ABC

Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States
2026 Proceedings
March 18-21, 2026
Dallas/Richardson, TX

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Mark Evans, *Proceedings Editor*
McCoy College of Business
Texas State University
601 University Dr.
San Marcos, TX 78640
512-245-2571
mark-evans@txstate.edu

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Editor's Note

Welcome to this meeting of the Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States in Richardson, Texas! Thank you to the planners, program chairs, reviewers, presenters, and others who made this program possible. Thank you especially to Kristen Wilson, the Program Chair of ABC-SWUS, for assembling the program you will experience over the next few days.

The program this year includes presentations by authors representing institutions across the United States and around the world. Included in the proceedings are 24 presentation abstracts. We would like to thank all everyone who helped review proposals and papers. We had great representation from across the United States.

Completed papers that are submitted for the program are considered for the Distinguished Paper Award. This year's award is presented to Marcel Robles for the paper entitled "Transforming Business Communication: The Integration of Artificial Intelligence into the Curriculum." The paper will be presented at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 19. Each year the association awards the FBD Outstanding Educator award in recognition of exemplary teaching. This year, we congratulate Kayla Sapkota of Arkansas State University at Beebe as the recipient of this award. Congratulations Marcel and Kayla!

In these proceedings, you will also find information on previous program chairpersons, award recipients, and recipients of the outstanding research and outstanding teacher awards.

Please make plans to join us next year for the conference.

I hope you enjoy your time at the conference!

Mark Evans
Proceedings Editor

Future International, National and Regional Meetings

ABC International Conference
October 14-17, 2026
Baltimore, Maryland

For more information, visit:
https://www.businesscommunication.org/page/conferences

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Lamar Reinsch, Georgetown University
Keely Robertson, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma
Marcel Robles, Eastern Kentucky University
Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe)
Danica Schieber, Sam Houston State University
Amar Sherma, The University of Texas at Arlington
Mara Singer, University of North Texas
Ashly Smith, Sam Houston State University
Dejan Terzic, The University of Texas at Arlington
Tammy van der Leest, University of North Texas
Kristen Waddell, Stephen F. Austin State University
William Wardrope, Retired Professor
Yong-Kang Wei, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Heidi Willers, Utah State University
Kristen Wilson, Eastern Kentucky University
Carol Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University

ABC-SWUS Program Chairpersons 1973 - Present

2025-2026	Kristen Wilson
2024-2025	Ashton Mouton
2023-2024	Ashton Mouton
2022-2023	Ashley Hall
2021-2022	Lindsay C. Clark
2020-2021	Leslie Ramos Salazar
2019-2020	Kayla Sapkota
2018-2019	Carol S. Wright
2017-2018	Kelly A. Grant
2016-2017	Laura Lott Valenti
2015-2016	Susan Evans Jennings
2014-2015	Kathryn S. O'Neill
2013-2014	Traci L. Austin
2012-2013	Randall L. Waller
2011-2012	Lucia Sigmar
2010-2011	Margaret Kilcoyne
2009-2010	Faridah Awang
2008-2009	Marcel Robles
2007-2008	Ann Wilson
2006-2007	Carolyn Ashe
2005-2006	Harold A. Hurry
2004-2005	Lana W. Carnes
2003-2004	Marsha L. Bayless
2002-2003	Betty A. Kleen
2001-2002	William Sharbrough
2000-2001	Carol Lehman
1999-2000	William P. Galle, Jr.
1998-1999	Anita Bednar
1997-1998	Timothy W. Clipson
1996-1997	Debbie D. Dufrene
1995-1996	William J. Wardrope
1994-1995	Roger N. Conaway
1993-1994	Donna W. Luse
1992-1993	F. Stanford Wayne
1991-1992	Beverly H. Nelson
1990-1991	Marian Crawford

1989-1990	Marlin C. Young
1988-1989	Sallye Benoit
1987-1988	Tom Means
1986-1987	Lamar N. Reinsch, Jr.
1985-1986	Sara Hart
1984-1985	Betty S. Johnson
1983-1984	Larry R. Smeltzer
1982-1983	Daniel Cochran
1981-1982	Nancy Darsey
1980-1981	John M. Penrose
1979-1980	R. Lynn Johnson
1978-1979	Raymond V. Lesikar
1977-1978	Jack D. Eure
1976-1977	Phil Lewis
1975-1976	Dale Level
1974-1975	Bette Anne Stead
1973-1974	Sam J. Bruno

Call For Papers

Association for Business Communication Southwestern U.S.
Renaissance Dallas Richardson Hotel – Dallas/Richardson, Texas
March 18-21, 2026

Please submit a proposal or paper related to business communication topics for presentation at the 2026 ABC-SWUS Conference in Dallas, Texas. Research papers, position papers, or case studies related to business communication topics in the following areas are encouraged:

Communication Technology	Training and Development/Consulting
Technology and Education	Interpersonal Communication
Innovative Instructional Methods	Nonverbal Communication
Business Education Issues	Executive/Managerial Communication
International Business Communication	Legal and Ethical Communication Issues
Paradigm Shifts in Communication	Organizational Communication

Papers or Proposals should include a statement of the problem or purpose, methodology section (if applicable), findings (as available), a summary, implications for education and/or business, and a bibliography.
- All proposals should contain **750 to 1,500 words** and must be submitted to our Ex Ordo Website: **https://abcsw2026.exordo.com/**
- Personal and institutional identification should be removed from your submission.
- For your research to be considered for the Distinguished Paper Award, you must submit a completed paper and a proposal by the submission deadline: **October 3, 2025**. If you are submitting a completed paper, submit your proposal online as indicated above. Then also submit the completed paper as a Microsoft Word doc or PDF to kristen.wilson@eku.edu by the deadline.

Workshop Proposals
- Workshop Proposals should include a 500-750-word rationale for the workshop justifying its place in the program and the need for this workshop for business communication professionals. Please also include a detailed schedule and justification for the length of time requested. Workshop slots are possible for 90 minutes, 2 hours, 3 hours, or 4 hours. Time requirements must be indicated in the proposal. Workshop proposals should not exceed 2000 words. *Please note, only one workshop will be selected for programming; remaining workshop submissions will be offered the opportunity to convert their workshop to a traditional presentation.*

Registration
- Upon receiving notice of acceptance, all authors and co-authors are expected to pre-register for ABC-SW and FBD at http://www.fbdonline.org. Please note that FBD registration is mandatory for all ABC attendees, in addition to ABC registration.

FBD Statement of Academic Integrity
Your paper should not have been previously published or previously presented at FBD. Please indicate to the Program Chair if your paper is currently under submission to another FBD association. If your paper is later accepted by another FBD association, it is your responsibility to notify the appropriate Program Chairs.

Submitting Your Proposal Through Ex Ordo:
1. Go to **https://abcsw2026.exordo.com/**.
2. Log In or Create and Account with Ex Ordo.
   - If you have used Ex Ordo before, you may log in using your established credentials.
   - If you have not used Ex Ordo before, please create a new account.
3. Follow the prompts to complete your submission.

Submission Deadline: Papers and proposals must be received by **October 3, 2025**.
Proceedings Deadline: Accepted papers must be received by **January 9, 2026,** to be included.

FBD Outstanding Educator Awards

Past award winners are:

2026   Kayla Sapkota, *Arkansas State University at Beebe*
2025   Kristen Wilson, *Eastern Kentucky University*
2024   Carol S. Wright, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2023   N. Lamar Reinsch, *Georgetown University*
2022   Lindsay C. Clark, *Sam Houston State University*
2020   Laura Valenti, *Nicholls State University*
2019   Traci L. Austin, *Sam Houston State University*
2018   Judith L. Biss, posthumously), *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2017   Susan E. Jennings, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2016   Tim Clipson, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2015   Lucia Sigmar, *Sam Houston State University*
2014   Margaret S. Kilcoyne, *Northwestern State University*
2013   S. Ann Wilson, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2012   Marcel M. Robles, *Eastern Kentucky University*
2011   Harold A. Hurry, *Sam Houston State University*
2010   Geraldine E. Hynes, *Sam Houston State University*
2009   Roger N. Conaway, *Tecnológico de Monterrey, campus San Luis Potosí*
2008   Bobbye J. Davis, *Southeastern Louisiana University*
2007   Betty A. Kleen, *Nicholls State University*
2006   William Wardrope, *University of Central Oklahoma*
2005   Betty S. Johnson, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2004   Marsha L. Bayless, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2003   Lillian H. Chaney, *University of Memphis*
2002   Debbie DuFrene, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
2001   Anita Bednar, *University of Central Oklahoma*

Outstanding Researcher and Teacher Awards

These awards were developed and first awarded in 1992 to recognize the accomplishments of the region's members. Nominated candidates are evaluated by a panel of previous award winners. No awards were given in 2001 or 2007. The association began alternating the awards every other year in 2000 between researcher and teacher. In 2011 the Outstanding Teacher Award was renamed the Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award in honor and memory of his contributions to the ABC-SWUS organization. In 2018 the Outstanding Researcher Award was renamed the Raymond V. Lesikar Outstanding Research Award. The recipients below each received a plaque and award of $100 (the award was changed to $200 in 2008):

2026 *To Be Announced,* Marlin C. Young Outstanding Researcher Award

2025 *Chris McKenna,* Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2024 Lindsay Clark*,* Raymond V. Lesikar Outstanding Researcher Award

2023 Kayla Sapkota, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2022 Carol S. Wright, Raymond V. Lesikar Outstanding Researcher Award

2021 Marsha Bayless, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2020 Ashley Hall, Raymond V. Lesikar Outstanding Researcher Award

2019 Lindsay Clark, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2018 Danica Schieber, Raymond V. Lesikar Outstanding Researcher Award

2017 Judith L. Biss, posthumously), Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2016 Geraldine Hynes, Outstanding Researcher Award

2015 Margaret Kilcoyne, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2014 Lucia Sigmar, Outstanding Researcher Award

2013 Brenda Hanson, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2012 Susan Evans Jennings, Outstanding Researcher Award

2011 S. Ann Wilson, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2010 Margaret Kilcoyne, Outstanding Researcher Award

2009 Harold Hurry, Outstanding Teacher Award

2008 Roger N. Conaway, Outstanding Researcher Award

2008 Geraldine E. Hynes, Outstanding Teacher Award

2006 Janna P. Vice, Outstanding Researcher Award

2005 Bobbye Davis, Outstanding Teacher Award

2004 William Wardrope, Outstanding Researcher Award

2003 Marcel Robles, Outstanding Teacher Award

2002 Lillian H. Chaney, Outstanding Researcher Award

2002 Jeré Littlejohn, Outstanding Teacher Award

2000 William Sharbrough, Outstanding Researcher Award

1999 William Wardrope, Outstanding Teacher Award

1998 Betty Kleen, Outstanding Researcher Award

1998 Robert Olney, Outstanding Teacher Award

1997 Al Williams, Outstanding Teacher Award

1996 Betty S. Johnson, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Marsha L. Bayless, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Anita Bednar, Outstanding Teacher Award

1994 Nelda Spinks, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 Timothy W. Clipson, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 F. Stanford Wayne, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Debbie D. DuFrene, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Beverly H. Nelson, Outstanding Teacher Award

ABC-SWUS Distinguished Paper Award Recipients[1]

2026 Marcel Robles
Transforming Business Communication: The Integration of Artificial Intelligence into the Curriculum

2025 Daniel Usera and Natalie Durham
What Predicts Engagement on LinkedIn? A Study of Four Variables.

2024 Kristen Wilson
Evaluation of Writing Assignments Using Supplementary AI Assessment

2023 Carol S. Wright and Lucia Sigmar
Undergraduate Business Majors' Perceptions of Skills Acquired During College

2022 N. L. Reinsch, Jr.
Giving Values a Voice in the Business Communication Classroom

2021 Laura Lott Valenti and Stavros Sindakis
A Qualitative Analysis of Top Performing Franchise Brands' Email Communication Used in the Franchise Sales Process

2020 Ashley Hall, Carol S. Wright, and Amanda Smith
Augmented Reality in Business Communication Classes

2019 Traci L. Austin, Lindsay L. Clark, and Lucia S. Sigmar
Just Get to the Point: Persuasive Strategies for the iGeneration

2018 N. Lamar Reinsch and Vicki Gates
Communication Strategies for Human Resource Managers and Other Counselors: Extensions and Applications of Equity Theory

2017 Jon M. Croghan and Tammy L. Croghan
Improving Performance Evaluations: The Role of Intrapersonal Communication, Message Strategy, and Age

2016 Melissa A. Barrett and Geraldine E. Hynes
The Little Creamery that Could: Weathering a Crisis and Maintaining Brand Loyalty

2015 Mark Leonard, Marsha Bayless, and Timothy Clipson
Media Selection in Managerial Communication: Exploring the Relationship between Media Preference, Personality, and Communication Aptitude

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[1] Formerly called the Irwin/McGraw Hill Distinguished Paper Award

Renaissance Dallas Richardson Hotel Conference Floor Plan

FIRST LEVEL

CANYON CREEK

COTTONWOOD

SPRING CREEK

DALLAS BOARDROOM

TEXAS

WILDFLOWER

PRE-FUNCTION

CAMPBELL CREEK

RICHARDSON BOARDROOM

STUDIO
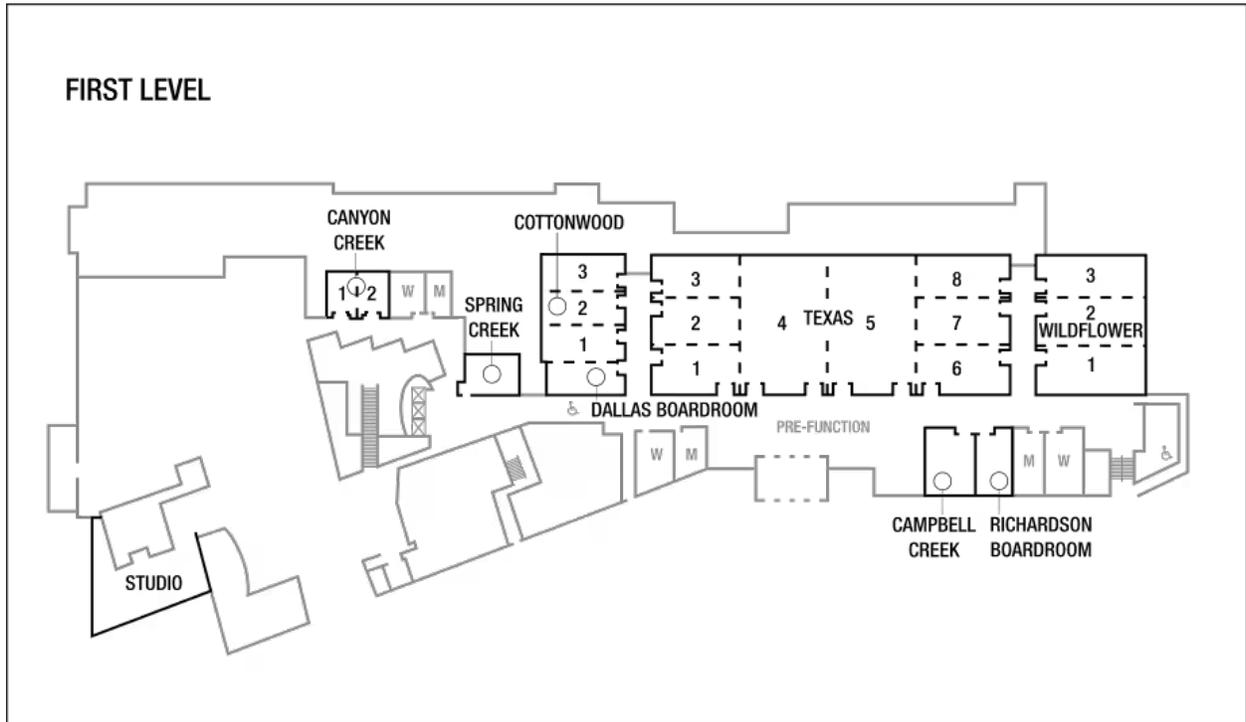
Association For Business Communication
Southwestern United States

