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A Comparative Analysis of Undergraduate Integrated Marketing Communications Degrees in the United States

Anne Watkins Tyson
University of Mississippi

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE INTEGRATED
MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS DEGREES IN THE UNITED STATES

by
Anne Watkins Tyson

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

Oxford, Mississippi
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Approved By:

Advisor: Assistant Dean Scott Fiene

Reader: Dr. Graham Bodie

Reader: Professor Evangeline Ivy

2019
Anne Watkins Tyson
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Dedicated to my friends and family for teaching me the meaning of “I am a part of all
that I have met.”

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There are many thanks due for this thesis. I would like to begin by thanking my advisor, Assistant Dean Scott Fiene, for his guidance and patience with me throughout this project. He continually encouraged me through the many processes, coaching me through brainstorming, creative techniques, and effective researching strategies in the development of my comparative analysis. I am so grateful for the time he devoted to planning, reading, and correcting my work.

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ABSTRACT

A Comparative Analysis of Undergraduate Integrated Marketing Communications
Degrees in the United States
(under the direction of Professor Scott Fiene)

No longer are traditional marketing communications methods effectively reaching consumers. The approach of integrated marketing communications intentionally combines all aspects of the marketing communications mix into one consistent message. Research reveals that integrated marketing communications is becoming a more and more popular field of study for students and academics. Because of this, universities are forced to evaluate how their integrated marketing communications programs are taught in order to stay relevant. The purpose of this study is to conduct an analysis of undergraduate integrated marketing communications degrees in the United States. This thesis work defines integrated marketing communications, and also describes the history, in order to fully understand the role of undergraduate integrated marketing communications programs.

The population is defined as undergraduate programs at universities with the exact title “integrated marketing communications.” It further analyzes a sample of this chosen population. The sample is composed of programs at the following 11 colleges and universities: University of Mississippi, University of West Alabama, Pepperdine University, Ithaca College, Duquesne University, University of Akron, Roosevelt University, Bryan College, Keiser University, Winthrop University, and National University. Personal interviews and in-depth secondary research was conducted to discover what the design of each program is.

This study identified elements that compose each undergraduate integrated marketing communications program. The school or college that houses the program, the number of required degree hours, and the required courses in the core curricula were described, and then cross-analyzed. Insights were gained on the similarities and the differences among the 11 programs researched. From these insights, not only were recommendations for the University of Mississippi program made, but also for other institutions of higher learning that may want to develop an integrated marketing communications program.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to reach a consensus on what Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is, by describing the birth of the practice of IMC, what IMC looks like today, and what my methods of research for this work will be. The history and the current state of IMC are important to understand before analyzing the different undergraduate IMC programs. Moving toward these goals, I will describe the reasons for and the importance of IMC in today's marketing and communications world.

The Beginnings of Integrated Marketing Communications

IMC was created as a solution to the always-changing world of media. Advertising and other marketing disciplines were growing stale and not effectively communicating a message. The answer for media companies was a gradual shift to an integrated approach (Brazeal, 2019). The number of ways that an organization could communicate exploded, making it more important than ever to sync all the messages with a coherent strategy (S. Fiene, personal communication, April 2, 2019). Organizing a campaign solely around public relations, social media, direct marketing, advertising, or other disciplines was becoming less and less effective. Using only one mass media tool is one-way communication. One-way communication includes strategies where the sender transmits a message to the target audience but does not receive a response (Naumovska and Blazeska, 2016). Examples of this one-way communication include magazines articles, print advertisements, and television commercials.

One-way communication became a part of the old world of communications. The new world was becoming more integrated. Market conditions, global and local, were constantly varying thus creating hardly predictable and diverse environments

(Naumovska and Blazeska, 2016). At the core of IMC is availability and diversity. Product choices are more diverse than ever before, media outlets are more diverse than ever before, and consumer data is more available than ever before (What Is IMC?, 2018). Due to the availability and diversity of information and media, a full spectrum of marketing and communications services became available, rooted in research and insights to work together to deliver one consistent message and in search for a response (Marder, n.d.).

Don Schultz, “The Father of IMC,” began research and introduced IMC to the world in the 1980s (Schultz & Schultz, 2003). Since that time, the way business is conducted with communications and marketing has completely transformed. In the past century, information technologies have rapidly advanced and diffused and have in turn impacted media, consumers, distribution of products and services and more (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997). IMC is the response to that ripe intellectual and innovative time.

Marketing communications, as it once was, was failing. IMC, as defined by Shultz, is a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines (for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations) and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications impact (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997). IMC is the idea that all of the components of the marketing communications mix will be used. One strategy will be chosen, and then all the disciplines will revolve around one single idea, and all of the disciplines will have one consistent marketing strategy (Brazeal, 2019).

The World of IMC Today

Today more than ever, a strong brand is necessary. With the world at our fingertips (on our phones), a well-thought and planned strategy is required for a consumer to be reached. Consistency and unification of a brand is necessary with IMC, as it relates to the audience, brand promotion, and messaging (Davenport, 2017). IMC is a harmonious concept integrating all marketing communications tools. The IMC mix includes public relations, advertising, sales promotion, corporate communication, marketing communications, and more (Brazeal, 2019).

With IMC, each discipline is used for what it does best. Public relations, for example, is an inexpensive way to raise awareness. It can garner high believability, and it is an effective way to create change. Advertising, though, has strict control of the message, rapidly creates awareness, is especially effective where news already exists and efficiently targets segments, broad or narrow. Sales promotion, on the other hand, generates action, is usually measurable, and very effectively builds brand awareness (Brazeal, 2019).

In today's world, everything starts and ends with the consumer. The aforementioned strengths of each discipline are then integrated to support one single and cohesive strategic idea to break through and reach the consumer (Brazeal, 2019). IMC is a consumer-driven practice: what they think, what they want, where they go, what their problems are, what they do, and more. IMC strives to reach people and to learn all they can about them, thus starting a two-way conversation. Two-way communication is a more tailored and interactive form of communication than one-way communication. With two-way communication, the consumer has a voice. Examples of this two-way

communication include social media, search engine marketing and interactive websites. IMC and its two-way communication creates a unique position among all elements of the promotional mix. IMC emphasizes its ability to communicate and then interact with the consumer in an intimate and specific way (Naumovska and Blazeska, 2016). The result, hopefully, is a consumer who has been reached, who is satisfied and whose needs have been met (Jones, 2016).

How does this two-way communication begin? How does one break into this highly clustered and competitive environment? How is the consumer reached today? The steps of IMC are:

1. Define goals and objectives.
2. Identify target needs and audience.
3. Develop an integrated campaign utilizing different elements of the promotional mix.
4. Evaluate the results.

IMC is a powerful approach because it allows the consumer to be reached with the right message and at the right time and through the tailored channels of media (What is IMC?, 2018). The brand is then effectively connecting and communicating with its consumers at every step of the process: before, during, and after. IMC is constructed to present a consistent brand position by implementing the strategy through every possible internal and external touch point (Marder, n.d.).

Methods

It was necessary to define the concept of IMC before looking at the undergraduate level. Integrated marketing communications is not a self-explanatory concept; before looking into undergraduate programs, I clarified the definition of IMC for any that may find my research helpful for the development of a program or curricula. Since the

beginnings of IMC and the progression of it have been defined, I now seek to answer this research question: *What are the similarities and differences among undergraduate IMC programs and their curriculum in the United States?* In order to understand the practice of IMC and to fully comprehend undergraduate IMC programs in the United States, I will conduct in-depth secondary research and in-depth interviews with IMC professors. The goal of conducting this study is to analyze this population of IMC programs, and then to provide recommendations for the Ole Miss IMC program and to provide recommendations for the ideal IMC program that institutions of higher learning may want to develop.

My chosen population is defined as undergraduate programs with the explicit title “integrated marketing communications.” There are many graduate IMC programs in the United States. There are also many undergraduate programs that have a similar design to IMC, but that simply have a different name. Some of these programs may be doing exactly what our program is doing, and may be conducting an IMC degree in a more effective way. However, I am looking strictly into undergraduate programs with the IMC title. While researching these other programs would be valuable, I have chosen this population for the sake of conducting a consistent analysis in my work. Although this population includes many different sizes and types of colleges and universities, they all have the title of the program in common. Having the title of the program in common is important because this title is also the title of the field that the programs are preparing students for.

Although the entire population of undergraduate IMC programs is unknown, I plan to generate a convenience sample. My initial pool of programs will be those that

different IMC professors and administrators at the University of Mississippi report that the program is modeled after. I will begin with these programs, and then I will go through a thorough online search to discover over ten IMC undergraduate programs.

In my Google search “undergraduate integrated marketing communications programs in the United States,” almost 25 million results were generated. After sifting through many graduate programs, suggested websites, and editorials, I chose a sample of undergraduate IMC programs. The extent of my research will define the number of undergraduate IMC programs in the United States as my sample. I hope to conduct a comparative analysis of every IMC program in the United States, but there are most likely programs that I will not discover.

After the sample is chosen, I will conduct secondary research on each program. There is enough public information on each program to conduct a comparative analysis of them. In my sample, I will find the following: where the program is housed within the university, how many courses are required for the degree, and which courses make up the curriculum. Not only am I going to look at these three aspects, but also I am going to look at the universities’ websites, mission statements, student-to-faculty ratio, and more. I will describe and use the language that the programs use to market and position themselves. I will be able to create a true description of each program, though, by seeking out the facts that are hours, requirements, and course descriptions. After collecting all of the required curriculum, I will cross-analyze the courses and credit hours, aiming to discover what makes an IMC program effective.

In order to analyze the programs, I will conduct multiple in-depth interviews. Ideally, I hope to interview individuals from every undergraduate IMC program. I will

begin with interviewing the Dean and the Assistant Dean of the School of Journalism and New Media at Ole Miss. Then, I will email a representative from every program to set up an interview time. To have a concrete understanding of the Ole Miss IMC program, I hope to interview multiple people involved with its beginnings. In those interviews, I will use a semi-structured format. I will have a set list of questions. Unlike a survey, though, my questions will be open-ended and not strict. I will follow the path that the questions, answers, and interviewees take me. Through thorough secondary research and interviews, my goal is to discover valuable information about each undergraduate IMC program and to depict an ideal IMC program.

CHAPTER II: WHAT ARE EXISTING UNDERGRADUATE IMC PROGRAMS?

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the 11 undergraduate IMC programs that were discovered and chosen as my sample for this thesis, by reporting on the curriculum of the following programs: the University of Mississippi, the University of West Alabama, Pepperdine University, Ithaca College, Duquesne University, University of Akron, Roosevelt University, Bryan College, Keiser University, Winthrop University, and National University. The university, school that houses the IMC program, and detailed list of curriculum are important to understand when examining each program. Moving toward this goal, I will give a thorough description of my secondary research about each IMC degree.

