


Assessment of the Videotape "Majoring in Technical Communication"

Introduction




Here is the report you requested on my evaluation of the University of Minnesota videotape "Majoring in Technical Communication." I believe a similar film at WSU would be beneficial, to students because it provides both an introduction to the field and describes the requirements for the major.

The film is 15 minutes long and answers questions about technical communication through interviews with faculty, students, and two technical writers. Major topics are the technical communication field and admission to the program.



The Technical Communication Field

The film describes the types of jobs technical communicators do, salary, and the personal characteristics a technical communicator needs.



Types of Jobs

By presenting interviews with two technical writers, the film shows the wide range of tasks technical writers do. These include writing manuals, standards and procedures, brochures, marketing information, and information packages.

Technical communicators also take part in designing products and working with customers. They must get regulatory information across to customers by rewriting documents and talking to customers.

Salary

A beginning technical writer's salary varies, depending on his or her skills, technical background, and the nature of the industry. For example, government and military jobs pay more. The median salary of members in the Society for Technical Communication is \$40,000.

Requirements



A student planning to enter the field needs two basic types of skill: technical and interpersonal. First, he or she should take science electives such as biology, botany, and computer science so the student understands what he/she is communicating. In addition, he/she must have strong interpersonal communication skills to be able to extract information and work with other writers.

Admission to the Program

There are four main steps involved in admission to the program at University of Minnesota:



Admission to the College of Agriculture

To be admitted to the College of Agriculture, a student must complete 32 required credits:

Rhetoric and English Composition	8
Physical and Biological Science	8
Social Science	8
Math, CS, and Engineering Tech.	8

Formal Application

To be formally admitted to the Technical Communication program, a student must submit the following:

- Application form
- Letter of Intent
- Transcripts
 - 2.0 GPA in College of Agriculture
 - 2.5 GPA in the 32 required credits
 - Portfolio



The **portfolio** is a collection of writing samples from classes or essay contests, graphics, or materials manufactured for the portfolio. The portfolio should look professional, be designed for the audience, and be free of errors.

Faculty Review

Once a quarter, faculty consider the following criteria before admitting a student:

- Strong academic record
- Grade point
- Difficulty of courses
- Letter of intent Previous experience
- Portfolio oral skills

Requirements

A student must complete both coursework and an internship.

Coursework: Once admitted, a student must fulfill the requirements of the College of Agriculture, as well as those required for a degree in technical communication. The latter include

- Writing and Editing
- Oral communication
- Visual Communication
- Communication Systems
- Communication Theory and Research
- Philosophy of Science and Technology
- Technical Electives
- Senior Seminar

Internship: The internship is one of the most important parts of the program because a student

- becomes part of the real world
- is exposed to corporate ideas
- applies theory in practice
- experiences what professionals do
- explores possible career paths

The internship director serves as mentor and mediator, while the faculty advisor helps the student plan the program and select a company.



Conclusions and Recommendation

In conclusion, I believe the length of the tape was about right. In addition, the tape covered all the information a student would need to know.

My only criticism is that the tape did not have a "professional" look due to the interviews with actual faculty. In addition, I believe there should have been interviews more types of technical writers.

Therefore, I recommend that Wright State prepare a similar tape to show to students entering the technical writing program.