March 18, 2026 (Wednesday)

1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.	Wildflower 3

Joint Session ABIS and ABC-SW - Beyond the Algorithm: Humanity and the Hybrid Workplace

Session Chairs: Dr. Lindsay Clark, Sam Houston State University; Melissa Aldredge, Northwestern State University

Factors Influencing Company Work Models and Policies in the Post Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown Era: The Hybrid Work Model Framework
Atieno Amadi, University of Texas at Arlington

The (In)Humanness of AI Chatbots in the Classroom
Dr. Ashly Smith, Sam Houston State University
Dr. Lindsay Clark, Sam Houston State University

Why Hire a Human? Teaching Students to Articulate Value in AI-Integrated Workplaces
Dr. Timothy Ponce, Texas State University

Build your own AI Class Agent: It's Not Rocket Science
Mr. Dejan Terzic, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Heather Philip, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Kevin Carr, The University of Texas at Arlington

ROI Case for IBM's AI-Driven HR Tool
Vianka Miranda, Northwestern State University
Elizabeth Prejean, Northwestern State University
Douglas Moran, Northwestern State University

3 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Wildflower 3

ABIS/ABC-SW Networking Coffee Break
ABC-SW or ABIS Association Name Badge Required for Entry

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Wildflower 3

Joint Session ABIS and ABC-SW - Building Digital Pathways: From Classroom Innovation to Career Readiness
Session Chairs: Timothy Ponce, Texas State University; Shane Schartz, Fort Hays State University

Evaluating Pedagogies for Teaching AI
Dr. William Ordeman, University of North Texas
Tammy van der Leest, University of North Texas
Dr. Mara Singer, University of North Texas

Using AI for Qualitative Research: An Exploratory Study
Dr. Carol Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University
Dr. Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

Toward a Self-Learning Institutional Framework for Student Retention and Success
Nabin Sapkota, Northwestern State University
Marcia Hardy, Northwestern State University
Mary Fair, Northwestern State University

The College Handshake Job Information System: Teaching College Students How to Utilize It for Career Opportunities
Marice Kelly, Stephen F. Austin State University
Karina Tergerson, Stephen F. Austin State University

The Path to CPA Licensure: Evolving Requirements and the Future of the Profession
Melissa Aldredge, Northwestern State University
Haeven Durbin, Northwestern State University
Vianka Miranda, Northwestern State University

March 19, 2026 (Thursday)

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Texas 5

Joint Breakfast with ABIS and ABC-SW

All ABC-SW and ABIS presenters and members are invited to enjoy a delicious breakfast. ABC-SW or ABIS Association Name Badge Required for Entry.

8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.	Texas 5

Joint Session ABIS and ABC-SW Distinguished Paper Presentations
Session Chairs: Kristen Wilson, Eastern Kentucky University; Jason Powell, Northwestern State University

Transforming Business Communication: The Integration of Artificial Intelligence into the Curriculum
Dr. Marcel Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

AI Student Perspectives – Exploring how Students in College of Business Classes are Using AI Inside and Outside the Classroom
Lori Soule, Nicholls State University
Sherry Rodrigue, Nicholls State University
Betty Kleen, Nicholls State University

10 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Exhibit Hall

FBD Coffee Break

All registered participants and paid guests are invited to the FBD Coffee Break in the Exhibit Hall to network with colleagues and exhibitors while enjoying a cup of coffee and snack. Please note that in order to enter the FBD Coffee Break, everyone must be wearing the FBD name badge received upon registration.

10:30 a.m. – Noon	Wildflower 3

Contemporary Issues in Business Communication Education
Session Chair: Dr. Lamar Reinsch, Georgetown University

Assurance of Learning in Business Communication: Strategies and Reflections
Dr. Kylie Harrison, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma
Dr. Stacie Wilson Mumpower, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma
Dr. Keely Robertson, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma
Dr. Marisa Flores, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma

Introducing Visualization into the Business Communication Classroom
Dr. Kenneth Price, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

From Text to Data: Integrating Humanities Mindsets into Business Communication Education
Mr. Carson Wright, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Timothy Ponce, Texas State University

Eco-Branding, Ownership and Ethical Gaps in Beauty Marketing
Ms. Aresia Arthurs, Sam Houston State University

Maker Learning through the Pyramid Principle and Story Arc in Business Presentations
Dr. Ma-aruf Al-hassan, Sam Houston State University

Social Identity Theory in the Business Communication Classroom
Dr. Lamar Reinsch, Georgetown University

Noon – 1:30 p.m.	**Lunch on your own**

ABC–SW Executive Board Meeting and Luncheon (By Invitation Only; Wildflower 3)
Dr. Ashton Mouton, Sam Houston State University
Dr. Kristen Wilson, Eastern Kentucky University
Dr. Timothy Ponce, Texas State University
Dr. Sarah Moore, University of Texas at Dallas
Dr. Chris McKenna, Stephen F. Austin State University
Dr. Mark Evans, Texas State University

1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.	Wildflower 3

From Insight to Impact in Communication
Session Chair: Dr. Amy Hodges, University of Texas at Arlington

Credibility, Complexity, and "the Creep Factor": Rhetorical Strategies in Death-Telling in Investigative Genetic Genealogy
Dr. Traci Austin, Sam Houston State University

It's All Important: Online Engagement through Student and Instructor Action
Ms. MaKenzie Norman, Oklahoma State University
Ms. Izzy Pankey Nguyen, Oklahoma State University

The Role of Service-Learning Abroad in Cultivating Professional Communication Skills for the Global Workplace
Dr. Stephanie Dailey, Texas State University
Dr. Seth Frei, Texas State University

Behind the Drawl: Methodological Approaches to Studying Southern and Appalachian Accents
Dr. Kristen Wilson, Eastern Kentucky University
Dr. James Kirby Easterling, Eastern Kentucky University
Dr. Julia Graham, Eastern Kentucky University

New Knowledge Work: Reframing the Process over Product Heuristic for the 21st Century Business Writing Course
Dr. Amy Hodges, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Gabriel Aguilar, The University of Texas at Arlington

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Exhibit Hall

Coffee Break

All registered participants and paid guests are invited to the FBD Coffee Break in the Exhibit Hall to network with colleagues and exhibitors while enjoying a cup of coffee and a snack. Please note that to enter the FBD Coffee Break, everyone must be wearing the FBD name badge received upon registration.

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Wildflower 3

Workshop: Collaborate and Captivate

The Reality Show Pitch: Teaching Teamwork, Persuasion, and Digital Communication
Ms. Maria Colman, University of Southern California

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Texas 5

Presidential Welcome Reception

All registered participants and paid guests are invited to the FBD President's Reception in the Exhibit Hall to network with colleagues and exhibitors while enjoying drinks (alcoholic drinks

available through drink tickets or cash bar) and appetizers. This is a conference-wide social event. Stop by to relax and wind down from the day's conference activities before heading out for the evening.

Please note that to enter the FBD President's Reception, everyone must be wearing the FBD name badge received upon registration. Name badges for the President's Reception must be picked up by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 19.

March 20, 2026 (Friday)

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Texas 5

ABIS and ABC-SW Joint Breakfast

All ABC-SW and ABIS presenters and members are invited to enjoy a delicious breakfast. ABC-SW or ABIS association name badge required for entry.

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Wildflower 3

Innovation and Insight in the Age of AI
Session Chair: Dr. Ashton Mouton, Sam Houston State University

Create Homework Assignments to Leverage AI for Business Communication Classes
Dr. Yong-Kang Wei, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Virtual Reality to Practice Presenting, Interviewing, and Pitching Skills
Dr. Robb McCollum, Southern Utah University

Generative AI: Bangladeshi and Nepalese University Teachers' Concerns: From Academic Writing to Business Communication
Mr. Amar Sherma, The University of Texas at Arlington

Intercultural Business Communication and Generative AI: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Norway and the United States
Dr. Ashton Mouton, Sam Houston State University

Using AI to Turn Existing Business Communication Assignments into Iterative Exercises with Rapid Feedback
Kenny MacKenzie, Examind AI Inc.

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Exhibit Hall

FBD Coffee Break

All registered participants and paid guests are invited to the FBD Coffee Break in the Exhibit Hall to network with colleagues and exhibitors while enjoying a cup of coffee and snack. Please note that to enter the FBD Coffee Break, everyone must be wearing the FBD name badge received upon registration.

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Wildflower 3

ABC-SW Business Meeting
All members welcome

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	Wildflower 3

Lunch & Learn: Communication in the Age of AI
Explore how AI is reshaping communication while enjoying a relaxed artisan charcuterie lunch: Hand Carved Cured Meats: Prosciutto, Mortadella Capicola, Salami, Ham; Brie, Swiss, Cheddar; Assorted Mustards & Jams; Artisan Crackers & Assorted Olives.

Provocations in Business Communication: Rethinking AI, Clarity, and Competence
Dr. Sarah Moore, The University of Texas at Dallas
Dr. Carol Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University
Dr. Kristen Waddell, Stephen F. Austin State University
Dr. Bethany Pitchford, Sam Houston State University
Dr. Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Wildflower 3

Human Communication at Work and Beyond
Session Chair: Dr. Danica Schieber, Sam Houston State University

The Case for Dignity: Reframing Accessibility through Human Value and Intrinsic Worth
Dr. Heidi Willers, Utah State University
Dr. Mark Hannah, Arizona State University

Introducing Workplace Context in a Business Communication Course: Discussing Published and Actual Organizational Communications
Dr. Anish Dave, Stephen F. Austin State University

Feedback Readiness: Integrating Psychological Safety and Radical Candor in the Classroom
Prof. Kim Marchesseault, University of Mary
Dr. Marisa Michaels, University of Arizona

The Bureaucracy of Denial: Legal and Ethical Dimensions of Health Insurance Communication for International Student Families
Pacificah Mariita, The University of Texas at Arlington

"We've got snacks!" Recruiting students to a professional business organization
Dr. Danica Schieber, Sam Houston State University
Mr. Jacob Ortmann, Sam Houston State University
Ashley Ells, Sam Houston State University

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Exhibit Hall

FBD Coffee Break

All registered participants and paid guests are invited to the FBD Coffee Break in the Exhibit Hall to network with colleagues and exhibitors while enjoying a cup of coffee and snack. Please note that in order to enter the FBD Coffee Break, everyone must be wearing the FBD name badge received upon registration.

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Wildflower 3

Workshop: STAR Power

Can PowerPoint Karaoke Teach STAR Interviews Better Than You? (with a little help from AI, maybe)
Dr. Heather Philip, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Kevin Carr, The University of Texas at Arlington
Mr. Dejan Terzic, The University of Texas at Arlington

Papers and abstracts below are organized in the order they appear in the program.

Build your own AI Class Agent: It's Not Rocket Science

Mr. Dejan Terzic, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Heather Philip, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Kevin Carr, The University of Texas at Arlington

Introduction
Many faculty see AI-uses in the classroom as unclear or risky (Milana et al., 2024). How do you shape it to your course, keep it from inventing facts, and align it with program policies? Meanwhile, many business students still use a one-and-done approach (Yusuf et al., 2025). They try a single prompt and accept the first output. The results are predictable: misread audiences, off-tone messages, and unsupported claims (Yusuf et al., 2025). Emerging studies also show consistent, detectable style patterns in AI-generated text that instructors can coach students to avoid (Hossen Rujeedawa et al., 2025; Georgiou, 2024; Terčon & Dobrovoljc, 2025). This workshop reframes AI as a set of course-aligned agents that make classes run smoother and help students build better prompts and stronger critical-thinking habits.

AI agents can be customized to do far more in a business communication course than draft text. They can answer routine syllabus questions, scaffold peer review, generate case prompts, translate rubrics into feedback cues, and turn lecture notes into quick study checks (Yusuf et al., 2025). For instructors, that means fewer repeat emails, more consistent coaching across sections, and faster prep for activities. For students, it means guided prompt engineering: clarifying the task, supplying evidence, and revising with purpose.

Purpose
The goal is to replace uncertainty with practical, policy-aligned classroom use-cases and give instructors the confidence to build an agent that fits their needs right now. Participants will see a variety of in-class use cases such as: Syllabus FAQ, Assignment Coach, Rubric Assistant, Study Guide, Peer-Review Partner, Case/Scenario Generator, Audience Persona Builder, Presentation Prep, and then select one to build for their course. The AI agent is not a shortcut. It is a scaffold that turns classroom concepts into a practical routine.

Using a simple A.G.E.N.T. workflow, participants will learn how to design and build a generative AI agent to their outcomes, policies, tone norms, and examples. They will learn how to set rules that control web searches, prevent speculation, ask for missing facts, respect privacy, and mirror the program's voice (Kolt, 2025). They will practice quick tests that check audience fit, clarity, tone, and support for claims (Kapoor et al., 2024). They will also program the agent to flag common AI-style "fingerprints" and suggest plainer alternatives that fit the course voice (Hossen Rujeedawa et al., 2025). The result is an agent that makes classes run better and helps students move beyond one-and-done prompting toward a plan → verify → revise routine they can carry into the workplace (Yusuf et al., 2025).

