

Comparative Analysis

Second Story Media's analysis of The App
State Communication Department's
advertising strategy

Thesis

“We argue that the Department of Communication must modernize its website’s media, layout, and user experience to stay competitive and accurately represent its students.”



“Website ease of use is an important element of visual aesthetics of the website. If a website is difficult to navigate, it is difficult for the users to evaluate the website as visually appealing.”

Affandy, H. B., Hussain, A., & Nadzir, M. M., 2018





The Current State

Outdated visuals that don't represent today's students



Welcome!

Students who become communication majors have the opportunity to build a versatile and adaptable communication major. Communication offers five majors reflecting different areas of contemporary communication:

- [Advertising](#)
- [Communication Studies](#)
- [Digital Journalism](#)
- [Electronic Media/Broadcasting](#)
- [Public Relations](#)

The department also offers two asynchronous/online degree programs:

- [Advertising \(online\)](#)
- [Communication Studies \(online\)](#)

Each major provides students with opportunities to build versatile and adaptable communication skills effectively with the evolving world. Small class sizes provide opportunities for students to connect with and develop their voice as they explore different ways to communicate meaningfully through the stories.

Students can broaden their educational experience by participating in award-winning, student-led organizations like [Appalachian](#), [Second Story Media](#), [The Peel](#) and [PRSSA](#).

Alumni of the communication department work in careers across different communication and business journalism (print and broadcast), radio, public relations, nonprofit communications, internal communications, and more.

Quick links to information about the communication department:

- [Admissions/Programs of Study](#)
- [Communication Majors](#)
- [Honors Program](#)
- [Internships](#)
- [Study Abroad](#)
- [Student Forms](#)
- [Advising FAQs](#)

The Current State

Flat, document-like layout with
no sense of storytelling



Faculty/Staff



Boone Docs Film Festival, A Collaboration between App State and App Theatre, returns February 25 from 2 pm - 5 pm

The Department of Communication, one of seven departments in the College of Fine and Applied Arts, is a proud sponsor of the Boone Docs Film Festival.

[Read more Faculty/Staff Highlights](#)

Latest News



[AppState Student Media Outlets are Finalists for National Awards](#)
Sep 10, 2025

Congratulations are in order for our incredibly talented and hard-working students! AppTV - including many pieces produced as a part of AWN, WASU FM, ...



[Dr. Volha Kananovich Recognized as the 2025 Second Place Winner of the Linda Shockley Award for Excellence in Teaching](#)
Aug 21, 2025

Congratulations to Dr. Volha Kananovich, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication! Dr. Kananovich was recognized by the Association for E...



[App State honors Dr. Shanshan Lou, Dr. Rose Mary Webb with 2025 Departmental Leadership Awards](#)

The Current State

Weak sense of
community/day-to-day life in
the department



The Current State

*The website undersells the
program.*



Frame of Reference

The driving problem behind this research is that the Communication Department's website does not reflect the **quality, personality, or modernity** of its program.

A departments' website is the first and most influential point of contact for prospective students. They're seeking more than basic information.

Seeking **Belonging** and **identity**.



“digital storytelling provides students with the opportunity to represent their personal experiences, which can enhance engagement and create stronger emotional connections with the institution”

Niemi, Harju, & Vesisenaho, 2023





SWOOT

Analysis



Swot Analysis

Strengths

- Straight-to-the-point
- Easy to navigate
- Important information is present



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Weaknesses

- Outdated media and photos that don't represent the modern communications student.
- Doesn't give a good representation of what the department achieves and how it functions day-to-day



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Opportunities

- Find imagery to represent the modern-day communications student at App State. User Generated Content (collect from students)
- Modulation within UI/UX, draw inspiration from competitors



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Threats (*limitations*)

- App State's branding doesn't allow a lot of room for creativity.
 - Ex. Art Department





