Based on an expressed need, the Graduate Communication Certificate Program was initiated at the request of the Graduate Student Government Association (SGA) in order to establish a platform for improving graduate students’ communication skills (currently 250+ participants across all majors), and for demonstrating communication proficiency to prospective employers. The Program is comprised of 5 required and 8 elective workshops, and a capstone project; and integrates instructors from several units — the Library, Career Services, the Communications Center, and the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning (CETL). (See: http://www.gradcommcert.gatech.edu)

**Research Question**
What is the effect of participation in the Georgia Tech Graduate Communication Certificate Program on participants’ overall professional communication skills?

**Literature Review: Key Findings**
- Focus program assessment on student learning outcomes from the communications curriculum (Allen, 2004; Bredtmann et al., 2013)
- Large gap between workplace needs and graduates’ communication skills (Reave, 2004; Craig et al., 2008)
- 95% of students attending Communicating Research workshops rated sessions as valuable, particularly for general advice & common errors (Alley et al., 2007)
- Self-assessment may not correlate with performance; pre/post tests or academic success metrics can help triangulate (Sharpiro et al., 2009; Bredtmann et al., 2013)
- Focus on multi-faceted, collaborative approach to teaching communication skills is effective; assessment can be more complex (Ballemore et al., 2011)

See http://tinyurl.com/pey2mo6 for a complete citation list.

**Results**
25 codes utilized for analysis of Pilot Interviews*

**Claims & Contributions**
- Self-ratings indicate improvement in professional communication skills
- Participants express increased self-confidence and lowered anxiety
- Anecdotal evidence that employers value participation in Program
- Participation precipitates continued interaction with expert-led assistance/services
- Success of Program could lead to additional program-based (i.e. not one-shot) graduate student professional development offerings
- Synergy of multiple campus units allows for robust set of courses and wide range of expertise (including librarians!)

**Recommendations**
- Continue gathering qualitative data beyond pilot stage
- Investigate additional assessment options/tools (e.g. survey; pre/post tests)
- Explore expanding workshop selections and scheduling possibilities
- Re-tool the demo/lecture workshops to more interactive formats (e.g. discussion-based; hands-on)
- Loop in industry voice to ensure relevance to needed workplace skill sets
- Explore formal institutional recognition options (e.g. transcript notation) for participants

*Graphic depicts relative frequency of each code in the pilot interview transcripts

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**Background**
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**Process & Methods**

**Developed Student Learning Outcomes**

**Developed Exit Interview (Semi-structured)**

**Piloted Instrument - with 3 graduate students**

**Transcribed Interviews**

**Determined a Priori Codes (Themes)**

**Coded Pilot Data/Added Emergent Codes (Themes)**

**Preliminary Analysis on Pilot Data**

**Revised Interview Instrument**

**SERVING THE UNDERSERVED:**
Assessing the Value of the Graduate Communication Certificate Program
Lori Ostapowicz Critz, Program Coordinator; Head - Faculty Engagement Dept., GT Library

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