

A PROFILE OF THE COMMUNICATION DOCTORATE III:

A SUMMARY OF THE 2014
NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION'S
SURVEY OF EARNED DOCTORATES



NATIONAL
COMMUNICATION
ASSOCIATION

Each year, the National Communication Association (NCA) generates “A Profile of the Communication Doctorate,” based on data contained in the National Science Foundation’s *Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)*. The 2014 *SED* was released in December of 2015, and this report updates the existing profiles of the Communication doctorate in light of the *SED*’s new information.

A Note on Disciplinary Classification

Since 2009, the complete set of responses to the *SED* has included specific information about doctorates received in Communication.¹ Communication is classified in the *SED* as “Other non-S&E (Science & Engineering) field.” This “broad field” category includes “Business and management,” “fields not elsewhere classified,” and “unknown field.” Additional non-S&E broad fields include “Social Sciences,” “Education,” and “Humanities.”

Respondents to the *SED* are asked to write the name of the “primary field” of their dissertation research and to select a code from a list of fields to classify their dissertation research. The broad field classification of Communication includes the sub-field designations of Communication Research, Communication Theory, Film/Radio/TV & Digital Communication, Mass Communication/Media Studies, Communication/General, and Communication/Other. Worth noting are the Speech & Rhetorical Studies and Rhetoric & Composition sub-fields placed under the broad field classification of Letters. It is possible that some doctorates in Communication may have selected Speech & Rhetorical Studies or Rhetoric & Composition as their field, and thus would not be classified in the field of Communication by the *SED*. Notably, the number of dissertations in the Speech & Rhetorical Studies category has declined dramatically over the last ten years.

Data about doctorates received in Communication, thus, should be read broadly, with the understanding that some doctorates may not be included (i.e., doctorates self-classified as Letters–Speech & Rhetorical Studies), while others from related disciplines (i.e., Journalism) may be included in Communication’s totals.

Doctorate Recipients and Institutions

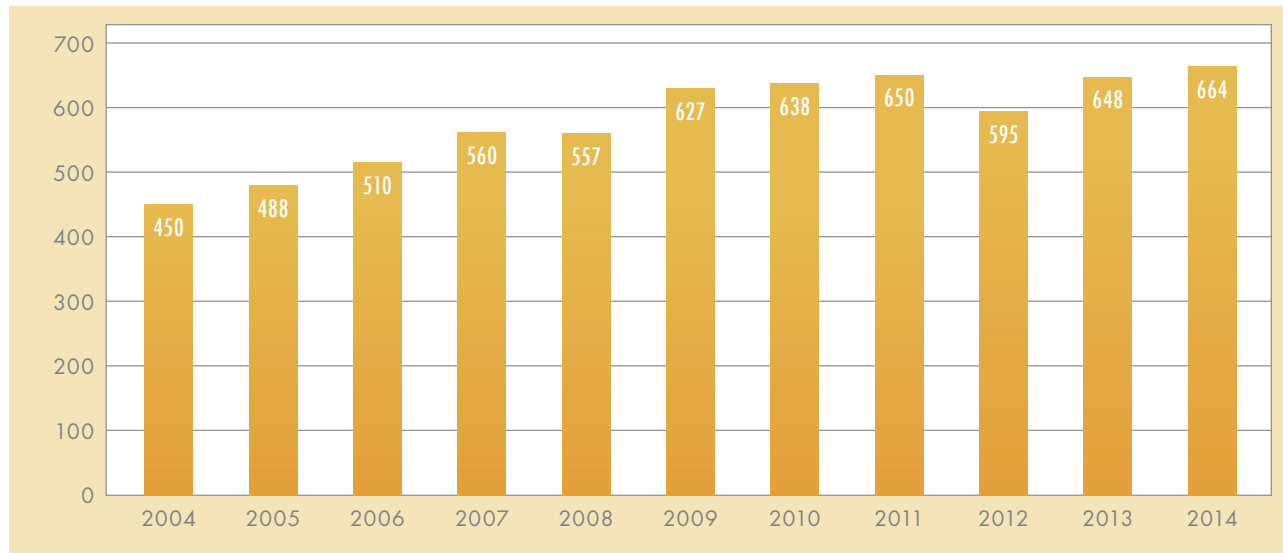
The population eligible for the 2014 *SED* included all individuals who received a research doctorate from a U.S. academic institution between June 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. This population consisted of more than 54,000 persons at 426 institutions. The response rate for the survey was 91%.²

