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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CURRICULUM CONTENT AMONG
UNDERGRADUATE INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS
PROGRAMS

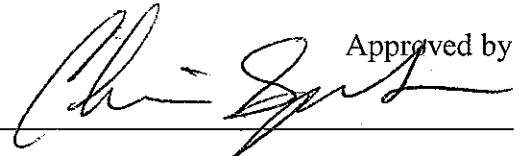
by

Braxton Avery Jones

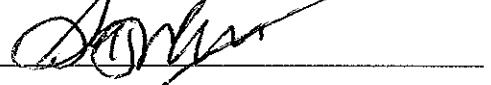
A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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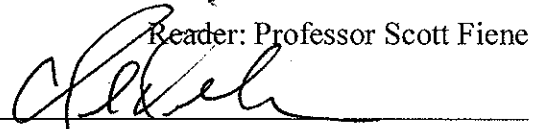
May 2016

 Approved by

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Reader: Professor Scott Fiene



Reader: Professor Charles Mitchell

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ABSTRACT

A Comparative Analysis of Curriculum Content Among Undergraduate IMC Programs (Under the direction of Chris Sparks)

The following thesis is an analysis of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) undergraduate programs. This thesis asks what the characteristics of an ideal undergraduate IMC program are and does any existing program have all these characteristics.

The rise of IMC as a communication approach, combined with its adoption by many companies as the new marketing standard, has led many different universities to offer a curriculum in IMC, but the curriculum varies greatly. Since it is still a new subject, colleges place the new program in different disciplines, including the business school, the communications program, and the journalism department. While there are many similar academic programs under various names and with varying ideals, few colleges offer IMC-specific degrees. Six of those programs are for undergraduates. These undergraduate IMC programs have differences in their curricula and how their programs are structured.

Currently, no program is consistent at offering the perfect foundation courses in a college environment. Through careful analysis and comparison of undergraduate IMC curricula, this thesis aims to identify the ideal composition of an undergraduate degree in Integrated Marketing Communications. By comparing the different approaches and challenges that the different programs face, one can discover a more effective way of teaching IMC. By researching and analyzing the origin and definition of IMC, the role of

IMC today, and the variations between the different college curricula, this thesis will construct an informed and comprehensive approach for an undergraduate degree in Integrated Marketing Communications. The author defines modern IMC and how it will apply to students after interviews with Dr. Don E. Schultz, father of the IMC field, and Dr. Ed Meek, founder of the Meek School of Journalism and New Media at Ole Miss. An examination of the required courses at various university IMC programs will provide the basis for understanding the differences and areas of emphasis offered to students studying IMC today. By comparing and evaluating each program, the researcher will determine the focus of each program and if each curriculum is comprehensive. Finally, a recommendation will be made for the ideal curriculum for an undergraduate degree in Integrated Marketing Communications.

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CHAPTER I: THE HISTORY AND DEFINITION OF IMC

The Birth of IMC

Integrated Marketing Communications arose from a growing need of businesses to gain more customers. Traditional marketing and sales promotion had begun to stale and people were not responding as actively. Media companies quickly learned they had two choices: they could continue to fight for the occasional jobs to earn partial commissions, or they could become the main source for promotional material, a “one-stop shop” for their clients. After scrambling to either buy out companies that had marketing specializations or developing the skills themselves, these new agencies could offer the full spectrum of services to their clients. This would give them not only a competitive edge over more old-fashioned companies, but also a creative edge when it came to marketing for their client.

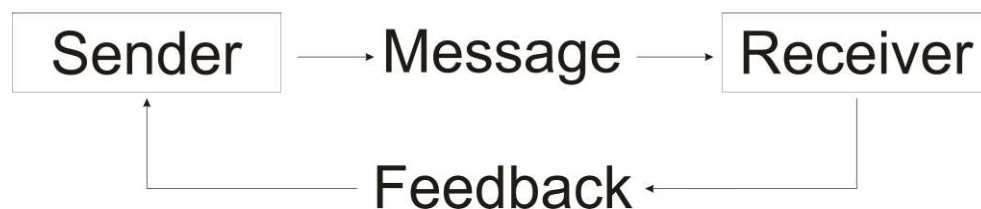
With the introduction of digital technology, brand differentiation, and global focus, the 1980’s forced many companies to change in unexpected ways. The products and services had been the main focus of traditional advertising, but computers and advances in technology allowed companies to focus on the needs and wants of their customers instead. Technology not only made consistent communication a must, shifting the focus to the consumer, but also made two-way communication necessary to effectively engage with consumers. (Schultz, 2004)

As technology advanced, marketing and communication in general failed to be as effective as it once was. Traditionally, marketing for a brand was all about one way, mass messages broadcasted on limited media channels at a high frequency. Brand messages were communicated to consumers based upon selling features and perceived brand

benefits. Constant repetition of a brand message was the main strategy to influence consumers to buy.



In today's media rich environment, effective communication is important. With the introduction of the internet, the communication model changed. More communication channels became available. While effective communication previously used the repetition of messaging to ensure it was heard, consumers are now able to take an active role and provide companies with feedback. Consumers became more media savvy and began traversing multiple forms of media to seek out and respond to messages rather than simply receiving them. As a result, a shift in the communication model occurred and brand-centric marketing and media approaches began to fail in reaching their audience. Consumers today require brand involvement that creates this two-way communication channel for deeper engagement between a brand and its audience.



IMC is defined as creating a brand identity and message that engages with the audience and creates a dialogue that remains constant throughout all channels of media so that a brand connects and communicates with its consumers. IMC uses technology to strategically communicate with customers rather than simply bombarding them with potentially meaningless information. By blending technology with marketing models, IMC inverts the mass communication approach and refocuses it on the consumer.