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Evaluating Pedagogies for Teaching AI

Dr. William Ordeman, University of North Texas
Ms. Tammy van der Leest, University of North Texas
Dr. Mara Singer, University of North Texas

Introduction

We are three faculty members who teach a required Business Communication course at the University of North Texas; despite struggling to get our students to value our course and prioritize communication as a skill, our college believes we offer an invaluable service to our students. In recent years, we have incorporated AI pedagogy to improve that service. Our course shares the same capstone assignment and six learning objectives (speaking and writing proficiencies in employment, professional, and intercultural categories), but each of us differs significantly in our teaching style and assignments, particularly when it comes to AI-driven assignments.

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, and the like are radically changing the nature of business communication courses (Sharma and Pandey). At the college of business at UNT, this technology has changed how our students see themselves as communicators in the workplace and how they complete coursework. When ChatGPT first became widely available, we were divided on how we should incorporate the tool into our classroom, but after discussions with our corporate partners, we all discovered nuances ways of teaching AI for ethical and effective workplace communication.

In Fall 2025, we revamped the capstone assignment to be more challenging and interesting for our students. It requires students to conduct a written research report on a business communication topic. The report is completed over the course of several weeks, and students are required to turn in several components of the report along the way, including a research question, outline, annotated bibliography, and a draft of the report for peer-review. The chief learning outcomes for this assignment are:

1. Demonstrate the ability to select the most effective channels for written and oral communication.
2. Select appropriate data visualizations for the right audience and purpose.
3. Demonstrate the ability to produce professional written documents.
4. Apply knowledge of the writing process to the creation and revision of effective written documents used in a professional setting.
5. Apply knowledge of the writing principles to the creation and revision of effective written documents used in a professional setting.
6. Evaluate the clarity, conciseness, and correctness of written documents used in a professional setting

Knowing the students would likely use AI in at least some aspect of this assignment (we do not have a policy forbidding AI use), we are interested in how our AI pedagogy assists students in completing the assignment and achieving their learning outcomes.

Problem: Students must learn to use AI ethically and effectively, and our teachers lack empirical data supporting which assignments and course content can achieve this learning outcome. Given we each teach about generative AI in distinct ways, we wanted to know how our pedagogical perspectives influenced the kinds of assignments and content we used to teach our students effective AI use. We wanted to see how our methods of teaching AI influenced our students' learning outcomes, specifically ones measured in the capstone project.

In the following paragraphs, each of us explains our pedagogical perspectives and how they influence the kinds of AI assignments we present in class.

Instructor A: In today's rapidly evolving workplace, the ethical and intentional use of artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming a vital skill for emerging professionals. My approach introduces AI not as a replacement for critical thought but as a resource to encourage learning, creativity, and intellectual growth. By framing AI as a partner rather than a shortcut, students view it as a supplement to, not a substitute for, their own efforts.

My pedagogical style blends collaborative and problem-based learning. Students work in teams to address authentic communication challenges, drawing on AI tools as both resources and provocations for deeper inquiry. For example, when drafting professional correspondence or persuasive arguments, groups must not only generate content but also analyze AI output, refine tone, and defend their revisions. These collaborative exercises reflect workplace realities where professionals combine technical tools with human judgment to deliver client-ready results.

I have also incorporated industry articles that highlight real-world applications of AI and examine both opportunities and concerns. Students engage with perspectives from business leaders and communication professionals on avoiding "auto-pilot" verbiage, developing prompts that lead to higher-quality writing, and recognizing when AI use risks producing generic or ineffective messages. These readings reinforce that intentionality and discernment are central to credibility.

A key emphasis in my teaching is editing and refinement. Students are cautioned against accepting first drafts generated by AI and instead are guided to analyze, revise, and polish output. This process fosters stronger writing skills while reinforcing critical thinking, peer learning, and attention to detail.

Practical applications of AI in my classroom include:
- Assisting students in quantifying résumé bullet points or project summaries.
- Ensuring logical information flow within outlines.
- Generating preliminary ideas for group projects or presentations.
- Drafting professional emails that students then refine collaboratively.

These activities provide hands-on practice in recognizing both the strengths and limitations of AI. Class discussions focus on analyzing AI-generated verbiage, evaluating tone, and adapting language to meet professional standards. Through this process, students intentionally incorporate polished, professional phrasing into their own vernacular.

Ultimately, this approach helps students transition away from casual or slang-based communication and toward intentional language choices that strengthen professional presence. By combining problem-based tasks, collaborative learning, curated industry insights, and ethical AI use, students gain the skills to leverage emerging technologies while maintaining an authentic professional voice. This prepares them to meet employer expectations and contribute meaningfully in today's dynamic business environment.

Instructor B: AI is here to stay. Without proper training, students and employees generate low-quality "workslop" (Niederhoffer et al., 2025), requiring extensive editing and losing client connection. I teach that AI, used correctly, amplifies human capabilities rather than replaces critical thinking. Students learn to use AI as both a personalized coach and workplace tool, bridging education with professional readiness.

Since my hybrid course lacks time for mastering fundamentals before incorporating AI, I teach them simultaneously. AI provides immediate feedback on weaknesses like unclear subject lines or weak conclusions, guiding students through progressively challenging tasks.

The first semester half presents AI as a coach, such as Socratic questioning for audience analysis, providing adaptive feedback, and teaching persuasive techniques. The second half focuses on AI as a workplace assistant, including crafting meta prompts, evaluating outputs, and role-playing scenarios.

I grade both process and product. Students submit prompts with final documents and reflect on their AI collaboration, creating transparency and accountability while recognizing AI as a legitimate professional tool.

Rather than eliminating AI, I nurture thoughtful professionals who leverage these tools while maintaining an authentic voice and judgment. Students learn when AI enhances communication versus when it produces a disconnecting "workslop." This approach gives graduates confidence in using AI strategically, knowing when human insight trumps AI suggestions, strengthening client relationships and professional success.

Instructor C: My pedagogy employs a mix of constructivism and social learning theory; it's important for me that students do things during our times together. My goal is to have students learn communication skills kinetically through the use of technology, small group interactions, and public speaking.

My biggest fear is of students losing their critical thinking skills and their creative capacity to solve complex problems. Thus, when I teach AI use in my course, my chief aim is to help students adopt the technology as a means of furthering their communicative ends, rather than identifying and solving communicative problems. The "doing" of critical thinking, however, can be hard to evaluate. How can I create in-class learning activities that are AI based and foster creative and critical thinking skills? In my talk, I will offer a few examples of what I've tried.

In one assignment, for example, students are asked to download financial reports via the SEC.gov and upload those data into an AI tool for analysis and synthesis. Students ask the AI tool to identify trends and distinctions between the two companies and are asked to verify the data is accurate. I then task students with assuming the role of a financial broker who is recommending their client to investing into one of the two companies. Students are required to provide data visualizations and cogent arguments to why their client should invest in one of the two. In this assignment, I emphasize the student's agency in their communication with a client and highlight the AI tool's potential of strengthening their persuasion.

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Using AI for Qualitative Research: An Exploratory Study

Dr. Carol Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University
Dr. Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

Since ChatGPT became publicly available for free in November 2022, the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on education and research has been widely discussed. In fact, Business and Professional Communication Quarterly has published multiple articles about the impact of how teaching business communication may be impacted and how educators can adapt to the new technology (Cardon, et al, 2023; Riapina, 2024; DeVasto & Palmer, 2024; DeJeu, 2024; Lookadoo, et al, 2025).

In addition to its educational impact, AI has been touted as a tool to support researchers. However, research into its viability, especially for thematic analysis, has been limited (Ozeum et al., 2025). Additionally, Wachinger et al. (2025) note that "ChatGPT's performance in supporting qualitative data analysis remain … limited" (p. 952).

One study conducted by Wachinger et al. (2025) examined scientific data to evaluate how ChatGPT compared to human analysis. Their analysis found that "ChatGPT was able to produce thematic insights that to a considerable degree aligned with or resembled those produced by an experienced human researcher" (p. 956). However, Morgan (2023) compared his own manual analysis of data with results from ChatGPT and found that "ChatGPT showed a clear tendency to emphasize more specific aspects of the data, without pointing to the bigger picture that united these specifics" (p. 8). He suggested that ChatGPT is a useful tool for coding to save time, but one must still rely on human interpretation of the data.

This study extends these findings to review responses in a social science context. This article will compare how AI analyzes qualitative responses to how a human codes text comments from the same survey questions. The analysis will be guided by the following questions:

- How closely does ChatGPT identify codes like a human would?
- How effective is ChatGPT at combining and quantifying themes in text?

This research is explorative to identify the value of AI in accurately assessing qualitative data. Data was collected and analyzed as part of a larger research study that assessed business communication instructors' perception of AI during its early public release.

ChatGPT has the ability to generate codes similar to a human coder; however, there are differences. The human element is still needed to direct the AI to perform the tasks needed and refine the responses to better fit the needs of the study.

The reliability of the results is questionable because ChatGPT does produce a different result each time it is prompted. For example, Data Set 1 provided specific frequency counts; however, Data Set 2 only provided approximate counts. The format of the output varied as well, necessitating an evaluation of the output to ensure it is comparable. Where AI showed more thought was when it made suggestions for practical application based on the responses. The suggestions were for instructors to require students to show drafts of their writing and include more face-to-face assignments. Suggestions for data set 2 rendered a need for professional development to prepare instructors for the changes expected.

This exploratory study shows there is promise for using AI systems, such as ChatGPT, to save time to code and analyze large sets of qualitative data. However, steps should be taken to accurately prompt how you want the analysis completed and caution should be exercised to validate the results produced. As AI continues to advance, these concerns may diminish, but human oversight should prevail in the final output.

ABC-SWUS Distinguished Paper: Transforming Business Communication: The Integration of Artificial Intelligence into the Curriculum

Dr. Marcel Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has fundamentally transformed business communication. This study examines the current state of AI implementation in business communication within organizations, analyzing AI's impact on organizational effectiveness, employee productivity, and communication quality. The study further discusses the implementation of AI into the business communication curriculum. This research identifies trends, challenges, and opportunities associated with AI-driven communication tools. The findings reveal significant improvements in organizational efficiency, productivity, and accessibility, while also highlighting concerns regarding authenticity, privacy, job displacement, and ethical considerations. This paper provides practical implications for business education and offers a comprehensive outline for integrating AI literacy into business communication courses. The study concludes with recommendations for educators and practitioners to navigate the future of AI in business communication.

Purpose and Goals of the Study
This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of AI's role in contemporary business communication and develop practical frameworks for integrating AI literacy into business education. Specifically, this study provides the following:

1. Examination of the current landscape of AI applications in business communication
2. Analysis of the impact of AI tools on communication effectiveness and organizational outcomes

3. Identification of significant challenges and opportunities associated with AI-driven communication
4. Educational recommendations for integrating AI literacy into business communication curricula
5. Practical assignments and assessment strategies for teaching AI-enhanced communication skills
6. Guidelines for ethical AI use in business communication contexts

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, combining a comprehensive literature review with analyses of contemporary industry reports.

Outcomes: AI Integration in Business Communication Curricula

Based on these findings and analyses in this study, business education programs should focus on developing five core competency areas:

1. AI literacy and tool proficiency - Students must understand AI capabilities, limitations, and appropriate applications in business communication, including hands-on experience with current AI tools and understanding of underlying technologies.
2. Ethical AI use and enforcement - Comprehensive understanding of ethical considerations is critical, which includes transparency, authenticity, accountability, and privacy concerns in AI-assisted communication.
3. Human-AI collaboration skills - Students need to be able to effectively combine human creativity, emotional intelligence, and relationship-building skills with AI efficiency and analytical capabilities.
4. Quality assessment and improvement - Skills are needed for evaluating AI-generated content, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring communication meets professional standards and objectives.
5. Strategic AI implementation - Students should understand how to select, implement, and optimize AI tools for specific communication needs and organizational contexts.

Five practical sample assignments will be provided that are based on these competencies and include learning outcomes, deliverables, and assessment criteria.

Implications for Educational Institutions, Businesses, and Communications Professionals

Business schools must fundamentally reimagine business communication curricula to address AI literacy, ethical reasoning, and human-AI collaboration skills. This transformation requires significant investment in faculty development, technology infrastructure, and curriculum redesign, but is essential for preparing students for continually changing professional

Organizations should approach AI integration in business communication as a strategic transformation rather than simple technology adoption. Success requires comprehensive change management, employee development, ethical adherence, and performance measurement systems that address both efficiency and quality outcomes. Professional development should focus on understanding AI capabilities and limitations, developing ethical decision-making awareness, and practicing effective human-AI collaboration in realistic business settings.

The future of business communication will be defined not by the replacement of human capabilities with artificial intelligence, but by the sophisticated integration of both to create communication practices that are more efficient, effective, and accessible than either could achieve alone. This transformation demands new skills and new educational approaches, but offers the potential for significant advancement in how we teach business communication and how organizations communicate, collaborate, and conduct business in an increasingly connected global economy.

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Assurance of Learning in Business Communication: Strategies and Reflections

Dr. Kylie Harrison, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma
Dr. Stacie Wilson Mumpower, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma
Dr. Keely Robertson, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma
Dr. Marisa Flores, The Michael F. Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma

Statement of the Problem

Business Communication faculty can advance both student learning and the broader goals of their business schools through the intentional implementation of assessment, also known as assurance of learning (AoL) practices. Assessment is a "continuous, systematic process, the goal of which is to improve the quality of student learning" (Martell & Calderon, 2005, p. 2). The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) places great emphasis on AoL processes and "closing the loop" or evidence-based improvements as a vital part of its prestigious accreditation standards (2025). The AACSB has recently urged schools to provide more data-driven evidence demonstrating how they close the loop to improve student learning (AACSB, 2025).

By engaging fully in AoL practices, Business Communication faculty strengthen student outcomes and enhance their propositional value to the business schools they support, showing that our discipline contributes directly to institutional accreditation, continuous improvement, and strategic goals. This proposal highlights the value of systematic assurance of learning efforts for Business Communication faculty, explores opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the educational mission of business schools, and presents assessment strategies along with targeted assignments developed to address gaps in student learning.