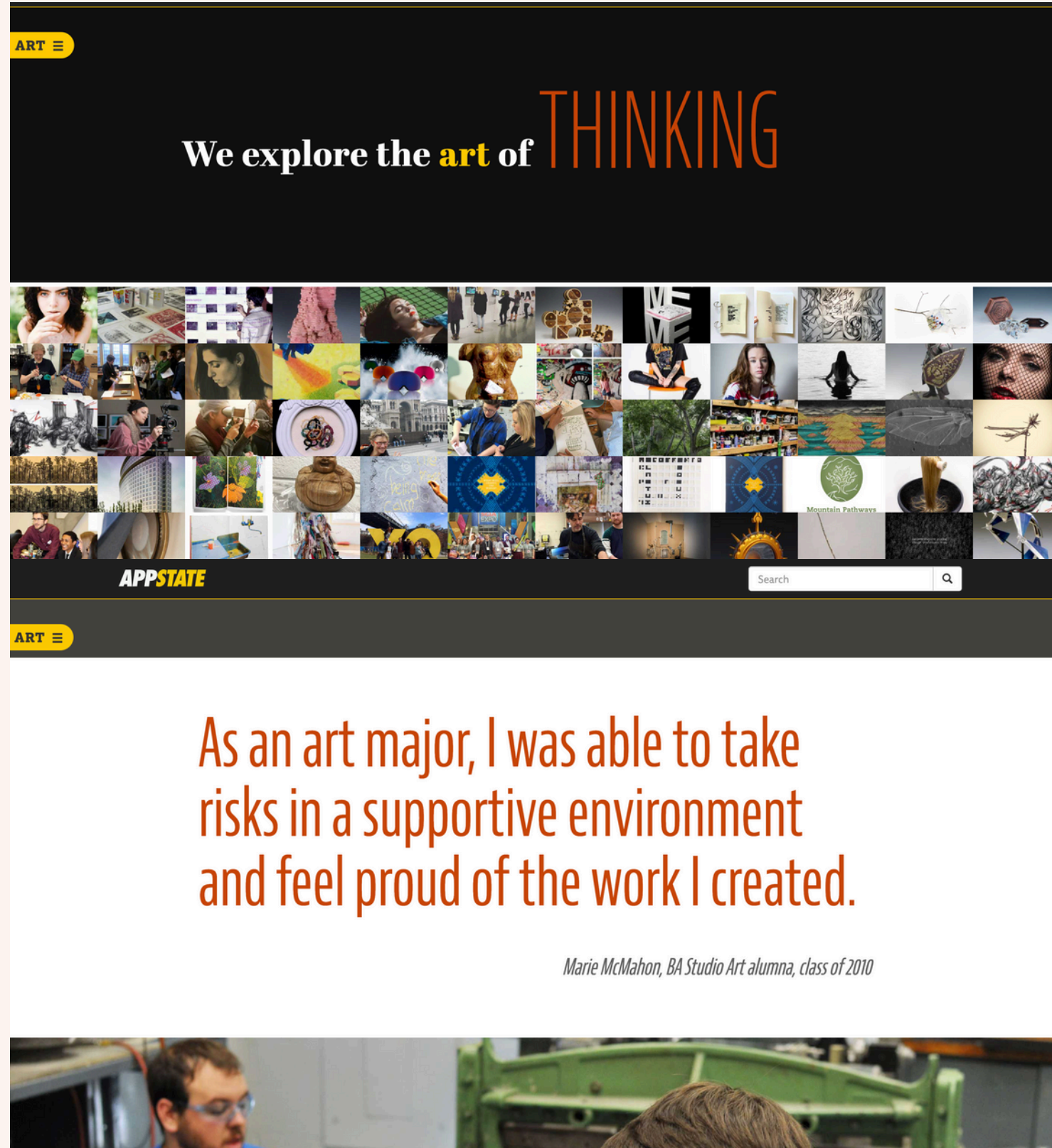
Comparison Between Universities

UNC Chapel Hill: Content-rich, but word-heavy.

UNC Charlotte: Strong usability, but unconventional information delivery strategy

UNC Greensboro: Visually modern, student-centered, highly engaging.





Art Department Website Comparison

Eye-catching, creative, but still very informative.

Testimonials from art students creates a sense of relatability for prospective students.

There is a need to differentiate our department through changes to our user interface (UI) and overall website layout.



UNC Chapel Hill

UNC Chapel Hill's landing pages across all their departments include zero graphics or photos. Each read as a list, organized through tabs at the top of each page where you'll find similar formatting throughout each page. Even the faculty page simply states the faculty names, no hyperlinks, and no additional information. UNC Chapel Hill's department pages **lacked use of visual media**, evidence of unique UI/UX design, as well as **failed to highlight their students, alumni, or any of their Communications adjacent organizations or clubs on campus.**

HOME / UNDERGRADUATE / DEPARTMENTS / COMMUNICATION / COMMUNICATION STUDIES MAJOR, B.A. Print Options

Undergraduate ▼

Programs A-Z

Departments ▼

- Aerospace Studies
- African, African American, and Diaspora Studies
- American Studies
- Anthropology
- Applied Physical Sciences
- Archaeology
- Art and Art History
- Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
- Biochemistry and Biophysics
- Biology
- Biomedical Engineering

Communication Studies Major, B.A.