The University of Mississippi

The University of Mississippi (“Ole Miss”) added Integrated Marketing Communications to the list of available majors in 2009. That addition was to the School of Journalism and New Media with merging curriculum of the School of Business. There was great discussion about where the degree should be housed after the curriculum was constructed. In the end, though, the major gained the unique placement in the Department of Journalism, which became a School of Journalism and New Media around the same time (W. Norton, personal interview, November 26, 2018). Still housed in the same School, the major is a Bachelor of Science degree (Annual Report, 2017-2018).

The program has grown to about 1,300 undergraduate students since it began in 2011 (Annual Report, 2017-2018). It includes studying writing, design, public relations, social media, law, and research/consumer insights. Students who choose to major in IMC are required to minor in business. If the student became an IMC major before the fall of

2018, the required minor was Business Administration. If the student became an IMC major in the fall of 2018 or after, the required minor is General Business (Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2018). The University of Mississippi IMC program is meant to enable students to build a toolbox of multiple professional skills (W. Norton, personal interview, November 26, 2018).

The 57 degree hours required for the IMC major span through the different areas of marketing, giving students the opportunity to understand the constantly changing roles of IMC from different perspectives, all while developing the intellectual skills necessary to succeed in different industries (Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2018). The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. There are 33 hours that make up the IMC core curriculum, and 24 hours that make up the business minor. The IMC curriculum core begins with JOUR 101, an introduction to mass communication. This course introduces first-year IMC students to traditional and new media and their importance to modern society. IMC 104 introduces students to the basic disciplines of IMC, including advertising, sales promotions, public relations, direct marketing, internet marketing communication and more. IMC 205 and IMC 390 are introductory and advanced, respectively, writing for IMC courses. The impact of clear and persuasive writing within IMC strategies are emphasized in these courses. Communication through visual elements is taught in JOUR 273. Students are introduced to many of the Adobe products through this creative visual thinking course. The process of account planning is introduced through IMC 304. Students are taught many skills and strategies in influencing consumer behavior. IMC 306 is an internet marketing communication course, including search engine optimization, digital marketing, and

social media marketing. JOUR 371, Communications Law, discusses many of the legal rights and responsibilities of journalists. This lecture is situationally based, and it pays attention to Constitutional law, relevant First Amendment cases, libel and privacy issues. JOUR 391 is an introduction to the skills, tools, theories, techniques and goals of public relations professionals, emphasizing the important role of journalism within this field. IMC Research, IMC 404, is applicable qualitative and quantitative research to marketing and communications problems and strategies. IMC students finish their degree with the IMC 455 Capstone course, Integrated Marketing Communications Campaigns. It involves the application of IMC skills and tactics gained over the years as a student while developing a marketing campaign with a team and real-life client (B.S. in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2019).

The built-in business minor is another significant aspect of the Ole Miss IMC program. The minor allows the student to gain global business skills, while understanding the marketing communications matrix better. This curriculum creates a strong balance for students to receive a practical understanding of IMC as a whole by combining an understanding of traditional business marketing with the applications and strategies of IMC (Jones, 2016).

The General Business minor provides the students a background in accountancy, economics, and business communications. The student has the option to then take four of the following General Business courses: Information Technology in Business, Essentials of Supply Chain Management, Essentials of Finance, Essentials of Marketing or Entrepreneurship & Management (Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2018). These business courses help students to grasp the corporate

background of brands that they develop in order to create a more effective message for their clients (B.S. in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2019).

Other than the major and the minor, the Ole Miss IMC program offers the option to dive deeper into an area of IMC. There are currently six IMC specializations offered: Public Relations, Magazine, Health Communications, Sports Promotion, Media Sales, and Graphic Design. Introduction to Multimedia Writing, Public Relations Techniques, and Public Relations Case Problems are the courses required for the PR specialization. Magazine Specialization is fulfilled by taking the courses Magazine Service Journalism and Magazine Service Journalism Publishing. Persuasion and Health Communication courses describe the Health Communications specialization. The Sports Promotion IMC specialization requires Foundations of Sports, Sports Promotion, and one of these three courses: Sports Media and Reporting, Sports Television Production, or a sports-themed internship. Media Sales, Media Management, and either Persuasion, Intercollegiate Debating, or a sales internship are the required courses for Media Sales Specialization. The Graphic Design specialization is fulfilled with Visual Communication and two of these courses: 3D Modeling, Motion Graphics, or Designing Interactivity (Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2018).

While a specialization is not required, it is recommended. The flexibility with IMC students' courses is given by the broadness of the major and the options for a specialization. The variety of IMC courses is a vital element in the success of the Ole Miss IMC program (Fiene, 2018).

Another aspect the Ole Miss IMC program prides itself on is the hands-on and comprehensive approach the professors take. There is great exposure to the concepts of

IMC. All students have taken a course, although it may be an introductory course, on a wide span of IMC ideas, practices and approaches that they may encounter after graduation (Norton, 2018). The hands-on and comprehensive approach is defined by two factors of the program. First, all professors, adjunct or full-time, have previous experience in the journalism, marketing, or communications field (Fiene, 2018). They bring real-life experiences, successes, and knowledge to the table when they teach IMC students. Second, the methods of teaching are also hands-on and comprehensive. Many of the IMC courses have students going out and gaining ‘real-world’ experience. Students go out into the town of Oxford and beyond, seek out stories, interview people, and write articles or press releases for the IMC writing courses. Multiple courses, including Internet Marketing Communication, IMC Campaigns, and others, give students the opportunity to create real strategic campaigns with local clients. The Creative Visual Thinking course gives students the space to reflect on their experiences within the IMC program, then create and build their own resumes (Fiene, 2018). Through the design of the curriculum and the hands-on approach of teaching it, students have the opportunity to learn about building a brand, communicating with a client, and customer care, all while learning the basic foundations of IMC: advertising, social media, public relations, sales promotion, visual design, etc; thus preparing students for wherever they will go with their IMC degree.

A major that has required curriculum in two contrasting fields and schools, Journalism and New Media and Business, and that covers a wide variety of topics attracts many people today. Since the start of the program in 2011, the IMC program at Ole Miss has grown exponentially. As shown in Figure 1, there is a drastic difference between the

number of IMC students at the start of the degree (51) and the number of students last reported (1,111). Total enrollment doubled in 2011 for the IMC program, then it tripled in 2012, and it has continued to grow in popularity, size and commitment (Annual Report, 2017-2018).

TREND LINES BSIMC – 1,111

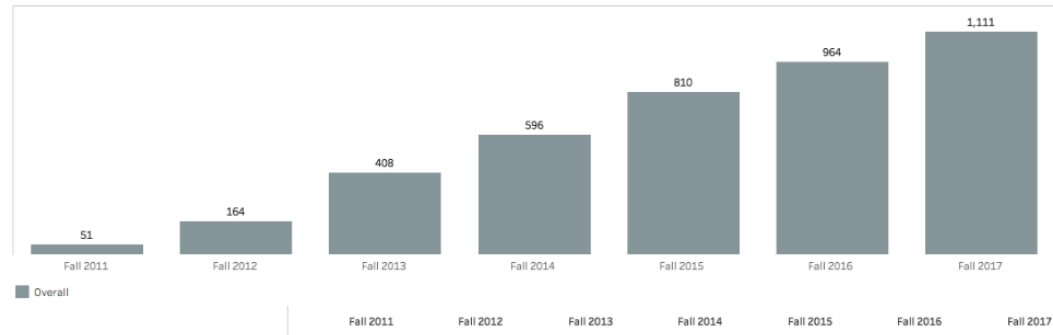


Figure 1 - Trend Lines in BSIMC Enrollment

With great growth comes opportunities and challenges. The University of Mississippi’s School of Journalism and New Media boasts the largest of the 11 undergraduate IMC programs researched for this thesis, with its 1300 students. There are also 31 full-time employees and about 30 part-time employees of the School of Journalism and New Media, which includes both IMC and Journalism degrees (Fiene, 2018). When students were asked how satisfied they are with the IMC program, 63 percent of students answered “very satisfied” (IMC Student Satisfaction Survey, 2018). Over the past decade, the Ole Miss IMC program has undertaken considerable change. Electives have increased, more creative specialization opportunities have been added, faculty have continued to experience growth alongside enrollment growth, the required minor has changed, and course curriculum has been tweaked.

The University of West Alabama

Founded in 1835, The University of West Alabama (UWA) is located in Livingston, Alabama. As a public, state-supported, coeducational and regional institution of higher learning, UWA is committed to meeting the educational needs of Alabama, particularly of the West Alabama area. At UWA, there is “emphasis upon the traditional learning, but the institution is also committed to furthering the concept of lifelong learning and to serving the non-traditional student” (UWA Mission, 2019). The University boasts a 17:1 student-to-teacher ratio. This ratio gives students an in-depth education through direct contact and relationships with their professors.

The undergraduate IMC program is found within the Department of Communications, which is housed in the College of Liberal Arts. Alongside the traditional IMC curriculum, IMC majors have the option to choose between two other tracks in the degree program: graphic design and sports communication. The traditional track caters to students who are interested in marketing, PR, or other communications careers. It is the major that “has it all,” boasting that students will learn about every facet of communications through creating multimedia campaigns while using many different software programs and equipment (Integrated Marketing Communications Major | UWA, 2019).

The required 59 hours for the major are broken down into three categories: Communications, Marketing, and Behavioral Science. The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. Students select from upper-level communications courses and learn how to conduct communications research so that by the time they graduate, they

will be prepared for careers in media planning, journalism, marketing, PR, business communications, and more (Integrated Marketing Communications Major | UWA, 2019).

While there is the option to further your IMC education towards graphic design or sports communication, there is a solid and similar core curriculum for all traditional IMC students. Under the communications area of curriculum are mass communication, news and broadcasting, visual design, writing, media and IMC courses, and more. Students also have the option to choose between a publishing or a broadcast practicum and a professional media or a marketing internship. Under the marketing area of the curriculum are marketing, business, social media, advertising courses, and more. There also is an option for students to choose between an e-Marketing and Social Media course or a Methods of Social Media course. Under the behavioral science area are nine hours of electives in either IMC, marketing, psychology, or IMC (Integrated Marketing Communications Major | UWA, 2019).

The IMC program at University of West Alabama allows students to gain not only the traditional IMC degree, but also the choice to gain a more in-depth focus or specialization in either graphic design or sports communication. News and media is valued greatly at UWA. Students understand the ever-changing world of media through the many unique options to learn about print, broadcast, design, and mass media. The required internship also gives students a more in-depth and real-life look into their degree, before they even graduate. While there are great approaches for the curriculum, the core curriculum is a small one, only being 59 hours (Integrated Marketing Communications Major | UWA, 2019). This might sacrifice a deeper knowledge of skills or practices that other programs teach students. The students at UWA may not gain

enough experience and knowledge to have a strong foundation of all IMC basics or strong knowledge of how to apply them.

