

2020-2021

ACADEMIC JOB LISTINGS
IN COMMUNICATION REPORT



NATIONAL
COMMUNICATION
ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON, DC
2021

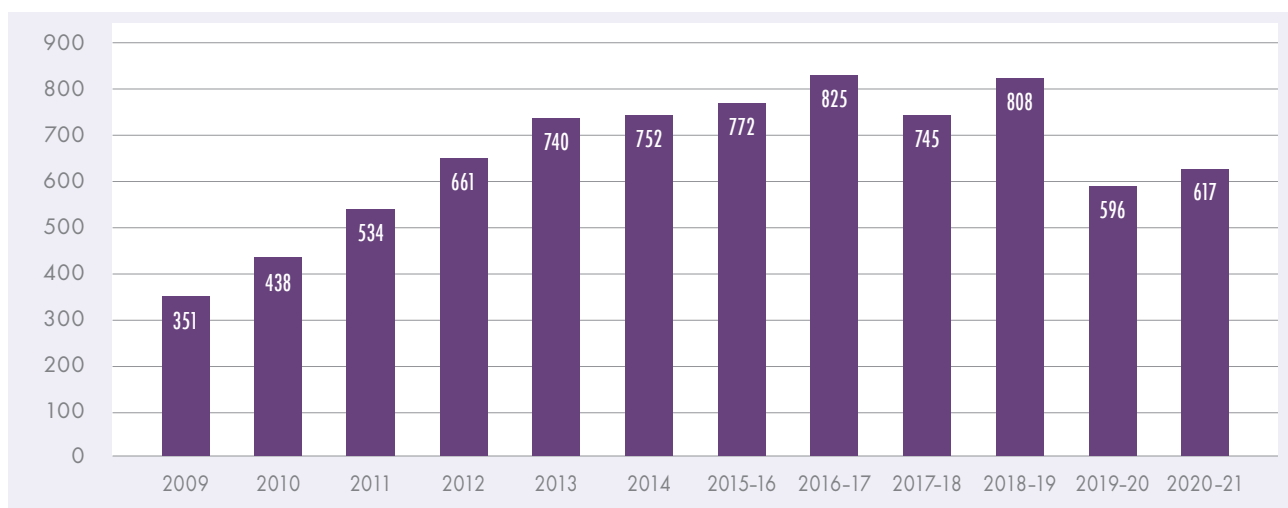
The National Communication Association (NCA) conducts an annual analysis of college and university searches to fill academic positions in Communication. We collect data from job postings in the online NCA Career Center and COMMNotes. COMMNotes, which replaced CRTNET in 2020, is a daily email sent to NCA members and subscribers to which potential employers may post position announcements. 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 12 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, 2020 through August 31, 2021 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. In 2020-21, the total number of positions advertised increased by 3.5 percent from the previous year. 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, before decreasing significantly during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-20. During the 2020-21 academic year, a total of 617 jobs were advertised. While this number indicates an increase in advertisements from the previous year, Communication recorded its weakest years for employment since 2011 during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years.