Brands needed to differentiate themselves from the rest of their competitors, and with better communication, brands could now resonate with consumers. This would allow companies to focus on what made each brand unique. Enhanced electronic communication forced smaller companies to start thinking bigger. Companies could now operate globally, instantly receiving feedback on how consumers received the message. With the multitude of new markets opening up, businesses had to completely adjust their communication strategies, not only to be more adaptive for a multinational audience, but also to keep brand messages consistent between channels. (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1993)

One major issue that still plagues modern IMC has been the difficulty in merging long-standing silos previously held by traditional marketing. In the past, companies traditionally used marketing communications (MarCom) for brand advertising. MarCom conceptualizes a main idea for the campaign to focus on. Six components stem from this main idea: Advertising, Public Relation, Sales Promotion, Direct Marketing, Event Marketing, and New Media. By following this model, businesses market to their audience by adapting their main idea to fit within one of these six silos and delivering it to their consumers. (Bendinger, 2002)

What is IMC today?

Dr. Don Schultz, hailed as the father of modern IMC, asserts that the importance of Integrated Marketing Communications comes down to the interaction it creates between a brand and its audience. Rather than bombarding customers with information,

Schultz believes that marketers should strive to help people purchase a product rather than sell a product.

Schultz affirms “We have essentially thrown out all the traditional, we don’t talk about advertising, we don’t talk about Public Relations, we don’t talk about direct marketing, we don’t even talk about sales promotion. What we do is we talk about customers and what their interests and what their needs and issues are. And then we start trying to put together the things that really focus on what applications would be relevant to them. So it is application based, but it is application based on the basis of what the customer is doing, not what the marketing organization is doing.” This is where traditional advertising fails compared to IMC. In today’s world, everything starts with the customer: what they want, what their problems are, what are their interests, etc. IMC strives to reach out to people and to learn who they are and what they need, starting a two-way conversation that results in consumers being satisfied while having their needs met. (D. Schultz, personal communication, November 9, 2015)

The marketplace and even the world have shifted focus onto the individual, and that needs to be reflected in the approach businesses take when communicating with their audience. Crafting an overarching message that breaks through and actually connects with the consumer requires coordination of smaller messages through multiple touch points and disciplines. This causes issues because it is the exact opposite of what advertising and journalism had been before -- a mass communication approach in which they had a message they needed people to receive and hopefully understand. By beginning with the consumer, the message has to become receiver-driven. It becomes less generalized, more personalized, and more engaging to the audience. Technology

catalyzes this process immensely and allows for immediate and effective feedback to further enhance the communication between brand and buyer. In this exchange, companies have the unique opportunity to become more of a friend rather than a seller. (Blakeman, 2009)

Consumers are constantly inundated with advertising messages from a myriad of sources. Marketers fight to break through the thousands of other messages that people had just gotten used to ignoring. As time goes on, the amount of messages that flood the market just keeps growing. “The increase comes from advertisers trying to out-yell each other, says J. Walker Smith, president of the consulting firm Yankelovich. If a marketer feels drowned out, ‘They just turn up the volume.’ ... The average 1970s city dweller was exposed to 500 to 2,000 ad messages a day, Smith says. Now, it's 3,000 to 5,000.” And ten years later, the total amount of messages people receive is nearly immeasurable and will continue to increase exponentially. Repetition of a message and mass communication do not work anymore. The quality of the content and how it relates to the consumer is more important than the quantity. (Petrecca, 2006)

Necessary tools for effective IMC include: problem reframing, research, targeting, branding, positioning, touch point, and media. In order to effectively communicate with their audience, a company has to establish credibility. Research allows agencies to gather the necessary information to know who they are talking to, what they need to say, and what their competitors are saying. Understanding customers’ behavior, values, beliefs, and lifestyle is essential to building loyalty to the brand and credibility of the brand. After gathering all the information needed, a company segments its audiences and defines its exact target consumers. By defining this target audience, the company’s message can be

tailored for that group of people. Whether in demographics, psychographics, or any other form of grouping individuals, segmentation reveals the targets' opinions, influences, and gives insight into how they make purchasing decisions. After gaining full understanding of their audience, a company can actually define their brand.

Brands are defined by the American Marketing Association as any “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition.” Without this unique personality, all products begin to blur together and the price becomes the only deciding factor. Any good, service, or idea has to break through the homogeneity of a saturated marketplace and have consumers begin to engage with its brand. Acquiring a reputation in the marketplace creates brand equity, allowing brands to gain credibility and loyalty. Even further, the brand must develop a unique visual and verbal message to create a consistent personality. All of the brand's attributes and messages must always address the solution to the consumer's problem and remain relevant through any possible changes of audience. However, the result of successful branding relies upon how the users position the brand in their minds. A successful brand must stay engaged with its audience. Brands can be reinvented, repositioned, or changed entirely, but the message must always solve the audience's problem. The success of IMC lies in this relationship established between brand and consumer. (Blakeman, 2009)

Because IMC has become the standard for brands to engage with their audience, IMC skills are becoming more and more necessary for successful marketing professionals. Reflecting this trend, job requirements are changing to match the shift in marketing communications. “Today's account managers need to understand all facets of

marketing, and understand them well. No matter what kind of agency employs them, account leaders need to be steeped in the digital landscape and everything that goes along with it: social platforms and their data, ad formats and attribution models (one could spend a month alone learning Facebook's or Google's intricacies and still not know everything), content strategy and distribution, and communications planning.” As the market continues to move toward IMC as the primary method of marketing, various colleges have incorporated an IMC program to educate and prepare students for this trend. (Morrison, 2016)

CHAPTER II: EXISTING UNDERGRADUATE IMC CURRICULA

The University of Mississippi

In 2009, the University of Mississippi added Integrated Marketing Communications to its list of available majors. It was a joint venture between the school of business and the school of journalism. The decision on where place the IMC program became the source of debate between the school of journalism and the school of business, but in the end, the program was placed in the journalism school. The IMC program at Ole Miss has a unique benefit in its placement within the Meek School of Journalism and New Media. Students have access to journalistic writing and communication skills in addition to expertise in content creation.

Another large aspect of the IMC program is a required business minor that has been structured into the major itself. This addition allows students to not only gain universal business skills, but understand the MARCOM matrix more thoroughly. By combining an understanding of traditional marketing with the practical applications of IMC, the curriculum creates a strong balance for students to receive a methodical understanding for IMC as a whole. They also garner a rich understanding for a more traditional marketing approach, and the commercial relevancy behind it.