Of the 54,070 doctorates reported in the 2014 *SED*, 664 (1.2%) were classified as in the Communication discipline. This is an increase of 16 doctorates since the 2013 *SED*, which reported 648 doctorates in Communication. By way of comparison, among the social sciences, Political Science produced 776 doctorates (down from 803 in 2013), Sociology produced 678 doctorates (up from 636 in 2013), and Anthropology produced 527 doctorates (down from 550 in 2013). In the humanities, History produced 1,182 doctorates (up from 1,148 in 2013) and Foreign Languages produced 676 doctorates (down from 702 in 2013).

¹ Though the *SED* has reported some data on Communication doctorates since 1981, full responses organized by field that include Communication are available only from the 2009 *SED* to the present.

² See: <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/srvydoctorates/#sd&tabs-1>.

Total Number of Ph.D.s in Communication, 2004–2014



Source: 2014 SED, Table 13. Available at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2016/nsf16300/data/tab13.pdf>.

Of the 664 doctorates in Communication conferred in 2014, 150 (22%) were in Communication Research, 39 (5.8%) were in Communication Theory, 250 (38%) were in Mass Communication/Media Studies, 35 (5.3%) were in Film/Radio/TV & Digital Communication, 123 (19%) were in Communication/General, and 67 (10%) were in Communication/Other. In the broad field of Letters, doctorates identified as Speech & Rhetorical Studies numbered 29 in 2014, only 1.8% of all doctorates in Letters. Since 2011, the SED has added a new category to the Letters field—Rhetoric & Composition. The 2014 SED reported that the total number of doctorates in this category was 210, or 13.5% of all doctorates in Letters.

The University of Texas granted 36 doctorates in Communication in 2014, while The Pennsylvania State University conferred 18 Communication doctorates. Michigan State University and Louisiana State University each conferred 17 doctorates, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Ohio University, Southern Illinois University, and the University of North Carolina each conferred 14 doctorates in 2014. The top five institutions in Communication doctorates conferred in 2013 were the University of Texas (27), Ohio University (21), Howard University (19), the University of Florida (19), and the University of Maryland (18).³

U.S. INSTITUTIONS CONFERRING 14+ COMMUNICATION DOCTORATES, 2014

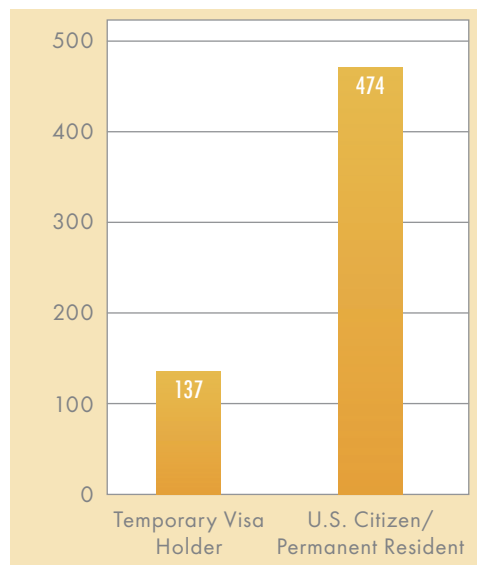
University of Texas	36
The Pennsylvania State University	18
Louisiana State University	17
Michigan State University	17
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	14
Ohio University	14
Southern Illinois University	14
University of North Carolina	14

