

# 2019-2020

ACADEMIC JOB LISTINGS  
IN COMMUNICATION REPORT



NATIONAL  
COMMUNICATION  
ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON, DC 2020

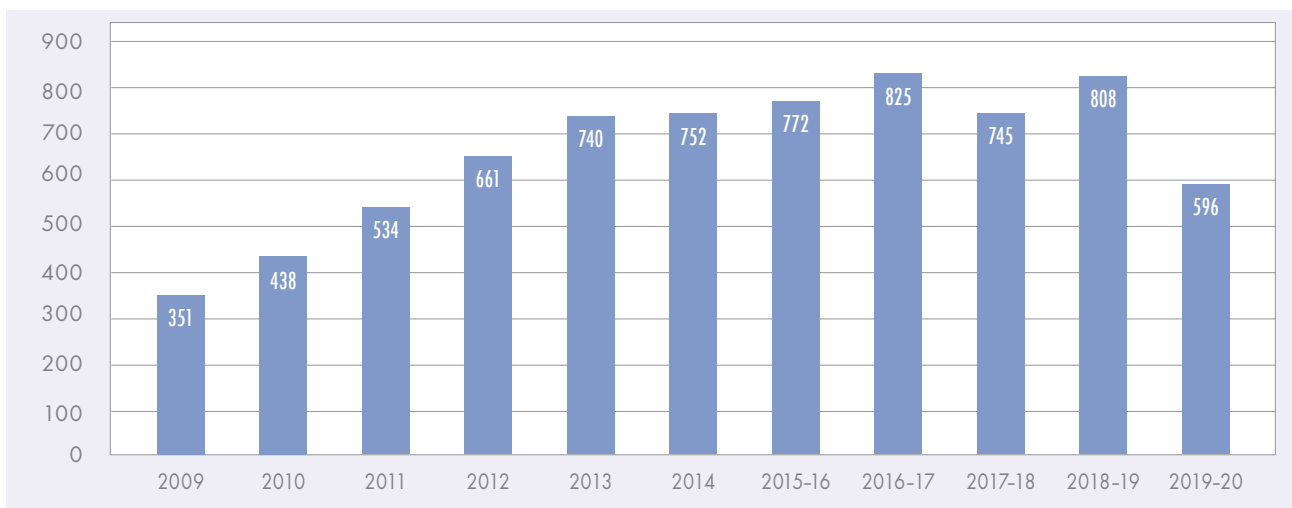
The National Communication Association (NCA) conducts an annual analysis of college and university searches to fill academic positions in Communication. We collect data from job postings in the online NCA Career Center, CRTNET, and *Spectra*. CRTNET is a disciplinary listserv to which employers may post position announcements and *Spectra* is NCA’s quarterly magazine. (Note: On June 1, 2020, CRTNET was deactivated and replaced with COMMNotes. The positions that were advertised in COMMNotes are included in this analysis.) If a job is posted in more than one outlet, it is counted only once.

This report provides a descriptive account of the job market in Communication over the last ten years, as well as a comparative analysis that includes other humanities and social science disciplines. We also provide an assessment of jobs posted during the period of September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020 with respect to areas of research and teaching specialty as well as rank and type of position.

## Multi-Year Trends

The total number of advertised Communication positions increased by 130 percent from 2009 to 2018-19, before decreasing by 26 percent in 2019-20. Figure 1 shows that there were 351 jobs advertised in 2009, followed by steady, year-by-year increases to 825 jobs during the 2016-17 academic year. While there was a slight decline in job advertisements during the 2017-2018 academic year, those numbers temporarily rebounded in 2018-19. In the 2019-20 academic year, a total of 596 jobs were advertised. Likely due to the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this number indicates a significant decrease in advertisements from previous years, and positions 2019-20 as the weakest year for employment in Communication since 2011.