The program is designed with a holistic, hands-on approach to IMC. Students learn the basic foundations of marketing – advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, social media, etc. The real benefit of the IMC program however, is the exposure to the concepts of IMC. Students learn about customer communication and brand building, product packaging and signage, and employee importance and customer care. All of these prepare students for the multitude of ideas and views they may

encounter once they graduate. The program reinforces these skills through more than standard lectures and assigned reading; the majority of the IMC curriculum contains classes primarily with hands-on experience. Classes have the opportunity to work on real campaigns with local clients, thus vocationally teaching IMC skills while also building students' résumés. (Fiene, 2014)

The 124 total credit hours required for an Integrated Marketing Communications major through the Meek School of Journalism and New Media span several different niches throughout marketing, allowing a substantial amount of variety in the program. Journalism 101 (Intro to Mass Communication), serves as an entry class to allow students to experience the different facets that the Meek School of Journalism has to offer. Several classes like IMC 204, 205, 304, and 390 teach students the basics of writing for Integrated Marketing Communications. All of these culminate in the capstone class IMC Campaigns, where students are paired with a real-life client to develop a fully branded campaign, start to finish. Communications Law provides students with a comprehensive legal understanding and Public Relations allows students to explore the PR functionality of IMC. Compared to other schools, however, the IMC program at Ole Miss has less specific foundational classes for research and strategy. The main research course for students is a preliminary capstone course intended for their senior year.

The Business minor built into the degree provides a background in Accountancy, Economics, Business Administration, and Management. It also incorporates the traditional styles of marketing with Marketing Principles and Advertising and Promotion. With these business courses, students are able to grasp the corporate background of the

brands they develop in order to create a more applicable and effective message for their clientele. ("The Meek School of Journalism and New Media | Undergraduate", 2016)

As stated by a faculty member in the Meek School, "A variety of electives—such as branding, consumer behavior, advanced design courses, database marketing, multicultural marketing, additional public relations courses, sales, and others—offer options. In addition, specializations in media sales and magazine management have provided a broad array of possibilities. There are plans to offer additional specializations in public relations, design/creativity, sports marketing, and more." (Fiene, 2014)

These options allow for a lot of flexibility in students' education, while requiring the students to adapt to different learning environments and marketing approaches. This wide variety of classes remains a key element in the success of the IMC program at Ole Miss. In a study of IMC student opinions in the 2015 fall semester, the overwhelming majority felt comfortable in their ability to explain Integrated Marketing Communications. 55% of students are very satisfied with their education and 37% are somewhat satisfied. 52% of students feel that they understand the key concepts of IMC and 42% are highly confident in their knowledge. (IMC Satisfaction Survey, 2015)

However, the holistic and hands-on approach that the Ole Miss program prides itself on occasionally leaves students craving more substance in their courses. Some even report feeling occasionally unprepared and confused not only about what they were currently learning, but also how it was different than what they learned before.

"Sometimes it still feels like we're just kind of out here hanging out waiting to see if something will catch on or if we're just wasting our time. I love IMC but...sometimes I'm in class and feel like I'm wasting my time." "I feel like a lot of the topics and/or

lessons in the different IMC classes (and marketing classes) are repetitive. More communication between the professors while they are planning their syllabus would help to cover more topics within the program as a whole.” (IMC Satisfaction Survey, 2015)

The University of Mississippi Integrated Marketing Communications program also faces challenges with rapid growth. Though unintentional, the Meek School of Journalism now boasts the largest of the six total undergraduate IMC programs researched for this thesis. Starting at only 27 students enrolled in 2010, Ole Miss had 817 IMC students in the fall of 2015. Total enrollment for the program doubled in 2011, tripled in 2012, and has continued to grow in size and popularity.

	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
BSIMC	27	51	164	492	609	817

(“The Meek School of Journalism and New Media | School Facts”, 2016)

“Despite the challenges of rapid growth, students indicate they are pleased with the program because they are learning and are finding jobs after graduation. Research each semester consistently demonstrates that nearly 90 percent of the IMC students are satisfied, would choose the same major again if they were to begin college again, and would recommend the degree to others. Additionally, in the most recent survey (May 2015), 96 percent report they understand IMC well, and 87 percent of all students indicate they grasp key concepts of the discipline (that figure increases to 97 percent for seniors).” (Norton, 2015)

The program has changed over the seven years it has been available. Course offerings and requirements have grown and shifted as faculty reassessed needs, skills, and resources. Currently areas of specialization and increased electives, offered in conjunction with other schools within Ole Miss, have been added.

Duquesne University

Duquesne University, reigns as one of the highest rated Catholic Universities in the country. “Founded more than 130 years ago by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Duquesne University is the only Spiritan institution of higher education in the United States. This means we share in the Spiritans' values and are deeply committed to: education excellence, moral and spiritual values, and ecumenical atmosphere open to diversity, service to the Church, the community, the nation and the world.”

Duquesne focuses on a personal approach to high level academics, boasting a 15:1 ratio of students to faculty. The student-to-faculty ratio gives students the advantage of a more direct relationship with their professors, allowing a much more in-depth education.

Duquesne approaches IMC as a discipline in strategic communication, drawing advertising, public relations, and marketing together. It is a communication major at its core. Students develop skills in advertising and public relations, such as visual communication, branding, event planning, and community relationships, while keeping up with promising new technologies. Students also have the option to pursue an “Enhanced Major,” taking fifteen extra credits of supplementary coursework and internships. Most graduates look to different agencies and firms to use their acquired strategic communication skill.

The IMC program at Duquesne is composed of 30 total credit hours, several of which are interchangeable and left up to students (post consultation with advisors) to decide the direction they wish for their IMC education. However, everyone is required to

take History of Communication and Communication Ethics to provide a foundational understanding of past and proper communication. Students choose between Human Communication in a Technological Age and Intercultural Communication to take in conjunction with Communication in the Marketplace. This allows students to focus on the diversity of their choice for their marketing field of choice. They then can take the recommended Professional Communications in IMC course, or substitute Business & Professional. Students then choose three major electives from IMC Functions I: PR, IMC Functions II: Ad, IMC Strategies I: PR, and IMC Strategies II: Ad. After choosing a heavier emphasis in advertising or public relations with the previous classes, students then tackle their capstone, IMC: Coordinating Ad & PR.