Pepperdine University

Located in the southern California city of Malibu, Pepperdine University is a private, Christian university. Consistently named one of the most beautiful places to go to college, Pepperdine is committed to high standards of academic excellence and Christian values, while strengthening students for lives of purpose, service, and leadership (Welcome to Pepperdine, 2019). Seaver College, the University's liberal arts institution, houses the Communication department and the undergraduate IMC program. Students graduate from this program with a Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Marketing Communication. Seaver College boasts a 13:1 student-to-teacher ratio and averages 19 students per class. Because of these low numbers, the faculty serve not only as professors but also as mentors, research advisors, and graduate school and career advisors. Eighty-eight percent of the Seaver College faculty hold the highest degree possible in their respective fields. This rate translates to relevant experience and meaningful conversations with students (Welcome to Seaver College, 2019).

The IMC program prepares students for a variety of areas and careers in the areas of either marketing management or communication management. The program “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” (Welcome to Seaver College | Integrated Marketing Communication Major).

General core requirements of the IMC undergraduate curriculum are Public Speaking and Rhetorical Analysis, Introductory Statistics, and Economic Principles. The lower division requirements for the major in IMC are Introduction to Advertising, Accounting & Finance, Storytelling Through Media, and Fundamentals of PR. As the recommended curriculum sequence continues, students gain a deeper understanding of the elements of IMC in these upper division requirements: Advertising Media, Principles of Marketing, Marketing Research, Marketing Strategy, Communication Graphics, Senior Seminar, and IMC Internship. Students then have multiple options from which to choose while furthering their education: Management Theory and Practice or Organizational Behavior, Business Ethics or Communication Ethics, Legal Environment of Business or Media Law. Lastly, students choose two of the following recommended courses: Advertising Copywriting and Layout, Advertising Campaign Management, International Marketing, Multimedia Production and Authoring, Digital Strategy, Philosophy and Effects of Mass Communication, PR Writing, PR Techniques, and Campaigns. The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables.

The IMC program in the Seaver College at Pepperdine University allows students flexibility within the program. As the coursework progresses, the students have few options to tailor the program for themselves. The primary program learning outcome is for students to “understand the role of research and strategic communication in the marketing of the products and services of businesses and organizations, including the identification of target markets, message creation and the use of public relations, advertising, events, sponsorship and other tools.” While the program is housed in the Communications department, this IMC program remains very business-oriented. Seaver

College prepares students for the fields of marketing and communication, but with an emphasis on the corporate world. Although there is a seminar for IMC seniors that is designed to be an IMC campaigns course, there is not another course in the curriculum that focuses on the integration of the elements of the marketing mix. (“Integrated Marketing Communication | Communication Division | Seaver College | Pepperdine University,” 2019).

Ithaca College

Ithaca College, founded in 1891, is a private liberal arts college in Ithaca, New York. With about 6,200 undergraduate students, it is a mid-sized college. Founded originally as a music conservatory where students learned through the repeated routine of theory, practice, and performance, this approach is relevant to the college still today: “learn important concepts, get authentic work experience, and perform at a professional level before graduation” (“Ithaca College | Academics,” 2019).

Ithaca’s Roy H. Park School of Communications houses ten undergraduate degrees, sectioned into the topics of media arts and entertainment, journalism and non-fiction, and strategic and organizational communications. Within the area of strategic and organizational communications is the undergraduate IMC program. This Bachelor of Science degree teaches students about the newly integrated fields of PR, branding, marketing, and advertising. Students learn how those specific specializations are then combined into a seamless communications program to promote and build brands, non-profits, businesses, and governmental agencies (“Integrated Marketing Communications Major | B.S.,” 2019).

The IMC program at Ithaca is built on the merging of courses from the Roy H. Park School of Communications and the School of Business. The curriculum was designed for students to gain new and different skills, knowledge and experience every year of their education. As described on the Roy H. Park School website:

“Freshmen IMC majors work in teams to create basic advertising and public relations executions for the Internet, magazines, TV, and social media to produce a strategic communication plan to promote a real-life company and its brands. Sophomores research different target audiences and generate a public relations media kit and an advertising plansbook for a national client. Juniors learn persuasive theory and techniques, and apply them in designing and creating web sites, pitch letters, news releases, promotional events, and advertisements for both traditional and nontraditional media plans. Seniors explore social media, search engine optimization, sales promotions, experiential, and international marketing, and then choose the capstone course that focuses on their primary area of interest: advertising, graphic design, public relations, or local IMC campaigns” (“Integrated Marketing Communications Major | B.S.,” 2019).

Ithaca requires a total of 120 credits for an undergraduate degree in IMC. The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. After a one-credit course called “Spark: Igniting Your Future in Communications,” freshmen can continue to these required communications courses: Introduction to Strategic Communication, Presentation & Graphic Design, Introduction to Mass Media, Public Relations, Advertising, Media Planning, Government and Media, Advertising Copywriting and Art Direction, and Writing for Public Relations. Students then have the option between either Research and Statistics for Strategic Communication or Statistics in Psychology. Then, they choose between Communication in Organizations or Business and Professional Communication. Seniors, after gaining many different IMC skills, have the option to choose a topic for their Capstone course. Based on which area of IMC they are most interested in pursuing after graduation, students choose between IMC Lab, Public Relations Lab, Ad Lab,

Brand Design and Communication, and Communication Management Lab. The IMC Lab option is for students to complete a client project that requires research, development of an integrated strategy, and the evaluation of marketing objectives and reach. The PR Lab includes an advanced workshop for planning of an actual public relations case study. The Ad Lab option teaches the essentials of advertising campaign planning: media strategy, position, ad design, and a comprehensive plan for a specific product. Brand Design and Communication is the option that focuses on the whole process of redesigning a brand for an existing corporation, business or organization. The Communication Management Lab option requires students to carry out a project for a real-life client to investigate a communications problem and then design an intervention and solution.

The other requirements for IMC majors are these business courses: Legal Environment of Business, Reporting and Decision Making in IMC, Principles of Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Sales and Sales Promotion, International Marketing, Marketing on the Internet, Marketing Analytics, and Principles of Microeconomics. The business courses help the students to learn more about consumers and how to analyze them. The merging coursework of the School of Communications and the School of Business allows students to “not only communicate with their target audience but also to understand them, which will be valuable in careers” (“Integrated Marketing Communications Major | B.S.,” 2019).

From all of the eleven programs researched for this thesis, the IMC program at Ithaca College requires the most courses besides Ole Miss. Ithaca gives their students numerous opportunities to gain a well-rounded and deep understanding of IMC and all of its components over the years. The sequence of courses helps students to learn about IMC

in an intentional way. It also allows students to wait to choose their capstone course until their last year of education. The wait for choosing this course allows students to tailor their education and to direct the path of their final days of education and career. Students are not only prepared for their Capstone, but also for their future field of work (“Integrated Marketing Communications Major | B.S.,” 2019).

Duquesne University

Duquesne University, housed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a private Catholic university. Founded in 1878 by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Duquesne is the only Spiritan institution of higher learning in the world. The student-to-teacher ratio is 14:1. The University boasts that almost half of all classes have 20 or fewer students (About Duquesne University, 2019).

Within the nine different schools of study, the McAnulty College of Liberal Arts houses 12 departments. Within the 12 different departments, there are 30 undergraduate majors and degrees offered. The undergraduate IMC program is one of the many majors in the Communication & Rhetorical Studies department that is offered by the McAnulty College at Duquesne. IMC students gain knowledge in advertising, PR, event planning, emerging communication technologies, community relations, branding, visual communication, and more (Major in Integrated Marketing Communication | Duquesne University, 2019). The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables.

While not required, students are given the option to have an enhanced major in IMC. They can take up to 15 additional credits to enhance the major and to supplement the 30-credit major. Additional coursework and internships are added to the core undergraduate IMC curriculum. The core curriculum begins with History of

Communication and Communication Ethics courses (Major in Integrated Marketing Communication | Duquesne University, 2019).

The required Elective Core I is Communication in the Marketplace and then the choice between Human Communication in a Technological Age or Intercultural Communication. Elective Core II is made up of the choice between Professional Communications in IMC and Business and Professional course. In consultation with their advisor, students select a communication elective courses out of the many offered. Students also choose three of the following four courses as additional required major electives: IMC Functions I: PR, IMC Functions II: Ad, IMC Strategies I: PR, or IMC Strategies II: Ad. The IMC undergraduate program is brought to a close with the IMC Capstone, IMC: Coordinating Ad & PR (Major in Integrated Marketing Communication | Duquesne University, 2019).

The IMC program at Duquesne leaves many choices up to the students, alongside consultation with advisors. The students chooses the route that their IMC degree will go. With only three required courses for all IMC majors, the remainder and majority of the 30 credit hours are the students' decision. Duquesne IMC students' education might be different, but it will be uniquely tailored to each student and their ideal marketing and communication field of choice.

The IMC program aims to unite advertising and public relations within the extent of the marketing communication field for strategic communication in a changing world (Majors and Minors in Communication | Duquesne University, 2019). Although there is space for supplemental coursework and for an enhanced major, the Duquesne undergraduate IMC program is focused primarily on advertising and public relations

rather than courses on all aspects of the marketing mix (Major in Integrated Marketing Communication | Duquesne University, 2019).

University of Akron

Located in Akron, Ohio, the University of Akron is a public research university that was founded in 1870. Akron currently offers 300 areas of study. Although a STEM-focused institution, the College of Business Administration has been included in *The Princeton Review's* list of Best Business Schools every year since 2005. The IMC undergraduate program is housed within the College of Business Administration (CBA).

Akron's business approach to the strategy behind communication focuses on developing strategic goals and executing tactics to achieve those goals. That approach is enhanced by students learning in the classrooms and laboratories in the Taylor Institute for Direct Marketing and the Suarez Applied Marketing Research Laboratories at the University of Akron. Akron boasts that students learn not only "what to do," but also, "how to do it" (Integrated Marketing Communications | University of Akron, 2019).

In addition to the CBA core curriculum, the understanding of consumer behavior and the knowledge of marketing research and analytics are also emphasized. The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. The required CBA core courses begin with Accounting I/II, Spreadsheet Modeling & Decision Analysis, Legal/Social Environment of Business, and Marketing Principles. Students then finish the 36 credit CBA core with Business Statistics, Principles of Finance, International Business, Management Principles, Business Analytics, Principles of Supply Chain & Operations Management, and Strategic Management (Graduation Planning Summary | The University of Akron, 2019).