OVERVIEW | LEARNING OUTCOMES | REQUIREMENTS | SAMPLE PLAN | OPPORTUNITIES | OTHER PROGRAMS

CONTACTS

Overview

The study of communication is essential for participating in an increasingly complex and mediated global environment. The Department of Communication's mission is to advance communication for the public good. Through its teaching, research, and service, the department addresses the many ways communication functions to create, sustain, and transform personal life, social relations, political institutions, economic organizations, and cultural and aesthetic conventions in society; promotes competencies required for various modes of mediated and non-mediated communication; and develops skills for analyzing, interpreting, and critiquing communication problems and questions. The curriculum is designed to enable students to develop the capacities to be knowledgeable and responsible producers and consumers of communication through engagement, critique, and creativity. The programs of study offered by the department support a vision of citizen-scholars building a better North Carolina and world.

A new curriculum — launched in 2024–2025 — is intended to be more interdisciplinary, flexible, and student-centric. We are calling it a **pathways approach** to communication. We will continue to give students focused opportunities to engage with the department's core areas of expertise — interpersonal and organizational communication, media art, media and technology studies, new media, performance studies, rhetoric, and writing for screen and stage — but the new curriculum allows students to bring these areas together in new combinations.

No links?
We were shocked with the
analog dependency

Copy and paste

This looks like how it felt to
switch to college ruled paper
in the 4th grade

Professors

Renee Alexander Craft, Torin Monahan, Patricia Parker, Tony Perucci, Joyce Rud

Associate Professors

Sarah E. Dempsey, Julia Haslett, Christian O. Lundberg, Steven K. May, Michael Michael S. Waltman.

Assistant Professors

Kelsey Brod, Lisa Calvente, E. Chebrolu, David Dooling, Aaron Shapiro.

Adjunct Professors

Greg Flaxman, Amanda Graham, Mark Katz, Daniel Kreiss, Chérie Rivers Ndaliko John Pickles, Barry Saunders, Randall Styers.



UNC Charlotte

We were drawn to UNC Charlotte in how they chose to present their department information at first glance in using a Canva templated presentation deck. There were some other graphics that they had featured that were cute, giving the home page a bit more personality than the other's, but otherwise, the pages were structured similar to ours; bulleted, scrollable, and document style.

What is Communication Studies?

According to the National Communication Association, Communication Studies focuses on how people use verbal and non-verbal messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, and is the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry.

CONTACT US

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jgrandin@charlotte.edu

Internship Director
Staci Kuntzman
Colvard 5002
704-687-0771

ADVISING

More bullet points...

- Similar to ours
- Repetitive
- Visually disengaging

Canva Slides

Is this really the best way to display information?

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM INFORMATION

Admission and Progression Requirements, and all Program Requirements can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog. Please see the information below:

Majors

- [Communication Studies, B.A.](#)
- [Communication Studies, Health Communication Concentration, B.A.](#)
- [Communication Studies, Media & Technology Studies Concentration, B.A.](#)
- [Communication Studies, Organizational Communication Concentration, B.A.](#)
- [Communication Studies, Public Relations Concentration, B.A.](#)
- [Communication Studies, Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Change Concentration, B.A.](#)

