Defining the Field: Revisiting the ACA 1995 Definition of Communication Studies

CHARLES J. KORN
SHERWYN P. MORREALE
DON M. BOILEAU

IN 1995, the Association for Communication Administration (ACA) convened a summer conference that produced a two-sentence definition of the field of communication. More than 100 conferees voted their unanimous approval of the definition, which was then disseminated nationally and used by communication scholar/teachers for a multiplicity of purposes. Given the potential utility of that definition and the expansion of communication studies since 1995, the present study surveyed ACA's current members to determine whether they are aware the definition exists, how they have used it, and the extent to which they perceive it as representative of communication studies today. The results of that survey are reported in this article, which begins with a description of why and how this definition was originally developed.

1995 ACA Definition of the Field of Communication

The field of communication focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media. The field promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication.

WHY A DEFINITION OF THE FIELD?

In a field as diverse and eclectic as communication, a need exists for some commonality of understanding about what constitutes the discipline's subject matter. Such understanding, in the form of a definition, can serve two functions: it can provide a descriptor of the diversity, breadth, and depth of the field itself; and, it can be used to represent the discipline to an external audience, both inside and outside of academe, many of whom may still hold onto the notion that the field is committed only to the practice and study of speech making.

David Zarefsky, speaking as the president of the Speech Communication Association (SCA) in 1993, addressed the need to define the communication field by raising questions such as these: "Can you tell me what holds this field together? What is the central issue or organizing principle? How can I make sense of what we are doing?" This challenge required a response. In 1994, Ellen Wartella, former president of the International Communication Association, more formally addressed the need for a commonality of understanding of the field, stating that:

> As communication researchers, we lack a clear vision about who we are, which is manifested in a fractured set of subfields that not only know little about each other but whose practitioners seem more intent on the internal debates of our field than our public responsibility as scholars of an increasingly important topic. (p. 55)

Wartella also pointed to a possible use of a definition of the field: "By defining a common definition, we can better represent our value and import to people external to our field, as well as further justify our presence and growth of our programs in today's academy" (p. 55).

DEFINING THE FIELD

While some communication scholar/teachers were calling attention to the need to define the field, others were crafting various definitions. In 1981, the Association for Communication Administration defined the field, recognizing its diversity, beyond the boundary of public communication, when they described speech communication as:

> A humanistic and scientific field of study, research, and application. Its focus is upon how, why, and with what effects people communicate through spoken language and associated nonverbal messages. Just as political scientists are concerned with political behavior and economists with economic behavior, the student of speech communication is concerned with communicative behavior.

In 1983, Gerbner stated that the study of communication revolves around the production, nature, and role of messages in life and in society. Craig conceptualized a focus upon the practical application of the discipline's work in 1989, when he argued that an intimate tie exists between the discipline's work and more practical communicative activities. To Craig and others, the discipline is best understood as one that entails the critical examination and study of communication that yields practical implications for individuals and society (Friedrich & Boileau, 1999). In 1991, the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education provided this description of communication as a field of study:

> An instructional program that generally describes the creation, transmission, and evaluation of messages at all levels, for commercial or non-commercial purposes and that may prepare individuals to apply principles of communications to work in specific media. Includes instruction in modes and behavioral aspects of human communications, and the formal means by which society organizes communication.

In 1994, Friedrich noted, in NCA's Rationale Kit, that speech communication professionals study communicative behavior with the goal of understanding the structure, pat-

terns, and effects of human communication and of facilitating a higher quality of communication both for individuals and for society.

State communication associations have also grappled with names and terminology in order to describe who they are and what it is their members study. For example, the Virginia Association of Speech Communication, in 1994, renamed itself Virginia Association for the Communication Arts and Sciences using a group consensus process led by Phil Emmert and Don Boileau. The association name recognizes both the creative and artistic roots of the field as well as the range of social scientific methods used to study human communication. Also, at this special meeting, members arrived at a common definition that reflects the breadth and depth of interests, approaches, and backgrounds of its members. The definitional statement agreed upon was:

> We study messages and outcomes that result from human interactive processes involving the content and relationship dimensions of sources, receivers, channels, and contexts (Virginia Association of Communication Arts and Sciences, 1994).