The IMC core is an additional 31 credits to the CBA core of 36 credits. The required curriculum is separated into the Foundation Core, Core Competencies Courses, and Professional Courses. The Foundation Core of the required IMC undergraduate curriculum is as follows: Professional Selling, Marketing Research, and Marketing & Sales Analytics. With an IMC background, the Foundation Core teaches students traditional marketing skills and techniques. The Core Competencies courses are Integrated Marketing Communications, Digital Marketing, Media Strategy, and the choice between Creative Marketing Laboratory and Social Media Marketing. While those courses reach into the more creative areas of IMC, they are still rooted in strategy and analysis. The remaining Professional Courses of the IMC curriculum are the courses that give students a hands-on project and real-life experience: Marketing Capstone Project, IMC Professional Insights, and the choice between an Internship or a Professional Workshop in Marketing (Graduation Planning Summary | The University of Akron, 2019).

In addition to the Business Administration core and the required IMC courses, IMC majors at Akron are strongly recommended to double major in Marketing Management, which requires 13 additional credits. With or without the double major, the 120 credit IMC degree prepares students for careers such as direct interactive marketing, media planning and coordination, online advertising and social media, agency account executive, communication strategy planning and coordination, and customer relationship management (Integrated Marketing Communications | University of Akron, 2019).

The IMC students at Akron gain a strong and consistent business education. The university and the CBA provide opportunities to give students the experience they need

to join the business world. However, there is not much variety in the IMC curriculum. While students have multiple courses related to traditional marketing, there are limited IMC-specific courses offered in the Akron curriculum (Integrated Marketing Communications | University of Akron, 2019).

Roosevelt University

Roosevelt University, founded in 1945, is a private university named after both former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. The Chicago, Illinois university boasts a 10:1 student-to-teacher ratio and an average of 18 students per class. It is an educational community that encourages students to grow not only academically, but also creatively. Of the five colleges of undergraduate programs, the IMC degree is housed in the College of Arts and Sciences (Our Story, 2019).

Small class sizes combined with a dedicated faculty of marketing professionals helps Roosevelt students gain knowledge and insight from the professors' years of experience in advertising, PR, and marketing careers. Not only do the professors have professional experience in the field, Roosevelt's IMC program helps students to understand and meet the marketing and communication challenges and opportunities of 21st-century brands, companies and nonprofits through hands-on assignments. These assignments are "based on actual industry work and are kept up to date with the latest IMC techniques, skills and trends by the experienced faculty" (Bachelor's in Integrated Marketing Communications | Roosevelt University, 2019).

The Bachelor of Arts IMC students have the option to follow the general IMC curriculum without a concentration, or they can choose from one of three concentrations: public relations, advertising management, or advertising creative. The IMC major is a

total of 37 credits, which includes eight core courses and four electives. The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. The electives can be focused in one of the concentrations, or students can follow the more generalized and non-concentration IMC curriculum (2018-2019 Academic Catalog, 2019).

The core curriculum of the IMC major begins with IMC Principles/Best Practices as an introduction to the techniques of IMC. The Media Writing course focuses on how to write clearly and consistently, while the IMC Research course focuses on how to research for advertising, journalism, professional communication, and public relations. Fundamentals of Public Relations and Fundamentals of Advertising help students to understand two important pieces of the marketing and communications matrix. Law and Ethics is a course that explains First Amendment rights and responsibilities. Students then have Internship in IMC, a required internship gaining experience in the field, and IMC Campaigns, the project-based capstone course (2018-2019 Academic Catalog, 2019).

Students have the choice to take four elective courses at the 200 or 300 level in IMC, Journalism, or Media Studies, or to add an area of concentration. The required courses for the Advertising Creative concentration in IMC are Advertising Portfolio I and Advertising Portfolio II. For the Advertising Management concentration, students take Brand Management and Advertising Media. For the Public Relations concentration, students are required to take Media Relations and Reputation Management (2019-2019 Academic Catalog, 2019).

The undergraduate IMC curriculum at Roosevelt is a limited curriculum. However, the curriculum covers the basic fundamentals of IMC. With that foundation

and the independence to choose between an intentionally designed concentration and electives that are unique to what the student wants to do with their IMC degree, students graduate with an understanding of many of the pieces of the marketing communications matrix (Bachelor's in Integrated Marketing Communications | Roosevelt University, 2019).

Bryan College

A private liberal arts college, Bryan College sits at the foothills of the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. The Christian university, whose motto is “Christ Above All,” was founded in 1930. The student-to-faculty ratio is 14:1 (Residential Undergraduate Academics, 2019). Of the 26 majors offered, there are 43 unique fields of study. One of these fields is Integrated Marketing Communications. The Bachelor of Science in IMC is the merging curriculum of Corporate Communication and Public Relations from the Communication Studies Department and Marketing from the Business Department, all in the light of biblical principles (Integrated Marketing Communications | Bryan College, 2019).

Through the blending of advertising, PR, and marketing strategies, IMC successfully reaches consumers and builds a strong brand. The IMC program at Bryan College helps students to examine “the connections between those different marketing and communication methods to create comprehensive and consistent marketing plans” (Integrated Marketing Communications | Bryan College, 2019).

The Bryan College IMC program blends together the skills of business and communication through its curriculum. The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. In the first year, students take the introductory courses of Introduction to

Communication, Introduction to Computer Systems with Business Applications, and Introduction to Business. Sophomore year, students are required to take the Principles of Microeconomics, Principles of Macroeconomics, Principles of Marketing, Persuasive Communication, and Principles of Management. They are also required to choose a Communications elective.

Junior year, IMC students take Communication Ethics & Issues, Psychology of Communication, Marketing Research & Decision Making, Legal Environment for Business, Principles of PR, Intercultural Communication, and Digital Marketing. Senior students are required to have a Communications Internship and take the following courses: Organizational Communication and Leadership and Managing Change. They are required to choose another Communications elective and a Marketing elective. The undergraduate IMC curriculum is wrapped up and finished with the Integrated Marketing Communication Capstone (Integrated Marketing Communication (B.S.) Curriculum | Bryan College, 2019).

IMC at Bryan College balances business and communications through all four years of the program. The blended curriculum of the Communications Studies Department and the Business Department consistently educates students on business and communications. A few areas of the marketing communications matrix are required courses, and they are introductory courses. The only practice with IMC, as the whole integrated technique, is in the Capstone course for seniors who are finishing the program. (Integrated Marketing Communication (B.S.) Curriculum | Bryan College, 2019).

Keiser University

Founded in 1977, Keiser University is a private career university with 18 campuses around Florida and a few around the world. The main campus is in Fort Lauderdale. A true career university, Keiser is committed to providing students opportunities to develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills needed for successful employment in their desired fields. The student-to-faculty ratio is 12:1, which leads to effective learning at the University (Why Keiser, 2019).

Within the School of Business, a Bachelor of Science degree is offered in Integrated Marketing Communications. The Keiser University IMC program prepares its students for careers in the fields of marketing, PR, communications, social media, advertising, and management. Students also learn to apply practices of the marketing communications matrix in the workplace through the curriculum (Integrated Marketing Communications, BS | Keiser University, 2019).

The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. The lower division IMC courses are 18 credit hours, beginning with Introduction to Marketing/Self Promotion, Social Media Platforms, and Marketing. Entrepreneurship, Principles of Management, and Human Resource Management finish the required lower division courses. There are 60 required credit hours for the upper division of the IMC program began with many different communications courses, such as: Persuasion; Business and Professional Communication; Cross-Cultural Communication; Political Communication; Introduction to Communication Research; PR; Communication Law and Ethics; and Communication, Technology, and Change. The courses continue with History and Philosophy of American Media, Social Media and Society, Consumer Behavior, Advertising/Promotional Management, and Industrial/Organizational Psychology. The

curriculum continues with marketing courses, such as Marketing Strategy, Service Marketing, E-Marketing, Project Management, and International Business. The final courses of the degree are these upper division General Education courses for IMC majors: Management Information Systems, Professional Writing, and Critical Thinking (Integrated Marketing Communications, BS | Keiser University, 2019).

The Keiser University program has a curriculum of 90 required degree hours for IMC students, not including all general education requirements. The extensive curriculum covers almost all facets of IMC by the time the student graduates. There is intentional consistency in what the students are learning in all of the courses, from lower division to upper division. While there is a heavy marketing, business and communications focus, there is not a focus on writing. The IMC curriculum does not require one writing class; the general education curriculum requires one Professional Writing course. While the Keiser University IMC program effectively educates about many of the facets of IMC, there is not a capstone course weaving it all together and giving the student experience with a real-life client (Integrated Marketing Communications, BS | Keiser University, 2019).

Winthrop University

Winthrop University is a public, liberal arts university in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Founded in 1886, the University now has five different academic colleges. The largest of the colleges is the College of Arts and Sciences, which houses the Bachelor of Science degree in IMC. The college boasts a 14:1 student-to-faculty ratio. The University harmoniously believes in the value of an education in liberal arts and also views it as a way to success (College of Arts & Sciences | Winthrop University, 2019).

Students majoring in IMC are a part of the Department of Mass Communication, within the College of Arts and Sciences. By graduation, IMC students are expected “to be able to gather, organize and process information and data, conduct interviews, write in professional style to a professional level of competence, and produce marketing communication messages and materials in printed, electronic or multimedia form, all while meeting standards of professional ethics” (Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communication, 2019).

Within the 65 hours of IMC requirements, there are three sections in the IMC curriculum: IMC & Visual Arts, Mass Communication, and Business. The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. The IMC & Visual Arts courses are the initial Introduction to IMC course and the capstone Senior Seminar IMC course. Students also choose one course between Introduction to Photography, Photo-Communication, Visual Thinking/Symbol Communication, Introduction to Typography, Introduction to Graphic Design, and Basic Design Applications. The courses that make up the Mass Communications section are Multimedia Storytelling & Production, Media Writing, Mass Media Law, Advertising Principles, Advertising Copy and Layout, Public Relations Principles, Public Relations Writing, Senior Portfolio, a Mass Communications elective, and a required Mass Communication internship. The Business section is made up of: Introduction to Computer and Information Processing, Principles of Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Marketing Research, Management & Leadership, and Business Statistics & Business Analytics. Students then choose between Introduction to Financial Accounting, Information Systems & Business Analytics, Promotion Management &

Digital Marketing, Sales & Relationship Marketing, and Global Marketing for the final Business course (Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communication, 2019).

The IMC program at Winthrop is a well-balanced blend of IMC/Mass Communication courses and Business Administration courses. The business courses in the IMC degree requirements are strategic; therefore, IMC majors cannot major in Business Administration at Winthrop. Not only does the undergraduate IMC curriculum cover many parts of the marketing communications matrix, but also it integrates all the parts through the progression of curriculum (Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communication, 2019).

