



NATIONAL COMMUNICATION
ASSOCIATION

THE 2012-2013 HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENTAL SURVEY:
COMMUNICATION IN
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences initiated the Humanities Departmental Survey (HDS) in 2008 “to fill critical gaps in the knowledge about the state of the humanities in higher education; specifically, about the number of faculty and students in the field and the role of humanities departments in their institutions and society.” The first HDS collected data on eight disciplines, including Art History, English, History, History of Science, Languages and Literatures other than English (LLE), Linguistics, Combined English and LLE, and Religion, at four-year colleges and universities. Communication was added to the second HDS, administered in 2012-2013, along with Classical Studies, Folklore, Musicology, and Philosophy. This report provides a descriptive overview of how Communication compares to other disciplines in the academy.

WASHINGTON, DC 2014

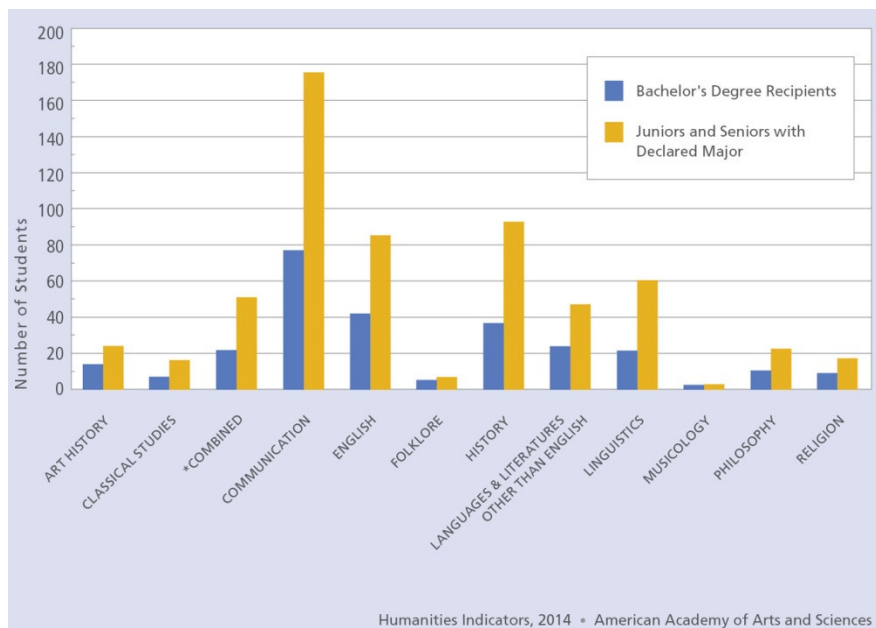
A Popular Undergraduate Major

Key Finding: By a substantial margin, the discipline of Communication has the largest number of bachelor’s degrees conferred and declared majors of all disciplines included in the survey.

In the 2011-2012 academic year, Communication departments conferred a total of 59,810 bachelor’s degrees, for an average of 78.1 per department. In contrast, 45,780 B.A. degrees were conferred in English (at an average of 43.0 per department) and 34,780 B.A. degrees were conferred in History (at an average of 37.8 per department). Figure 1 reveals the average number of majors and degrees conferred across all the disciplines in the HDS.

While Figure 1 reports the average number of degree recipients and majors, the total numbers derived from the individual discipline reports show that there were 135,190 juniors and seniors with a declared major in Communication in 766 Communication departments, while there were nearly 50,000 fewer majors in History with 921 departments. With 1,064 departments, there were nearly 45,000 fewer majors in English than in Communication.

Figure 1. Average Number of Bachelor’s Degrees Conferred (AY 2011-12) and Juniors and Seniors with Declared Majors



* “Combined” refers to departments that confer degrees in both English and LLE.

