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Boston University Introduces New Majors and Minors in Media Science, Advertising, and Public Relations

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BOSTON — Boston University (BU) students are able to enroll in the new programs starting Fall 2018 for degrees with a more specific title than “Communication;” but students have mixed reactions towards the change.

For students interested in Advertising and Public Relations, the change implies that employers can more easily recognize what the student’s interest is through the separate B.S. degrees in Advertising and Public Relations, while Media Science is a new major that does not correlate to any degrees prior to fall.

“Media Science as a major is intended to replace the concentration of Mass Communication; while the concentrations of advertising and public relations also become separate majors,” said Denis Wu, the Section Head of Media Science. However, he also clarified that the Media Science program will start in the fall of 2018; i.e., “only upcoming freshman class will be eligible.”

According to BU’s website, the Bachelor's in Media Science “provide core, structured learning in media theory, research, and practice in furtherance of training students with specialization in how to create, distribute, and evaluate media messages in a strategic manner.”

Since Media Science is intended to replace the Communication Studies concentration, the two programs have similarities. The curriculum guide of Media Science overlaps with that of the Communication Studies concentration available prior to fall for foundational courses, but the higher level courses for Media Science are mostly research-based.

“Media Science is a more comprehensive, research-savvy field than Mass Communication and it reflects better of the development of media world and our research community,” Wu said.

Along with the majors, students may minor in Media Science, Advertising, or Public Relations. College of Communication (COM) Undergraduate Affairs confirmed that these minors are eligible for any student who has not declared a minor.

Although students with undeclared minors may opt for the concentrations above, they are encouraged to “wait till the fall and declare a more specific minor (out of the list of options fall 2018 and forward),” according to COM Undergraduate Affairs.

The change in separating out the concentrations of the Communication degree is for the better: “We are now offering new minors that are more specific than just ‘Communication’ for the fall,” said the COM Undergraduate Affairs.

In the original communication major, there are eight college and departmental courses along with merely five concentration-specific courses required. In the new majors, there are six college and departmental

courses along with seven major-specific courses required — a greater emphasis on specific subdomains within communication.

Not all reactions to the curriculum are positive, however. Some students are wary of the new major's limitations, “I think Communication has more flexibility than Media Science because some interesting higher level classes that Communication has in their curriculum aren't available for Media Science majors,” said Lily Zhao.

Still, many agree with the change, citing Media Science's practical advantages: “I have to admit that I find this [Media Science] major really interesting and practical when I first read the program guide on the school website,” said Joyce Wang. “Based on my instinct, I think I might choose the new Media Science major instead of Communication Studies, as the curriculum guide provides a lot of detailed descriptions of what we will learn in this program. It is indeed more specific than the Communication degree.”

COM has yet to promote the new programs on the main pages of their website. As a result, students can only find information about changes in the programs under the “Undergraduate Advising” section of the COM website and under the “COM” section of BU's website.

Although the COM Undergraduate Affairs has already encouraged undeclared students to consider the new minors, further announcements of the majors will likely be made when the new school year begins. Moreover, the B.S. in Communication page on BU's website no longer includes information on the requirements for the major. Instead, the webpage contains links to the three new B.S. degrees.

According to the curriculum guides, the three new B.S. degrees are in the same department because they share the same college and department requirements. Prospective students should note that they “cannot double major between Advertising, Media Science, and Public Relations, due to a shared core experience,” according to the program's website. Furthermore, it states, “Minors and dual degrees in other BU schools and colleges, while not required, are strongly recommended.”

For further information on the subject, visit BU's COM website:

<http://www.bu.edu/com/resources/current-students/undergraduate/com-curriculum-guides-minors/> or contact COM Undergraduate Affairs via email at comugrad@bu.edu.

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