National University

National University boasts of being San Diego's largest nonprofit university. Founded in 1971, the University's mission is to provide accessible and quality higher education to adult learners. National offers 100+ degree programs, at not only the San Diego campus, but also online. The University uses a unique year-round enrollment and four-week class format. Students focus on one subject at a time, and for one month at a time. This is tailored for the adult learners so that they can finish their degrees faster (About National University).

The undergraduate IMC degree is in the Marketing and Management department of the School of Business and Management. In the in-person program, students discover the integration of many different marketing and communication elements, such as advertising, sales promotion, PR, e-Marketing, etc., to deliver a consistent message. Through learning communication technologies and IMC fundamentals, students are

equipped to develop an effective and measurable marketing campaign (Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2019).

The core IMC requirements are 72 units. The courses are listed in table form in the List of Tables. Many of the courses are introductions to the different facets of IMC basics. The curriculum is composed of: Intercultural Communication, Communication Technologies, IMC, Critical Thinking & Ethics, Persuasion, and Professional Presentations. From this point, the courses are Introduction to Global Marketing, Introduction to Market Research, Introduction to Advertising, Introduction to Services Marketing, Channel & Value Network, and e-Marketing. The final courses of the degree are Communication Strategies, Communication Campaigns, Interactive & Mobile Campaigns, and a required Marketing Project (Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2019).

The curriculum at National University is unique because of its four-week course program. It is the only undergraduate IMC program where students complete one course at a time and that is year-round. The students learn how to conduct marketing research and how to apply it to creating insights. Through the National University curriculum, students learn how to translate these insights from research into the study of communication and media, and then to design a full marketing campaign. The curriculum covers many elements of the marketing communications matrix. The courses cover specific and very tailored topics, such as Channel and Value Networks and Professional Presentations. It does not include a writing course, which is included in most IMC curriculums. The program is a combination of a degree in the School of Business & Management and skills in communication. Although there are many more essentials of

IMC that could be included in the curriculum, the degree prepares students for creating an IMC campaign, for completing a marketing project, and for many different careers in the field (Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Marketing Communications, 2019).

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

In this chapter, I provide the emergent ideas that have appeared through analysis of my research. Looking at the facts of the IMC programs described in Chapter II, I will present the many similarities and differences among the existing undergraduate IMC programs in the United States. This chapter of my analysis is important for describing the results of the thorough study of how different universities are conducting their IMC programs, in hopes of revealing the common threads and unique aspects of an IMC program. The goal is to illuminate the many components of IMC through an examination of those programs.

The Schools that House the IMC Programs

While there are many similarities between each program, there is a certain uniqueness about each one. Through my research and findings, I have discovered that what makes the Ole Miss IMC program unique is that it is the only undergraduate program in a School of Journalism and New Media. Although there may be similarities in the schools and the departments, the ten other programs researched are housed in an assortment of locations at the different universities.

Journalism, by definition, is an academic study concerned with the collection and editing of news or the management of a news medium (Merriam-Webster). The definition of journalism, though, is very broad (Fink, 2019). The broadness of the concept of journalism correlates with the broadness of the concept of IMC. While journalism and marketing communications have similarities, the two concepts also have differences. A similarity between journalism and marketing communications is the goal of communicating not only effectively, but also honestly. Marketing communications,

though, is never objective; it is about intentionally shaping opinion through every possible touchpoint, consistency through them, and communicating through maximum communications impact (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997).

Communication, by definition, is the process by which information is exchanged between individuals through different systems (Merriam-Webster). For example, communication happens through customer experiences, sights, sounds, and more. Multiple IMC programs are housed in communications departments, usually within colleges of liberal arts. The University of West Alabama IMC program is found in the Department of Communications in the College of Liberal Arts. The IMC program is a part of the Communications departments at the Seaver College and the McAnulty College of Liberal Arts at Pepperdine University and Duquesne University, respectively.

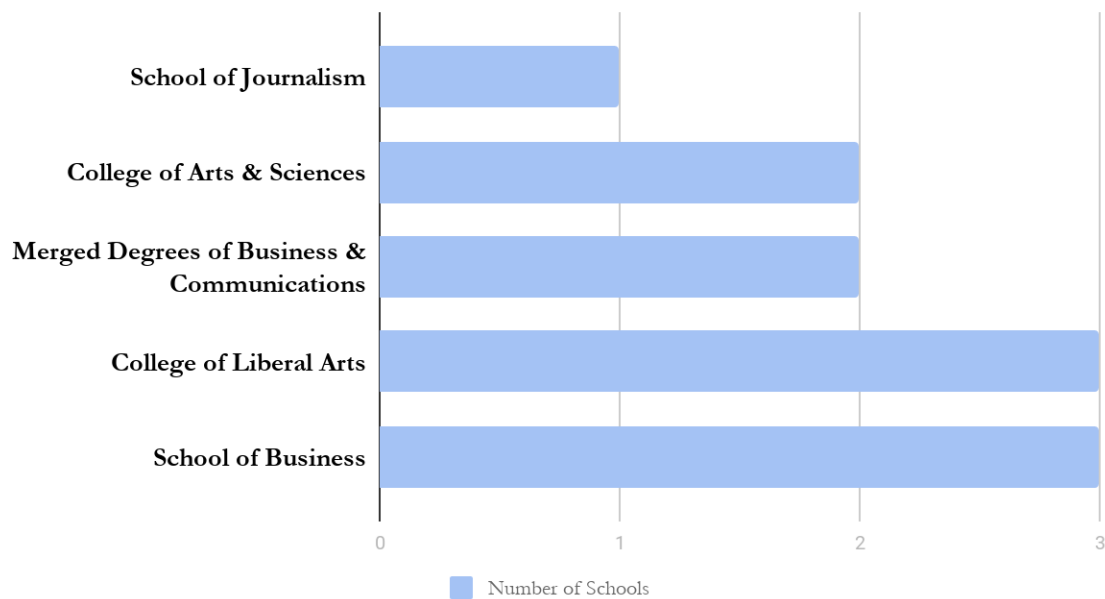
Ithaca College and Bryan College are different from the other IMC degrees found in the communications schools. They are not designed to have solely communications courses. These IMC degrees are a combination of parts of other degrees. While the Ithaca College IMC program is in the Roy H. Park School of Communications, the curriculum is built not only on the coursework of the School of Communications, but also the School of Business. Similarly, the Bachelor of Science in IMC at Bryan College is built upon the merging curriculum of Corporate Communication and Public Relations from the Communication Studies Department and Marketing from the Business Department.

The curricula of three undergraduate IMC programs are designed with the many aspects of conducting successful business in mind. The University of Akron College of Business Administration houses its IMC program. At National University, IMC is found in the Marketing and Management department of the School of Business and

Management. The IMC undergraduate program at Keiser University is also in the School of Business. This business core or the merging of business curriculum is a common thread between the IMC programs.

Although a College of Arts and Sciences is similar to a College of Liberal Arts, they are individual schools of thought and titled differently, as shown in Figure 13 below. At Roosevelt University, the IMC program is housed in the College of Arts and Sciences. Within the College of Arts and Sciences is a Department of Communications. Similar to the undergraduate IMC degree at Ole Miss, the undergraduate IMC degree at Roosevelt is housed in the same school as the undergraduate Journalism degree. The College of Arts and Sciences also houses the Bachelor of Science degree in IMC at Winthrop University. The undergraduate program is a part of the Department of Mass Communication within their College of Arts and Sciences.

The Schools that House the IMC Programs



The Comparisons Between the 11 IMC Curricula

Each undergraduate IMC program is unique in its own way. However, there are also many similarities among each of them. Although the different schools that house the IMC programs have been described, the different programs' curricula must be compared and contrasted.

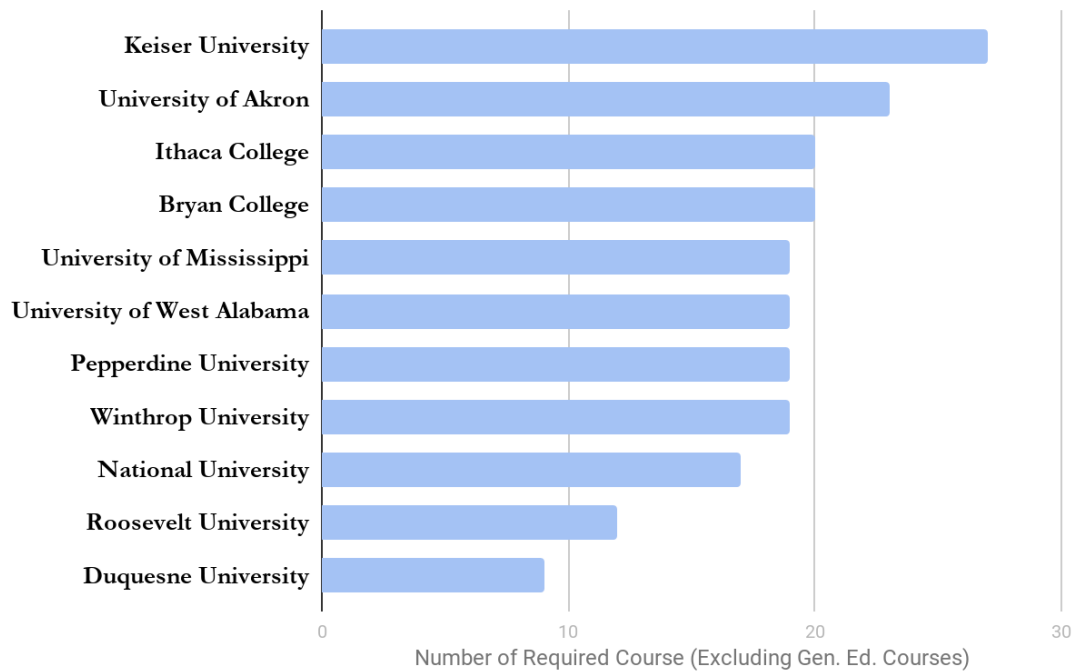
First, the amount of courses required for an IMC degree is vastly different for each undergraduate program. The number of courses required for these programs is accounted for with the different courses required to graduate with an IMC degree, excluding general education requirements. For example, some programs may require both IMC and business courses as a part of the IMC course requirements. That is taken into account and reflected in Figure 14 below.

Duquesne University requires the least amount of courses: nine. The low number of required courses leaves space for students to choose the route of an enhanced major for IMC students. The IMC major is enhanced by supplemental courses and additional internships. Roosevelt University requires only three more courses than Duquesne: 12 courses. For the general IMC curriculum at Roosevelt, only 12 courses are required. Students are encouraged, however, to choose from one of three offered concentrations: public relations, advertising management, or advertising creative.

The median number of courses required for the 11 IMC programs is 19. Multiple programs lie around that median. National University has 17 required IMC courses. There are 19 required courses for multiple IMC programs: Ole Miss, University of West Alabama, Pepperdine University, and Winthrop University. Only requiring one more course than these, Ithaca College and Bryan College require 20 courses. The 19 required courses for the Ole Miss IMC program are a combination of IMC and business courses.

