CCN statewide initiative. Creating a COMM 100Z course will add another Communication class that will easily transfer across Oregon institutions.</i></p>		
<p>4. Create a COCC event (or events) related to Communication for the campus community (example: Public Speaking Contest; Free Listening Day).</p> <p><i>The event/s that we launch relates to the belonging aspect of our Guided Pathways work. Events specific to Communication can help students to feel more connected to the college, along with their pathway in Communication or related majors.</i></p>	<p>Brainstorm possible event/s this academic year, and try to launch at least one campus event next year or the following year.</p>	<p>Time and possible funding from the community or college (example: prizes for best speech).</p>
<p>5. Determine if FAC can restore Theatre classes.</p> <p><i>If we are able to restore Theatre classes, this goal relates to the value of empowering students in that student inquiries regarding Theatre is one strong reason why we would like to bring back these classes, demonstrating that student voices are important to those in positions of leadership at COCC.</i></p>	<p>Assess the current need and budget for hiring a part-time faculty member to teach a few Theatre classes each AY.</p>	<p>Time and possible Department/College budget for hiring of a part-time instructor.</p>