

My deep appreciation for communication lies in how fluid it is in every aspect of our lives. It's a skill that we rely on everyday to push us forward and most of the time. Most times, we aren't even aware of the true implications that communication has. Whether it's sharing information, forming relationships, or establishing your wants and needs, understanding how and why we communicate will ultimately shape a more united world. During my four years, the University of Alabama has instilled in me various skills such as critical thinking, a deep understanding of interpersonal communication and public speaking. It's these skills that have allowed me to understand this change in cultural contexts and adjust accordingly. It's these skills that have allowed me to deliver countless speeches across multiple different platforms and connect with others in order to create a cohesive and successful environment. I feel confident in my ability to present myself and share my message with the world.

Using the techniques and methods that I've acquired throughout my undergraduate career, I am able to identify what my own cultural context is and have developed a knowledge/appreciation for the various cultures that exist all around me. I am able to effectively communicate with others in order to create a more cohesive and harmonious environment. I am able to critique others' messages in order to further my education and understanding of the world around me. I am able to take a message from another cultural context, break it down, and recreate it in a way that makes it easier to understand and comprehend.

Throughout my undergraduate career, I've been in constant awe of how communication shapes the world we live in and how the study of communication can transform how you act in and perceive the world. Communication studies has given me valuable skills that can be applied both inside and outside of the classroom and is a major that I think is of utmost importance.

One Wednesday afternoon in November, my second grade teacher gave the class an assignment: give an impromptu speech. The topic? You were the Thanksgiving turkey and you had to persuade the class about why you shouldn't be eaten for Thanksgiving dinner. It's been 14 years since that day and while the details have escaped me, the genuine excitement and joy of delivering that speech has certainly stayed. Public speaking is without a doubt something that brings me great joy. While I was considered a relatively shy kid, I found it easy to come alive whenever it involved giving a speech or presentation in front of an audience. The simple act of capturing the attention of an audience and connecting with them through words or actions is something that I find fascinating. This fascination has only grown stronger throughout my four years here at The Capstone.

For my Capstone Seminar course, I've decided to pursue a project focusing on public speaking anxiety in the university setting. I've decided to survey students who are currently enrolled in an Intro to Public Speaking course and collect data regarding the level of public speaking anxiety they experience within the classroom. Then using this data, I plan to research and examine different techniques and methods that could be used to alleviate this anxiety. This topic is strongly tied to my genuine love and appreciation for public speaking--a love that has been constant since my persuasive Thanksgiving turkey speech. This project is so important to me because I believe that everyone deserves to have a voice and the ability to be heard. To know that a large number of college students struggle with public speaking anxiety is something that I think needs more attention and care. Communication is fluid in everything we do. It can be found throughout multiple different jobs and disciplines and is simply a crucial life skill that is used everyday. It's important that students are given the proper tools and techniques to lessen their

fears and anxiety so that they can share their own message with the world. I would love to instill these mechanisms into the university curriculum so that students can find comfort in their voice and can comfortably engage in public speaking.

Looking back, it's challenging to distinguish which classes I've cherished the most because I truly have enjoyed them all. With that being said, there is one course in particular that left a profound impact on me and has been essential to the success of my undergraduate career--Advanced Public Speaking. After spending a semester in Intro to Public Speaking, I was eager to advance my expertise and further strengthen my public speaking skills in Advanced Public Speaking. This course not only expanded my knowledge of constructing and delivering different speeches, but also encouraged me to find my own voice and gain a sense of "self" as a communicator. This was a very transformative moment for me. Despite my love and external ease when it came to public speaking, I internally battled self-doubt for years due to me not believing that what I had to say was good enough. My inner monologue was a sea of questions: Why do my thoughts and ideals even matter? Am I even "qualified" to be informing and persuading my peers on these matters that meant so much to me? Why should people listen to me? Advanced Public Speaking not only instilled the necessary skills needed to be a successful public speaker, but helped me find MY VOICE. A voice that I now know deserves to be heard.

With that being said, having established my own sense of "self" and finding my personal style, I have come to appreciate that not everyone shares the same communication style or process. Along with core public speaking skills, Advanced Public Speaking has further instilled in me what cultural competence is and why it is so important. We are communicating with different cultures every single day whether that be race, religion, gender, and it's important that

we not only acknowledge our own culture and cultural ability, but also appreciate and accommodate other cultures as well. Because of Advanced Public Speaking, and the other communication studies courses here at UA I feel confident in my ability to effectively craft and communicate a message and deliver it thoroughly across multiple different cultures and platforms.