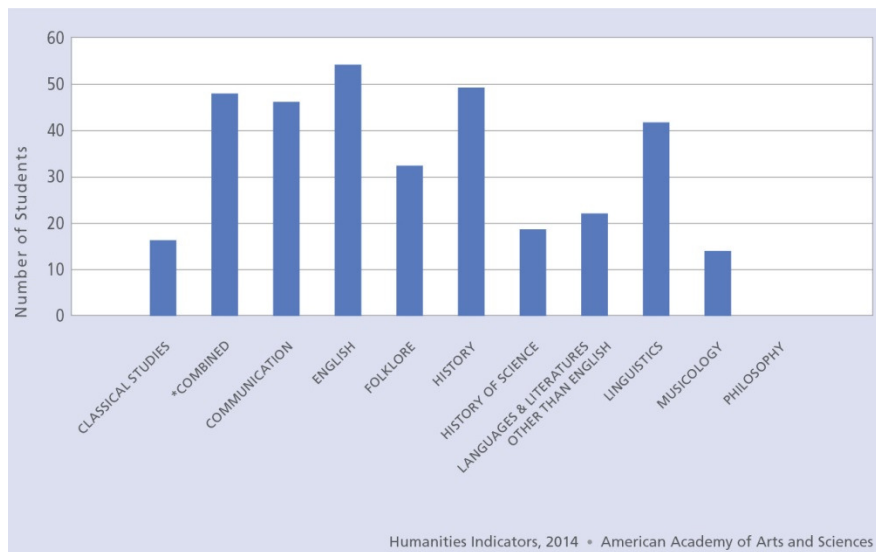
A Popular Discipline for Graduate Study

Key Finding: The HDS reveals that Communication has the third highest number of graduate students among the disciplines surveyed.

As Figure 2 reveals, Communication departments have an average of 46.1 students per department, which is slightly fewer than English (average = 54.3 students/department), History (average = 49.5 students/department), and “Combined” (average = 48.1 students/department), but more than all of the other surveyed disciplines. “Combined” refers to departments that offer graduate degrees in English and Language and Literatures other than English.

In terms of the total numbers of graduate students, English is the largest discipline for graduate study, with a total of 21,810 graduate students in 1,064 departments. History has a total of 18,500 graduate students in 921 departments. Communication follows, with a total of 13,750 graduate students in 766 departments. While “Combined” is third in discipline rank for the average number of graduate students per department, this category reported only 2,070 graduate students in just 147 departments. The rest of the disciplines are substantially smaller than Communication with respect to graduate student enrollment.

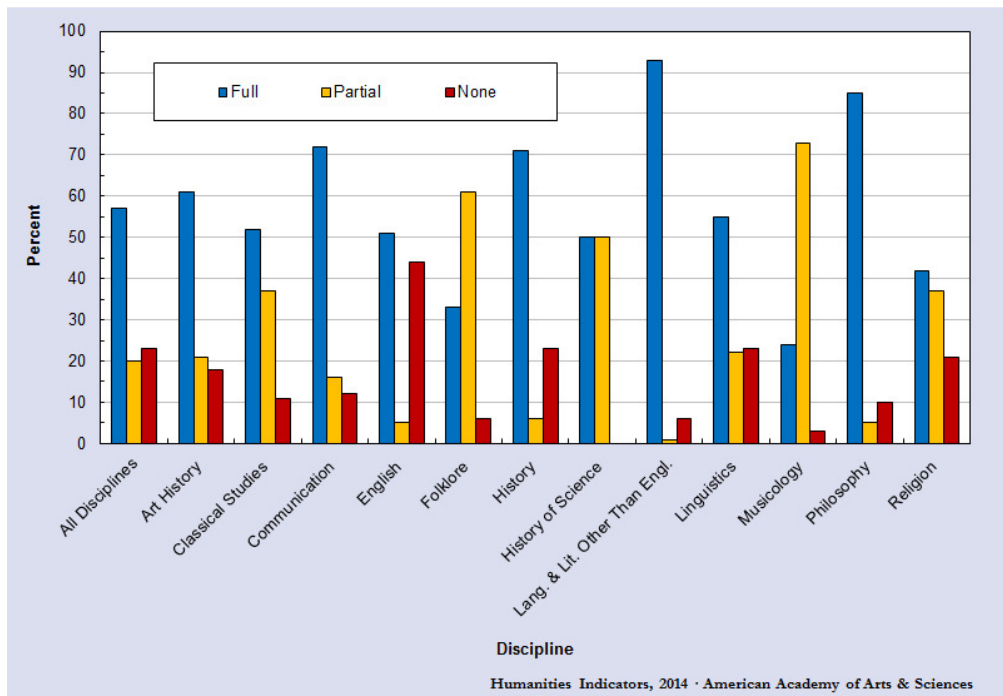
Figure 2. Average Graduate Student Enrollment per Department, Fall 2012



* “Combined” refers to departments that confer degrees in both English and LLE.