Taking a different approach and rather than attempting to define the field, Powers provided a description of what he perceived to be its structure, based on a message-centered, four-tiered structure of human communication theory and research (1995). According to Powers, his tiered structure can account for both the underlying unity of the discipline and the diversity of topics that interest communication theorists. The first and most central tier analyzes the nature of messages themselves. The second tier explores the implication of messages for understanding the communicator as an individual, a participant in social relationships, and an actor in a cultural community. The purpose of the third tier is to understand three traditional and moderately concrete levels of communication behavior: public, small group, and interpersonal communication. Tier four addresses the task of understanding communication practices that occur within significant, recurring social or cultural contexts and situations: health care, the courts, complex organizations, religious practices, schools, courtship, marriage, the family, and so forth.

An obvious consistency exists among these many attempts to define and describe the field of communication. They share essential elements, suggesting that not only is there overlap in terminology but that similar perspectives, as to the domain and core of the field, exist as well. The need to emphasize similarity of domain or phenomena was suggested by Delia who in 1979 asserted that as a maturing discipline, communication scholars' emerging focus should reflect the field as a phenomenon-centered, not method-centered, discipline. This assertion holds as true today as it did twenty years ago. A need to define the field in terms of the phenomenon that it studies continues to exist today. Therefore, the present study revisited a definition that was carefully developed at ACA's 1995 summer conference.

THE 1995 DEFINING THE FIELD CONFERENCE

In the summer of 1995, the Association for Communication Administration (ACA) spearheaded an ambitious effort to bring together communication scholar/teachers/administrators to develop a definition of the field of communication. What made the ACA summer conference unique was that it represented a pioneer attempt for an association to officially define the communication field in all its depth, breadth, and diversity. The purpose of the conference, as articulated by ACA President Bishetta Merritt, was to identify the essential elements of the communication field and to create a concise statement defining the discipline.

Prior to the start of the conference, 100 participants submitted a list of the specific elements they believed to constitute the knowledge base of the discipline of communication. Those elements were what Dubin refers to as enumerative units that would always be present regardless of the focus taken to studying communication (1978). In addition to identifying elements, participants were asked to write a concise statement defining the discipline of communication. Preliminary analysis of the submitted elements yielded a list of 108 terms to be considered for inclusion in the definition.

TABLE 1
First Set of Enumerative Terms Identified at the Conference

1.	Adapting	32.	Rhetoric
2.	Mass communication	33.	Culture
3.	Analyzing	34.	Sender/source
4.	Meaning	35.	Decode
5.	Argument	36.	Sharing
6.	Media	37.	Effect
7.	Art	38.	Signs/signals
8.	Message	39.	Encode
9.	Audience analysis	40.	Speech
10.	Negotiating	41.	Ethics
11.	Channels	42.	Symbols
12.	Nonverbal	43.	Expressing
13.	Cognition	44.	System
14.	Perception	45.	Feedback
15.	Coherence	46.	Technology
16.	Performance	47.	Historical
17.	Communication	48.	Uncertainty
18.	Persuading	49.	Human
19.	Communication apprehension	50.	Verbal
20.	Power	51.	Information
21.	Competency	52.	Transaction
22.	Process	53.	Intentional/unintentional
23.	Context	54.	Community
24.	Public	55.	Interaction
25.	Convergence	56.	Theory
26.	Reasoning	57.	Interpersonal
27.	Creativity	58.	Literacy
28.	Receivers	59.	Interpreting
29.	Critical thinking	60.	Policy
30.	Relationship	61.	Listening
31.	Cultural sensitivity	62.	Strategy

Eighty-five of the initial 100 participants attended the conference. For two days, they engaged in a nominal group process and used the 108 terms to generate a definition of the field. Initial evaluation of the enumerative units essential to any definition of the field resulted in selection of 62 essential terms by the participants. (see Table 1) Further elimination and narrowing down of the elements yielded 13 final enumerative terms that were to be used to develop a definition. (see Table 2) Conferees then participated in one of four small groups, each of which produced a definition of communication studies (see Table 3). Those four definitions were examined and revised by a new committee of conferees to produce

the final definition that was unanimously approved by all conference participants. (see Table 3)

TABLE 2
Final List of Terms for Inclusion in the Definition

1. Channels/media	8. Meaning
2. Competency	9. Process
3. Context	10. Relationship
4. Culture	11. Symbols
5. Effect/Outcomes	12. System
6. Human	13. Strategy
7. Interaction	

TABLE 3
Definitions Developed by Four Work Groups and Final Definition

Group One

The communication discipline studies the strategies, processes, and outcomes of messages created by humans to generate shared meanings across contexts, cultures, and channels/media to enhance the quality of communication practice.

Group Two

Communication as a field studies messages, outcomes, and competencies that result from interactive processes involving human relationships and meanings achieved through the use of symbols and strategies within contexts, channels, and cultures.