Benefits of AoL

Through AoL, Business Communication faculty can empower students by assessing progress toward key learning outcomes and identifying areas where additional support is needed. At the same time, AoL offers benefits that extend beyond the individual classroom. AoL initiatives can strengthen teaching, enrich curriculum design, and enhance student engagement (Martell & Calderon, 2005). AoL also promotes evidence-based accountability, enabling us to demonstrate educational quality clearly and transparently to students and stakeholders (Martell & Calderon, 2005). In multi-section courses, where consistency and quality can be challenging to maintain, AoL provides a shared framework centered on common goals for student learning, while still allowing space for individual teaching approaches (Martell & Calderon, 2005). As Martell and Calderon (2005) wisely noted, "Assessment of student learning is as much about the conversation as it is about the outcomes" (p. iv). Together, these benefits underscore that AoL is

not merely an accreditation requirement but a collaborative tool for advancing student success, strengthening curricula, and building a more engaged faculty community.

Building on Scholarship
An inquiry into the scholarship of AoL in Business Communication Quarterly (BPCQ) reveals only a handful of empirical investigations. This body of work includes studies such as the testing of SALGains as an indirect measure for evaluating advanced Business Communication students' perceptions of learning (Vogt, Atwong, & Fuller, 2005), as well as valuable guidance for assessing MBA-level business writing (May, Thompson, & Hebblethwaite, 2012). These contributions provide a foundation but also highlight significant opportunities for Business Communication scholars to expand the field through research on best practices for AoL. Because the Business Communication course serves as an early checkpoint in students' business school education, with the right tools, Business Communication faculty could be well-positioned to lead this work.

Both the AACSB and Melinda Knight, past editor of BPCQ, have called for greater leadership in demonstrating effective teaching practices and providing documentation of student learning and systematic improvements to instruction and curriculum (AACSB, 2025; Knight, 2012). Today, we have an even greater opportunity to respond by extending the conversation into undergraduate settings, embedding AoL systematically in multi-section programs, and developing collaborative faculty models that strengthen both teaching and research.

From Learning Objectives to Evidence
Importantly, it is not enough to articulate course objectives. We need to determine whether students are achieving them. AoL provides the structure and evidence required to move from intention to documented results, ensuring accountability, continuous improvement, and a clear demonstration of value. Our Business Communication course is designed to equip students with communication skills that employers consistently rank among their highest priorities (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], Job Outlook 2024). Specifically, our learning objectives include:

- L1: Build and exhibit credibility through integrity, accountability, and sound judgment in writing, presenting, and professional interactions.
- L2: Employ strategic, audience-centered analysis to plan, research, write, revise, and deliver effective messages across business genres.
- •L3: Develop, organize, and deliver excellent, audience-centered presentations.
- •L4: Demonstrate professional communication skills that foster positive work climates and maximize performance in small-group and interpersonal settings.

Methodology
We developed an examination that assessed students' ability to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of business communication artifacts such as emails, cover letters, and résumés. We categorized every exam question to determine how students performed at the knowledge, analytical, and evaluative levels using Bloom's taxonomy (Adams, 2015). Martell and Calderon (2005) indicate that "authentic assessment emphasizes higher level learning skills and requires students to demonstrate performance on 'real world' tasks, which are usually ambiguous and

necessitate integration of ideas and concepts from multiple sources" (p. 7). This systematic assessment surfaced patterns in student understanding that offered clear direction for improvement. By collaboratively analyzing results, faculty identified areas of need and designed targeted activities to strengthen learning outcomes. These activities were developed and implemented during the subsequent semester.

Demonstrating Our Value with Persuasive Data
Equally important, AoL enables Business Communication faculty to contribute persuasive data to their business school's annual factbooks and accreditation reports. Rather than merely noting that students completed a required Business Communication course, we can demonstrate with evidence how effectively students communicate in practice, highlight areas where skills need sharpening, and document the remediations implemented to close those gaps. This adjustment could bolster the propositional value of our courses and divisions to our business school homes.

Presentation Goals
This presentation outlines our approach to designing, implementing, and interpreting a direct assessment within the Business Communication curriculum. We will demonstrate how faculty can use assessment data to enhance student performance, support accreditation efforts, and foster stronger collegial relationships across institutions. In addition, we will reflect on the development of our objective assessments and share how insights from student performance data informed the creation of a new, targeted assignment.

Summary and Implications
We recognize that AoL is becoming a growing area of research, shaped by interdisciplinary perspectives and evolving best practices. Business Communication faculty across institutions are likely facing similar challenges in multi-section courses, curriculum alignment, and documenting student progress. Our goal is to share our experiences and invite colleagues from the Southwestern Division of ABC to a broader conversation about what is working, what remains challenging, and where we can learn from one another. We welcome collaboration and feedback on our approach, and we are equally eager to learn from others' strategies and insights. By building partnerships across universities, we can expand our collective propositional value to our business schools and strengthen the evidence we bring to accrediting bodies, employers, and other stakeholders who expect clear outcomes from our teaching.

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Introducing Visualization into the Business Communication Classroom

Dr. Kenneth Price, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Description and Justification

Visual communication predates printed text. Our ancient ancestors used to carve paintings and symbols to communicate with each other. The human brain acquires, encodes, and organizes visual information incredibly efficiently, so it is much easier to recall an image like a ideogram than to remember what someone said or wrote. When contemporary writers use visualization in addition to text, they increase their audiences' ability to synthesize information, grasp both the big picture and the details more efficiently, and increase their willingness to read. Graphics can be rapidly communicated, processed, and transmitted within a large and diverse constituency. A visual language of pictures offers a means of global communication that far exceeds the limitations of text and speech and is therefore appropriate for international business communication.

Business communicators can use visualization to facilitate understanding of their messages because the human brain is accustomed to visual patterns instead of text. Concepts, facts, emotions and complexity can be portrayed within simple ideograms and icons. Much the same as writing for a low-skill reader, a visual communication system presents a more approachable form of communication for an international audience than textual or even verbal. Visuals are highly appealing and can help facilitate understanding, regardless of the language the reader speaks.

Business communication students should then have a knowledge of the forms of logographic communication, such as iconography, logograms, ideograms, and pictograms when writing to an international audience and to recognize how readers recognize and interpret them.

Purpose

This presentation is multipurpose: the first is to give an overview of the concepts of visualization in addition to traditional communication in written form. It then considers the benefits of employing this multimodal approach and discusses the methodology for linking logographic communication to international markets. Finally it explains how to develop measurable assessment strategies for educational institutions to gauge the effectiveness of this form of communication.

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Eco-Branding, Ownership and Ethical Gaps in Beauty Marketing

Aresia Arthurs, Sam Houston State University

As sustainability becomes central to corporate image and consumer expectations, beauty brands increasingly leverage eco-branding language, visuals, and packaging to construct narratives of environmental responsibility. This paper critically examines how four global beauty brands—NARS, Too Faced, Fenty Beauty, and e.l.f.—use rhetorical strategies to signal (or obscure) sustainability through websites, packaging, ESG reports, and third-party certifications. The project investigates the ethical implications of these practices and reveals how corporate ownership influences the clarity, credibility, and transparency of environmental messaging.

Drawing from theories of greenwashing (Rasche, 2023), visual semiotics (Simao et al., 2023), and rhetorical framing, this study analyzes how brands align (or fail to align) their public sustainability claims with verifiable data. Methodologically, the paper uses a comparative rhetorical analysis across two dimensions: (1) brand-level eco-branding language and visual cues, and (2) parent company ESG disclosures and transparency practices. The goal is to uncover patterns in how messaging is crafted, framed, and controlled—and to assess whether sustainability rhetoric reflects genuine environmental accountability or merely functions as a marketing device.

Findings show that subsidiary brands like NARS (owned by Shiseido) and Too Faced (owned by Estée Lauder) frequently appear in generalized ESG reports but lack brand-specific metrics. These brands demonstrate rhetorical distancing and high greenwashing risk, relying on vague phrases like "clean beauty" or remaining silent about environmental practices—a tactic known as greenhushing. Fenty Beauty, distributed by LVMH, employs more intentional eco-language, referencing packaging reuse and ethical sourcing, but lacks sufficient data to substantiate its claims. This rhetorical gap creates a zone of aspirational branding without accountability. In contrast, e.l.f. Cosmetics, an independent and publicly traded brand, provides a high level of alignment between ESG disclosures and marketing. Its reporting includes measurable sustainability actions, such as the use of 100% renewable energy, Fair Trade manufacturing, and banned ingredient lists—earning it top scores in verifiability and claim clarity.

A comparative bar graph titled Eco-Branding vs. ESG Transparency in Global Beauty Brands was generated to visually represent how the four brands perform across five dimensions: ESG

mention, claim clarity, greenwashing risk, verifiable action, and cruelty-free/vegan status. The visual data supports the analysis: corporate ownership strongly influences the credibility and specificity of sustainability rhetoric. E.l.f. outperforms its counterparts, while NARS ranks lowest across all ethical communication indicators.

The outcomes of this analysis reinforce that eco-branding is not just a visual or marketing trend—it is a rhetorical act that holds ethical weight. In the beauty industry, where consumer trust and environmental ethics increasingly overlap, vague sustainability language can mislead the public and damage long-term credibility. Ethical communication, therefore, must involve transparency, brand-level specificity, and verifiable claims—not simply aesthetic gestures.

This paper contributes to discussions in business communication, marketing ethics, and technical communication by offering a model for critically analyzing brand rhetoric. It encourages students, educators, and practitioners to interrogate corporate narratives, question who controls messaging, and advocate for honest, data-driven environmental communication. As the marketplace grows more attuned to climate justice and consumer activism, rhetorical integrity becomes not only a professional responsibility but a strategic imperative.

Social Identity Theory in the Business Communication Classroom

Dr. Lamar Reinsch, Georgetown University

Problem/Purpose
The purposes of this project include: (a) bringing Social Identity Theory (SIT) to the attention of business communication scholars and providing them a brief, accurate, and clear summary of the theory; (b) arguing that SIT is fundamentally a communication theory and, therefore, potentially valuable in communication scholarship and teaching; and (c) suggesting specific ways in which SIT can be applied to leadership (especially crisis leadership) and to other aspects of group dynamics.

Method
This paper offers an analytical review of published literature relevant to SIT (e.g., Turner, 1987), especially as it has been adapted to address leadership issues (e.g., Haslam et al., 2020; Hogg, 2001a, 2001b; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003; Hogg et al., 2012; Lord & Brown, 2004). The author taught this literature for more than a decade in a post-graduate leadership degree program and is now re-analyzing the literature from the perspective described in this proposal.

Findings
SIT, arguably the most viable theory of leadership (Goethals & Sorenson, 2006), and a large body of research shows that an individual is likely to emerge as a group leader when: (a) the group develops a clear social identity (what defines "us"); (b) the individual is recognized as a prototypical group member (she is "one of us"); and (c) the individual demonstrates an apparent willingness to champion the group. Once a person is placed (selected or elected) into a leadership role, he or she has the opportunity to: (d) start collective action; (e) that alters the social context; and (f) shifts the group prototype. The result is often a process that is both linear and circular, gradually entrenching the leader in his or her position. An effective leader is likely to be a person with skills as an artist (using language to create a vision), an impresario (structuring activities to

reflect shared social identity), and an engineer (focusing the energy of the group to change external society so that it better reflects the group's norms and values).

As may already be clear, each stage of this process involves multiple forms of communication such as observing and listening to group members, articulating one's concept of self and of group identity. In short, it is various forms of communication that allow a group to form, to develop an identity, and to find potential leaders. It is also communication that allows a leader to effect collective action that (at least potentially) nudges the social context and, thus, the group prototype in particular directions.

These processes occur spontaneously in human groups, including each classroom of students, and each team that is selected or assigned to a group project. Consequently, SIT can be a useful tool for an instructor who wishes to diagnose team or classroom behavior. It can also be useful for the instructor who wishes to include a leadership unit in her or his course. The SIT perspective makes very clear that communication skills (such as taught in business communication courses) can help an individual secure and keep a leadership position. In fact, the same skills can place an individual in a leadership position even if he or she does not seek it.

SIT can also be productively linked to the process of crisis management (Boin, McConnell et al., 2008; Boin, 't Hart et al., 2017), a particularly challenging environment for leadership. Some leaders successfully manage the stages of crisis management (Boin et al., 2017) such as sense making, decision making, and meaning making. But crisis management theory does not focus on: (a) the skills needed to complete those stages successfully; or (b) the skills needed to keep one's leadership position during a crisis. SIT can be used to address those deficiencies.

Summary
This presentation (and handouts distributed to attendees) will provide business communication instructors with: (a) an introductory overview of SIT that should allow each instructor to determine the relevance of SIT to his or her research and teaching; (b) a list of resources that will facilitate further self-guided learning for those who seek it.

Implications
SIT can help an instructor to better understand group behavior among her or his students (and among her or his faculty colleagues). It can be a useful tool when the faculty member teaches group behavior, leadership, and/or crisis management. It can provide a powerful theoretical perspective when a faculty member conducts research in those same areas.

SIT does not often attract the attention of communication scholars. That is, I think, unfortunate and something I hope to (at least partially) correct.

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Credibility, Complexity, and "the Creep Factor": Rhetorical Strategies in Death-Telling in Investigative Genetic Genealogy

Dr. Traci Austin, Sam Houston State University

Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) combines DNA testing with family history research to identify unknown individuals, including crime victims, perpetrators, and adoptees' relatives. As the field expands beyond law enforcement into nonprofit and business sectors, IGG professionals increasingly face the challenge of contacting "target testers" or potential relatives asked to provide DNA samples. These outreach efforts often carry elements of "death telling," since they may involve disclosing that an unknown or distant relative has died. Communicating effectively in this context is complicated by three challenges: limited credibility compared to law enforcement, the "creep factor" of revealing deeply personal knowledge, and the difficulty of explaining complex genetic methods. This study analyzes outreach messages from IGG practitioners, using move analysis and practitioner feedback to identify effective rhetorical strategies. Findings will provide the first discipline-specific framework for IGG communication, advancing both business communication research and professional practice in this emerging business field.

Background

Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) is a powerful investigative tool that combines DNA testing with traditional family history research to identify unknown individuals (e.g., unidentified human remains, perpetrators of violent crimes, or biological relatives of adoptees) (Greytak et al., 2019). In recent years, IGG has played a role in well-known criminal cases, including that of Joseph DiAngelo, the Golden State Killer, in 2019, and Bryan Kohberger, convicted in of four murders in Idaho in 2025. Whether it's solving crimes or reuniting families, IGG is very much in the public eye, with media coverage not only making the technique widely known but also inspiring more and more people to want to get involved in the IGG field.