Figure 3 reveals the varying levels of support received by full-time, first-year graduate students. Graduate student support (i.e., teaching assistantships, research assistantships, fellowships) is of critical concern to graduate departments and prospective graduate students. The HDS found that 72 percent of full-time, first-year Communication graduate students received full financial support, and 16 percent received partial support. The only disciplines that reported offering more full financial support than Communication were Philosophy (85 percent of students) and LLE (93 percent of students). In contrast, 71 percent of History graduate students received full financial support, and only 51 percent of English graduate students received such support.

Figure 3. Percentage of Full-time, First-Year Doctoral Students Who Receive Financial Support



Humanities Faculty—Communication

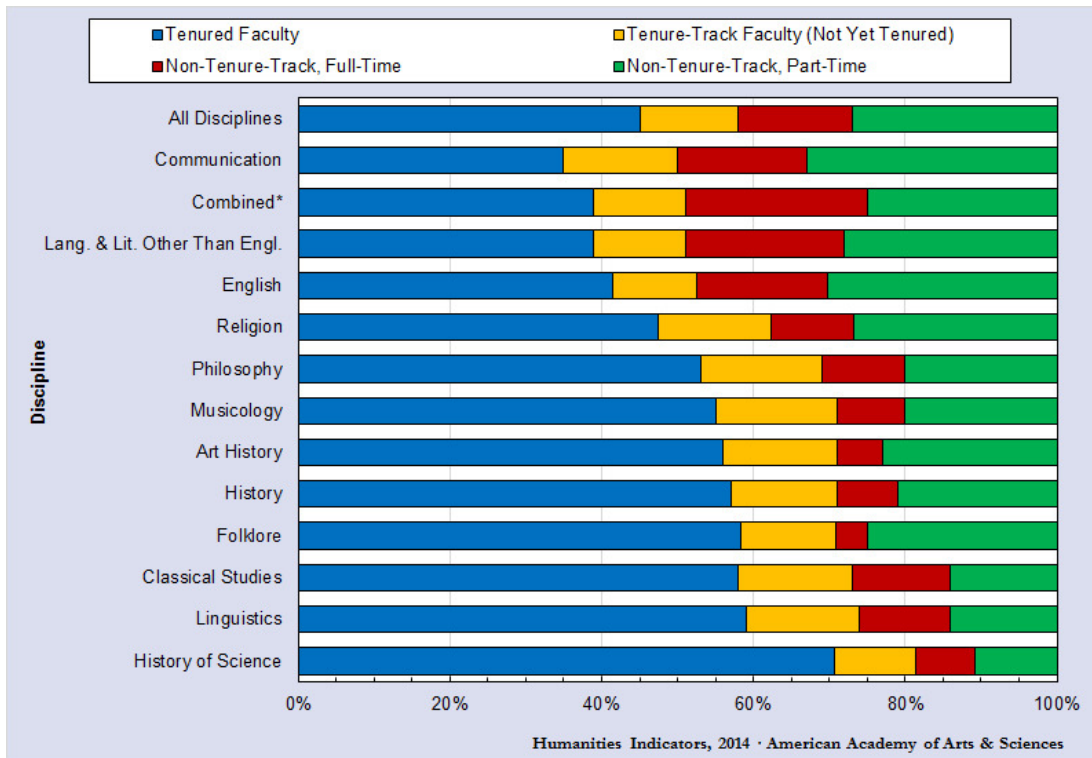
Key Finding: Despite high undergraduate and graduate student populations, colleges and universities employ smaller numbers of faculty members in Communication departments than in comparable disciplines.

The HDS shows that Communication departments across the country employ 6,590 full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty members and 6,710 full-time and part-time non tenure-track faculty members, for a total of 13,300 faculty members. The overall number of faculty members in Departments of Communication is substantially lower than other disciplines. English departments employ a total of 28,750 faculty members; History, 15,800 faculty members; and

LLE, 21,600 faculty members. In this context, “faculty” excludes graduate students and personnel with 100 percent research appointments.