Group Three

The field of communication examines the process of symbolic interaction. This discipline studies the creation of meanings, effects, and/or outcomes of messages on human relationships within and across diverse channels, cultures, and contexts. This discipline promotes the strategies and ethical use of symbols to communicate competently.

Group Four

The field of communication focuses on the processes by which humans interact strategically through messages to effect meanings to relationships. The field fosters competencies in employing symbols, messages, channels, and media that reflect and shape cultural contexts.

Final Definition

The field of communication focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media. The field promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication.

Participants' evaluations indicated an overall satisfaction with the conference process and the resulting definition. They reported that they could easily use the definition to explain the communication discipline to non-discipline colleagues and to the general public. While this anecdotal evidence suggests that communication colleagues have used the definition effectively within and outside the academy, no systematic efforts have occurred to disseminate the definition or document its usefulness. Therefore, the present

survey attempted to examine how, since 1995, ACA members have used the definition, and their perceptions of its contemporary utility. If the majority of members felt a need for a new definition, future leadership of ACA may hold another such conference or assign a task force to work on a new or revised definition.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to assess the overall value of the 1995 definition, how well it is known, and how it has been used, a survey instrument was developed and mailed to all members of the Association for Communication Administration (ACA) in May 1999. Respondents were asked to provide demographic information and their responses to the definition. The questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. Several members of ACA, NCA, and 1995 conference participants were used to pilot test and revise the initial survey. The items on the questionnaire were designed to yield both quantitative and qualitative data, making use of open- and close-ended questions as well as allowing respondents to provide nominal, ordinal, and numerical data.

The survey was mailed to 250 ACA members in early May 1999 at a time when both enrollments and response rates were at their peak. No follow-up mailings were made. Out of a sample size of 250, 89 surveys were returned. The response rate of 35.6 percent is acceptable for a single mailing of a survey instrument. Unsolicited surveys, such as this, often receive the lowest response rates in social science research, usually approaching 20% (Fink, 1995).

RESULTS

Response Rate and Employment Status
Eighty-nine ACA members responded out of 250 questionnaires mailed for a response rate of 35.6 percent. The respondents included deans [12], associate deans [1], department chairs [67], assistant chairs [1], graduate coordinators [2], and one academic vice-president [5 did not identify their position]. Sixty of the respondents identified themselves as holding the rank of Full Professor and 22 were Associate Professors.

Awareness and Past Use of the Definition
In response to the question: "Are you aware of the ACA's definition of the field of communication?" just over 50 respondents, or 60 percent, had prior knowledge of the definition. As to the question, "How useful is it for the communication field/discipline to have a common definition?" on a five-point scale with five being very useful, the mean was 4.17. Respondents who were aware of the definition reported a mean of 3.62 on the usefulness scale. These respondents were then asked how they have used the definition. Given a range of nine activities, the most common use reported by about half of this group was in teaching, followed closely by use with administrators and in department mission and rationale statements. (see Table 4)

TABLE 4
Uses of the ACA Definition by Administrators Familiar with the Definition

Function	Frequency	Rank
Classes	23	1
Administrative Purposes	21	2
Rationale Statements	21	2
Mission Statements	20	4
Colleagues	18	5
Faculty Discussion	17	6
General Public	16	7
Other	1	

An open ended question was presented: "Please describe when and how you used this definition in your teaching or administrative duties." Thirty-five responses primarily reflected the top four uses mentioned above, but they provided more detail as to those usages. More than one-fourth of the open-ended responses indicated two or more uses. For one department chair, the definition was used in developing a mission statement, at faculty meeting discussions, as a base for setting parameters for the department in response to senior administrators' inquiries, and as part of a rationale for justifying the addition of an intercultural communication course.

In regards to *teaching*, respondents said the definition is used in introductory courses, upper division theory courses, and graduate courses. It has been used as a focus statement for a class assignment and to spark a discussion on boundaries. One respondent used it as part of a test question, although most report using it as a starting place to explain what communication is. One response mentioned how the definition works as "an explanation of how each course fits" into the general definition of the field.