Once the sole purview of law enforcement, IGG has spread into the business world, thanks in part to the widespread and inexpensive availability of commercial DNA databases (e.g., GedmatchPro, FTDNA, and DNA Justice) and family history tools (e.g. Ancestry and FamilySearch). As such, the number of for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations devoted to IGG have greatly increased in the last eight years (Erturk & Kuang, 2021). Their work spans the full range of IGG cases, from restoring names to Jane and John Does, locating birth families, or identifying victims of historical trauma. Whatever their focus, they all share a common thread: the need to deliver difficult, complex, and sensitive news to an audience that may be unfamiliar with the nature of IGG and unsure of their own connection to situation. If an unknown person can't be identified from the matches found on the commercial DNA databases, IGG professionals must reach out to additional potential relatives in order to narrow down the family lines that may lead to their unknown individual. These potential relatives, identified through traditional family history and public records research, are called "target" or "reference testers" and are asked to take and upload a commercial DNA test.

Each instance of outreach to target testers also carries elements of a what is knowns as a death notification or "death telling," since the request for DNA testing comes alongside the news that a potential relative of theirs, whom they may or may not have known, has died. Often, this unknown person is also a victim—of a crime, a tragic accident, a natural disaster, or even traumatic historical events. Looking to the "bad news" strategies advised in business communication textbooks (e.g., Cardon, 2024; one more here) are not always useful, either, because they assume a degree of certainty about and control over the message that is often absent in IGG contexts. In addition, business communication textbooks recommend a high degree of transparency when communicating; in IGG-related messages, however, that same level of transparency, openness, and detail can often inspire discomfort and suspicion in the target audience. Clearly, a new, discipline-specific communication strategy is necessary.

Need for Specialized Strategies for IGG Businesses

Despite the expansion of the IGG field, there has been no research on how IGG professionals in for-profit businesses should approach and structure their outreach messages to target testers. Even the two most prominent university-level IGG programs (Ramapo College and the University of New Haven) do not provide formal guidance regarding how to conduct outreach to target testers. As a result, practitioners often rely on instinct, trial and error, strategies from other disciplines (like law enforcement, social work, or counseling), and their own sense of empathy when crafting messages to potential contacts. Sometimes these strategies are successful, and

sometimes not; clearly, a set of strategies tailored to this new profession would be helpful to current and prospective IGG professionals alike.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to examine how IGG professionals navigate the unique communication challenge of outreach to target testers, to identify the rhetorical moves they employ, and gather feedback on the degree of success they achieve. The study will focus on how IGG professionals navigate three main challenges:

- Credibility: IGG professionals in for-profit and non-profit organizations lack the credibility and authority typically accorded to police officers, medical examiners, and other law enforcement professionals. In addition, many members of the public believe that IGG-related activities "should" be the purview of law enforcement and are suspicious of for-profit businesses "doing law enforcement's job."
- The "Creep Factor": Often, IGG professionals know more about a recipient's family history and ethnic background than the recipients themselves, and they have researched the recipient's personal history to an extent that some find disturbing.
- Complex Scientific Content: The process that leads to the identification of target testers often involves complex genetic and genealogical concepts; IGG professionals must decide what information to include, and what to leave out, when a target tester asks, "How did you find me?"

Methods
This study will use a qualitative, artifact-based approach combined with practitioner feedback. IGG professionals from both for-profit and nonprofit organizations will be invited to share sample communication artifacts, including phone scripts, outreach emails, or message templates used when contacting family members or target testers. These messages will be systematically analyzed using move analysis to identify recurring rhetorical structures, with particular attention to how communicators address issues of credibility, the "creep factor," and delivery of complex scientific content. Each contributing professional will also be asked to describe the context of use and to evaluate the degree of success or difficulty associated with the message. Success will be defined broadly, including whether recipients agreed to DNA testing, accepted the identification, or responded with trust, suspicion, or hostility. The combined analysis of rhetorical moves and practitioner evaluations will provide insight into both common strategies and areas where communication guidance is most urgently needed.

The study will be conducted between October 2025 and January 2026, with artifact collection in the first month, coding and practitioner feedback in the second, and synthesis of findings in the third and fourth. IRB approval is currently in process as of September 2025.

Conclusion
The findings from this study will contribute both to business communication research and to practice in investigative genetic genealogy. Understanding how IGG professionals construct and deliver their messages will help scholars, practitioners, and law enforcement partners better support families and, ultimately, lead to greater success in restoring names to the unidentified.

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The Role of Service-Learning Abroad in Cultivating Professional Communication Skills for the Global Workplace

Dr. Stephanie Dailey, Texas State University
Dr. Seth Frei, Texas State University

Purpose

Within business schools, service-learning has gained popularity as an effective tool to supplement traditional pedagogies and enhance learning outcomes (Wang & Calvano, 2018). Service-learning involves an educational approach that integrates meaningful community involvement with academic instruction (Jacoby, 1996). Extensive research touts the benefits of service-learning, including transformational learning and increased motivation (see Marco-Gardoqui et al., 2020 for a review).

Although service-learning can be implemented through various course formats, most research on this teaching methodology has been conducted in the US, rather than classrooms abroad. Here, we seek to expand scholarship in the area of service-learning by exploring international service-learning. A primary way in which service-learning transpires internationally is through education abroad programs.

Research has explored the benefits of education abroad (see Iskhakova & Bradly, 2022). However, when assessing study abroad programs, most scholars investigate changes in cultural competence or language proficiency (e.g., de Diego-Lázaro et al., 2020). Very little scholarship has studied international service-learning. In one example, Le et al. (2013) studied the outcomes of a service-learning project in a business study abroad program. The authors' qualitative analysis of student surveys and reflection papers demonstrated the effect of service-learning on cultural awareness and sensitivity to poverty.

Goals

The current study contributes to this emerging line of research by seeking to understand how service-learning abroad may benefit undergraduate students in their future careers. International service-learning programs have been identified as beneficial for specific professions (Chambers & Lavery, 2022; Motley & Sturgill, 2013). However, our aim here is to understand how this experience contributes to the development of general business communication skills for navigating the global workplace. For example, one can imagine that service-learning abroad might enhance students' ability to communicate across cultures or work in diverse teams. To frame our investigation, we draw on Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1978), which offers a valuable lens for understanding how immersive service-learning experiences can challenge students' assumptions and foster the career-relevant skills needed in global business environments today. Grounded in this theoretical perspective, we ask the following research question: What role does international service-learning play in transforming skills for the global workplace?

Methodology

This qualitative research study was conducted with IRB approval from a public university in the U.S. We focused on a single education abroad program—co-led by the two authors—that offered students the opportunity to learn about communication in the workplace while visiting multiple locations across Europe. Data were collected after students in the program spent three weeks in the Netherlands, Germany, and Portugal. Throughout the study abroad program, students took a course titled "Professional Skills for the Global Workplace," which the authors taught. In addition to readings and class discussions on business communication competencies—such as leadership and conflict—the course included immersive business site visits and conversations with communication directors and HR representatives from global businesses in each country.

Furthermore, the class was designated as a service-learning course because it provided students with opportunities to apply their knowledge. For example, the course offered experiences like volunteering for a local nonprofit, where students used their intercultural communication skills to work in teams to clean the grounds, build benches, and serve guests afternoon tea at a community center. The course also included a consulting project, where students delivered presentations to a global startup, offering the company communication advice based on the course readings and the knowledge gained through business visits.

A total of 34 undergraduate students participated in the program. The majority of students (n=24) were from the business school, majoring in accounting, finance, business management, and marketing. The remaining ten students were studying public relations, communication, and digital media and innovation. The group was comprised of 21 females and 13 males. Students were entering their sophomore, junior, and senior years of college.

Data Collection

Because our research question sought to understand and describe, rather than to know "how much" or "how many," we chose to employ qualitative methods (Tracy, 2024). At the conclusion of the study abroad program, all 34 students anonymously completed a Qualtrics survey on their personal devices. Qualitative survey questions asked students to reflect on the service-learning activities in the course and explain how these activities strengthened their professional skills.

On average, students took approximately 19 minutes to answer the survey. When asked a week later if we could use students' anonymous survey responses for a research project, three students answered "no" and were removed from the sample.

Outcomes

Our analysis revealed four key skill areas that students developed through international service-learning. These skills align closely with those needed for success in today's global workplace and emerged consistently across both qualitative responses and instructor observations. Specifically, students reported growth in their a) cross-cultural communication abilities, b) intercultural competence, c) teamwork skills, and d) presentation skills. For each of these areas, we draw upon illustrative examples from the data to highlight their impact.

For cross-cultural communication, service-learning enhanced students' behavioral ability to communicate effectively across cultures by providing hands-on opportunities to adapt their communication, build confidence, and spark continued interest in cross-cultural learning. While cross-cultural communication refers to students' behavioral ability to adapt their messaging and confidently interact effectively across cultural boundaries, intercultural competence captures their cognitive and emotional awareness of cultural norms and perspectives. By immersing students in new cultural contexts, service-learning encouraged students to understand other cultures better, reflect on their own identities, and appreciate cultural diversity.

Teamwork skills were impacted in a number of ways. Working in and observing diverse teams during service-learning activities helped students develop their confidence in working in global groups. Additionally, immersive learning experiences strengthened teamwork skills, including active listening, delegation, and flexibility. Finally, service-learning experiences enhanced students' presentation skills by providing them with opportunities to observe diverse speakers, build confidence in delivering public presentations to various audiences, and learn how to tailor their messages accordingly.

Implications for Business Communication Education

This study adds to the scant body of research showing that international service-learning fosters critical competencies. Beyond contributing to theory and extending scholarship in the area of international service-learning, the current study also holds implications for business curricula and pedagogical practice. Research suggests that with advancements in generative AI, business practitioners value communication and soft skills more than ever (Cardon et al., 2024). This project highlights the pedagogical power of international service-learning to transform these professional communication competencies, offering a model for how experiential and reflective learning can be embedded into business education. We encourage the inclusion of service-learning abroad in business programs, as students greatly benefit from real-world practice and opportunities to apply their communication coursework in meaningful global contexts.

As our findings demonstrate, even short-term experiences abroad can be impactful when intentionally structured. Reflective components—such as guided journal reflections and debriefing sessions following service-learning activities—likely played a key role in deepening the transformative learning process students described. Ultimately, this study highlights the

importance of thoughtfully designed service-learning pedagogy—especially in international contexts—on preparing students to navigate the complex demands of today's global business environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our findings reinforce the value of service-learning abroad, particularly as a meaningful learning experience to cultivate business communication skills. As this study clearly demonstrates, international service-learning can serve as a powerful pedagogical practice for business schools striving to cultivate globally competent graduates, equipping students with the cross-cultural communication abilities, intercultural competence, teamwork skills, and presentation skills demanded by today's employers.

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Behind the Drawl: Methodological Approaches to Studying Southern and Appalachian Accents

Dr. Kristen Wilson, Eastern Kentucky University
Dr. Dr. James Kirby Easterling, Eastern Kentucky University
Dr. Julia Graham, Eastern Kentucky University

Purpose and Goals
Accents represent a natural and meaningful component of cultural identity, often serving as a source of pride and community connection. However, they can also be accompanied by implicit biases that influence how individuals are perceived, particularly in terms of intelligence, competence, and trustworthiness. A growing body of research has shown that accented speech can affect how individuals are evaluated in professional contexts, including hiring decisions and assessments of communication effectiveness (Spence et al., 2022). Further, recent studies indicate a persistent bias favoring standard-accented speakers over those with non-standard accents, a pattern often attributed to implicit social prejudices and stereotypes (Spence et al., 2024). Despite these findings, educational system frequently fail to adequately prepare students to recognize, address, and counteract these biases (O'Brien et al., 2024).

Other targeted research underscores how Appalachian and Southern accents continue to shape perceptions of intelligence, competence, and professionalism across education and employment. Peterson (2023) highlights the legal gap surrounding accent-based discrimination, noting that current interpretations of Title VII offer little protection for Appalachian speakers who experience workplace bias. Buckle (2025) extends this concern into academia, showing how linguistic prejudice can pressure Appalachian students and scholars to suppress regional identity in order to gain credibility and career advancement. Similarly, another study found that educators often view regional dialects as barriers rather than assets, emphasizing the need for greater awareness and training around diversity (Brashears, 2019). Collectively, these studies and others reveal how accent bias begins early, persists through higher education, and influences professional outcomes, suggesting that valuing accent diversity is essential to foresting inclusion in both classroom and profession spaces.

Expanding upon prior research, the purpose of this proposal is to examine the perceived image and credibility associated with particular accents—Southern and Appalachian—with a focus on how these regional dialects influence listener perceptions in professional settings. By exploring existing research and developing a research project to evaluate the variation of these perceptions

across persons with differing accents, the authors' aim is to better understand the complex relationship between accent, perceptions of professionalism, and credibility, particularly as it pertains to speakers from the Southern and Appalachian regions of the United States.

Proposed Study and Methodology
Building on existing research about how accents influence perception, this study proposes an experimental survey using both video and audio-only vignettes. In each vignette, an actor will deliver a brief self-introduction followed by a short persuasive statement that includes information about their profession. Professional voice actors will record the audio-only versions, which will then be paired with generated video representations featuring moderately attractive individuals. This design allows us to examine whether attractiveness interacts with accent and other speaker characteristics to influence perception. Each vignette will also include a short biographical profile of the speaker.

Participants will be randomly assigned to view or listen to one of several treatment combinations, varying across the following conditions:

- Medium: Video, Audio-only
- Gender: Male, Female
- Accent: Appalachian Traditional English, Southern American English, Neutral Non-Identifiable Accent
- Age: Young Professional (20-40 years), Middle Aged Professional (40-60 years of age), Seasoned Professional (60+ years of age); Note: age will not be explicitly stated but inferred visually though the actor's appearance, hence the wide range

The content of the vignettes and accompanying biographies will remain consistent across all conditions, with the only differences being gender, accent, age, and presentation medium. After viewing or listening, respondents will complete a series of survey items from prior-validated studies, assessing the speaker's perceived credibility, power, professionalism, and competence. The primary goal of this conference presentation is to share draft versions of these vignettes as a pilot and invite attendee feedback before launching the full study. This collaborative input will help refine the materials to ensure they effectively capture the nuances of perception across regional and social dimensions.