Figure 1. Number of Advertisements for Positions in Communication

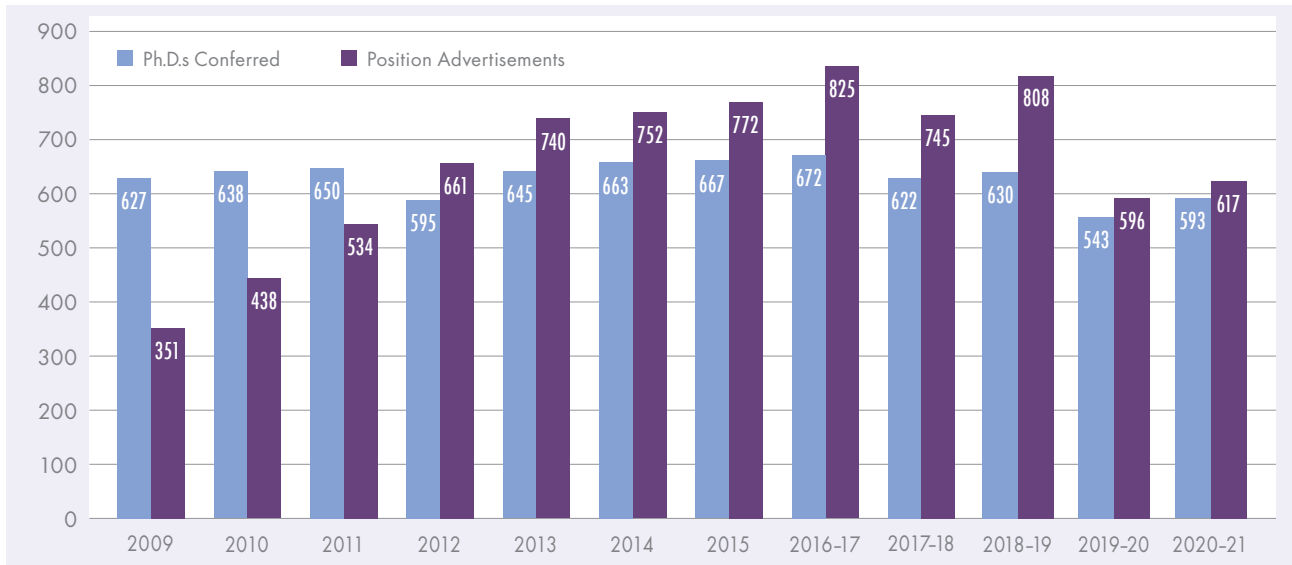


Ph.D. Production and Job Openings in Communication

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 2020, a high of 672 doctorates were awarded in 2016, and a low of 543 were awarded in 2019. In 2020, 593 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 COMMNotes as of June 2020), and *Spectra* (following its May 2020 issue, *Spectra* stopped including job advertisements).

Figure 2. Number of Advertisements for Positions in Communication and Communication Doctorates Conferred, 2009 through 2020-2021



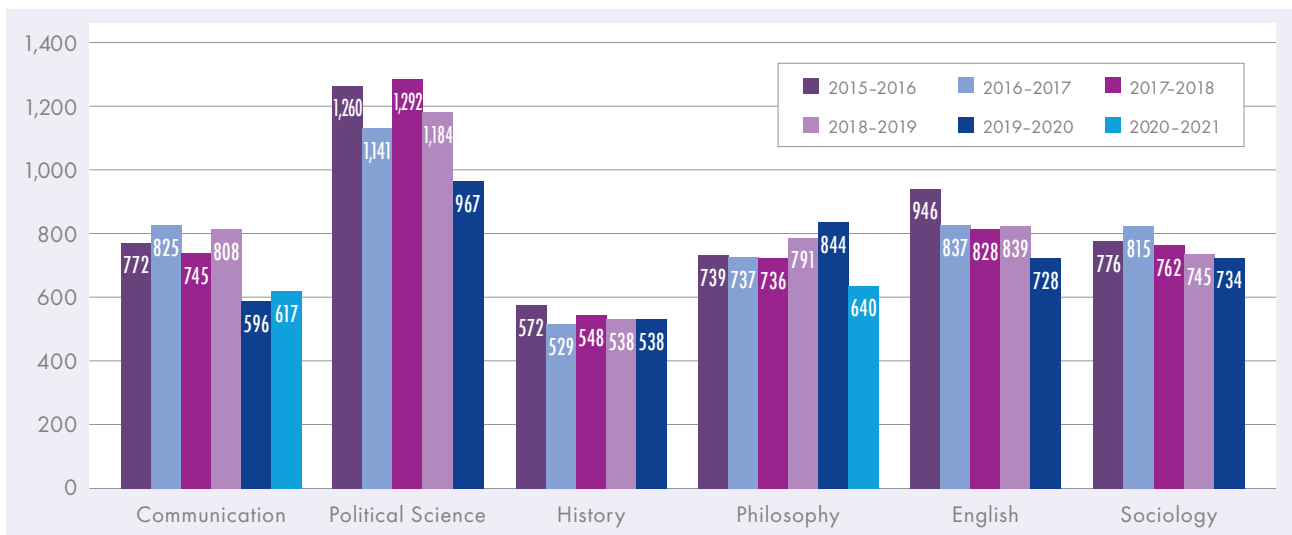
Note: Because the SED reports data on a calendar year basis, this figure reflects the total number of 2020 graduates in Communication, as reported in the SED, while positions advertised reflects the total number of advertisements during the 2020-21 academic year.

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.”¹

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 2020-2021



Note(s): Both the Philosophy and Sociology job posting numbers reflect data collected per calendar year rather than academic year. The 2021 Philosophy job posting numbers are estimated to be 860 and will be reflected in NCA's 2021-22 jobs report.

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

¹ 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. 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 2020–2021, there were 26 postings for generalist positions. Specialists in Strategic Communication/Public Relations/Advertising remained the most sought after, with 97 postings accounting for more than 12 percent of the total number of postings. The next most common research/teaching specialties sought in position postings were Journalism, with 44 mentions, and Mass Communication/Media Studies/Film Studies, with 40 mentions. These were followed in frequency by advertisements seeking specialties in Business/Corporate Communication (31), Health Communication (27), Intercultural/International/Global Communication (27), and Communication Technology (24). A total of 94 postings did not specify a required specialty and 173 were classified as “other” specialties.