The Integrated Marketing Communications program at Duquesne University allows students to choose not only what they want their degree to emphasize, but also how in-depth they want to go with their degree with supplemental coursework and internships. This approach emphasizes the personal touch that Duquesne wants for each student's education. However, while it does give students the freedom to learn what they want to, it might sacrifice other skills and knowledge that would be mandatory in other programs. Being a smaller program, the curriculum narrows to Advertising and Public Relations as the two most important functions of IMC. Students gain the foundation for whichever facet of IMC in which they have an interest, but they might not garner enough experience through the program to apply these basics effectively.

A communications degree at its core, Duquesne's program struggles at teaching students the many facets of marketing that IMC has come to include. However, Duquesne's program's strength remains in the constant balance of advertising and public

relations, and its relationship to marketing and strategic communications as a whole. Its smaller size and limited curricula result in a program that gives students a deep understanding of Advertising and Public Relations and how to communicate effectively using the two. However, it falls short on educating students about the other applications and functions of Integrated Marketing Communications. ("Major in Integrated Marketing Communication | Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies | Duquesne University", 2016)

Ithaca College

By combining a curriculum focused on students' future careers with a vocational education system, Ithaca blends the Roy H. Park School of Communications and a more traditional dose of marketing through the School of Business to provide a comprehensive IMC major.

Ithaca College's Integrated Marketing Communications major aims to edify students through a series of vocational techniques throughout the standard four years in the undergraduate program. Freshmen are instructed on how to create strategic communication plans for a real-life company and their subsequent brand(s) through basic implementation of advertising and public relations. Then, in their sophomore year, they learn about researching target audiences for national clients and how that research affects PR media kits and plan books for advertising. Juniors focus on applying persuasive techniques and theories practically in design; they practice creating media for web design, direct marketing, as well as for both traditional and nontraditional outlets. Seniors, well equipped with the skills and knowledge from their previous years, delve

further into the field of marketing in which they are most interested, and choose a related IMC Capstone class between: Ad Lab, PR Lab, Brand Design, and IMC Lab.

Ithaca requires 120 total credits for a degree in Integrated Marketing Communications. After a freshman orientation course, S'Park!: Igniting Your Future in Communications, students have foundational classes to learn the basics of communicating clearly to specific target audiences through advertising and public relations. Electives then offer students a chance to hone skills specific to copywriting and public relations. Other courses like Research Statistics for Strategic Communications and Communication in Organizations teach students important skills in research and organization that build on the foundation of previous courses on how to write and communicate effectively and clearly. The business school requirements cater more to how students can and will analyze consumers. Classes like Consumer Behavior, International Marketing, Marketing Analytics, and Marketing Strategy educate students on how to understand their audience. This understanding allows students to communicate more effectively with their intended target audience, not only in subsequent classes but in future careers as well.

The five major capstone courses then actualize what each student desires to pursue with their IMC degree. IMC Capstone: Ad Lab provides students with a client to spend a full semester researching their brand and creating a campaign to potentially compete in the American Advertising Federation (AAF) National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC). (Ithaca Ad Lab) The PR Lab capstone course helps to hone students' creative writing, critical-thinking, and strategic planning to provide samples and experience to be used in professional entry-level portfolios. (Ithaca PR Lab) By showing

how to differentiate a brand and develop an effective message, IMC Capstone: Brand Design teaches students to construct a unique and definable identity and message to unify all of a brand's communication channels. (Ithaca Brand Design) The IMC Lab capstone adopts a more overarching approach, allowing students to employ all the key principles and components taught throughout their time at Ithaca to construct a fully fledged integrated marketing program tailored for a specific client. (Ithaca IMC Lab)

The last IMC Capstone course is a Communication Management Lab. While the other four courses are more heavily emphasized, this class provides a focus more on the specifics of communication that are not stressed as much throughout the other courses in Ithaca's IMC program. "Topics include developing department operations budgets, strategic planning and organizational alignment, identifying client needs, requests for proposals, senior management relations, communicating value, developing policies and procedures, assessing employee performance, project management, and change management practices. Students carry out a project for a client to investigate a communications/learning problem and design an intervention."

By far the largest undergraduate IMC program in terms of courses required, Ithaca provides students with ample opportunities to explore all that IMC has to offer. In the curriculum, students are allowed to wait until they are graduating to choose their capstone for the direction of their education and future career. While this may limit the education they have in the first three years, it ensures that students receive a well-rounded education and that they are prepared for not only their IMC Capstone, but also their future IMC career. However, the program does suffer from a lack of cohesion. The many different programs cover a lot of material, but do not have many ties to the other courses

and how to use skills in tandem. This hinders the integrated component crucial to IMC that separates it from traditional MARCOM. ("Integrated Marketing Communications - Ithaca College", 2016)

Seaver College

Seaver College, part of Pepperdine University, touts its Integrated Marketing Communications program as a practical approach to the variety of marketing and communications. "Our Bachelor of Arts in integrated marketing communication requires a grounding in the fundamentals of business, principles of effective mass communication, an introduction to modern corporate image, branding, advertising, public reputation communication, public relations practices, and behavioral patterns of stakeholder consumers."

With a minimum requirement of 24 graded semester units, Seaver requires a core of three classes: Public Speaking and Rhetorical Analysis, Introductory Statistics, and Economic Principles. The lower division classes cover Introduction to Advertising, Accounting and Finance for Non-business Majors, and Principles of Public Relations. With no dedicated IMC classes, these three courses boil IMC down to its roots of integrating traditional marketing, advertising, and public relations and allow a basic understanding of IMC. Upper-level courses delve deeper by looking at media, graphics, and research, mostly in relation to management. Several other courses use IMC for higher level situations, such as Management Theory and Practice and Organizational Behavior. Business Ethics and Communication Ethics are combined with Legal and Regulatory Environment of Business and Media Law to focus on the morality and legality of

standard business practices. Compared to the surplus of more traditional MARCOM based courses, IMC oriented courses are quite scarce. Students can pick two courses between Advertising Copywriting and Layout, Advertising Campaign Management, Public Relations Writing and Media, Public Relations Strategies and Techniques and Digital Strategy.