Figure 4 demonstrates that alone among the disciplines surveyed, the number of tenure-track faculty members in Communication is lower than the total number of non tenure-track faculty.

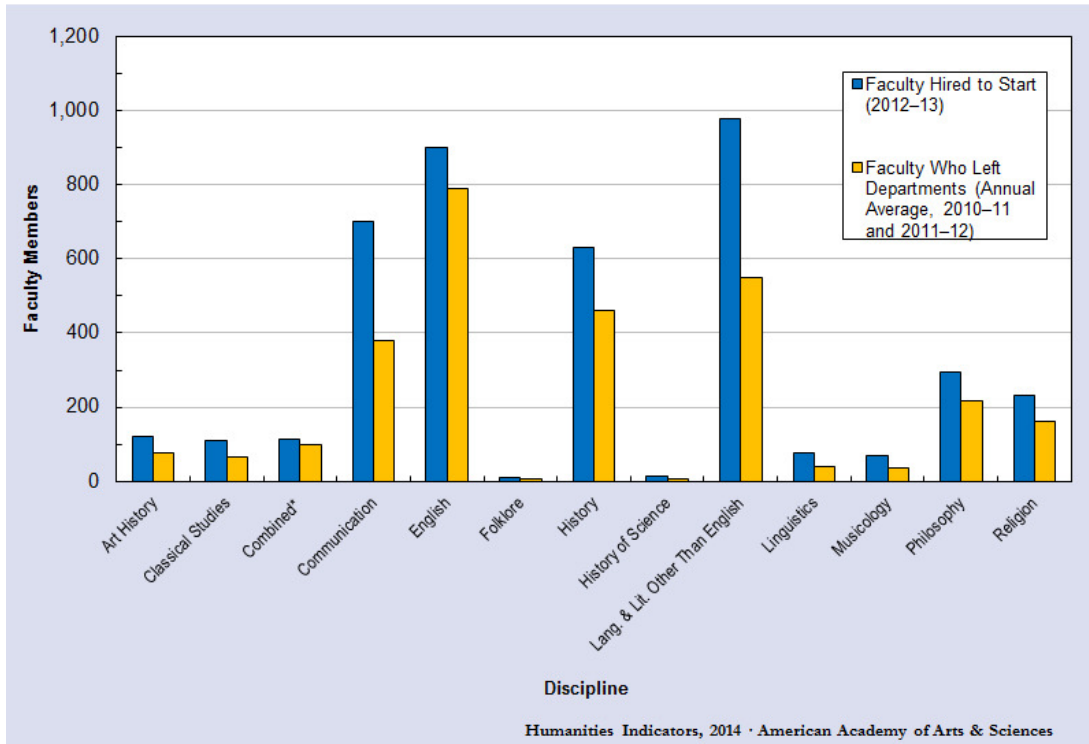
Figure 4. Tenure Status of Faculty Members



* “Combined” refers to departments that confer degrees in both English and LLE.

Figure 5 indicates the differences by discipline in faculty hiring relative to faculty departures due to retirement, death, or moving to another position. On average in each of the previous two years, the number of faculty members hired into humanities departments was higher than the number of faculty lost. In most of the disciplines, the report finds, half or more of departing faculty were retiring. The exceptions were Philosophy, Religion, and Communication. According to the HDS, 700 new faculty members were hired to tenured or tenure-track positions in 2012-13 in Communication. This compares with 900 such hires in English, 630 in History, 980 in LLE, and 295 in Philosophy.

Figure 5. Net Growth or Decline in Faculty Size, AY 2012-13



* “Combined” refers to departments that confer degrees in both English and LLE.

Some Additional Highlights

Assessment

Communication ranked second among the disciplines in the percentage of departments that conduct an undergraduate learning outcomes assessment for all undergraduate majors. Ninety percent of all Communication departments measure the learning outcomes of their majors, compared with 85 percent of English departments, 80 percent of History departments, and 78 percent of LLE departments.

Research Support

Eighty-six percent of Communication departments have institutional or departmental support available for research to tenured or tenure-track faculty. In contrast, the departments providing higher levels of support include LLE departments (97 percent), English departments (93 percent), and History departments (90 percent).