THE FACULTY SENATE

June 17, 1996

Dr. Ray M. Bowen
President
Texas A&M University

Dear President Bowen:

At its regular meeting held June 10, 1996 the Faculty Senate considered and approved a proposal from the College of Liberal Arts and the Department of Speech Communications and Theater Arts to offer a Doctor of Philosophy in Speech Communications and Theater Arts.

Enclosed is the document considered by the Senate. Please advise me of your decision on this recommendation.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Steven M. Oberhelman
Speaker, 1996-97

pc: Dr. Ronald G. Douglas, Executive Vice President & Provost
Dr. Dan H. Robertson, Chair, Graduate Council

APPROVED DATE

[Signature] 6/24/96

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
May 17, 1996

Dr. Pierce E. Cantrell
Chair, Executive Committee
Faculty Senate
Texas A&M University
M. S. 1225

Dear Pierce:

At the May 9, 1996, meeting, the Graduate Council voted unanimously to approve the College of Liberal Arts and the Department of Speech Communications and Theater Arts' proposal to offer a Doctor of Philosophy in Speech Communications and Theater Arts.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dan H. Robertson, Chair
Graduate Council

attachment

pc: Steve Rholes
Ph.D. PROPOSAL IN SPEECH COMMUNICATION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The field of Speech Communication, which was founded in 1914, is a broad-based, liberal arts discipline that encompasses all areas of human communication, from interpersonal, face-to-face encounters, to small group decision making, organizational communication, public communication, and mass communication. Some departments of Speech Communication embrace all of these specialities; others focus on only some of the areas represented by the field as a whole. The Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts at Texas A&M University focuses on three areas: Organizational Communication, Rhetoric and Public Affairs, and Public Health Communication.

The Department of Speech Communication at Texas A&M University has been building toward a Ph.D-quality faculty for the last ten years. In 1985, the Department was created and authorized to offer the B.A. degree in Speech Communication. In 1990, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board authorized the University to offer the M.A. in Speech Communication. Since 1990, forty-six students have graduated with the M.A. in Speech Communication. All are gainfully employed. The faculty has grown from seven tenure lines in 1985 to fourteen tenure lines in Fall 1996. More importantly, the quality of the faculty has also undergone significant improvement. Over the last seven years, senior faculty have been recruited from the University of California, Texas Tech University, University of North Carolina, Purdue University, Cornell University, and the University of Minnesota. Today, Texas A&M University has one of the nation's strongest faculties in organizational communication and in rhetoric and public affairs, and is rapidly becoming a major force in the new field of health communication.

Because the number of undergraduate students seeking degrees in Speech Communication continues to rise, and because the number of Ph.D.s in Speech Communication has been more or less constant for the last ten years (both within the State of Texas and nationwide), there is a need for qualified Ph.D.s in the field. According to several studies, these trends will only continue in the next decade, with fewer and fewer Ph.D.s teaching more and more undergraduate students. Establishment of a new Ph.D. program in Speech Communication will serve both the current and future needs of Texas students. The faculty at Texas A&M University is the best qualified in the state—and one of the best qualified in the nation—to mount a new doctoral program.

The proposed Ph.D. program is designed to admit 4 funded Ph.D. students each year for a total of 15 funded students after attrition and graduation. These students would be additions to the approximately 20 funded M.A. students who are currently enrolled. At the end of the first six years of the program, we anticipate a total graduate student population of 30-40 students, funded and non-funded, divided about equally between Ph.D. and M.A. degree-seekers. This number will allow us to maintain a faculty-to-graduate student ratio of 1:3 into the foreseeable future.

The proposed doctorate in Speech Communication features three areas of concentration which parallel the strengths of the faculty now in place: Organizational Communication, Rhetoric and Public Affairs, and Public Health Communication. Each of these concentrations represents an
area where social, political, and economic factors call out for sustained analysis and understanding. Each is an area where scholarship in Speech Communication can make a difference, both in the lives of individuals and in society at large. As a land grant, sea grant, and space grant university, Texas A&M is committed to research that makes a difference in the everyday lives of people. The proposal for a Ph.D. in Speech Communication rests firmly within this tradition.

The three concentrations are intentionally designed to overlap in several aspects. There is, for example, a common core course that each Ph.D. student will be required to take. There are courses in research methods that will be applicable to all three concentrations. And there is a special seminar on the integration of scholarship and teaching that will be required of all Ph.D. students without regard to the concentration being pursued. In addition, each of the three concentrations takes as a starting assumption that the study of Speech Communication ought to be informed by theory, grounded in context, focused on messages, and oriented toward improved outcomes. To give curricular substance and form to these premises, the Ph.D. in Speech Communication will offer the following concentrations:

Public Health Communication: Speech Communication in the context of public health focuses on communicative processes as they relate to health behavior and health services. These health contexts may be formal (hospitals, private practitioners, public health maintenance organizations [HMOs]) or informal (social support networks, cultural beliefs about health, etc.). To study such issues, the level of analysis could range from macroscopic (persuasive appeals in public health campaigns, interactive media for health promotion) to microscopic (how providers and patients communicate with one another and outcomes resulting from these exchanges). Numerous topics pertaining to the instrumental functions of messages in public health contexts can be studied from perspectives associated with the discipline of Speech Communication.