Seaver College's Integrated Marketing Communications program, while not incredibly varied or extensive, remains very business-oriented, streamlining its courses to ensure that graduates have a full comprehension of how to operate in a management level communications or marketing position. It does not possess any courses that are specifically IMC based, preferring to create the curriculum from an amalgamation of the different elements that IMC entails. With this severe lack of explicit emphasis on IMC, the curriculum fails to deliver a proper understanding of Integrated Marketing Communications and its modern and future uses. ("Integrated Marketing Communication | Communication Division | Seaver College | Pepperdine University", 2016)

Roosevelt University

Roosevelt University, out of Chicago, has a relatively small Integrated Marketing Communications program designed not only to prepare their students for the broad field of work they will encounter, but also to have a curriculum intended to ease the process of transferring into the program from outside colleges.

The degree is made up of twelve courses, eight core requirements and four electives, and contains a built-in internship as well as an IMC Campaigns capstone course. The eight required courses are standard IMC classes, featuring IMC Principles

and Best Practices, Media Writing, Communication Research, Fundamentals of Public Relations, Fundamentals of Advertising, and Law and Ethics. Roosevelt also offers its students the choice of four electives of any upper level journalism or IMC course, with the option to add a concentration in Advertising Creative, Advertising Management, and Public Relations.

Though small compared to other programs, the IMC major at Roosevelt University covers everything that students would need to know about the fundamentals of Integrated Marketing Communications, and gives them the freedom to choose from a prebuilt concentration or to take electives that could be more specific to what they specifically want to do with IMC. The problem with Roosevelt boils down to its size. Being so small, the program forgoes any standard business or communications courses. This lack of traditional MARCOM can lead to a difficulty in finding a basis for IMC and how it is unique. ("Degree Information", 2016)

The University of Akron

The IMC program at the University of Akron exists within the College of Business Administration (CBA), and the curriculum reflects the more traditional approach. Students in the program are required to fulfill the core requirements of the CBA, consisting of 36 credit hours covering Accounting and Finance, Business Analytics, Business Law, and Management. The Integrated Marketing Communication major, however, consists of only 30 credit hours. These are separated into Marketing Foundation courses, IMC Core Competency courses, and Professional Experience.

The Marketing Foundation courses streamline students from the CBA core to the IMC curriculum with Professional Selling, Marketing Research, Buyer Behavior, and Marketing & Sales Analytics. These courses apply traditional marketing skills to the field of IMC and teach students how to approach standard business situations from an IMC background. The four courses making up the IMC Core -- Integrated Marketing Communications, Digital IMC, Media Strategy, and Creative Laboratory -- branch into the more creative side of IMC, but the majority still root themselves in a more analytical approach. The Professional Experience requirements allow students to choose between an Internship in Marketing or Sales or taking Professional Workshops in Marketing, catering to the opportunities that relate and apply to each student. Finally, the Marketing Capstone Project allows students to demonstrate what they have learned by teaming up with a group of students from other marketing majors, forming a mock agency and developing a marketing strategy for a live client.

While Akron's IMC major lacks some of the variety of other programs, it does ensure that students receive a business education, while providing ample opportunities to help students gain the experience needed to begin their careers. However, with very limited courses specializing in IMC and without a constant focus on IMC, the curriculum becomes difficult to distinguish from traditional MARCOM. ("Integrated Marketing Communication Major : The University of Akron", 2016)

The Comparisons Between Each Program

All six undergraduate programs have similarities and differences in the number of each type of required class. An analysis of the number of individual courses shows clear and defined weights for each section that can be quantified and expressed as percentages. Based on the curriculum, students at each university receive vastly differing educations, even though all of the programs are designed for IMC. The percentage of course categories that a student would be required to take is listed in the chart below.

	Ole Miss	Duquesne	Ithaca	Seaver	Roosevelt	Akron
Total Number of Courses Required	19	10	40	18	12	24
IMC Specific Courses Required	8 42%	5 50%	13 33%	0 0%	8 67%	2 8%
Business Specific Courses Required	8 42%	1 10%	11 28%	8 44%	0 0%	14 58%
Advertising/Creative Courses Required	5 26%	3 30%	7 18%	5 28%	6 50%	2 8%
Research/Strategy Courses Required	1 5%	0 0%	3 8%	3 17%	1 8%	7 29%
Public Relations Courses Required	1 5%	3 30%	3 8%	1 6%	3 25%	0 0%
Communications Courses Required	4 21%	5 50%	2 5%	3 17%	0 0%	0 0%
Internship Courses Required	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 6%	1 8%	1 4%

*these numbers are based on what courses the students would be required to take if they took the maximum number of each type of course in relation to the minimum credit hour requirement for each school's degree

The University of Mississippi balances the more creative side of its degree with the business minor built into the degree. By existing under the Meek School of Journalism and New Media, the IMC program has access to a wider array of classes that

focus on content creation and communication. The incorporated journalism courses teach students how to effectively communicate to mass audiences through writing and other media. Advertising classes that focus more on brand development and creative skills are more common than required PR courses or research and strategy courses. The curriculum lacks courses that focus on research and strategy, leaving those skills to be learned through practical use in other courses.

Duquesne University has a much smaller program and focuses its curriculum on teaching students to apply strategic communication. Without specific research courses, the majority of classes are left to cover the basis of research within the applications of that course's subject. The large emphasis on communication allows students to choose to specialize in advertising or PR, consequently adjusting the background of their skills; the communication techniques and significance will vary based on that student's specialization, or if the student chooses not to specialize. Without any courses that provide a business background, students may fail to learn the MARCOM matrix of IMC.

Ithaca College, as the most demanding degree with 40 total required classes, has a concentration on an equal amount of IMC and business courses, but tends to focus on more creative and more lab-based courses. Its degree has been streamlined to prepare students for their choice of capstone class that culminates in that student's preferred application of IMC. This structure allows the students to experience all the different facets of IMC and then pursue what they understand and enjoy most. Though the most diverse and inclusive program, Ithaca fails to incorporate an integration among its curricula.