Proposed Outcomes
Although the authors regularly teach and interact with students who speak with strong Appalachian or Southern accents, their connection to these regions extends well beyond the classroom. Having deep personal and professional roots in the South and Appalachia, the authors are acutely aware of both the pride and the prejudice often associated with regional speech. This perspective fuels a strong commitment to helping students from these areas recognize the value of their linguistic and cultural heritage while also preparing them to navigate professional environments where bias still may exist. By deepening out understanding of how these native accents are perceived and how they influence professional interactions, educators can more effectively empower student to pursue excellence and achieve long term career success.

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New Knowledge Work: Reframing the Process over Product Heuristic for the 21st Century Business Writing Course

Dr. Amy Hodges, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Gabriel Aguilar, The University of Texas at Arlington

What does a business writing class look like in 2025? 2035? 2055? Why has it become so hard to imagine the future of business writing in a time where the future seems to be all we think about? We frame this proposal around our rethinking of a heuristic that has helped business writing instructors teach for the past 30 years: process over product. As a profession, we have learned that emphasizing the writing process in our courses helps students build critical rhetorical skills which they will carry with them into their careers. The process is where rhetorical consideration of stakeholders occurs; it's where instructors can make students critically think through conventional business writing genres; it's where we assess student progress over the span of a term. However, when students cut-and-paste from AI to their assignment submissions, many instructors don't feel as if there is a thoughtful, metacognitive process anymore and, in turn, that learning has suffered. Yet, we see new opportunities arising from this current technological moment by reframing this heuristic to help instructors navigate AI and give students the tools needed to critically think about their technologically mediated composing processes.

In this presentation, we will share our New Knowledge Work Heuristic, which considers the interaction of process, product, information, and agent. To paraphrase Miles Kimball (2017), anyone and everyone can be a business communicator. These communication skills have rapidly become democratized, for better or worse, and AI agents have complicated not only how communication occurs in the workplace but also how instructors assess business communication

in the classroom. To help instructors navigate this new technological era, we offer a model to think through these emerging problems. This model considers both the reality that AI has the capability to produce elements of business communication, such as a quality business memo, but AI also has limitations on what it can learn from humans and what it can communicate.

The New Knowledge Work Heuristic offers methods for centering human capabilities in business communication, while emphasizing that AI literacy is a foundational skill for 21st century work. Recent reports on the impact of AI on work shows that soft skills like leadership, social influence, and creative thinking will rise in demand along with technological capabilities (Cardon et al., 2024; World Economic Forum, 2025). However, each element of this model (process, product, information, and agent) is already always technologically mediated: even "agent" referring to the human in the loop can be (or will soon be) supplemented by the work of agentic AI (Yee et al., 2024). Our presentation describes each element of the heuristic and how business communication instructors can use the heuristic to create forward-thinking, industry-focused assignments which prioritize critical knowledge skills.

1. AI can do almost anything you can do.
2. You can do almost anything AI can do.
3. 21st Century business writers are information control writers.

We will talk about these three principles of the heuristic with examples from our own business writing courses and white papers on the future of work. For the first principle, we will reflect on the disruption AI has had on the traditional role of the business communicator and how business communicators may feel threatened or undervalued because of the immense capabilities of AI. We will also describe how faculty may get stuck at this step of the heuristic, claiming that "we don't need a writing class because of AI" and yet other faculty claiming that "AI is the worst development of all mankind."

For the second principle, we will explain how New Knowledge Work aligns with the capabilities (or limitations) of AI, including selecting and analyzing information, determining hierarchy and importance of information, creating contextualized outputs of information, which then circulates back into the organization's information network. LLMs are built on training data of known information, and its abilities to develop content based on new or undocumented knowledge is limited. AIs are also limited by their lack of ability to respond to social and cultural context that makes communication between humans so complex. With these affordances and limitations in mind, we ask business writing instructors to consider how their assignments and assessments consider the intangibles of communication that occur in the everyday workplace.

For the third principle, we will explain our new model for business writing tasks: process, product, information, and agent. We explain how these elements work in 21st century workplaces and what roles both human and AI agents play in managing this information landscape. Beyond serving as quality control for the army of AI agents creating content, a 21st century business writer needs to act as information control - the primary manager of information in an organization. This role requires them to have both the technological skills and soft skills for New Knowledge Work, which will assist them in being more marketable today and more adaptable in their career in the future. We conclude with examples of assignments developed

with this heuristic, and we explain changes we made to prior assignments with this new framework.

Implications for Education
- There is more work to do, not less in the AI Information Age
  - We need critical business writing leaders to think through the quality of information that comes from the partnerships between human and AI agents.
- Instructors must create new assignments and assessments to prepare students for the 21st Century workplace
  - AI has displaced traditional roles and values of business communicators. Instructors need to rethink what students are required to do in the future workplace.
- You can do this!
  - Working with the problems of AI requires a reframing of how business writing is taught but there are resources available, as we cover in our heuristic.

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The Reality Show Pitch: Teaching Teamwork, Persuasion, and Digital Communication

Maria Colman, University of Southern California

Rationale
Strong teamwork and persuasive communication are foundational skills for business success. Yet many students and professionals find communication instruction abstract, overly theoretical, or disengaging. This workshop introduces a proven, high-impact teaching activity, the Reality Show Pitch presentation, a blend of creativity, teamwork, and technology that creates an engaging and transferable communication development experience.

Adapted from the BUAD 302, Communication Strategy in Business course at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, the assignment requires student teams to design and pitch an original reality television show. Although playful in format, the task mirrors real-world business communication, requiring:

- Audience analysis
- Crafting persuasive narratives
- Designing professional slides, visuals, and video trailers
- Delivering a compelling, polished team presentation
- Managing financial considerations such as budget and profitability
- Responding to executive-level Q&A under pressure

A distinctive feature of the assignment is the inclusion of a trailer, which students storyboard and produce using video editing tools or AI-driven platforms. The trailers are often the highlight of the presentations, as they bring together storytelling, creativity, and digital communication. This component bridges business communication with technology, providing students with hands-on experience using tools increasingly employed in professional practice.

This two-hour workshop immerses participants in the assignment, enabling them to design, present, and reflect on the activity while also discussing ways to adapt it for academic and professional settings.

Team Size and Roles
Team size will depend on the number of participants in the workshop. Ideally, teams consist of four members, with each taking on a specific role: producer, director, writer, and financial manager, simulating real-world divisions of responsibility in media production and business.

If class size requires teams of five, the adjustment is to include two writers, allowing for richer idea development without compromising balance. The assignment is never conducted with teams larger than five, as larger teams tend to invite social loafing, which reduces engagement, accountability, and communication practice. This structure ensures all team members contribute meaningfully to the development of the pitch and trailer.

Why This Workshop is Needed
This workshop addresses the pressing needs of business professionals and educators by demonstrating how a single integrated activity can touch upon nearly every dimension of effective communication:

- Interpersonal communication: Team members negotiate, persuade, resolve conflicts, and actively listen to one another to create a unified pitch
- Presentation skills: Participants practice structuring, delivering, and responding to live pitches, simulating high-stakes business environments
- Creativity and innovation: The reality show framework encourages risk-taking, imagination, and design thinking while remaining tied to business goals
- Technology integration: The trailer requirement emphasizes the use of video editing tools and AI platforms, preparing participants for the growing role of digital tools in communication
- Teamwork and collaboration: Clearly defined roles ensure interdependence, accountability, and collaboration

- Slide design and visual storytelling: Teams must use professional presentation visuals, aligning with industry standards of clarity and design
- Financial communication: The financial manager's role requires teams to consider budgets, costs, and profitability, simulating real-world business proposal constraints
- Experiential learning: Participants do not just hear about communication skills; they practice them in a dynamic, hands-on, and memorable way

Virtual Reality to Practice Presenting, Interviewing, and Pitching Skills

Dr. Robb McCollum, Southern Utah University

Introduction

Research suggests that the use of virtual reality (VR) technologies can decrease learners' anxiety about speaking in public settings (Kaplan-Rakowski, 2023; Qiu et al., 2022) as well as increase their motivation to practice difficult speaking tasks (Ding, 2024; Hsu, 2024; Hua & Wang, 2023). Virtual Reality (VR) technologies offer exciting opportunities for language development but also involve pedagogical challenges (Parmaxi, 2023).

Goal

This presentation reports on the integration of VR technology into a business communication course. The goal was to assess how students' ability to communicate in common business scenarios could be improved through the use of VR headsets and business communication software. The study also attempted to learn how students and instructors felt about VR technology and the degree that it could be practically integrated into communication courses.

Methodology

Students were introduced to the headsets and software during an in-class demonstration, followed by a hands-on tutorial in the VR lab in which all students completed a short communication scenario. Following the demonstration and tutorial, students were required to visit the campus VR lab outside of class hours to practice a business communication scenario of their choosing. Each scenario involved speaking with one or more artificial intelligence (AI) avatars in a typical business setting (such as an office, a boardroom, or a collaborative meeting space). Available tasks involved a wide variety of scenarios such as making a sales pitch, introducing oneself in an elevator, giving a formal presentation, sharing negative news with an employee, meeting with a mentee, and interviewing for a job.

Following each scenario, students were provided, in software, with feedback on their performance. Quantitative feedback included speech rate, intelligibility, filler language, and eye contact measures. Qualitative feedback included suggestions on content, organization, and tone. Students who repeatedly used the VR software received data on their progression on the quantitative measures over time.

Outcomes

In addition to the software statistics, data for this study included survey feedback from students and instructors. Results show that students who repeatedly used the software improved in all quantitative measures. Surveys feedback suggests that students were eager to experiment with the technology. They reported that they enjoyed the experience and felt it prepared them for in-

person communication tasks. Both students and instructors dealt with technological problems, but most felt that these issues were minor inconveniences so long as the VR technology practice was a repeated and required part of the course. A small number of students dealt with technological problems on their first visit and did not try using the software again.

Using these results, the presenter will also provide an argument for the use of VR in business communication courses. The presenter will discuss the key features of the software and how it can align with business communication curricula. The presenter will also share advice for integrating VR practice into a business communication course, including on-boarding students, coordinating support with the VR lab, and problem solving technical issues. Advice will also be shared regarding the potential for grading VR practice and what alternatives can be suggested for students who do not or cannot use the VR software for practice.

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Generative AI: Bangladeshi and Nepalese University Teachers' Concerns: From Academic Writing to Business Communication

Amar Sherma, The University of Texas at Arlington

Education is not an exception to the global trend of artificial intelligence (AI). Generative AI (GenAI) has emerged as a major topic in discussions about education, bringing up issues that need close examination because they present both opportunities and risks. While much scholarship reflects perspectives from the Global North, far less has been written about the implications of GenAI in the Global South, where distinct cultural, religious, and economic factors shape educational practices. UNESCO (2021; 2024; 2025) has repeatedly cautioned about

the ethical issues and disruptive effects of AI, indicating that international policy frameworks need to be contextualized in light of local realities. Researchers warn that commercial sponsorship frequently influences studies that highlight the advantages of AI in education, obscuring deeper effects on the student-teacher relationships, mental health, student agency, and teacher empowerment (Eynon, 2024; Palenski et al., 2024; Holmes et al., 2023; Shiohira & Holmes, 2022). These warnings imply that rather than copying Northern presumptions, educators and policymakers in the Global South should carefully evaluate the adoption of AI in ways that address local needs.

Since ChatGPT-3. 5 was made available in 2022, researchers like Kasneci (2023) and Holmes et al. (2023) have highlighted the advantages of GenAI for discipline-specific learning and academic productivity. However, little is known about how teachers in different Global South contexts respond to GenAI, especially where higher education is often framed as a pathway to the global labor market. For instance, preparing students for participation in the global workforce is a top priority for both Bangladesh and Nepal. This priority means that students must learn forms of English aligned with business communication—including business English, English for Specific Purposes, and genres such as reports, proposals, memoranda, and correspondence—so they can secure higher-paying jobs that contribute to national economic growth. According to this viewpoint, incorporating GenAI into the teaching of business writing and related academic subjects involves more than just technological innovation. It also involves teachers' willingness and readiness to use these tools in ways that improve professional competence and employability. Responding to this research gap, the present study explores how university teachers in Bangladesh and Nepal perceive the use (and potential misuse) of GenAI in higher education. It combines two theoretical frameworks: Rogers' (1983) Diffusion of Innovations Theory and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). Diffusion of Innovations highlights four elements—innovation, communication channel, time, and social system—through which new practices spread. CBAM complements this by mapping six stages of concern: unconcerned information, personal, management, consequence, collaboration, and refusing. Together, these frameworks provide a lens for understanding how educators move from initial awareness of GenAI toward or away from adoption in their teaching, including in business-related disciplines where clear ethical communication, use of data, and intercultural sensitivity are paramount.

This qualitative study employs multiple case studies to investigate the perspectives and concerns of tertiary educators across disciplines—including English, economics, public administration, history, and business studies—in both public and private universities. More than 25 teachers were interviewed in person and via Zoom, with each interview lasting an average of 40 minutes. The interview design combined structured and unstructured questions, and participants were selected randomly from different fields to ensure a broad representation of views.

Preliminary findings indicate mixed reactions. Few participants opposed AI outright, but most called for its integration in controlled and ethical ways. Teachers expressed limited awareness of recent findings about AI-detection software, such as evidence that detection algorithms disproportionately flag non-native English writing patterns and that some universities have already restricted tools like iThenticate because of false positives. At the same time, lecturers and professors struggled to provide concrete examples of how AI-generated bias might appear in their own subject areas, especially outside English and business contexts. Some colleges have

not yet introduced institutional protocols to regulate AI use. These gaps highlight the need for professional development that equips educators to apply GenAI meaningfully, including in business writing contexts where precision, credibility, and intercultural awareness are essential.

Based on early analysis, GenAI is rapidly becoming a common educational tool in Bangladesh and Nepal. Restricting its use entirely is neither feasible nor fair in a global technological era. Instead, educators should embrace GenAI through ethical and pedagogically informed practices. When integrated thoughtfully, GenAI can augment—not replace—critical thinking and professional communication, helping students develop writing skills that are adaptable to both academic and business settings. For the Global South, this is particularly significant: by treating GenAI as an assistant rather than a leader or adversary teachers can help students to enhance their employability, professional credibility, and civic intelligence, thereby contributing not only to individual advancement but also to broader social and economic goals. In this sense, the goal of teaching business-oriented writing intersects with yet also differs from more general academic writing instruction: business writing requires conciseness, clarity, and sensitivity to intercultural communication norms, raising particular challenges and opportunities for GenAI integration.

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Using AI to Turn Existing Business Communication Assignments into Iterative Exercises with Rapid Feedback

Kenny MacKenzie, Examind AI Inc.