Table 1. Primary Research/Teaching Specialties Requested in Job Advertisements, 2020–2021

PRIMARY SPECIALTY	NUMBER OF JOBS	PERCENTAGE
Communication Education	1	0.13%
Communication Theory	1	0.13%
Applied Communication	2	0.26%
Basic Course	2	0.26%
Environmental Communication	4	0.52%
Political Communication	4	0.52%
Research Methods	4	0.52%
Performance Studies/Theatre	8	1.03%
Risk/Crisis/Conflict Communication	9	1.16%
Visual Communication	9	1.16%
Sports Communication	11	1.42%
Science Communication	12	1.55%
Interpersonal Communication	19	2.45%
Organizational Communication	20	2.58%
Rhetoric	20	2.58%
Digital/New/Emerging Media	20	2.58%
Debate/Forensics	21	2.71%
Media Production	24	3.10%
Communication Technology	24	3.10%
General Communication	26	3.36%
Intercultural/International/Global Communication	27	3.49%
Health Communication	27	3.49%
Business/Corporate Communication	31	4.01%
Mass Communication/Media Studies/Film Studies	40	5.17%
Journalism	44	5.68%
None Specified	94	12.14%
Strategic Communication/PR/Advertising	97	12.53%
Other	173	22.35%

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 274 of the 2020-2021 job postings (44 percent) sought individuals for tenured or tenure track positions, with 179 of those postings (29 percent) specifically seeking an assistant professor. The number of tenured or tenure track positions advertised decreased by 76 (22 percent) from the previous year. The number of non-tenure track position advertisements increased since 2019-20, accounting for 211 (34 percent) of the 2020-2021 job postings. Twenty-two postings (4 percent) sought individuals for administrative positions (some of these positions are tenure-bearing), which included advertised department chair positions. During the 2020-2021 academic year, 110 non-academic positions were posted (18 percent). Figure 5 also compares position ranks over the past three academic years.

Figure 4. Number of Communication Job Postings by Rank or Type of Position, 2020-2021

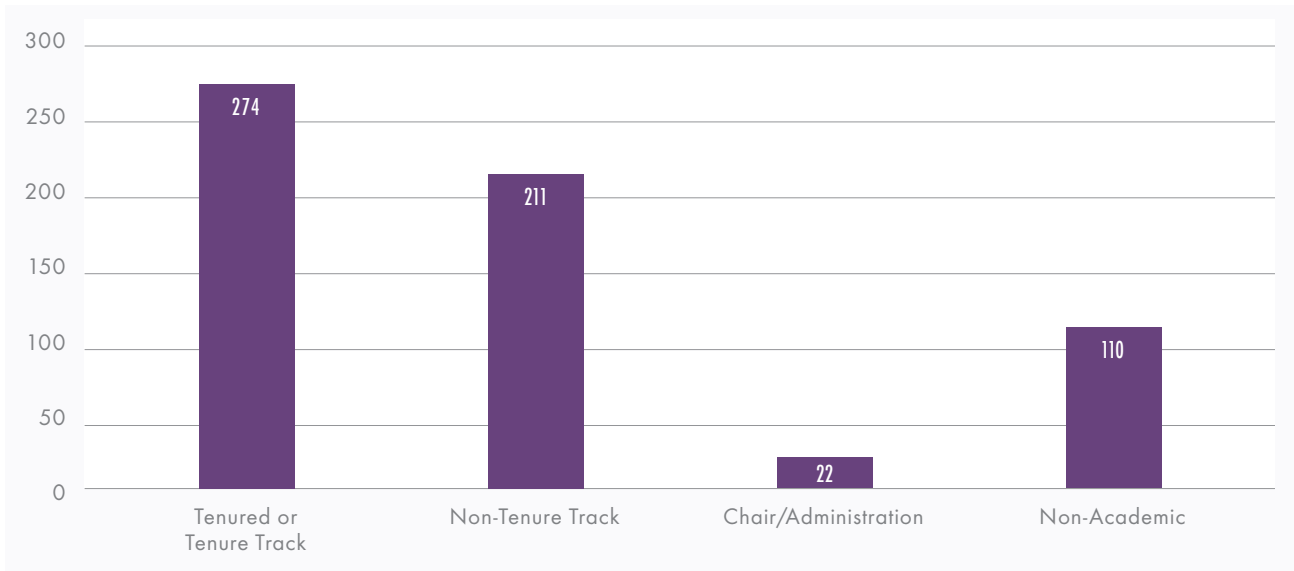


Figure 5. Advertised Position Ranks by Year, 2018-2021