Seaver College positions its IMC program under its Communication division. Of the 18 courses that are required for the major, there are no IMC specific classes. However, the requirements themselves cover all the topics that IMC normally would. Business courses make up the majority, then several advertising and creative based courses, and finally research, public relations, and communications courses. These courses allow the students to learn each discipline without thinking of it in the context of everything else that an IMC course would cover. While allowing students to learn the foundation of communication skills, it might be difficult to bring them all together effectively without previous instruction or experience.

Roosevelt University allows its degree to remain open for students, intending to prepare them for the broad field that Integrated Marketing Communication has grown to cover. Unlike other colleges, Roosevelt forgoes any business requirements, focusing solely on public relations, ad management, and ad creative. It offers a specialization in one of these concentrations, or allows students to find other courses to develop their own personal emphasis in conjunction with the general IMC curriculum. With no business or communication requirements, the program builds its three subcategories of IMC and works through them in lower level courses even before students choose their electives. This gives students a practical understanding of what would primarily be expected of them in an IMC position, but does not provide students with much history or theory. This issue is partially resolved through the internship built into the program, which allows students to learn through real life experience working with a business.

The University of Akron approaches IMC in a much more traditional fashion and focuses heavily on the business portion of IMC, emphasizing research and analytics to

understand consumer behavior and relate to a client's target audience. It chooses to focus on creating a program where students learn different marketing skills through application. The program focuses heavily on the strategic understanding and use of marketing and advertising. However, there are very few classes on the actual creative process. Without public relations or communication courses required, Akron's program seems more like an update to more customary marketing tactics by applying them to more engaging media. The professional internship required in the curriculum provides a more visceral experience compared to the rest of the other classes, exposing students to real issues with practicing IMC.

Keeping the "Integrated" in IMC

After analysis of the coursework by IMC programs, it was determined that the key to a successful undergraduate program relies on the ability of the program to adequately educate students in IMC concepts and the practical application of all of these concepts. Crafting a curriculum for Integrated Marketing Communications requires a balance between the assorted disciplines that are involved in the desired interaction and engagement with the target audience. Each undergraduate program values these disciplines differently, choosing to focus on the creative, analytical, business, or communications aspect more heavily than others. These disparities reflect not only the size of the organization, but also its categorization and its placement within the university. While the existing programs offer many specializations and variations to the degree, students and the program itself can become too focused on one facet of IMC.

It is also important for students to understand the basic principles of business. The inclusion of the business minor allows students to learn marketing theory, the four P's, and the traditional MARCOM strategy. In the IMC specific courses, there should be an even split among advertising/creative courses, public relations courses, communication based courses, and research/strategy courses emphasizing the importance of each factor and highlighting its role in IMC in relation to all the other factors as well.

The Ideal IMC Program

An undergraduate IMC program can be successful by guaranteeing students have a strong understanding in the basic concepts and strategies of IMC. Don Schultz explains, “the problem you have when you start to teach practical applications is what you teach the students as a freshman, how relevant is that going to be when they graduate four years later?... An activity-based program is trying to keep up with the technology. And what we [in the graduate program at Northwestern University] are trying to do is teach the basics of what you need to know and let you figure out what the application is.” While focusing primarily on basic concepts, the ideal program should also teach students how to apply those skills. Application-based courses would serve to reinforce basic IMC principles and teach students how exactly they apply these basics by introducing them to modern IMC applications. (D. Schultz, personal communication, November 9, 2015)

Based on the existing IMC curricula, an ideal undergraduate IMC program would consist of 25 required IMC classes combined with a general business education. This structure would focus on teaching students the basic theories and strategies for IMC and then enhance these skills through repetition in application-based courses. IMC-specific

courses would cover courses designed around four main categories: Branding and Communication, Public Relations, Technological and Digital Skills, and Research and Analysis. These courses would then all lead up to a capstone course designed to challenge students to apply all the skills they learn by developing a full campaign.

Branding and Communication

Communications Theory
 Planning and Strategy
 Brand and Relationship Strategy
 Writing for Advertising (Copywriting)
 Creative Thinking and Design
 Multi-Media
 Oral Presentations

Technological and Digital Skills

Digital Strategy
 Digital Writing
 Communication Platforms - Traditional
 Communication Platforms - Emerging
 Digital Design
 Web Design and Coding
 Database Marketing

Public Relations

PR Theory and Strategy
 PR Techniques and Tactics
 Writing for PR
 Crisis Communications
 Social Media

Research and Analysis

Research Methods
 Interpreting Data
 Research Application
 Research and Analysis

IMC Campaigns

Capstone Course

Branding and Communications courses would teach students how to create and manage a brand and its message. Not only would these courses help students learn to communicate effectively, but they would also help students learn to engage the audience through content creation on various platforms. Ed Meek, IMC practitioner and founder of the School of Journalism at Ole Miss, stresses that writing is an invaluable part of IMC. “For IMC students, everything begins with the written word. Slogans, newspapers, art, you have to write. I’m finding that IMC students don’t have that fire to write...they seem to be skirting the day-to-day grind of learning how to write.” Synthesizing information to

relate to an audience is a very important skill and would be a consistent focus throughout the program. (E. Meek, personal communication, October 30, 2015)

The role of Public Relations has expanded under the new definition of IMC. Instead of a silo'd department seen as the "voicebox" of the company to the consumer, it has evolved to include social media, brandings, and engaging the public. This expanded and integrated definition of Public Relations has made it a crucial part of the IMC formula and future curricula should reflect this. At one time, PR was the primary method of feedback and direct communication for a brand, it now falls under the jurisdiction of IMC as another way to communicate with consumers. Several existing universities have specializations and courses dedicated to PR, but it is important to ensure that future programs connect PR with other aspects of IMC and how to integrate them.

Because technology continues to advance, it is important for savvy businesses to keep pace with their target audience by understanding how these new innovations will function. The ideal IMC program should reflect this ideology and dedicate a portion of its curriculum both to existing technology and digital media, as well as to emerging technological advancements. In order to keep IMC relevant, the program will have to anticipate new technological improvements and adapt to these changes, integrating new and developing media into the program, and removing media that has become irrelevant.