For example, one could examine (1) how doctors and patients discuss and negotiate decisions for treatment; (2) factors affecting, and outcomes associated with, patterns of verbal and nonverbal communication in physician-patient interactions; (3) group decision making and decision support in health care organizations (e.g. doctors, nurses, administrators); (4) the effectiveness of fear appeals in public health campaigns; (5) the influence of media technology to encourage healthy behavior; (6) evaluating the effectiveness of public health campaigns; and (7) rhetorical strategies used by the public health industry to influence public policy.

Public health delivery is a social concern of increasing import, not only in Texas, but throughout the nation. Problems related to a healthy lifestyle, obtaining informed consent, involving patients in medical decision making, class and ethnic issues in public health, rural public health, and systems of public health delivery are issues that must be dealt with--and to a large degree are dealt with--through the medium of human communication.

Rhetoric and Public Affairs: Public affairs, as used in this proposal, include any areas of life debated publicly and having the potential to affect the general welfare: judicial decisions, legislative debates, executive policies or programs, and a range of public concerns such as environmentalism, nuclear proliferation, minority rights, educational practices, civil-religious activism, artistic freedom, and a host of other issues whose resolution involves arguments, evidence, strategies, and appeals for public adherence.
Speech Communication in the context of public affairs examines (1) how the political candidates and office holders bolster their images with the electorate by drawing on mythic images from the past; (2) how participants in legislative hearings use language to construct authority; (3) how environmental decision making can be improved through techniques of conflict resolution; (4) how the process of political speech writing shapes policy options; (5) how political messages are constructed to serve multiple purposes; and (6) how presidential debates affect audience perceptions of candidates.

Scholars of rhetoric and public affairs seek to bring into focus the choices confronting the public, the ways in which those choices are shaped and framed by public discourse, and the potential consequences--political, ethical, or practical--of acceding to those choices.

**Organizational Communication:** Communication in the context of organizations is concerned with the communicative processes that occur within private and public organizations, the cultures that are spawned by these processes, and their impact on organizational effectiveness. Organizational communication researchers take two general approaches, treating the organization as an information processor or as a symbolic environment.

Central concerns of the information processing perspective include: (1) the design of organizational communication systems; (2) message flow in organizations; (3) communication networks; and (4) use and effects of information technologies in organizational contexts.

Important concerns of the second perspective include: (1) how communication creates and sustains organizations through symbolic forms; (2) how organizational members negotiate agreements and manage conflicts through message systems; (3) how organizational values are enacted through communication; (4) how organizational communication practices influence and are influenced by race, class, gender, and ethnicity; (5) how organizations communicate with stakeholders and other constituencies; and (6) how organizations use rhetorical strategies to shape and influence their environments. Because we live in a complex web of organizations, the possibilities for contributing to improved communication and better workplace relationships are many.

**Current members of the graduate faculty in Speech Communication at Texas A&M, include:**

James Arnt Aune (Ph.D., Northwestern University): Associate Professor in Rhetoric and Public Affairs
Charles R. Conrad (Ph.D., University of Kansas): Professor in Organizational Communication
Leroy G. Dorsey (Ph.D., Indiana University): Assistant Professor in Rhetoric and Public Affairs
Margarita Gangotena (Ph.D., University of Minnesota): Assistant Professor in Public Health Communication
Craig Kallendorf (Ph.D., University of North Carolina): Professor (Jointly appointed with English, and Modern and Classical Languages Graduate Faculties) in Rhetoric and Public Affairs
Alicia A. Marshall (Ph.D., Purdue University): Assistant Professor in Public Health Communication
Martin J. Medhurst (Ph.D., Penn State University): Professor in Rhetoric and Public Affairs
Tarla Rai Peterson (Ph.D, Washington State University): Associate Professor in Organizational Communication
M. Scott Poole (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin): Professor in Organizational Communication
Linda L. Putnam (Ph.D., University of Minnesota): Professor in Organizational Communication
Enrique D. Rigsby (Ph.D., University of Oregon): Assistant Professor in Rhetoric and Public Affairs
Rajiv Rimal (Ph.D., Stanford University): Assistant Professor in Public Health Communication
Kurt Ritter (Ph.D., Indiana University): Professor in Rhetoric and Public Affairs
Abran J. Salazar (Ph.D., University of Iowa): Assistant Professor in Public Health Communication
Richard L. Street (Ph.D., University of Texas): Professor in Public Health Communication
Paul Thompson (Ph.D., SUNY-Stony Brook): Professor (Jointly appointed with the Philosophy graduate faculty) in Rhetoric and Public Affairs

As a land grant, sea grant, and space grant university, Texas A&M is committed to advancing frontiers of knowledge that speak directly to the needs of the people of Texas and the nation. A Ph.D. program in Speech Communication that focuses on Public Health Communication, Rhetoric and Public Affairs, and Organizational Communication will meet demonstrated needs in the state and the nation.