

## **Media Communication Literacy- A Campus Imperative**

**Submitted by the College of Media, Communication and Information**

What we propose: Every student who graduates from CU should be able to understand how messages, images and information are gathered, organized and used to create meaning. Graduates should possess the skillset to be able to apply critical thinking to media and understand technology's role and impact in society. This understanding of technology from a social and communicative perspective is central to understanding society in the information age.

Why the campus needs it: CU Boulder's strategic imperatives are to shape tomorrow's leaders, be the top university for innovation, and positively impact humanity. These goals necessitate a definition of literacy beyond "reading and writing" to recognize technology's impact on public participation and deliberation, decision-making and informed citizenry. To fully participate in the current and future economy and society, students need to acquire competencies in evolving multimedia environments by learning to critically evaluate media messages.

Essentials of media literacy are the ability to analyze and evaluate information from a wide variety of sources as well as communicate messages in a variety of formats. The majority of CU undergraduate students are "digital natives" but their ability to understand the validity of the un-curated content they are routinely exposed to (and often create) through social media, blogs and wikis is underdeveloped. The ability to identify valid sources, objectively analyze data then synthesize and communicate information are learned skills. Students are not likely to acquire this knowledge intuitively or organically on their own so it must be addressed in our curriculum.

What are the obstacles: Though sometimes colleges have their own "core" curriculum, currently there is no academic mechanism to mandate media literacy for all CU students through a university core requirement. The CMCI department of Media Studies has a first year seminar on media literacy and Media Studies and Journalism will launch a media/public literacy collaborative this year. These are strong first steps. To create a campus-level media literacy core would require a large investment of time and resources. A multidisciplinary approach is crucial, as is the need to reduce barriers to cross disciplinary collaboration.

Conclusion: A mandated media literacy education prepares students to access, analyze, evaluate, create and engage with media in a variety of forms. A deep understanding of all forms of media, how they work, how data and facts can be manipulated are essential to becoming responsible consumers and producers of media. Graduating media literate citizens aligns with CU Boulder strategic imperatives and furthers global citizenship, public scholarship and a strong democracy.