Offering courses in Research and Analysis was a weakness for several of the current undergraduate IMC programs. Most education about it was delegated to other courses, leaving research and analysis seeming subordinate to the rest of IMC. According to Schultz, research and understanding the audience is the foundation of any successful IMC effort. In order to engage with its consumers, a brand needs to have a focus on the

intended target. Without the understanding and researching of its target audience, a company would have no idea how to accurately communicate with their audience. Therefore, this section has significant importance in ensuring students understand not only how to research accurately and effectively, but also the importance of research and analysis to IMC as the starting point of all IMC efforts. By introducing specific research courses early in the curriculum and keeping these courses consistent throughout, students are assured to have an accurate understanding of how to research and will use these skills throughout their other courses and in their future careers. (D. Schultz, personal communication, November 9, 2015)

A general business education is also important to develop underlying skills needed in IMC. Those courses should include the following: Accounting, Economics, Entrepreneurship, Management, and Finance. The business portion of the ideal IMC degree could likely be incorporated effectively through a business minor. Having a traditional business minor will not only provide a general business foundation, but also practical understanding of traditional marketing and the application of the MarCom matrix.

The IMC Campaigns Capstone course would culminate in students having the chance to combine every aspect of their IMC education together into one campaign. While previous courses would combine certain elements, this capstone course would ensure students used every skill they had learned in the IMC program to develop a fully functional IMC campaign. Not only would this provide students with an accurate representation of modern IMC application, but also grant them a valid experience to put on a résumé.

CONCLUSION

The ideal undergraduate IMC program is attainable by structuring an IMC-specific curriculum around Branding and Communication, Public Relations, Technological and Digital Skills, and Research and Analysis and then incorporating a traditional marketing core within a business minor. Universities with different sizes and resources will have to incorporate this curriculum structure individually, but by following this model they will develop a cohesive and successful program. It should be noted that as technology and IMC continue to evolve, the curricula of IMC programs should also evolve to reflect the current state of IMC. However, an undergraduate IMC program can be successful by teaching fundamental skills and harnessing those skills through application.

LIST OF TABLES

The University of Mississippi

Jour 101	Intro to Mass Communication
Jour 273	Creative Visual Thinking
Jour 371	Communications Law
Jour 391	Public Relations
IMC 204	Intro to Integrated Marketing Communications
IMC 205	Writing for Integrated Marketing Communications
IMC 304	Account Planning
IMC 306	Internet Marketing
IMC 390	Intro to Writing for Advertising
IMC 404	IMC Research
IMC 555	IMC Campaigns
Bus 271	Business Communications
Mktg 351	Marketing Principles
Mktg 353	Advertising and Promotion
Accy 201	Accounting I
Accy 202	Accounting II
Econ 202	Principles of Microeconomics
Econ 203	Principles of Macroeconomics
Mgmt 371	Principles of Management

Duquesne University

Major Requirements

- **COMM 301W** History of Communication
- **COMM 494W** Communication Ethics

Elective Core I

- **COMM 206** Communication in the Marketplace

Select one:

- **COMM 201** Human Communication in a Technological Age
- **COMM 407 or 114** Intercultural Communication

Elective Core II

- **COMM 204** Professional Comm. in IMC (*recommended*)
- **COMM 202** Business & Professional (*can be substituted if needed*)

Major Electives

Select three:

- **COMM 330** IMC Functions I: PR
- **COMM 333** IMC Functions II: Ad
- **COMM 430** IMC Strategies I: PR
- **COMM 433** IMC Strategies II: Ad

IMC Capstone

- **COMM 436** IMC: Coordinating Ad & PR

Additional Elective

Students select one additional communication elective in consultation with advisors.

Ithaca College

GCOM 13000 S'Park!: Igniting Your Future in Communications (F)

STCM 10300 Introduction to Strategic Communication* (F-S)

STCM 11100 Presentation and Graphic Design (F-S)

TVR 12100 Introduction to Mass Media* (F)

STCM 23200 Public Relations* (F-S)

STCM 24100 Advertising* (F-S)

STCM 30900 Media Planning (F-S)

TVR 31200 Government and Media* (F-S, offered in Los Angeles)
(*ICC-CLA*)

STCM 33000 Advertising Copywriting and Art Direction (F-S)

STCM 33200 Writing for Public Relations* (F-S, offered in Los Angeles)
(*ICC-WI*)

GCOM 43000 Connecting the Dots: General Education Integration (F-S)
(*ICC-CP*)

Choose one of the following:

STCM 28800 Research and Statistics for Strategic Communications* (3)
(F-S) (*ICC-QL & CLA*)

PSYC 20700 Statistics in Psychology* (4) (F-S, Y) (*ICC-CLA*)

Choose one of the following:

STCM 10800 Communication in Organizations* (F-S) (*ICC-CLA*)

CMST 11500 Business & Professional Communication* (F-S, Y) (*ICC-CLA*)

Choose one of the following:

STCM 42000 Integrated Marketing Communications Lab* (S)

STCM 44000 Public Relations Lab (F)

STCM 44100 Ad Lab (S)

STCM 43000 Brand Design and Communication (F)

STCM 43400 Communication Management Lab (S)

Business Course Requirements

GBUS 20300 Legal Environment of Business I (F-S, Y)

ACCT 22400 Reporting and Decision Making in Integrated Marketing Communication (S)

MKTG 31200 Principles of Marketing (F-S)

MKTG 32300 Consumer Behavior (F-S)

MKTG 32500 Sales and Sales Promotion (F-S)

MKTG 38000 International Marketing (F-S)

MKTG 49100 Marketing on the Internet (F-S)

Choose at least three credits from the following:

MKTG 41100 Marketing Analytics (F-S)

MKTG 48600 Marketing Strategy (S)

MKTG 49700 Selected Topics: Marketing (F-S)

Other Course Requirement

ECON 12200 Microeconomics* (F, Y) (*ICC-CLA*)

Seaver College

Interdisciplinary Major in Integrated Marketing Communication: 50-54 units

General Education Core Requirements: 12 units

COM 180 Public Speaking and Rhetorical Analysis (GE) (4)