Figure 1. Number of Advertisements for Positions in Communication

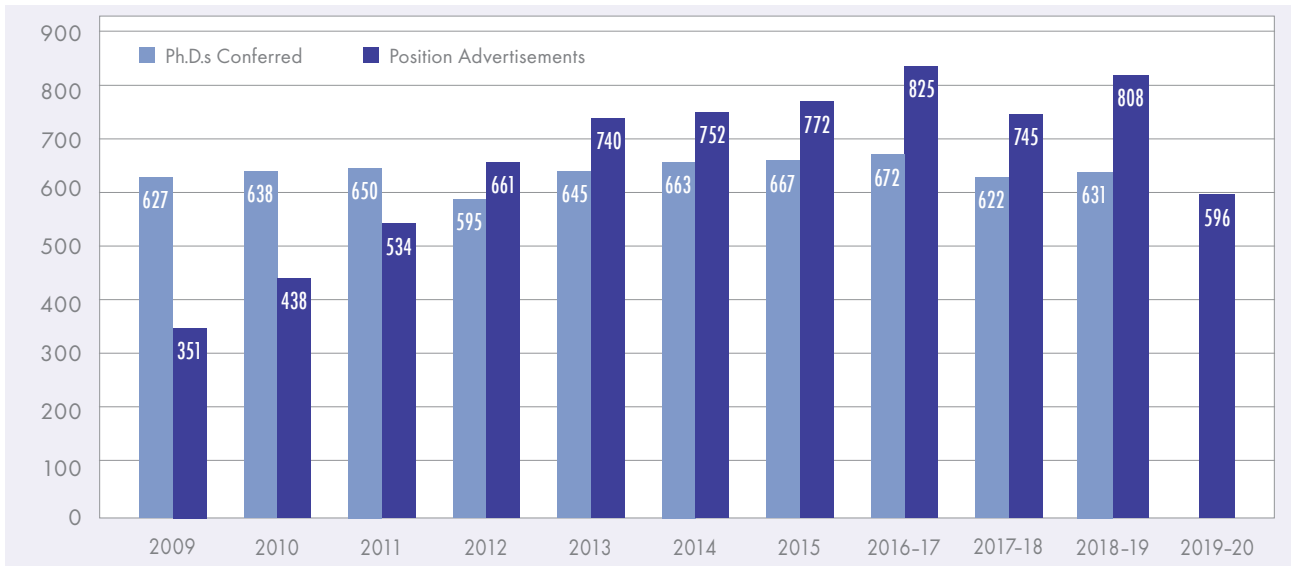


## Ph.D. Production and Job Openings in Communication

One method of examining the job market in a discipline is to explore the production of Ph.D.s relative to position availability. Much attention has been paid to the seeming over-production of Ph.D.s relative to the evolving academic job market. To explore this concern, we use the National Science Foundation’s *Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)*. Between 2009 and 2018, a high of 672 doctorates were awarded in 2016, and a low of 595 were awarded in 2012. In 2018, 631 doctorates were conferred.

Figure 2 compares the number of advertisements for positions in Communication with the number of Ph.D. graduates in Communication. These data reflect only the availability of Communication positions as advertised in the NCA Career Center, CRTNET, and *Spectra*.

Figure 2. Number of Advertisements for Positions in Communication and Communication Doctorates Conferred, 2009 through 2019–2020



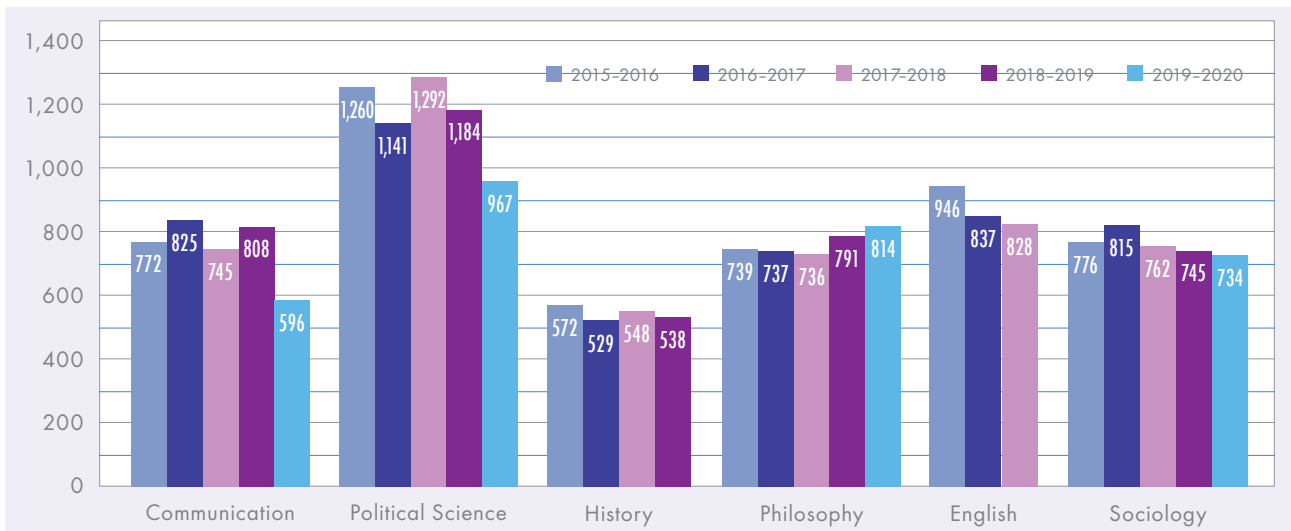
Note: Because the SED reports data on a calendar year basis, this figure reflects the total number of 2018 graduates in Communication, as reported in the SED, while positions advertised reflects the total number of advertisements during the 2018-19 academic year. The 2019 SED report has not yet been released, thus, no data comparing jobs available versus doctorates conferred is available.