Demographic Data—Communication Doctorates

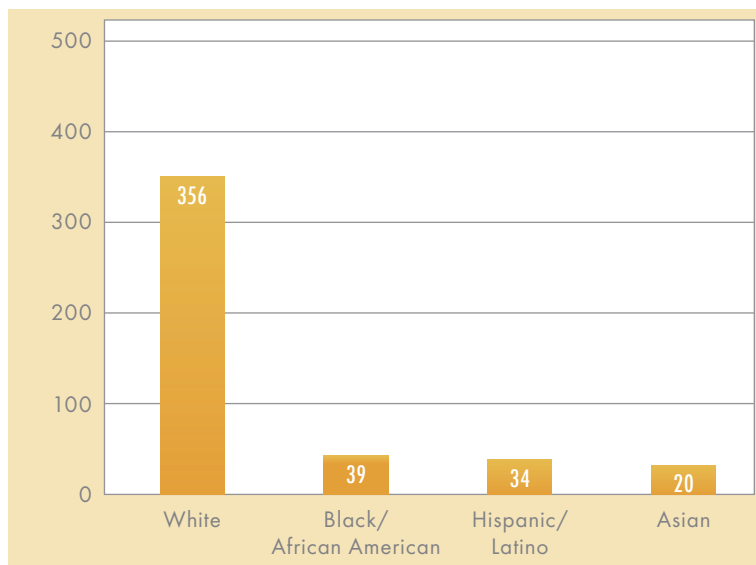
Nearly 58% of 2014 doctoral recipients in Communication were female. The percentage of female Communication doctoral recipients has declined from 64.1% in 2011. By way of comparison, among the social sciences, 44.1% of doctorates in Political Science were awarded to females, while 63.4% of doctorates in Sociology went to females. In the humanities, females received 44% of History doctorates and 63% of doctorates in Foreign Languages.

³ Source: 2014 SED, Table 8. Available at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2016/nsf16300/data/tab8.pdf>.

Communication Doctoral Recipients, by Citizenship Status, 2014



U.S. Citizenship/Permanent Resident Communication Doctoral Recipients, by Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity, 2014



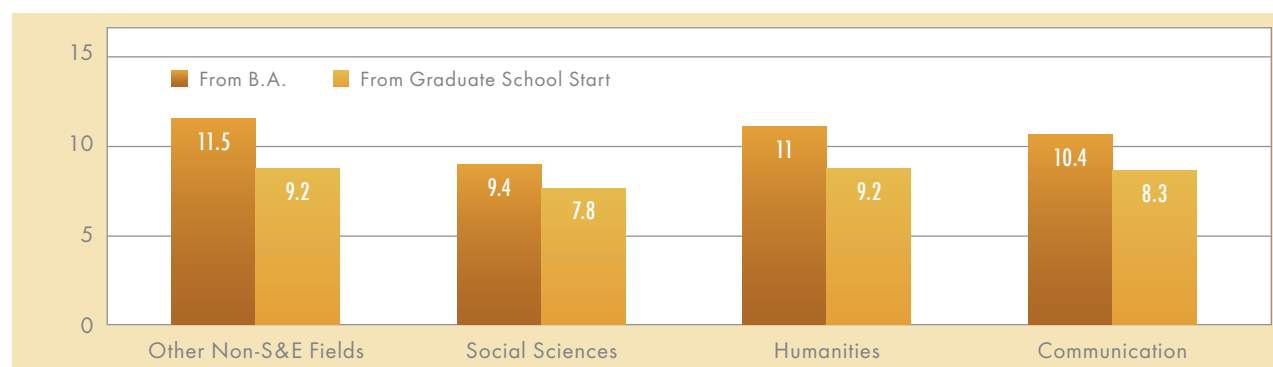
Source: 2014 SED, Table 22, available at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/sed/2013/data/tab22.pdf>.