Purpose

Formative assessments and constructive feedback are fundamental to learning, (National Research Council, 2000) and highly correlated to student outcomes (Wisniewski, Zierer, & Hattie, 2020). Feedback is most impactful when delivered immediately (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). However, it's impractical for instructors to provide detailed, relevant and emotionally optimized feedback to students on their business writing in a timely manner, especially at scale and asynchronously. This workshop explores how instructors can configure an AI application to align with their assignments and learning objectives to provide students with unlimited access to formative feedback that facilitates an iterative learning experience, saving instructor time while simultaneously improving student outcomes.

Goals

The primary goal of this interactive workshop is to empower professors with a theoretical understanding and practical skills to direct AI to provide students with extremely detailed, assignment-aligned feedback in seconds, dramatically increasing the frequency and depth of formative feedback provided to students. Participants will directly experience how this rapid, scalable feedback approach can transform their students' learning outcomes in business communication courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Methodology

The workshop will guide participants through a structured, interactive process:
- Brief introductory discussion outlining the importance of feedback frequency and specificity, grounded in established feedback research.
- Hands-on practice sessions where attendees use their own assignment instructions, grading rubrics, and real student writing samples to experience the feedback students could receive.
- Step-by-step demonstrations of proven methods, showcasing various feedback generation approaches tested through numerous classroom trials, highlighting successes and addressing common pitfalls.
- Group discussion and collaborative problem-solving to help participants refine their technique and ensure immediate practical applicability.
- Guidance on integrating AI generated feedback into course design to support iterative learning and student engagement.

Outcomes

By the end of this workshop, attendees will:

- Be proficient in a replicable method for generating accurate, consistent, rubric-aligned feedback in seconds, ready for immediate classroom integration.
- Have practical insights into overcoming typical challenges when scaling formative feedback, drawn from interactive practice, a theoretical framework and real-time feedback generation exercises.

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Provocations in Business Communication: Rethinking AI, Clarity, and Competence

Dr. Sarah Moore, The University of Texas at Dallas
Dr. Carol Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University
Dr. Kristen Waddell, Stephen F. Austin State University
Dr. Bethany Pitchford, Sam Houston State University
Dr. Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

Statement of the Problem/Purpose

Business communication classrooms are being reshaped by AI tools, shifting workplace norms, evolving expectations for professional writing, and new expectations for workforce readiness. Faculty face pressing questions: How should students learn to communicate with AI? Does clarity outweigh authentic voice? Are résumés and traditional assessments outdated? What's the future of being a professor given AI? This panel uses a provocations approach—concise, pointed questions that spark discussion—to engage faculty in exploring these challenges (Mills, 1998; Dotzel, 2021). The purpose of this panel is to share teaching strategies, highlight tensions, and invite collective reflection on the future of business communication pedagogy.

Preliminary Literature Review

Preliminary classroom observations and recent scholarly and popular scholarship suggest:
- Students increasingly rely on AI tools but lack guidance in using them responsibly (Riapina, 2023; Sharma & Pandey, 2024).
- Employers express tension between valuing clarity and welcoming authentic, personal expression (Cullen, 2024).
- Résumés are declining in importance relative to digital portfolios and LinkedIn, yet many students lack preparation in these areas (Hiles, 2016; Marino, 2023).
- Faculty report challenges in balancing academic grading standards with workplace realities, with grade inflation and evolving skill expectations both in play (Marino, 2023).

Methodology

The interactive session will be structured as a panel of business communication faculty. Each panelist will introduce one or two provocations in the form of a position statement or critical question (e.g., "Resumes are obsolete—stop teaching them") to a rotating audience broken into small groups. Audience members will then respond, debate, and share examples from their own teaching while the panelists take notes and synthesize for a share-out at the end. This format prioritizes interaction, surfacing emerging viewpoints rather than prescribing solutions (Brew et al., 2023).

Questions

1. AI as a Colleague: How, to what extent, and to what level should students be required to learn how to communicate with AI as part of business communication courses? If so, how do we balance teaching AI-supported writing or AI-free writing?
2. The AI Professor: With AI automation, how do instructors stay relevant? How do we help our students do the same?
3. Grade Inflation or Skill Inflation?: Are we assessing communication competence too generously—or failing to adapt grading to real-world standards?
4. The Resume's Future: Is the resume obsolete in an era of LinkedIn profiles, digital portfolios, and AI-based screening? Should students be required to graduate with a personal portfolio that shows communication competence, and should that happen in a business communication class?
5. Workplace Reality Check: Should business schools be training students for ideal workplaces or for the messy, political reality of organizations?

Summary

This panel will present five interconnected provocations tied to current challenges in business communication pedagogy. These topics include AI as a colleague, clarity vs. personality, the AI professor, grade vs. skill inflation, the resume's future, and workplace realities. Each provocation will be a springboard for audience dialogue, aiming to challenge assumptions and generate new teaching approaches or ideas for future research.

Implications for Education and/or Business

The provocations explored in this panel carry implications at multiple levels. For educators they highlight the need to consider assignments, grading practices, and course outcomes in light of AI and digital platforms and changing workforce norms. For our students, the provocations underscore the importance of developing both clarity and adaptability, skills that prepare them for digital-first, politically complex workplaces. For workforce readiness, the provocations raise questions about how employers assess communication competence and whether current tools, such as résumés or portfolios, are sufficient indicators of ability or assessment methods. For the field of business communication, these provocations encourage research on AI literacy, evolving genre conventions, and assessment standards while reinforcing the value of business communication as a discipline central to workforce readiness.

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The Case for Dignity: Reframing Accessibility through Human Value and Intrinsic Worth

Dr. Heidi Willers, Utah State University
Dr. Mark Hannah, Arizona State University

Workplace accessibility often is understood narrowly as a matter of legal compliance. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires organizations to provide accommodations, reshaping workplace practices in important ways (Palmer & Palmer, 2018). Yet, when compliance becomes the central goal, accessibility risks being reduced to a legal checkbox rather than a meaningful commitment (Knight & Oswal, 2018; Oswal, 2018). This approach frames accessibility as a way to avoid liability, rather than an organizational value, reinforcing the idea that accessibility is an external obligation rather than an integral part of workplace culture. In this presentation, we propose dignity as a conceptual framework for reimagining workplace accessibility. Unlike compliance, which is primarily transactional, dignity emphasizes the intrinsic worth and value of employees as whole persons. By foregrounding dignity, we aim to

reframe accessibility not as a legal requirement but as an organizational practice that fosters inclusion, belonging, and respect as everyday workplace norms.

Although dignity is not new to conversations about disability, law, or ethics, it remains underdeveloped in business and professional communication (BPC) scholarship (Walton, 2016). Much of the field's accessibility work has focused on usability, design, and the impact of legal discourse and disability concerns on workplace documents and training (Bennett, 2023; Bennett & Hannah, 2021, 2022; Heilig, 2023; Nielsen, 2018). To demonstrate how dignity sits in this space, we examine how it differs from and complements terms commonly invoked in organizations' accessibility work, like inclusion, belonging, respect, equity, and justice (Cardon et al., 2023; Colquitt & Zipay, 2015; Ferdman, 2014; Haas & Eble, 2018; Shore et al., 2011). We assess how dignity complements or enriches this space by highlighting the intrinsic worth and wholeness of all people and it is both relational and contextual (Gibson et al., 2023; Lucas, 2017). This framing offers a proactive lens for analyzing how organizational practices shape disabled employees' lived experiences beyond procedural or corrective approaches. At a time when diversity, equity, and inclusion are increasingly contested and reconfigured (see, e.g., Ng et al., 2025; Robb & Rana, 2024), dignity provides a new frame for this work—one that is grounded in shared human value and ethical workplace practices.

Drawing on conceptual analysis and an integrative interdisciplinary literature synthesis (Acharya, 2022; Lauren & Schreiber, 2018), we examine how dignity functions as a communicative and ethical framework for workplace accessibility. Specifically, research in BPC, organizational studies, and disability studies shows that dignity can reframe accessibility practices in five ways. First, it encourages movement beyond legal thresholds to aspirational practices, asking not only whether organizations are compliant but whether they cultivate environments where disabled employees feel genuinely valued. Second, dignity positions accessibility as a positive organizational value rather than an externally imposed burden, inviting leaders to see accessibility as an investment in employee flourishing and organizational sustainability. Third, dignity provides a bridge between compliance, ethics, and culture, creating continuity between policy and practice. Fourth, it draws attention to the relational dynamics of workplace life—how coworkers, managers, and systems communicate recognition—rather than focusing only on high-level policies. Finally, dignity establishes continuity across disciplinary conversations in disability studies, business ethics, rhetoric, and organizational communication, offering a shared vocabulary for cross-disciplinary dialogue about accessibility and human worth (Hannah & Saidy, 2014; Hannah & Simeone, 2018; Hannah & Salmon, 2022). Together, these frames offer organizations ways to transform workplace culture and expand their accessibility commitments beyond design and usability to include the relational and ethical dimensions of workplace culture (Oswal, 2018; Oswal & Palmer, 2024). Importantly, for organizational leaders, dignity reframes accessibility as part of corporate social responsibility and as integral to employee engagement and well-being (Ahmed et al., 2023; Baum, 2021; Gibson et al., 2023; LeGree et al., 2023; Willett et al., 2023). Additionally, dignity resonates with long-standing calls to move beyond accommodation and charity toward justice and affirmation (Price et al., 2017).

In sum, this presentation positions dignity as a conceptual frame for reimagining accessibility as both a communicative and ethical practice. By clarifying its conceptual distinctiveness and demonstrating its practical implications, we offer a lens that bridges legal mandates,

organizational culture, and lived experience. This framework contributes to ongoing efforts in BPC to reconceive the workplace as a site where communication shapes not only how work is accomplished but also how individuals experience recognition and belonging. In doing so, it opens new avenues for collaboration among scholars, practitioners, and organizational leaders committed to advancing accessibility not merely to satisfy legal requirements but to cultivate workplace cultures grounded in dignity and human-centered values.

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Introducing Workplace Context in a Business Communication Course: Discussing Published and Actual Organizational Communications

Dr. Anish Dave, Stephen F. Austin State University

One of the challenges business communication instructors regularly face is to exemplify concepts and guidelines they teach so that students can see their practical application. It is true that course textbooks contain a plethora of constructed examples, which illustrate ideas and concepts the authors explore. However, often classroom instruction barely mimics workplace communication.

Remarking on the disparity between business writing in academic and workplace contexts, Hollis-Turner and Scholtz (2010) stated that graduating "students are required to transfer the de-contextualized writing practices learned in the classroom and recontextualize what they have learned in the workplace" (p. 240). They summed up the differences between the two contexts insightfully in the following words: "in workplaces, employees write in order to communicate specific information accurately and appropriately to specific audiences" (emphasis mine). They argued that the "difference between higher education and the workplace may account for one of the key barriers to the transfer of communication skills from the academic environment to the workplace" (p. 243). In a pedagogical recommendation, they advocated using "authentic texts" or "documents taken from the workplace (that are not confidential)" (p. 244).

In a few studies examining workplace relevance of business communication courses, researchers have found a desire for greater emphasis on oral communication (Russ, 2009; Coffelt, Baker, & Corey, 2016; Al-Musalli, 2019) and communication skills that can creatively tackle complex issues in organizations (Cyphert et al., 2019). As a pedagogical strategy to train students communicate about organizational intricacies, Cyphert et al (2019) pointed out that "Class discussion… requires students to engage in confident oral communication, respond appropriately to implicit cues and expectations, and integrate course readings, homework assignments, lecture materials, and personal experience into the coherent expression of an idea" (p. 183). Although expecting undergraduate students to quickly transform themselves into savvy business communicators is an unattainable goal, there is a benefit in planting a few elements from the workplace context in a business communication classroom.

I will share my experience of introducing my business communication students to published and actual memos and letters by leaders and managers of different organizations. Business Insider regularly publishes many such communications, often involving significant news, such as organizational restructuring or layoffs. In addition, commercial letters we receive also become useful examples of actual business communication, after redacting identifying information in them. These workplace documents, combined with business communication textbooks, strengthen the credibility of the course, in my view. In my classes, students read and discuss such workplace documents in small groups. Later, each group shares its observations and deliberations. Although there have been cliched responses at times, there have also been analytical observations and crisp critiques. Students also seem to grasp the textbook material better as they read and analyze workplace documents. I will also share the results of a brief survey involving my students about reading and discussing published, actual business communications.

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Feedback Readiness: Integrating Psychological Safety and Radical Candor in the Classroom

Prof. Kim Marchesseault, University of Mary
Dr. Marisa Michaels, University of Arizona

Problem/Purpose

Feedback is a cornerstone of interpersonal communication in both education and professional practice, yet teams often lack the conditions necessary for it to be effective. Students and professionals alike may avoid giving honest feedback for fear of damaging relationships, or they may deliver feedback in ways that erode trust. These challenges raise a central question for business communication educators: How can we help learners appreciate the value of feedback but also assess their readiness to exchange it productively?

Amy Edmondson's (1999) research on psychological safety provides one lens, highlighting the importance of creating an environment where individuals feel safe to take interpersonal risks, such as asking questions, raising concerns, or admitting mistakes. Without psychological safety, team members may remain silent or disengaged, depriving groups of diverse perspectives and problem-solving capacity.

Complementing Edmondson's work, Kim Scott (2017) offers the concept of Radical Candor, which emphasizes that effective feedback requires a balance of caring personally and challenging directly. While psychological safety ensures that team members feel secure, radical candor ensures that feedback is both honest and respectful. Together, these frameworks suggest that feedback readiness depends on the coexistence of trust, empathy, and candor.

To explore this integration, we developed a Feedback Readiness Scale (FRS), a diagnostic inventory designed to assess whether a team is prepared to give and receive feedback effectively.

This proposal reports on an informal, soft pilot study of the FRS conducted with undergraduate and graduate business communication students to explore if the FRS is a concept worth pursuing. In addition to evaluating the tool's usefulness, we will also examine whether correlations exist between individual FRS results and other established interpersonal measures used in class, including Snyder's (1974) concept of self-monitoring and Bolton & Bolton's (1984) People Styles framework. This layered approach may provide insight into whether traits such as adaptability or style preferences shape how students engage in feedback, and at the very least, it presents an opportunity to explore how and if the measures used in class are complementary or mutually exclusive.