As shown in Figure 14, the IMC programs with the highest amount of courses required are University of Akron and Keiser University. Akron requires 23 courses for their students that are also a mixture of business and communications. Keiser University requires students to take 27 IMC courses. In terms of credit hours, the Keiser IMC program requires 90 credit hours, excluding all general education credit hours. This extensive curriculum covers almost all facets of the marketing and communications matrix.

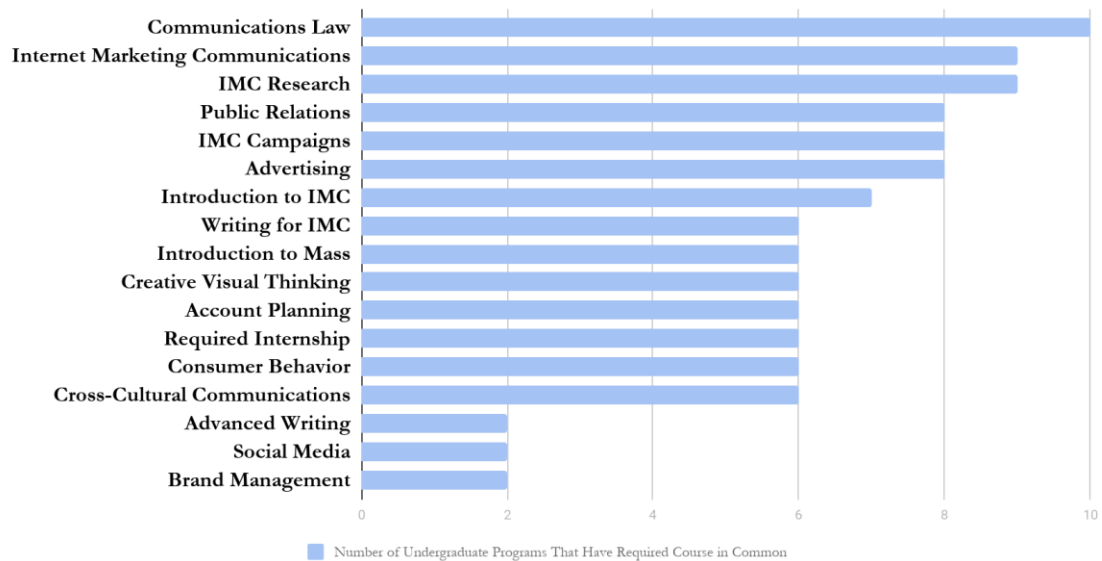
Undergraduate IMC Program Required Courses



Among all of the 11 IMC programs studied for this thesis, there are many courses in common. In Figure 14 below, the required courses that are a part of the IMC degree in common among the undergraduate programs are shown. There is not one course that all 11 programs have in common. However, the design of the curriculum of many programs is similar.

The course that is the most common among all of the programs is Communications Law. As described by the Ole Miss IMC program, Communications Law is a course studying the legal rights and responsibilities of journalists and other media personnel, First Amendment cases, internet regulation, intellectual property, and libel and privacy issues (Jour 371: Communications Law, 2019). The University of Akron is the only IMC program that does not require a course educating students on the laws and ethics of today’s world of marketing communications.

IMC Courses in Common Between Programs



Besides Communications Law, the other two courses with the most IMC programs in common are Internet Marketing Communications and IMC Research. The nine schools that require a course teaching students about marketing communications strictly through online application are Ole Miss, Pepperdine, Ithaca, Akron, Bryan, Keiser, Winthrop, National, and University of West Alabama. Another relevant tool for IMC is research. A course on conducting market research is required by nine different

schools: Ole Miss, National, Winthrop, Keiser, Bryan, Roosevelt, Akron, Ithaca, and Pepperdine.

Three other courses are required by eight different undergraduate IMC programs. The eight programs that require a class teaching the essentials of public relations are Ole Miss, Pepperdine, Ithaca, Duquesne, Roosevelt, Bryan, Keiser, and Winthrop. A Capstone course weaving all the parts of IMC together through a real-life campaign is required by these eight schools: Ole Miss, Pepperdine, Ithaca, Akron, Roosevelt, Bryan, Winthrop, and National. Advertising is required by eight different programs, also. The programs that require a course teaching the skills and tools of advertising are University of West Alabama, Pepperdine, Ithaca, Duquesne, Roosevelt, Keiser, Winthrop, and National.

After Communications Law, Internet Marketing Communications, IMC Research, PR, IMC Campaigns and Advertising, there are multiple programs with courses in common. Introduction to IMC is a course required by seven programs. Introduction to Mass Communications is required by six programs. Writing for IMC is required by six programs. Creative Visual Thinking is required by six programs. Account Planning is required by six programs. A required internship is required by six programs. Consumer Behavior is required by six programs. A global or cross-cultural communications course is required by six programs. As seen in Figure 14, there are many other courses in common between undergraduate IMC programs.

Ole Miss offers the majority of the courses that many programs have in common. However, the undergraduate IMC program at Ole Miss does not require Advertising, although most other IMC programs do. Consumer Behavior, Global Communications,

and a required internship are a part of many other programs' curricula, but these courses are not required by Ole Miss. Social Media and Brand Management are two other courses that are seen in multiple other curricula, but not Ole Miss's curricula. Although social media is mentioned in multiple courses, there is not a course dedicated to the essentials, state or impact of social media. A course that is not very common, though, among the programs is Advanced Writing for IMC. Ole Miss requires this writing course for students after Writing for IMC. The only other school that requires this advanced writing course is University of West Alabama. Ole Miss is the only IMC program in a school of journalism and new media, and this is reflected in the curriculum. Very few other IMC programs have such an emphasis on writing, like Ole Miss. Mostly, the 11 IMC programs studied emphasize the creative and the design, advertising, or communications in general.

The Many Other Similar Programs

While this thesis covers the research of all the curriculum of undergraduate IMC programs in the United States, there are many other programs similar in curriculum but labeled differently. The extent of my research found that there are currently 11 undergraduate IMC programs in the United States. However, although this is a look into strictly Integrated Marketing Communications programs, there are many similar undergraduate programs that are operating under a different name (Fiene, 2018). The curriculum is similar to those researched. These programs are:

- American University (PR and Strategic Communications)
- University of Kentucky (Integrated Strategic Communications)
- Loyola University (Strategic Communications)
- University of Minnesota (Strategic Communications)
- University of Missouri (Strategic Communications)
- Notre Dame of Maryland (Marketing Communications)

- Elon University (Strategic Communications)
- Oklahoma State University (Strategic Communication)
- Texas Christian University (Strategic Communications)
- University of Houston (Integrated Communication)

The similar curricula does not end here. Although this is a look into strictly undergraduate programs, there are many graduate IMC programs. They follow a similar, yet deeper and more all-encompassing curriculum. These programs are:

- Northwestern University
- Eastern Michigan University
- West Virginia University
- University of Kansas
- Florida State University
- Loyola University
- Emerson College

While research on the curricula of these similar undergraduate programs and of these graduate IMC programs may prove to be valuable, this study was exclusively on the undergraduate IMC programs within the United States.

The Differences in the Curricula

The analysis of the 11 undergraduate IMC programs concludes that each program is vastly different. Every university houses the degree in its own way. Based on names and descriptions of required courses, every program takes a different approach. Not one course is in common among the program. And although there are many courses that are in common, there is not a similar recommended curriculum track for earning an IMC degree.

The fact that the schools that these IMC programs are in varied different schools of thoughts describes why the programs are so distinct. That can be concluded because

every school has a different type of accreditation. For example, the curriculum of the Ole Miss IMC program is unique because of the unique accreditation for the School of Journalism and New Media. Generations of college students learning vastly different IMC curriculum is likely to result in a muddled understanding of IMC. IMC is already misunderstood among practitioners and scholars. It is a field that has been constantly adapting since it was first developed. In 1997, Don Schultz wrote,

“While various authors and researchers have developed some type of IMC approach or concept for their teaching and research, each appears to have done so independent of the others, or at least each has developed the concept from his or her own view. There does not, at this time, appear to be any consistent or mutually agreed upon definition, description, or process to identify what is IMC and what it is not” (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997, p. 8).

What was declared in 1997 still remains. Through personal interviews and secondary research, it is concluded that the fact that all of these undergraduate IMC curricula and programs are so different plays into the constant misunderstanding of IMC.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide recommendations for the Ole Miss IMC program and to provide recommendations for schools who are interested in developing an IMC program. Although all recommendations are limited to findings from my study, they will be helpful due to the extent of research in some areas. The goal is to create a comprehensive understanding of undergraduate IMC programs in the United States and to set potential guidelines for future research and for other successful undergraduate IMC programs.

Recommendations for the Ole Miss IMC Program

Further study on how valuable it is that the Ole Miss IMC program is in the journalism school is recommended. It has been established that it is currently the only undergraduate IMC program in a School of Journalism and New Media. This question must be answered about the placement of the degree as it progresses: *While there is an importance of uniqueness, does the placement in the journalism school give value to a student's education and future career?*

Ole Miss IMC curriculum requires introductory and advanced courses for IMC writing. That is rare among the other IMC curricula. Ole Miss School of Journalism and Media Dean Will Norton, Jr. comments, "If students have the basic skill of writing from the beginning, they will excel in our IMC program. However, this is not always the case" (W. Norton, personal interview, November 26, 2018). A survey on student satisfaction with the IMC program revealed student reflections towards writing courses. Although there are multiple required writing courses and many other journalism electives offered in the School of Journalism and New Media, as of the spring of 2018, only 28 percent of

total IMC students surveyed strongly agreed that they are confident in their abilities to write good promotional copy. Also, only 41 percent of graduating seniors strongly agreed that they are confident in their abilities to write good promotional copy (IMC Student Satisfaction Survey, 2018).

An implication of analyzing and evaluating IMC curriculum is the constantly changing world of media, marketing, and communications. That is the exhausting task of staying relevant as an IMC program. Research and analysis of Ole Miss IMC curriculum and other curricula must occur on a regular basis. For instance, through this study, it can be concluded that Ole Miss is aligned with many courses and multiple programs. The curriculum has many courses in common with other curricula. The courses that are found in the highest number of programs (Communications Law, Internet Marketing Communications and IMC Research) are found at Ole Miss, too. Public Relations and IMC Campaigns follow after these courses, and those are two courses are also required by the Ole Miss IMC program.

