

# Feasibility of Establishing an Undergraduate Health Communication Program at a Small Private University: Preliminary Investigations and Analysis

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The field of health communication has expanded greatly since its initial development following the United States' Surgeon General's report on smoking in 1963 and the Stanford Heart Disease Prevention Program 10 years later in 1973 (Rogers, 1996). Much of the focus has been on public health and disease prevention campaigns. Health communication scholars serve as advocates around the world. However, most encounter health communication after first being trained in other communication specialties and other allied fields as diverse as health education, natural sciences, and marketing—and usually not until post-graduate studies. Very few programs exist with undergraduate components. The purpose of this paper is to investigate rudimentary guidelines for the development of an undergraduate program in health communication and offer a case example a specialized track within a Department of Communication. The University has an established professional pharmacy program, so the proposed health communication program would benefit this existing curriculum. To establish these guidelines, this paper uses inductive grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), first to consider the history of health communication and possible theoretical positions in mass and human communication under-girding the program [two-way symmetrical public relations (e.g., Wilcox & Cameron, 2006), the entertainment-education strategy (e.g., Singhal & Rogers, 1999), diffusion of innovations (e.g., Rogers, 2003), and critical theory (e.g., Cooks, 2003)]. Then, the author presents a preliminary track of coursework for the program along with possible career prospects for graduates in a case example.