## Communication in Comparison

Higher education news media regularly cover the annual rate of job growth (or decline) as reported by individual disciplines. Despite concerns about relying on job postings as an exclusive measure of academic job markets, higher education economists and researchers have concluded that such analyses are nonetheless useful and positively correlate with the “set of variables that plausibly should influence the demand for new Ph.D.s.”<sup>1</sup>

Figure 3 compares the number of Communication job postings to the numbers posted by similar disciplines. Not all disciplines have released current job data. As a result, the data reported reflect what is currently available from the other learned societies.

Figure 3. Number of Job Postings in Communication, Political Science, History, Philosophy, English, and Sociology, 2015–2016 to 2019–2020



Note(s): Both the Philosophy and Sociology job posting numbers reflect data collected per calendar year rather than academic year. The 2019 Philosophy job posting numbers are an estimate.

Sources: American Historical Association, Modern Language Association, American Philosophical Association, American Political Science Association, and American Sociological Association.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.amacad.org/content/research/dataForumEssay.aspx?i=21673> and Jeffrey A. Groen, “The Impact of Labor Demand on Time to the Doctorate,” *Education Finance and Policy*, available at [https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/10.1162/EDFP\\_a\\_00177](https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/10.1162/EDFP_a_00177). See also Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Harriet Zuckerman, Jeffrey A. Groen, and Sharon M. Brucker, *Educating Scholars: Doctoral Education in the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

## Distribution of Jobs by Research/Teaching Specialties

Not all academic jobs in Communication have requirements that align with the backgrounds of all Communication Ph.D.s. Thus, the number of advertised jobs by sub-field or specialty is also of interest to job seekers and employers. Specialties are presented in Table 1.

More than one specialty may appear in any given job posting. In fact, many postings advertise for individuals who possess more than one specialty. Table 1 indicates that in 2019–2020, there were 73 postings for generalist positions. Specialists in Strategic Communication/Public Relations/Advertising remained the most sought after, with 100 postings accounting for more than 14 percent of the total number of postings. The next most common research/teaching specialties sought in position postings were Journalism, with 49 mentions, and Mass Communication/Media Studies/Film Studies, with 48 mentions. These were followed in frequency by advertisements seeking specialties in Digital/New/Emerging Media (45), Health Communication (29), Communication Technology (25), and Intercultural/International/Global Communication (21). A total of 42 postings did not specify a required specialty and 100 were classified as “other” specialties.