The biggest gap in the Ole Miss IMC curriculum in comparison to other IMC programs is Advertising. While IMC 304 (Account Planning) covers advertising case studies, there is not a course dedicated to the essentials and techniques of advertising. Eight of the 11 IMC programs in the United States, though, require Advertising as a part of the IMC degree. Further research and discussion on the addition of that course is strongly recommended because of the 72% of IMC programs that do require Advertising. Consumer Behavior, Cross-Cultural Communications, and a required Internship are the courses that follow after Advertising when examining the courses that Ole Miss does not require. Six programs other than Ole Miss require those courses. Moving forward with

analysis and evaluation of Ole Miss IMC curriculum, those four courses must be the first courses to consider.

Continued surveys and focus groups on student skills and satisfaction are also recommended to measure the stature of the program. Specific questions on different aspects, such as individual courses, skills, faculty, internships, careers and resources, will be helpful when evaluating the curriculum in the future. For example, questions like these would be valuable:

- Are you confident in your ability to write a successful press release? (Rank from Very Confident to Not at All Confident)
- True or false: You understand how to create online advertisements and track the reach and engagement.
- How satisfied are you with the assistance in finding an IMC internship? (Rank from Very Satisfied to Not at All Satisfied)

Another way to measure the value of the Ole Miss program being in the journalism school is to look at it from a career perspective. While Ole Miss has a comprehensive IMC curriculum, some professors believe that students do not get as much practice or as many skills in the things most IMC students actually get hired for, such as social media and data analytics (IMC Faculty Focus Group, 2018). Therefore, research from career recruiters, current marketing communications professionals, and job searching websites is recommended for the program. For example, Indeed is the #1 job search and placement website in the world. Monthly, the website has 250 million visitors between job seekers and job recruiters (About Indeed, 2019). On April 1, there were 18,721 jobs found when “integrated marketing communications” was searched (Indeed, 2019). A way to study the value of the placement and skills of our IMC program would be to track the job market through that search website. Not only should the jobs be

researched, but also the skills and qualifications required for each position. Then, those results can be analyzed alongside the curriculum of the Ole Miss IMC program.

Recommendations for the Ideal IMC Curriculum

For universities who are interested in creating an undergraduate IMC program or developing a current program, the ideal IMC curriculum depends on what school of thought the program will be housed in and on how many credits the program can require. After analyzing the many different IMC programs and curricula, it is concluded that an ideal curriculum and success of the program relies on the ability of students to be sufficiently educated in the pieces of IMC and the application of all of them.

Each IMC program studied regards and values different characteristics of IMC. Some undergraduate IMC programs find business the most important aspect while others focus on creative aspects, for example. Research, business, design, writing, and others are potential pieces for the foundation of an IMC curriculum. The many courses that fall under these categories create a curriculum that an ideal IMC program would intentionally keep integrated.

Ideally, there would be a uniform curriculum for all undergraduate IMC programs in the United States. However, universities now have the freedom to create their own IMC curriculum, combining the elements they either want to, choose to, or are mandated to by their accrediting body. Until there is one track of coursework, there will not be one definition of IMC in the world; “One of the major issues for the academic community, if IMC is to develop a theory base, is to develop a more acceptable or relevant definition. Until that is done, we will likely find ourselves continuing to disagree on what IMC is and how we might practice it” (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997, p. 16).

Although the elements and practices of IMC from a curriculum standpoint might be disagreed upon, the integration of those elements and practices is essential. The idea of incorporating different aspects into one campaign translates to the only unconditionally recommended course for IMC curricula: the capstone course IMC Campaigns. The IMC Campaigns course offered at eight different schools is central to this discussion of the many different pieces of IMC, contact points, consistent messaging, and integration of it all (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010). The Ole Miss IMC Campaigns course is described as a capstone course which involves the tactical application of all IMC skills and disciplines (IMC 455: Integrated Marketing Communications Campaigns, 2019). Through application, IMC Campaigns teaches students to weave together all the pieces of IMC consistently and effectively. Although the curriculum of each current IMC program and of any potential program are abundantly different, IMC Campaigns is the strongest recommendation to be made for IMC programs to join together all the varying elements at the end of an IMC student's education.

Conclusion

Integrated marketing communications is an adaptive and unique approach to effectively reach consumers through cohesiveness and consistency. Yearly, it becomes a more and more popular field of study for students and academics (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997). This study was conducted with the goal of understanding this sample of 11 undergraduate IMC programs in the United States through curriculum analysis. In this study, data was discovered that suggests how vastly different each program and its curriculum are. While the universities, the departments and schools of thought, and the curricula have some similarities, each IMC program reflects a completely unique

approach. The overall aim was to explore the multiple dimensions of IMC through the 11 different programs' unique curricula, and then to help give way to future research.

The findings of this study are limited to the 11 programs researched and their curricula; the programs are in the United States, are undergraduate degree programs, and have the exact title "Integrated Marketing Communications." Also, the findings are limited to the curricula information and content on each program's website and annual reports. Additionally, the findings are also limited to the people who agreed to be interviewed and to the interview questions asked; the questions were presented in the manner to make the interviewee feel comfortable to share about the curriculum, programs, and IMC in general. There are many valuable findings from the study not only for the Ole Miss IMC program, but also for other IMC programs that institutions of higher learning may want to develop.

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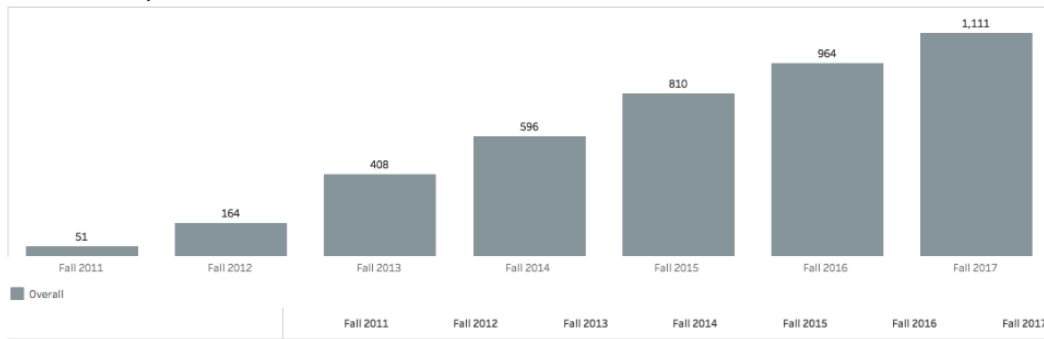
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<u>The University of Mississippi</u>	
Course Title	Course Number
Introduction to Mass Communication	JOUR 101
Introduction to IMC	IMC 104
Writing for IMC	IMC 205
Creative Visual Thinking	JOUR 273
Advanced Writing: IMC	IMC 390
Account Planning	IMC 304
Internet Marketing Communication	IMC 306
Communications Law	JOUR 371
Public Relations	JOUR 391
IMC Research	IMC 404
IMC Campaigns	IMC 455
Business Communication	BUS 271
Marketing, Journalism, IMC Elective *	MKTG/JOUR/IMC 3XX
Introduction to Accounting Principles 1/2 *	ACCY 201/202
Principles of Microeconomics/Principles of Macroeconomics *	ECON 202/203
Information Technology in Business/Essentials of Supply Chain Management/Essentials of Finance/Essentials of Marketing/Entrepreneurship & Management *	GB 310/GB 320/GB 330/GB 350/GB 370

TREND LINES BSIMC – 1,111



<u>The University of West Alabama</u>	
Course Title	Course Number
Introduction to Mass Communication	IMC 200
News Practicum	IMC 219
Publishing Practicum/Broadcast Practicum *	IMC 259/279
Creative Photography	IMC 240
Copywriting	IMC 249
Graphic Design	IMC 260
Writing for the Mass Media	IMC 320
Mass Media Design	IMC 360
Television Production	IMC 370
Advanced Media Writing	IMC 420
Media Ethics and Law	IMC 430
Methods of IMC	IMC 495
Professional Media/Marketing Internship *	IMC 499/460
Principles of Microeconomics	EC 201
Marketing	MK 300
Consumer Behavior	MK 340
e-Marketing and Social Media/Methods of Social Media *	MK 390/IMC 490
Advertising and Promotion	MK 430
Marketing Management	MK 470

<u>Pepperdine University</u>	
Course Title	Course Number
Public Speaking and Rhetorical Analysis	COM 180
Introduction to Advertising	ADV 275
Introductory Statistics	COM 240
Economic Principles	ECON 200
Accounting and Finance for Non-Business Majors	BA 220
Storytelling Through Media	COM 205
Principles of Public Relations	PR 255
Advertising Media	ADV 375
Principles of Marketing	BA 355
Marketing Research	BA 470
Marketing Strategy	BA 471
Senior Seminar in IMC	COM 490
Communication Internship	COM 595
Communication Graphics	MSCO 371
Management Theory and Practice/Organizational Behavior *	BA 352/BA 366
Legal & Regulatory Environment of Business/Media Law *	BA 358/COM 570
Business Ethics/Communication Ethics *	BA 410/COM 400
Advertising Copywriting & Layout/Advertising Campaign Management/International Marketing/Multimedia Production & Authoring/Digital Strategy/Philosophy and Effects of Mass Communication/PR Writing/PR Techniques & Campaigns *	AD 475/ADV 575/BA 474/COM 408/MSCO 380/MSCO 560/PR 380/PR 455

<u>Ithaca College</u>	
Course Title	Course Number
Introduction to Strategic Communication	STCM 10300
Presentation and Graphic Design	STCM 11100
Introduction to Mass Media	TVR 12100
Public Relations	STCM 23200
Advertising	STCM 24100
Media Planning	STCM 30900
Government and Media	TVR 31200
Advertising Copywriting and Art Direction	STCM 33000
Writing for Public Relations	STCM 33200
Research and Statistics for Strategic Communication/Statistics in Psychology *	STCM 28800/PSYC 20700
Communication in Organizations/Business and Professional Communication *	STCM 10800/CMST 11500
IMC Lab/PR Lab/Ad Lab/Brand Design and Communication/Communication Management Lab	STCM 42000/STCM 44000/STCM 44100/STCM 43000/STCM 43400
Legal Environment of Business	GBUS 20300
Reporting and Decision Making in IMC	ACCT 22400
Principles of Marketing	MKTG 31200
Consumer Behavior	MKTG 32300
Sales and Sales Promotion	MKTG 32500
International Marketing	MKTG 38000
Marketing on the Internet	MKTG 49100
Principle of Microeconomics	ECON 12200

<u>Duquesne University</u>	
Course Title	Course Number
History of Communication	COMM 301
Communication Ethics	COMM 494
Communication in the Marketplace	COMM 206
Human Communication in a Technological Age/Intercultural Communication *	COMM 201/COMM 407
Professional Communications in IMC/Business & Professional *	COMM 204/COMM 202
IMC Functions PR/IMC Functions AD I/II *	COMM 330/COMM 333/COMM 430/COMM 433
IMC: Coordinating AD & PR	COMM 436