From an *administrative* standpoint, comments indicated that the definition is used in mission statements, department brochures, course rationales, accreditation reports, and systematic departmental reviews. One administrator valued the definition as a way "to provide discussion of abstract in comparison to concrete examples." One department used it to explain to upper administrators how communication is different from psychology. Another reported that "accrediting agencies like it," while the limits in the definition "create some territorial difficulties between my department and the mass comm school." Some chairs have used the definition as part of a mission statement or rationale document, while others report using it to help create a departmental definition to fit their own academic focii. Several respondents pointed to its value for making funding requests. Another found it valuable for discussions with the general public "on radio and television interviews." The public relations value was indicated in responses ranging from brochures for the general public to letters about students for employers. One department put the definition in the departmental handbook given to all majors.

Future Use of the Definition

The survey also asked: "In the future, how might you as an ACA member use a common definition?" When presented with a list of ten future uses, differences emerged between those familiar with the definition and those who learned about it from the questionnaire. (see Table 5) Future uses for those familiar with the definition, in ascending order, are mission statements, administrative purposes, justification/rationale statements, and public relations. Future uses for those not familiar with the definition, in ascending order, are public relations, administrative purposes, faculty discussions, and teaching purposes/de-

partmental brochures. Taken together, the two groups ranked future uses as follows: administrative purposes, mission statements, public relations, and justification/rationale statements. Research was the least ranked use for all three lists.

TABLE 5
Future Uses for Those Familiar and Not Familiar With the Definition and Total Ranking of Future Use of the Definition

5a. Future Uses for Those Familiar with the Definition

Future Use	Familiar	Ranking
Mission Statements	41	1
Administrative Purposes	39	2
Justification/Rationale	34	3
Public Relations	34	3
Teaching Purposes	31	5
Dept. Brochures	31	6
Faculty Discussions	26	7
Curriculum Committees	25	8
Administrative Purposes	23	9
Research Purposes	10	10

5b. Future Uses for Those Not Familiar with the Definition

Future Use	Familiar	Ranking
Public Relations	25	1
Administrative Purposes	24	2
Faculty Discussions	23	3
Teaching Purposes	21	4
Dept. Brochures	21	4
Mission Statements	21	4
Justification/Rationale	21	7
Curriculum Committees	19	8
Administrative Purposes	18	9
Research Purposes	3	10

5c. Total Ranking of Future Use of the Definition

Future Use	Familiar	Ranking
Administrative Purposes	63	1
Mission Statements	62	2
Public Relations	59	3
Justification/Rationale	55	4
Teaching Purposes	52	5
Dept. Brochures	52	5
Faculty Discussions	49	7
Curriculum Committees	44	8
Administrative Purposes	41	9
Research Purposes	13	10

An open-ended question asked: "In the future, how might ACA use a common definition to advance the communication field/discipline?" Forty-one respondents identified a range of concerns from the viability and value of the definition to how it could be used for public relations purposes. The value of the definition was seen in its ability to provide a basic starting point for the communication field. One respondent noted, "It would serve as

a unifying point, a beginning point, for discussions: budgeting, vision, policy, etc." Another stated, "Certainly, one value is to set boundaries." "The fact that this definition is centered on message factors rather than technology" provided value for another respondent. Several saw the value in the centrality of the definition as a "basis of mergers of fragmented communication and academic organizations" and a way "for servicing departments and professionals." This centralizing theme was echoed by two different respondents who individually spoke of the "balkanization of the field." As one explained, the ACA definition "provides us with a unifying theme for a diverse, 'Balkanized field'." Another reported the ACA definition could be used to unify disciplines within their department that includes broadcasting, mass communication, public relations, speech communication, and theatre. It was also mentioned as a way to "develop a curriculum standard for a variety of majors to complement the definition."

For many respondents, the value of the definition was providing a common theme by its "identification of core issues/questions—where we all speak the same general language." In one department, the definition provided commonality among the three areas of speech communication, radio-television, and journalism. One observed, "A simple definition provides a point of departure for public discussion of who we are and what we are about. I have no illusion about such a definition addressing the field. Presenting a unified public image is very useful." Another respondent observed that the definition could be used "to frame responses about the unique focus of communication within the social sciences."

Other respondents reinforced the need for a common definition. One observed, "This helps us seem less ambiguous and we can now apparently be 'defined'." For another, in an umbrella department that includes broadcasting, mass communication, public relations, speech communication and theater, the definition is "a way of unifying disciplines." According to this respondent, "One of the greatest shortcomings of the discipline is/has been our inability to uniformly identify who we are and why we exist."

