

Communication in Utah: The State of the Discipline in 2024

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This edition of the Utah Journal of Communication consists of five intriguing papers on a variety of topics important to the discipline of communication. Included among them are two fascinating teaching activities about an “end of the world” simulation (Phillips, 2024), and a unit-long professional development activity that utilizes LinkedIn to enhance each student’s online image (McGowan-Kirsch & Steidinger, 2024). The wide variety of methods that the journal invites for submission is also on display with an ethnography conducted from a European exchange student immersing themselves in U.S. college sports culture (Hubka, 2024).

Additionally, we are proud to publish two articles from faculty members from Utah institutions. Specifically, Lareina Hingson, an Assistant Professor from Brigham Young University, and Elaine Schnabel, an Assistant Professor from Weber State University, highlight the fascinating scholarship that is taking place right here in the Beehive State (Hingson, 2024; Schnabel, 2024). For me, being exposed to excellent scholarship from faculty members in Utah reminds me of questions I occasionally hear from ambitious graduate students. These questions include, “If I want to teach in higher education, are there opportunities for me?”, “If I do pursue this career path, can I stay in Utah?”, and “What degrees should I pursue improve my chances of landing a job?” With these questions in mind, I would like to focus the discussion of this forward on the state of the communication discipline in Utah.

I made the attempt of identifying every communication faculty job in the state of Utah, and specifying the degree that is required to hold each position. Before I delve into the findings, I’d like to first acknowledge the limitations. These numbers rely on the accuracy of each department’s own reporting on the Faculty and Staff pages of their websites. Turnover and out-of-date pages, for example, can make these numbers marginally incorrect. Also, there is likely some inconsistency in reporting from school to school. For instance, one school may choose to list their adjunct faculty on the website, and others may elect not to do so. There are other departments that aren’t distinctly “communication” departments, such as linguistics, that were not included in the data. Finally, professional staff positions, such as tv studio managers, were not included, as the focus is primarily on teaching opportunities. However, I still feel confident that the statistics below give a fairly accurate representation of communication teaching appointments in the state. The sample includes departments from Brigham Young University, Ensign College, Salt Lake Community College, Snow College, Southern Utah University, Utah State University (inclusive of USU Eastern), the University of Utah, Utah Valley University, Weber State University, and Westminster University. The pool of positions includes 57 adjunct or part-time faculty, 12 emeritus professors, 14 graduate teaching assistants, and 169 full-time faculty members.

Of the 57 adjunct/part-time faculty, 37 were listed as either an adjunct instructor or adjunct lecturer. Additionally, two faculty members from the University of Utah were listed as associate adjunct professors. At Utah Tech University, the 18 faculty members had the title of part-time instructor. An attempt was made to identify the degrees obtained by each faculty member. In many cases, the information for highest degree earned was made available on each website. If not, LinkedIn was used as a secondary source. However, there were still some faculty members that I could not obtain this information for, many of which were in this category. With that said, 41 part-time/adjunct faculty did not have a degree listed for the employee. Of the remaining individuals, 13 had received a Master's degree, one a J.D., and two PhDs. Both Brigham Young University (N=8) and Utah State University (N=4) had emeritus professors listed on their website. Three of which had no degree listed with the professor. Of the remaining nine, one had an M.A., and eight had earned a PhD.

For full-time faculty, I wanted the reader to be able to visualize where the opportunities are, and what qualifications are needed to obtain them. Therefore, figure 1 displays full-time opportunities by title, figure 2 displays full-time opportunities by location, and figure 3 displays full-time opportunities by highest degree obtained.

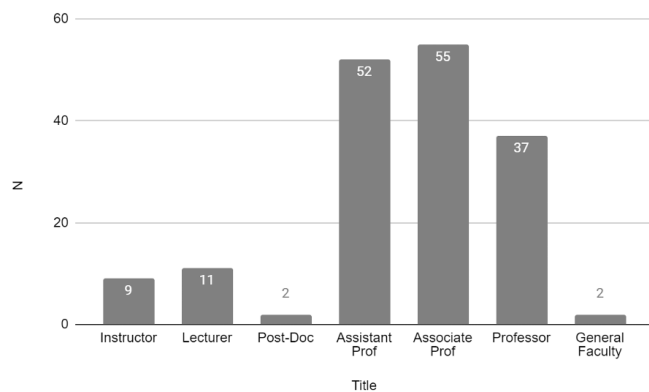


Figure 1. Full-time Opportunities by Job Title

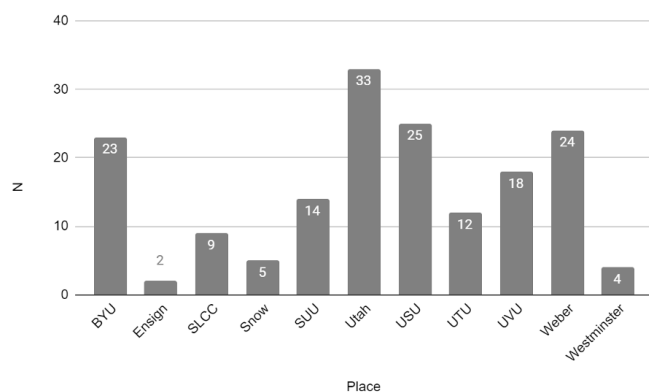


Figure 2. Full-time Opportunities by Institution

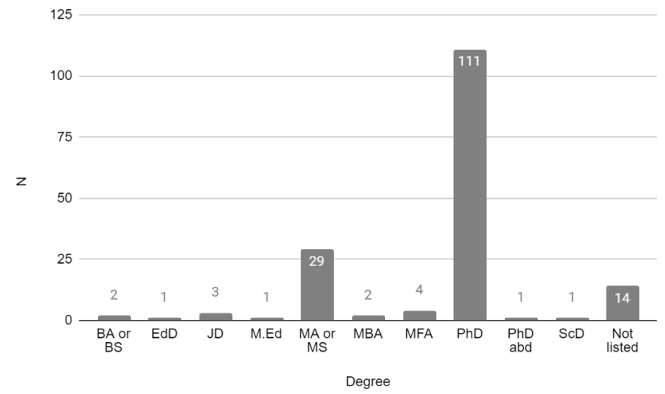


Figure 3. Full-time Opportunities by Degree

This data reflects a healthy and growing field of communication scholars in this great state. We're excited that the Utah Journal of Communication gets to be a part of continually telling the story of the discipline. I hope you will enjoy this issue of the journal, and consider it as an outlet for your own scholarship in the future.

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