<u>University of Akron</u>	
Course Title	Course Number
Professional Selling	6600:275
Marketing Research	6600:335
Buyer Behavior	6600:355
Marketing & Sales Analytics	6600:375
Integrated Marketing Communications	6600:432
Digital Marketing	6600:434
Media Strategy	6600:438
Creative Marketing Laboratory	6600:445
Marketing Capstone Project	6600:446
Professional Insights: IMC	6600:495
Internship/Professional Workshops in Marketing *	6600:488/6600:491
Accounting Principles I/II	6200:201/6200:202
Spreadsheet Modeling & Decision Analysis	6200:250
Legal and Social Environment of Business	6400:220
Principles of Finance	6400:301
Business Statistics	6500:304
Marketing Principles	6600:205
International Business	6800:305
Management Principles	6500:301
Business Analytics	6500:305
Principles of Supply Chain & Operations Management	6500:330
Strategic Management	6500:490

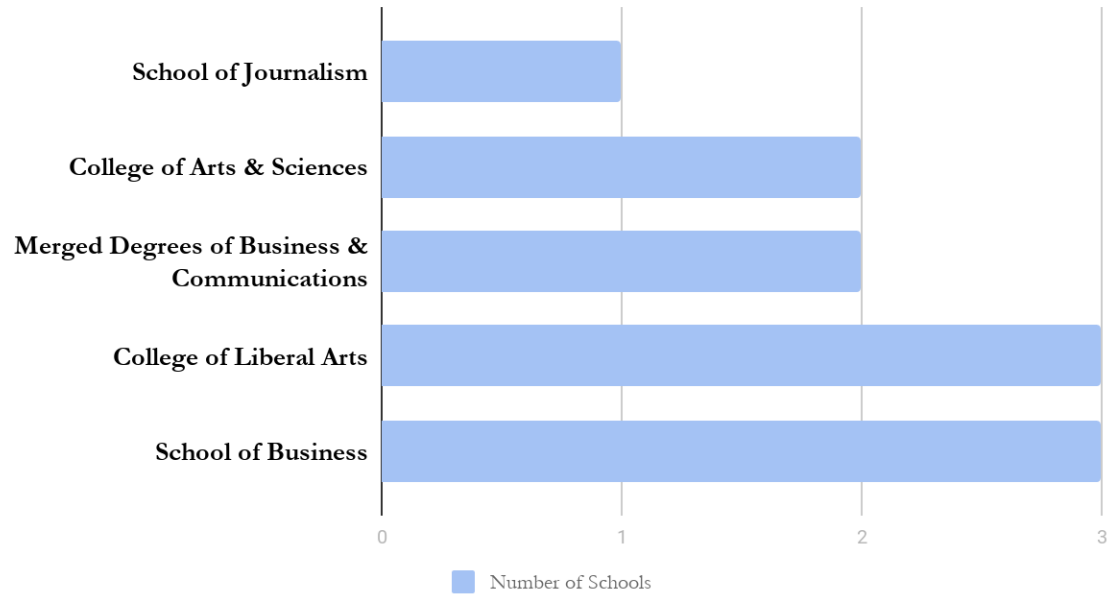
<u>Roosevelt University</u>	
Course Title	Course Number
IMC Principles/Best Practices	IMC 202
Media Writing	IMC 220
IMC Research	IMC 240
Fundamentals of PR	IMC 302
Fundamentals of Advertising	IMC 303
IMC Campaigns	IMC 347
Law and Ethics	IMC 363
Internship in IMC	IMC 399
Four Electives in IMC/JOUR/MED *	IMC/JOUR/MED 2XX/3XX

Bryan College	
Course Title	Course Number
Introduction to Communication	COMM 111
Introduction to Business	BUS 121
Introduction to Computer Systems With Business Applications	BUS 111
Persuasive Communication	COMM 324
Principles of Economics I (Micro)	ECFN 221
Principles of Economics II (Macro)	ECFN 222
Principles of Marketing	MKT 243
Principles of Management	MGT 237
Communication Ethics & Issues	COMM 326
Psychology of Communication	COMM 330
Marketing Research & Decision Making	MKT 421
Legal Environment for Business	BUS 326
Principles of Public Relations	COMM 325
Intercultural Communication	COMM 331
Digital Marketing	MKT 423
Organizational Communication	COMM 434
Internship	COMM 475
Leadership and Managing Change	MGT 441
Marketing Elective *	MKT 3XX/4XX
IMC Capstone	BUS 493

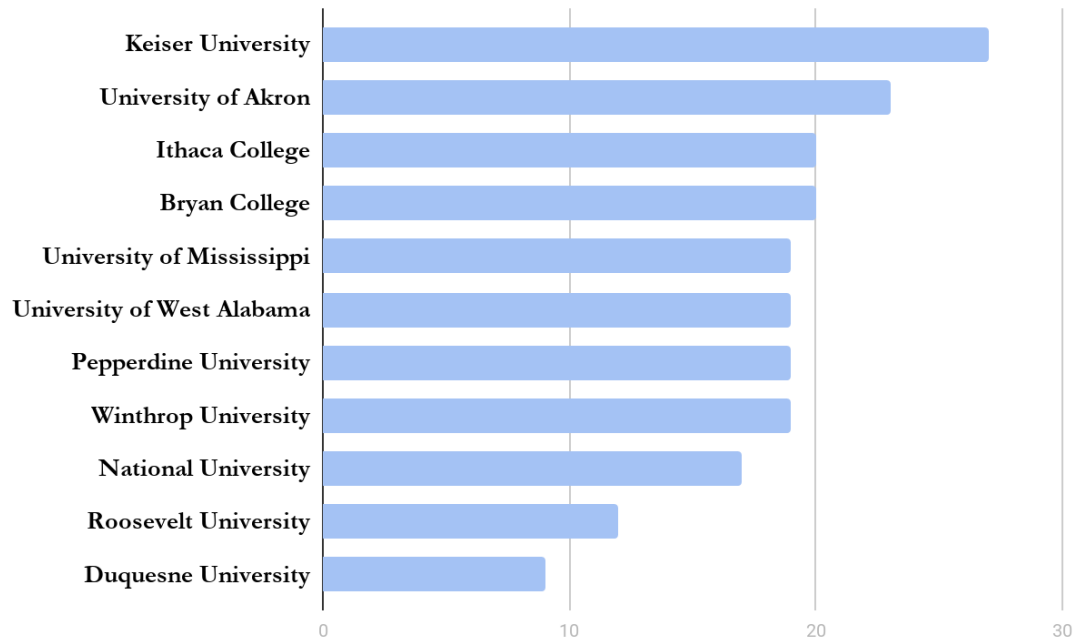
<u>Keiser University</u>	
Course Title	
Introduction to Marketing/Self Promotion	Communication Law and Ethics
Introduction to Social Media Platforms	Social Media and Society
Entrepreneurship	Consumer Behavior
Principles of Management	Advertising/Promotional Management
Introduction to Marketing	Marketing Strategy
Human Resource Management	Service Marketing
Persuasion	E-Marketing
Business and Professional Communication	Industrial/Organizational Psychology
Cross-Cultural Communication	Project Management
Communication, Technology, and Change	International Business
Political Communication	Management Information Systems
History and Philosophy of American Media	Professional Writing
Introduction to Communication Research	Critical Thinking
Public Relations	

<u>National University</u>	
Course Title	Course Number
Marketing Fundamentals	MKT 302A
Intercultural Communication	COM 305
Communication Technologies	COM 402
Integrated Marketing Communications	COM 365
Critical Thinking and Ethics	COM 324
Persuasion	COM 334
Professional Presentations	COM 354
Introduction to Global Marketing	MKT 430
Introduction to Market Research	MKT 434
Introduction to Advertising	MKT 443
Channel and Value Networks	MKT 441
e-Marketing	MKT 445
Introduction to Services Marketing	MKT 446
Communication Strategies	COM 441
Communication Campaigns	COM 442
Interactive & Mobile Campaigns	COM 443
Marketing Project	MKT 480

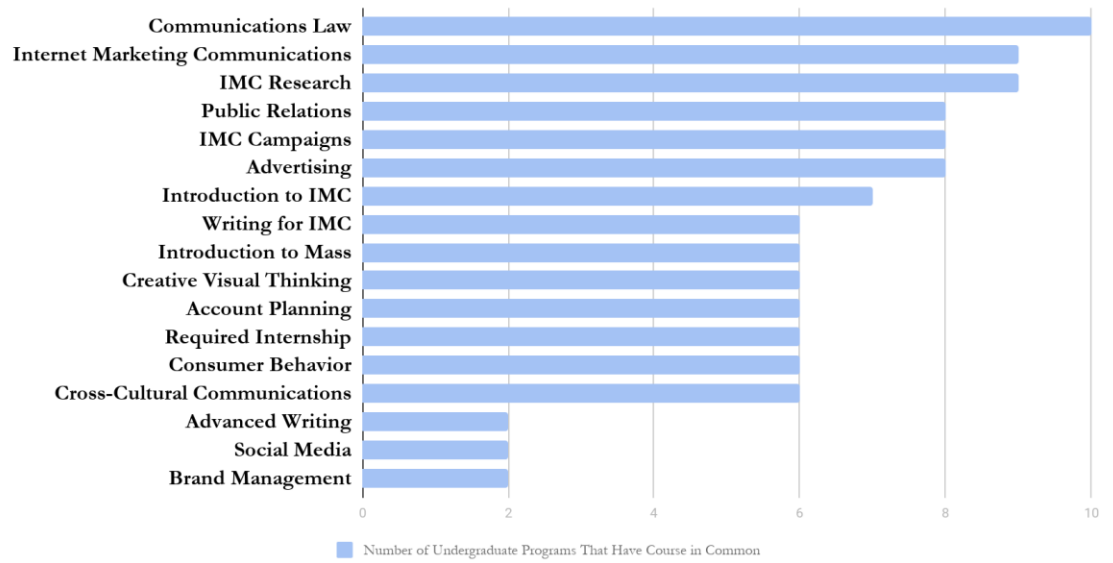
The Schools that House the IMC Programs



Undergraduate IMC Program Required Courses



IMC Courses in Common Between Programs



APPENDIX

Interview Questions (for each IMC program):

- How would you define IMC?
- How was IMC born in general?
- What was your role in bringing IMC to your university?
- Where is the IMC program housed? Was it always going to be in this School?
- What did these beginnings look like?
- How has the IMC program transformed since then?
- What do you think about the IMC program's job placement?
- What do you think about the IMC program's recruitment?
- If you were defending the IMC program, what would you say about it?
- How would you compare the IMC program to other IMC programs?
- How many degree requirements are there, excluding general education requirements?
- What was the IMC program modeled after? Or was it a hybrid program?