“Temporary Visa Holders” received 20.6% of all doctorates in Communication in 2014 (137 of the 664 Communication doctorates), suggesting that one in five of all Communication doctoral recipients is an international student. Of the 474 doctoral recipients who said they were U.S. citizen/permanent residents and who answered racial/ethnic questions, 75% (356) were classified as “white,” 8.2% (39) were classified as “Black,” 7.2% (34) were classified as “Hispanic/Latino,” and 4.2% (20) were classified as “Asian.” Other SED respondents (24) identified as among two or more races, did not answer race/ethnicity questions, or were classified as American Indian or Alaska Native (1). Note: sums are variable with this data because respondents do not answer all items on the NSF survey.

Other Information—Communication Doctorates

For the 664 Communication doctorates included in the 2014 SED, the time to degree is less than in comparable disciplines. In the broad field (“Other Non-S&E Fields”) that includes Communication, the time to doctoral degree is 11.5 years from the B.A., and 9.2 years from entering graduate school. These time-to-degree figures for this broad field have declined from a 2001 high of 14.0 years since the B.A., and 10.7 years since entering graduate school. In Communication, however, the 2014 time-to-degree figures were significantly lower than for the broad field category—10.4 years from the B.A., and 8.3 years from entering graduate school, in median number of years.

Time to Doctorate, in Median Years, 2014



Source: 2014 SED, Tables 31 & 68, available at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2014/nsf16300/data/tab31.pdf> and <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2016/nsf16300/data/tab68.pdf>.

Other characteristics surveyed by the *SED* include marital status, degree status, and age at doctorate.

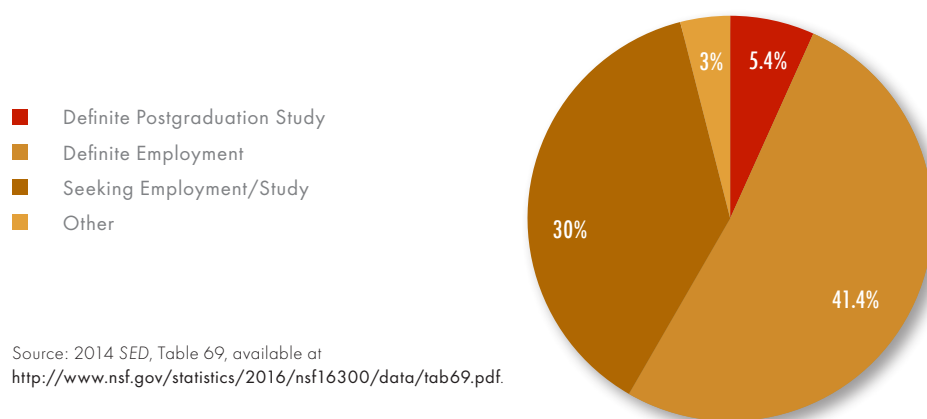
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION DOCTORATE RECIPIENTS, 2014 (N=664)	
Never married	26.8%
Married/Marriage-like relationship	54.5%
B.A. in same field	47.4%
M.A. earned	86.3%
Median age at doctorate	33.4 years

Source: 2014 *SED*, Table 68, available at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2016/nsf16300/data/tab68.pdf>.

Postgraduation Plans—Communication Doctorates

The 2014 *SED* asked its respondents for an indication of their postgraduation plans. Of the 664 Communication doctorates, 5.4% (36) reported “definite postgraduation study”; of that number, 52.8% reported receiving a postdoctoral fellowship, while another 44.4% reported receiving a postdoctoral research associateship.

Among the Communication doctorates, 41.4% (275) reported “definite employment” as their postgraduate plans; of those, 89.1% reported employment in academe and 6.2% in business or industry. Just under 30% (198) of respondents reported that they were “seeking employment or study” at the time they answered the *SED*, while another 3% (21) reported “other” as their postgraduate plans. These data are largely unchanged from the 2013 *SED*.



Source: 2014 *SED*, Table 69, available at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2016/nsf16300/data/tab69.pdf>.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

The National Communication Association (NCA) advances Communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry. NCA serves the scholars, teachers, and practitioners who are its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests in research and teaching. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems.

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