Juxtaposed against those perceived values, several chairs and deans questioned the viability of the definition. One saw the definition as "OK for working with administrators", but was worried that it would provide an artificial boundary limiting communication to the arts and sciences. This respondent raised the question, "When we talk about communication's niche, who's communication are we talking about?" The breadth of wording of the definition was problematic for another respondent, who reported, "It does not say anything specific, and is likely to get us back in the old bag of being about everything or more likely, nothing!" For another, "ACA needs to keep flexibility. I would hate to see us limit ourselves or rule out important research or classes because of a definition. We are a dynamic profession and our definition needs to maintain flexibility."

The largest response as to the future value and usefulness of the definition reflected a need to promote the definition to campus administrators and the public. One respondent observed, "Publicize it, explain, and encourage use." Greater use by ACA and NCA was encouraged. "This definition should be published in NCA and ACA publications in a readily available and readable format." Another respondent said that ACA needs to continue "promoting it" so that more communication administrators could use it as a "part of assessment documents, and accreditation."

Content of the Definition

Respondents were asked their opinion of how well the definition represented the field of communication in 1995 and then in 1999, and as well as their perceptions of the *breadth* and *depth* of the definition. Using a five-point scale they responded as follows. The first question asked, "How representative of the field of communication *was* the definition in 1995?" [M = 3.94]. A second question asked, "How representative of the field/discipline of

communication *is* the definition in 1999?" [M = 3.85] A third question asked, "To what extent does the definition presented above represent the breadth of the communication field/discipline?" [M =3.72], while the next question addressed depth, "To what extent does the definition presented above represent the depth of the communication field/discipline?" [M= 3.47].

The next question sought to discover if there was a need to change the definition. Respondents were asked, "Are there changes you would recommend to make the definition more relevant or useful as we approach the year 2000." By two to one [26=Yes and 54=No], two-thirds of the respondents said the definition does not need to be changed.

A last question asked the respondents who said the definition needed to be changed to suggest possible changes. Several ACA members suggested adding elements to the definition: (1) add "messages across cultural contexts," (2) add something about human/technology interface, (3) consider adding artistic elements, (4) add "how people use information and messages to generate meanings," (5) should also include language about "creating meanings," and (6) we use messages to generate meaning "in people."

Suggestions for substitutions included: (1) instead of "use messages," add "co-create messages and interactions," and (2) replace the "within and across" clause with "in order to relate to and influence others." Others made recommendations for changes but did not recommend any language. These ideas included: (1) add the notion of "media, policy, the business-side [advertising, sales..], message production" (2) "There needs to be acknowledgment that a substantive part of the field is **historical** and/or **critical** in focus;" (3) specify by a sub-definition, "something to accommodate those who still seek the structure of communication;" (4) "add something about the need for communication skills to be effective in personal and professional pursuits; to be competitive in a global economy in the new millennium;" and (5) "incorporate mass media as well as human communication."

Several comments reflected a concern for the underlying philosophy of the definition, specifically noting its restrictions or limitations. These included: "The definition appears to wipe out most of the inventional process. It seems to say: use the messages, while ignoring where messages originate. The definition is also one of the most reductively 'functionalist' statement I have seen." One respondent said,

> The definition is overly focused on meaning....but more importantly communication is studied as a social practice. And these practices—from interpersonal to socio-cultural—add to the body of knowledge of humans as symbol using animals. Communication needs to set itself on a par with other liberal arts in contributing to this knowledge.

Another reported, "The definition implies that messages exist "out there" to be used. Also, it establishes a distinction between 'message' and 'meaning.' Finally, it comes from a sender-receiver linear model; there's no attention to the interactive role of message production."

One stated, "On a tentative basis, I would like to discuss the issue of convergence in especially electronic communication to make sure that we are inclusive—not exclusive." A final change, "The definition is weighted toward message creation ('generation')—it is *source* focused, as though the most important element to understand is *intentional* meaning construction...."

Others suggested ways to keep the definition the same, such as: "keep focus on ethics;" "I think that the definition is appropriate for the purpose it serves; to give 'outsiders' an understanding of what the field of communication is about."

Another person wanted to provide a historical perspective by adding at the start of the definition, "The field of communication has expanded beyond its original focus on spoken

language to a concern with how people use messages to generate...." This respondent felt that

> ...The discipline has a unique case that defines it and establishes its right and ability to deal with messages in a way that is distinctive and grounded in a 2,000-year history of scholarship. We are not "latecomers" to the academy, and that is a charge that is often made by other academic areas to demean our work. Even the "ivies" are now acknowledging the importance of speech education, so it is foolish for our discipline to continue to ignore or obfuscate its roots.