COM 240 Introductory Statistics (GE) (4)

ECON 200 Economic Principles (GE) (4)

Lower-Division Requirements: 12 units

ADV 275 Introduction to Advertising (4)

BA 220 Accounting and Finance for Non-business Majors (4)

PR 255 Principles of Public Relations (4)

Upper-Division Requirements: 38-42 units ADV 375 Advertising Media (4)

BA 355 Principles of Marketing (3)

BA 470 Marketing Research (4)

BA 471 Marketing Strategy (3)

COM 595 Communication Internship (1)

COM 590 Seminar in Communication (4)

MSCO 371 Communication Graphics (4)

Choose one of the following:

BA 352 Management Theory and Practice (WI) (3)

BA 366 Organizational Behavior (WI) (3)

Choose one of the following:

BA 410 Business Ethics (4)

COM 400 Communication Ethics (3)

Choose one of the following:

BA 358 Legal and Regulatory Environment of Business (3)

COM 570 Media Law (4)

Choose two of the following:

ADV 475 Advertising Copywriting and Layout (4)

ADV 575 Advertising Campaign Management (3)

BA 474 International Marketing (3)

COM 408 Multimedia Production and Authoring (3)

MSCO 380 Digital Strategy (3)

MSCO 560 Philosophy and Effects of Mass Communication (4)

PR 380 Public Relations Writing and Media (4)

PR 455 Public Relations Strategies and Techniques (4)

Roosevelt University

Core requirements

IMC 202	IMC Principles and Best Practices
IMC 220	Media Writing
IMC 240	Communication Research
IMC 302	Fundamentals of Public Relations
IMC 303	Fundamentals of Advertising
IMC 347	IMC Campaigns (capstone)
IMC 363	Law and Ethics
IMC 399	Internship

Electives

Four courses at the 200- or 300-level in JOUR or IMC (may be an area of concentration).

Specified electives for concentrations

Advertising Creative

IMC 349	Portfolio I
IMC 350	Portfolio II

Advertising Management

IMC 344	Brand Management
IMC 345	Advertising Media

Public Relations

IMC 340	Media Relations
IMC 343	Reputation Management

The University of Akron

Marketing Foundation courses (12 credits)

- 6600:275 Professional Selling
- 6600:335 Marketing Research
- 6600:355 Buyer Behavior
- 6600:375 Marketing & Sales Analytics

Required IMC Core Competency Courses (12 credits)

- 6600:432 Integrated Marketing Communications
- 6600:434 Digital IMC
- 6600:438 Media Strategy
- 6600:445 Creative Laboratory

Professional Experience (6 credits)

- 6100:495 Internship in Marketing or Sales

or

- 6600:491 Professional Workshops in Marketing

and

- 6600:499 Marketing Capstone Project

College of Business Administration (CBA) Core Requirements

Accounting and Finance —12 credits)

6200:201	Accounting Principles I	3
6200:202	Accounting Principles II	3
6400:301	Principles of Finance	3

Business Analytics —9 credits

6200:250	Spreadsheet Modeling & Decision Analysis	3
6500:304	Business Statistics	3
6500:305	Business Analytics	3

Business Law —9 credits

6400:220	The Legal and Social Environment of Business	3
6400:321	Business Law I*	3
6400:322	Business Law II*	

**Only Accounting majors are required to take Business Law I and II* 3

Management —12 credits

6500:301	Management: Principles & Concepts	3
6500:330	Principles of Supply Chain & Operations Management	3
6500:490	Strategic Management	3
6800:305	International Business	3

Marketing — 3 credits

6600:205	Marketing Principles	3
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Curriculum Averages and Comparison

	Ole Miss	Duquesne	Ithaca	Seaver	Roosevelt	Akron
Total Number of Courses Required	20	10	40	18	12	24
IMC Specific Courses Required	8 40%	5 50%	13 33%	0 0%	8 67%	2 8%
Business Specific Courses Required	8 40%	1 10%	11 28%	8 44%	0 0%	14 58%
Advertising/Creative Courses Required	5 25%	3 30%	7 18%	5 28%	6 50%	2 8%
Research/Strategy Courses Required	1 5%	0 0%	3 8%	3 17%	1 8%	7 29%
Public Relations Courses Required	1 5%	3 30%	3 8%	1 6%	3 25%	0 0%
Communications Courses Required	4 20%	5 50%	2 5%	3 17%	0 0%	0 0%
Internship Courses Required	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 6%	1 8%	1 4%

*these numbers are based on what courses the students would be required to take if they took the maximum number of each type of course in relation to the minimum credit hour requirement for each school's degree

University of Mississippi IMC Program Growth Rate

	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
BSIMC	27	51	164	492	609	817

Ideal Composition of an IMC Curriculum

Branding and Communication

Communications Theory
Planning and Strategy
Brand and Relationship Strategy
Writing for Advertising (Copywriting)
Creative Thinking and Design
Multi-Media
Oral Presentations

Technological and Digital Skills

Digital Strategy
Digital Writing
Communication Platforms - Traditional
Communication Platforms - Emerging
Digital Design
Web Design and Coding
Database Marketing

Public Relations

PR Theory and Strategy
PR Techniques and Tactics
Writing for PR
Crisis Communications
Social Media

Research and Analysis

Research Methods
Interpreting Data
Research Application
Research and Analysis

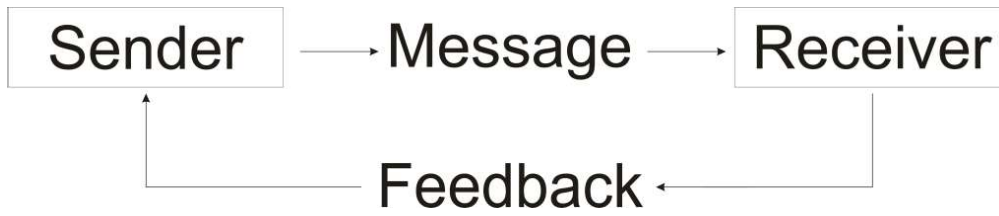
IMC Campaigns

Capstone Course

Old Communication Model



New Communication Model



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