Methodology

Instrument Design

The Feedback Readiness Scale (FRS) draws from Edmondson's (1999) psychological safety dimensions and Scott's (2017) Radical Candor framework. The 15-item instrument uses a 10-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree) to provide greater sensitivity and variability in responses. Items are grouped into four dimensions:

1. Voice & Risk-Taking (Psychological Safety): Comfort in speaking up, asking questions, and taking interpersonal risks.
2. Respect & Trust (Psychological Safety): Belief that contributions are valued and teammates have positive intentions.
3. Care Personally (Radical Candor): Perception of empathy, support, and investment in one another's growth.
4. Challenge Directly (Radical Candor): Comfort with candor, clarity of feedback, and willingness to engage in constructive disagreement.

Sample items include:

- "Mistakes in this team are treated as learning opportunities, not failures."
- "My teammates show that they care about me as a person, not just my contributions."
- "Disagreements are addressed directly rather than avoided."

Participants

The pilot was administered in two contexts during the Fall 2025 term:

- Undergraduate Interpersonal Communication course (n = 20 students).
- Graduate MBA course (n = 16 students in a managerial communication course).

Both groups participated in team-based projects requiring collaboration, peer review, and feedback exchanges.

Procedure

Students completed the FRS at the beginning of their team projects. Responses were anonymous, but team averages were calculated and shared back for guided discussion. Students reflected on their scores and identified one specific practice to improve feedback readiness for the remainder of the project.

In parallel, students also completed Snyder's Self-Monitoring Scale and Bolton & Bolton's People Styles assessment as part of their course activities. These additional measures allow us to explore potential correlations between personality-linked traits (e.g., high vs. low self-monitors, Drivers vs. Amiables) and readiness for feedback. Comparing results across instruments may help identify whether certain interpersonal tendencies reveal stronger or weaker alignment with the conditions of psychological safety and radical candor.

Data Analysis
This pilot is designed as an exploratory exercise rather than a formal validation study. Our goal is to see whether meaningful patterns emerge when comparing FRS results with other inventories already used in class, including Snyder's Self-Monitoring Scale and Bolton & Bolton's People Styles assessment. We will also look for potential connections between these results and team-level performance indicators, such as 360-degree peer evaluations and overall team project outcomes.

The analysis will focus on descriptive comparisons and thematic exploration rather than statistical reliability or predictive validity. For example, we are curious whether high self-monitors tend to report greater comfort with Challenge Directly, or whether certain People Styles cluster with high Care Personally
scores. Similarly, we will consider whether teams that score higher on the FRS also demonstrate stronger collaboration and performance in their 360 evaluations.

This approach is intended to generate insights and questions rather than firm conclusions. The study is best understood as an initial step to determine whether further, more systematic investigation is warranted. For us as educators and researchers, it is also deeply interesting to see how individual tendencies and team readiness interact in ways that shape feedback practices.

Implications for Education and Business
At this stage, the value of the Feedback Readiness Scale lies less in its psychometric properties and more in the conversations it provokes. Simply engaging students in rating and discussing their perceptions of feedback conditions appears to spark thoughtful dialogue about how teams communicate. This type of reflective exercise is especially relevant in business communication courses, where feedback is a persistent challenge and a critical element of the discipline—essential not only in education but also across industry contexts.

By inviting reflection rather than prescribing solutions, this exploratory work highlights the importance of feedback as a core issue in business communication and offers a fresh avenue for dialogue in both classrooms and organizations.

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The Bureaucracy of Denial: Legal and Ethical Dimensions of Health Insurance Communication for International Student Families

Pacificah Mariita, The University of Texas at Arlington

Statement of the Problem

Healthcare access in the United States is shaped not only by policy but also by the communication practices within bureaucratic systems like application forms, eligibility requirements, and denial notices. Although these processes are presented as neutral administrative procedures, they have significant legal and ethical implications because they influence who gets care and who is left out. For international student families, bureaucratic communication adds extra layers of complexity, especially when dependents are ineligible for university-sponsored insurance and encounter obstacles in seeking private alternatives (Cheng, n.d.; Tang et al., 2018)

This issue became real to me through my own experience as an international student parent. When I learned that my university's health plan excluded dependents, I turned to a private insurer in hopes of securing coverage for my child. What began as a routine application ended in disappointment: my dependent was denied for not having a Social Security Number, and I was automatically placed in a "critical illness" policy I had never requested. Only after calling the company was the denial clearly explained. I felt confused by the substitution, frustrated at the lack of transparency, and helpless against a barrier I could not overcome. This experience shows how bureaucratic communication not only enforces legal restrictions but also shapes the emotions of those affected, raising ethical questions about fairness and accountability.

While research in business communication has examined barriers to healthcare for undocumented immigrants (Hacker et al., 2015) and the health insurance literacy challenges faced by international students (Adegboyega et al., 2020), less attention has been given to the communication methods that actively create exclusion. These barriers reflect what Marmot (2015) calls the "health gap," where structural inequities—not individual behavior—determine who receives adequate care and who is left behind. Bureaucratic documents and denial letters are not neutral; they are communicative acts that reinforce authority and legitimize exclusion (Fairclough, 2013). As Lawrence (2024) argues, linguistic justice requires communication practices that prioritize clarity and fairness, yet health insurance systems often obscure rather than clarify. This study addresses that gap by exploring how bureaucratic communication functions both as a legal tool and an ethical barrier, with particular effects on international student families.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2018) grounded in my lived experience as an international student parent seeking health insurance coverage for my dependent. Since my dependent's application for private insurance coverage through a private insurance company was denied without transparent communication, this experience, which combined opaque documentation, substitution of an unwanted product, and a lack of clear explanation, forms the central case of my study. The materials analyzed include the original application forms, denial communications, follow-up phone correspondence, and publicly available company policy documents.

I analyze these materials using Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2013), which allows me to interrogate how institutional language constructs authority and legitimizes exclusionary practices. This approach makes visible the rhetorical strategies through which the company framed ineligibility as a matter of legality, performed neutrality through administrative tone, and obscured accountability by substituting an unwanted policy. My analysis is also informed by Isidore & Ryan's (2025) framework of the insurance industry's "DDD cycle"—deny, defend, and depose—which explains how insurers use communication to reject applications, justify decisions through bureaucratic language, and position themselves to resist challenges. Together, CDA and the DDD framework highlight how bureaucratic communication is not a neutral delivery of information but a defensive practice that enforces legal restrictions while minimizing their ethical visibility.

Findings

Preliminary analysis of my case with private insurance reveals three interconnected patterns in how bureaucratic communication produces exclusion. The first concerns legality as a framing device. My dependent's denial was justified on the grounds of lacking a Social Security Number, a requirement presented as an unavoidable regulatory fact. The explanation reflects how bureaucratic language transforms structural inequities into administrative necessities. The second pattern relates to tone. Both the written correspondence and the verbal explanation from the insurer adopted an air of administrative neutrality, framing the denial as routine rather than ethically consequential. This rhetorical strategy aligns with Lawrence's (2024) critique of institutional communication that privileges compliance over accessibility, masking the human consequences of exclusion under the guise of impartiality.

A third and particularly troubling pattern involved substitution and deflection. Rather than issuing a transparent denial, the company enrolled me in a "critical illness" plan. The substitution undermined informed consent, which is central to ethical healthcare communication. For international students, this lack of clarity is compounded by uncertainty about finding trustworthy health information. Without clear institutional communication, international families may be left to piece together conflicting information from less credible channels, intensifying the confusion I experienced. This maneuver exemplifies what Isidore & Ryan (2025) describe as the "DDD cycle" through which insurers obscure accountability by shifting responsibility back onto the consumer to recognize and contest the decision. Such practices confuse applicants and undermine the ethical principle of informed consent, which is essential in healthcare communication. Together, the findings demonstrate that bureaucratic communication is a strategic organizational practice that enforces legal restrictions while minimizing their ethical

visibility. For international student families, this means exclusion from insurance coverage is experienced not only as a legal barrier but also as a communicative act that conveys invisibility and disempowerment.

Summary
This study explores the legal and ethical aspects of bureaucratic communication in U.S. healthcare insurance through a case involving an international student parent. Using Critical Discourse Analysis and the "DDD cycle," findings show how legality framing, administrative neutrality, and product substitution normalize exclusion, thereby legitimizing unfair practices and hiding ethical accountability.

Implications for Education
This study highlights the importance of business communication scholarship in examining how bureaucratic language acts as a barrier to access. My case illustrates how the framing of legality, neutrality, and product substitution obscures meaning and perpetuates inequalities. As Sen, (2023) and Tang et al., (2018) note, international students already encounter systemic healthcare barriers, yet little research has explored how organizational communication itself maintains these exclusions. For business communication, this reveals a clear gap: we need to study bureaucratic texts not as neutral documents but as rhetorical tools that influence access and inclusion.

For educators, the findings highlight the importance of teaching beyond just clarity and conciseness. Jones, (2016) and Lawrence, (2024) contend that communicators must also promote justice by emphasizing transparency and equity. Introducing denial letters and eligibility forms into the classroom would help students identify rhetorical strategies like legality framing and deflection, and practice redesigning them to support informed consent. Professional standards such as those outlined by American College Health Association. (n.d) provide a model for integrating equity into institutional communication. Overall, this study urges business communication educators and researchers to critically examine bureaucratic obstacles and incorporate justice-focused approaches into both teaching and scholarship.

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"We've got snacks!" Recruiting students to a professional business organization

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Jacob Ortmann, Sam Houston State University
Ashley Ells, Sam Houston State University

Colleges and universities typically encourage their students to get involved on campus. One way students can learn more and meet new people is by joining a student organization or club. However, recruitment may be difficult for existing student orgs when they don't have many resources available to them. While some universities offer suggestions and assistance for recruiting students to organizations, others only provide forms and a limited number of copies for recruitment materials. Some free online resources, like that provided by Campus Groups blogs, suggest creating materials that are very clear about their purpose statement and creating a sense of belonging within the student group (Desthuis-Francis, 2021). Similarly, the Society for

Human Resource Management (2023) (not affiliated with the org in question) has a list of 50 recruiting ideas for their student chapters. While there are some resources available online, there were not many available to the student organizations on campus. The organization Phi Chi Theta, while it has a good reputation on campus, was starting to struggle with recruitment after the Covid pandemic.

This presentation will focus on one co-ed professional organization, Phi Chi Theta, Beta Theta chapter and how the chapter grew their recruitment from 5 per semester to 17. According to their website, the mission statement of Phi Chi Theta is to: "Provide an opportunity to develop and practice those professional leadership skills and abilities necessary to succeed in the business community; Provide a local and national network to share resources, ideas and concepts; Instill in its membership those values, codes and creeds which will enable participation in a rapidly changing world; and Enable members to develop the business astuteness necessary to achieve high esteem and success in their chosen fields." The faculty advisor and student executive board members will share their findings and give examples from the past few semesters.

Purpose
The purpose of this presentation is to share ideas and helpful tips that have worked to encourage students to join a college of business professional organization.

Goals
RQ 1: What are some helpful ways that we can increase student involvement in our co-ed professional business organization?

Methodology
The methodology employed in this study encompassed both secondary research (existing case studies), and primary research, which was informed by direct experiential engagement and firsthand data collection. This dual approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis that integrated established knowledge with original insights derived from students' personal experiences.

Outcomes
This presentation will be delivered by the faculty advisor alongside two student leaders currently serving in executive leadership roles within the Phi Chi Theta organization. Together, they will present the outcomes of their recent initiatives, focusing on student recruitment and retention strategies that have proven effective within their chapter. Drawing upon both data and lived experience, the presenters will share insights into how these approaches can be adapted and implemented by other student-led organizations on college and university campuses. Particular attention will be given to sustainable recruitment practices, methods of engaging prospective members, and strategies for fostering long-term involvement. The session will conclude with an open discussion on innovative and practical ideas for improving both recruitment and retention across diverse organizational contexts.

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Can PowerPoint Karaoke Teach STAR Interviews Better Than You? (with a little help from AI, maybe)

Dr. Heather Philip, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dr. Kevin Carr, The University of Texas at Arlington
Dejan Terzic, The University of Texas at Arlington

PowerPoint Karaoke, an activity where students present slides they've never seen before, is often treated as a fun game to help students improve their extemporaneous public speaking and presentation skills. But with the right scaffolding, and the integration of Generative AI (GenAI) agents, it can also become a powerful tool for building confidence, adaptability, and narrative fluency when it comes to developing job interview skills as well.

Research shows that improvisational speaking activities can reduce public speaking anxiety, improve audience awareness, and help students think more clearly under pressure (Sawyer, 2016; Stiles and Skarupski, 2014). These are the same skills students need in behavioral interviews, where they must tell structured, reflective stories in response to questions that are familiar in format but unpredictable in content. Even when students understand the STAR method, applying it under pressure can be difficult. In one study, fewer than half of student responses to behavioral questions included actual stories, while many gave vague summaries or hypothetical answers instead (Brosy, Bangerter, & Ribeiro, 2020). Another study found that while most students could describe the "Situation," far fewer articulated the "Task," "Action," or "Result"—especially the "Result," which requires reflection and transfer of learning (Boyer, Pleasant, & Vest, 2022).

PowerPoint Karaoke helps students practice storytelling under pressure by asking them to make sense of unfamiliar visuals and build coherent narratives in real time (Stiles and Skarupski 2014). When paired with narrative scaffolds like STAR and supported by structured interview question prompts, the activity becomes a rehearsal space for the same cognitive moves required in interviews: selecting relevant experiences, framing them clearly, and adapting to unexpected cues while staying composed and focused on the needs of their audience.

Providing students with regular, individualized feedback on these skills can significantly improve performance (Williams, 2008), but doing so at scale is often a challenge in large BCOM classrooms. Generative AI offers a promising solution. As Mollick & Mollick (2023) argue, Generative AI can serve as a coach, mentor, tutor, or simulated audience guiding students through reflection, modeling strong and weak responses, prompting improvisation, and offering targeted feedback.

This workshop explores how Generative AI can be embedded across a scaffolded sequence of activities in the BCOM classroom to prepare students for live, in-person, behavioral interviews. Students build story libraries describing their relevant transferable skills and accomplishments, generate visual STAR decks, rehearse with AI-guided improvisation, and ultimately perform in a live round of PowerPoint Karaoke where they practice answering interview questions using the STAR method. By combining structured storytelling with spontaneous performance and AI-supported rehearsals, we have reimagined a fun game as a pedagogically rich series of scaffolded activities for developing clarity, confidence, and narrative storytelling skills.

Workshop participants will be invited to try selected activities within the PowerPoint Karaoke activity, reflect on classroom applications, and consider how these activities might be adapted to their own teaching contexts.

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