Table 1. Primary Research/Teaching Specialties Requested in Job Advertisements, 2019–2020

PRIMARY SPECIALTY	NUMBER OF JOBS	PERCENTAGE
Communication Education	1	0.14%
Family Communication	1	0.14%
Communication Theory	2	0.29%
Risk/Crisis/Conflict	2	0.29%
Applied Communication	3	0.43%
Basic Course	3	0.43%
Environmental	3	0.43%
Science	4	0.57%
Performance Studies/Theatre	6	0.86%
Political	6	0.86%
Research Methods	8	1.14%
Sport	8	1.14%
Visual	8	1.14%
Debate/Forensics	17	2.43%
Organizational Communication	17	2.43%
Interpersonal	18	2.57%
Rhetoric	19	2.71%
Business/Corporate Communication	20	2.86%
Media Production	20	2.86%
Intercultural/International/Global	21	3.00%
Communication Technology	25	3.57%
Health Communication	29	4.14%
None Specified	42	6.00%
Digital/New/Emerging Media	45	6.43%
Mass Communication/Media Studies/Film Studies	48	6.86%
Journalism	49	7.00%
General	73	10.43%
Strategic/Public Relations/Advertising	100	14.29%
Other	102	14.57%

Note: None specified may include advertisements for administrators or advertisements that specified teaching need but did not require applicants to have a specific specialization. Other includes all specializations not commonly found in job postings.

## Job Advertisements by Rank or Type of Position

Figures 4 and 5 show that 350 of the 2019-2020 job postings (59 percent) sought individuals for tenured or tenure track positions, with 250 of those postings specifically seeking an assistant professor. The number of tenured or tenure track positions advertised decreased by 117 from the previous year. The number of non-tenure track position advertisements also decreased since 2018-19, accounting for 160 (27 percent) of the 2019-2020 job postings. Forty-five postings (8 percent) sought individuals for administrative positions (some of these positions are tenure-bearing), which included advertised department chair positions. During the 2019-2020 academic year, 41 non-academic positions were posted (7 percent). Figure 5 also compares position ranks over the past two years.

Figure 4. Number of Communication Job Postings by Rank or Type of Position, 2019-2020

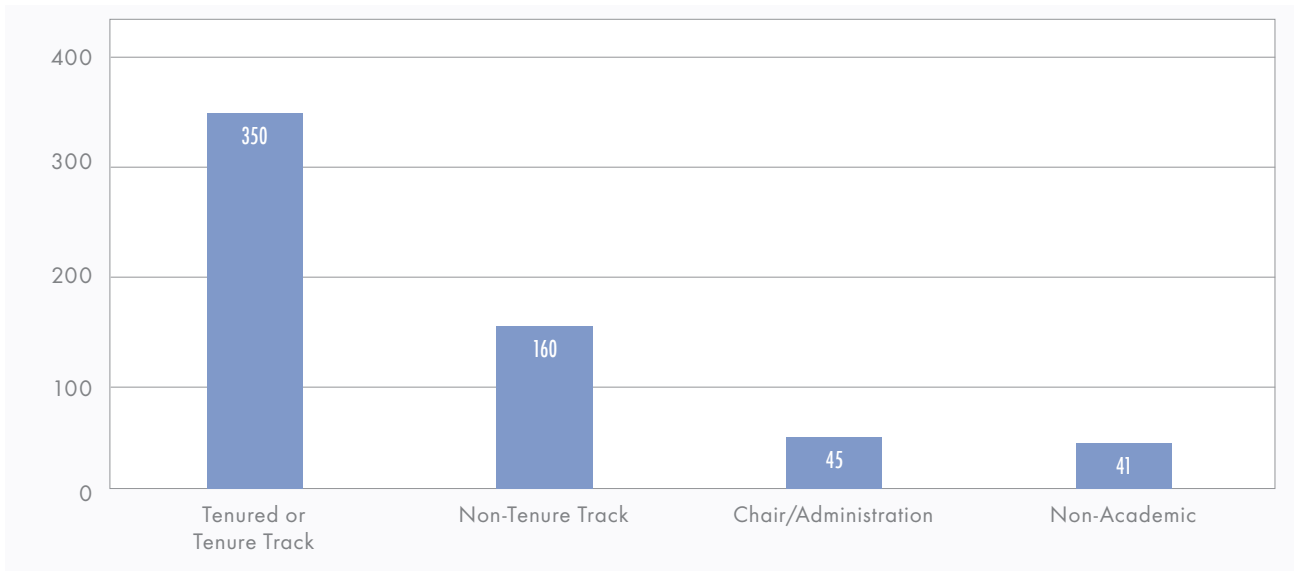


Figure 5. Advertised Position Ranks by Year, 2018-2020