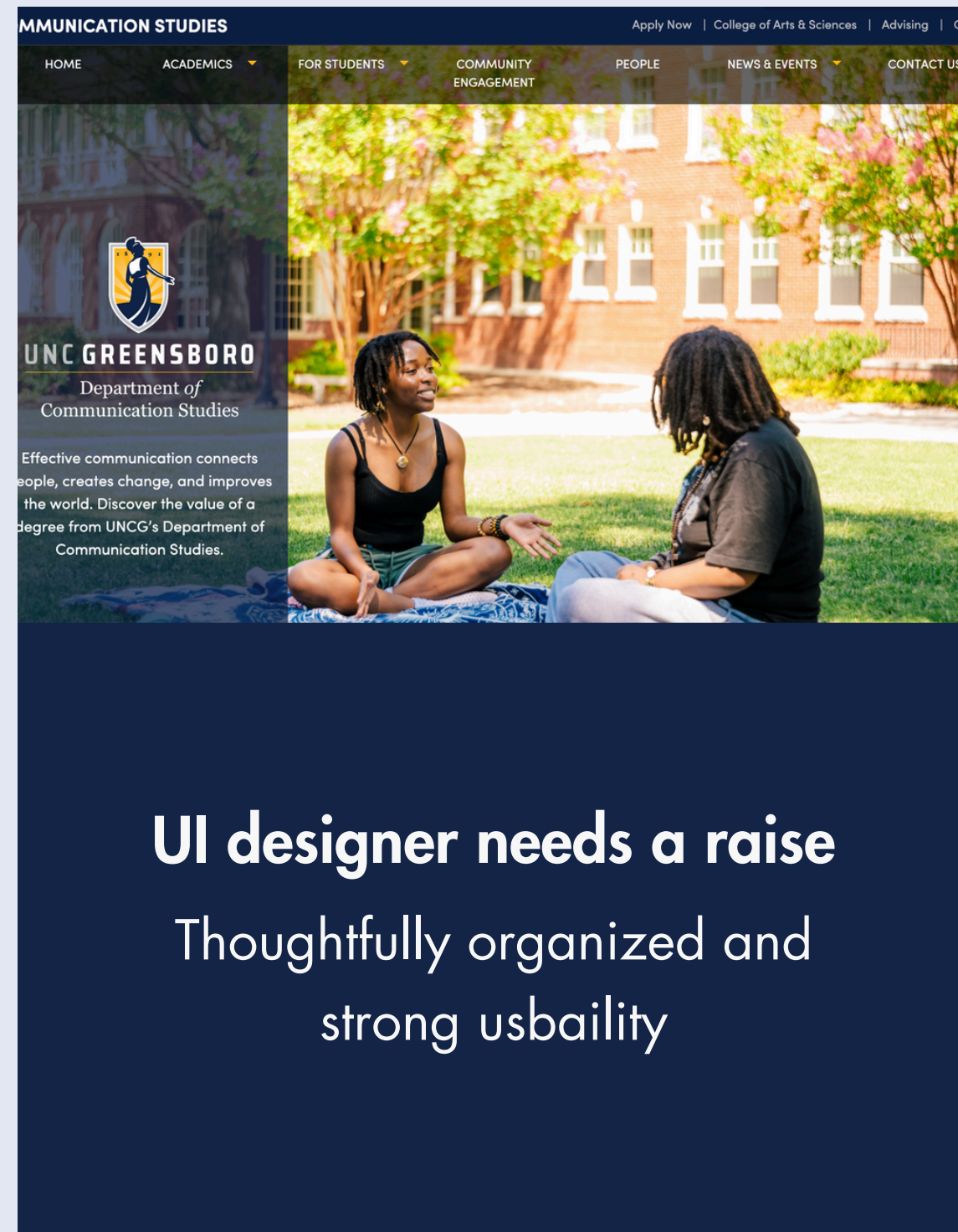
Minors

- [Communication Studies, Minor](#)
- [Journalism, Minor](#)



UNC Greensboro

The UNC Greensboro Communication Department's website stands out as **clear**, **concise**, and **modern**, offering an updated look that immediately feels engaging. The site is highly navigable, with an intuitive structure that welcomes visitors right away with a prominent photo and quick, informative tidbits. Its homepage is thoughtfully organized into sections such as "Why Study Communication," "Choose Your Path," "Upcoming Events," "Department News," and "Stay Connected," which together create a strong sense of identity and purpose.



Picture Perfect
Seemingly recent photo of students

UI designer needs a raise
Thoughtfully organized and strong usability

CHOOSE YOUR PATH

BA TO MA

ACCELERATED BA TO MA

MA

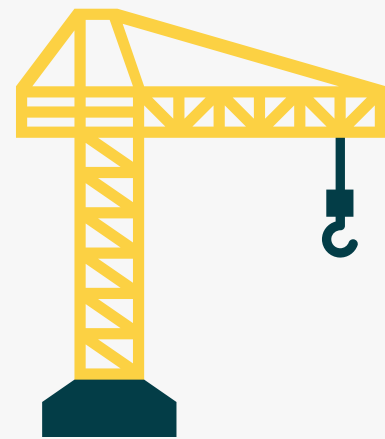
MASTER OF ARTS

M

UNDERGRADUATE



The Proposed Outcome



1. Visually engaging site featuring real students, updated regularly.
2. Modular, scrollable homepage sections that guide users intuitively.
3. Clear brand identity that builds pride to attract prospective students.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION



Find Your Path

Advertising

Communication
Studies

Digital
Journalism

Electronic Media/
Broadcasting

Public
Relations

We prepare students for successful careers in today's dynamic media and communication industries. Students develop the skills, insight, and ethical foundation to lead, create, and adapt. Rooted in community engagement, sustainability, and innovation, our programs empower graduates to inform, connect, and inspire across diverse platforms, turning a passion for communication into meaningful, real-world impact.



WHAT WE DO



DIGITAL JOURNALISM



Program of Study

[Admission](#)

[Courses](#)

[Professors](#)

[Alumni
Highlights](#)

[FAQ](#)

Hands On Journalism



Equipped with the skills to research, report, and produce compelling multimedia stories, you'll gain hands-on experience from day one. Covering real events, and mastering industry tools.



Benefits

In a digital age where storytelling drives engagement, our website must evolve into a living reflection of who we are: innovative, driven and ready to lead.



A big
Thank You!

from



**SECOND
STORY
MEDIA**