DISCUSSION

Awareness emerged as a significant issue, as four out of ten ACA members were not aware of the definition, suggesting that more effort is needed by both ACA and NCA to bolster publicity. However, for the majority who were aware of the definition, the multiple uses reported by the 84 administrators demonstrate its overall value. The many uses discovered by administrators, representing a variety of institutions, reflect the intentions of the original conference participants.

In teaching, the definition is being used at all levels — introductory, lower division, upper division, and graduate courses. The most common use by chairs was for a variety of administrative purposes with both internal and external audiences. For those administrators familiar with the definition, the most common uses reported, after teaching, were with administrators, rationale statements, and mission statements. The definition was also used with colleagues, faculty, and the general public. The usage suggests a broad-based application of the definition.

For all the respondents, which included even those wanting to change the definition, the top five potential uses, for more than 60% of those responding, were: (1) administrative purposes, (2) mission statements, (3) public relations, (4) justification/rationale statements, and (5) department brochures and teaching, a tie. These uses represent important communication tasks for both external and internal audiences. Since these five uses are the same, but in a different order for those familiar with the definition, this result endorses the need for more use by those new chairs and for those not yet familiar with the definition.

The positive direction, for the four questions about the definition and its representation of the field, indicates a general, but not strong support of the definition. The slightly lower mean of 3.85 for the representativeness of the definition in 1999 compared to a view in 1995 of 3.94 reflects continued support for the definition. The higher mean for the definition representing the *breadth* [3.72] of communication compared to the *depth* [3.47] was expected, as a single definition cannot capture the total depth of a discipline. Since less than one-third had changes to recommend, (suggestions are discussed above) this definition was determined by the authors to have a strong pragmatic value. For those participating in the conference, the realization that each person started with her/his own unique definition makes the agreement that much more significant as well as pragmatic.

CONCLUSIONS

The most significant discovery of this study was the variety of uses for the definition. Another important revelation was that 40 percent of the ACA administrators who responded were unaware of the definition, which suggests that both ACA and NCA need to further promote the definition of the field. The definition can be included on association and

departmental home pages, in publications, information forms, brochures, and other public-ity materials. Perhaps both associations can place greater emphasis on the definition and its uses in workshops, convention panels, and other association activities.

Although ACA did not originally convene the conference to create another definition for teaching purposes, the pedagogical uses indicated across levels of the academe was both surprising and encouraging. These types of activities and uses need to be shared among communication instructors through publication and convention programs. Further inquiry can move beyond the initial definition and begin to explore and define what Dubin (1978) calls "boundaries" of the discipline.

Similarly, the usefulness of the definition needs to be shared among all communica-tion administrators. The increased public relations activity in all the tiers of higher educa-tion suggests that the list of activities for the potential use of the definition will increase. A definition helps focus many of the activities within an academic unit or institution. For example, the definition, with its cultural implications, helped one department add an inter-cultural communication course, while another used it to differentiate communication from psychology. Chairs used the definition with a variety of external audiences from parents to television and radio interviews. Many departments were using the definition in both mis-sion statements and brochures; others were using it in accreditation and/or rationale state-ments. These uses all indicate a need for systematic consideration by communication administrators of how to use the definition.

Just as departments can use the definition in accreditation reports, national communi-cation organizations can use it to spread the word. For a professional organization, the availability of a definition has significant implications. This year, the National Communi-cation Association is working with the Department of Education to revise its *Classification of Instructional Programs* (CIP) document. The national office of the NCA is working in collaboration with the Council of Communication Associations to incorporate the ACA definition of communication in the CIP-2000 publication. Other such collaborative efforts should be encouraged.

The 1995 conference produced a definition that captures the domain of communica-tion, in all its depth, breadth, and diversity, one that is clearly valued and used by many members of the Association of Communication Administrators. This study discovered that others need to learn about the definition, and that many practical uses exist for it. A final pragmatically-focused value for the ACA definition is that it fits what we have called the "airplane metaphor;" that is, if someone asks what it is you do, you can aptly respond with ACA's definition of communication. Other uses and applications need to be discovered as well. With the new millennium upon us, the challenge, now, is to promote the definition systematically, so that it is available to help communication administrators and teachers represent and promote the field of communication, internally and externally, in ways of most value to them.

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Charles J. Korn, (D. A., George Mason University, 1997) is Professor of Speech Communi-cation/Drama, Northern Virginia Community College, Manassas, VA.

Sherwyn P. Morreale, (Ph.D., University of Denver, 1989) is Associate Director of the National Communication Association, Washington, DC

Don M. Boileau, (Ph.D., University of Oregon, 1972) is Professor of Communication at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

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