

JOUR 203 Final Enterprise Story

Cal Poly's Suspension of the IMC Minor

By Sheri Donahue

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The Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) minor has been suspended for the 2021-2022 academic year, according to the Orafalea College of Business website. This comes after the uncertain status of the minor over the past year, as the application for the minor was closed for Winter and Spring quarter 2021.

Several students have voiced their frustrations over the suspension of the IMC minor. Currently, the classes required for the minor are still available and students have been able to complete these requirements during the suspension, despite not being officially accepted into the minor. Others are still taking the required courses in anticipation of applying to the IMC minor, but are crestfallen by the continuation of its suspended status. Students that are graduating this year or the next are dismayed that they have been shut out of the chance to apply to the minor during their time at Cal Poly.

The Integrated Marketing Communications minor, known as IMC for short, is an interdisciplinary program with a “carefully-crafted blend of journalism, graphic communication [GrC], and marketing courses,” according to the webpage dedicated to the minor. According to the flow chart on this webpage, there is a minimum of seven classes required to complete the minor, some of which require prerequisite courses that are not included in the total.

Several of the required courses overlap with other requirements for different majors, concentrations, tracks, and other minors offered at Cal Poly. There is flexibility in some of the required options, allowing students to optimize their schedule to include courses that serve as a requirement for two or more areas of study.

Students are provided with three options for the minor's capstone course, with one from each of the disciplines covered by the minor. The FAQ section on the IMC minor webpage addresses the question, “Should I take the journalism, marketing, or GRC capstone class?”. Students are able to take any of the three options but “it may be useful to take one outside your own field to increase your exposure to other disciplines and students.”

This blend of courses includes business classes that are also required for marketing concentration students. There is the option to take BUS 418 “Listening to the Customer” or BUS 396 “Consumer Insights”, both of which require BUS 346 “Intro to Marketing” as a prerequisite. Additionally, the IMC minor flow chart includes a marketing concentration elective

BUS 453 “Digital and New Media Marketing”. The marketing course offered as an option for the capstone of the minor is BUS 459 “Social Media’s Role in IMC”.

The IMC minor also incorporates the journalism program and courses from its public relations track. The first course in the IMC flow chart is JOUR 312 “Public Relations”. Other required courses from this area of study include JOUR 331 “Contemporary Advertising” and JOUR 342 “Public Relations Writing and Editing”. Students pursuing the minor also have the option to take JOUR 390 “Visual Communication for the Mass Media” and the capstone class JOUR 415 “Advanced Public Relations Practice”.

The third program that the IMC minor draws from for its course requirements is the Graphic Communication major, or GrC for short. While courses in both journalism and marketing programs are fairly open to all students, the GrC department is mostly closed off to students outside of the major. Of the 49 courses offered for undergraduates in the Graphic Communication program, only three are open to students that are not majoring or minoring in GrC. Two of these three courses are included in the IMC minor flow chart. All students can take GRC 377 “Web and Print Publishing” and the capstone option GRC 420 “Graphic Communication in IMC”. For students in GrC, there is more flexibility in required courses for the minor with the option to take GRC 388 “Web Development and Content Management”, as well as prerequisite substitutes for other courses.

The courses that are offered under the umbrella of the Integrated Marketing Communications minor create a unique and valuable opportunity for students to develop skills in multiple separate, but related industries. According to the website, “Students will learn to acquire and leverage customer insights; to create and deploy visual, graphic, and written content across traditional and digital media channels; and to analyze the impact. Graduates with these skills are in demand for positions in social media, content marketing, digital marketing, and brand storytelling. The opportunities and job titles are many and growing!”

Spencer Egbert, a 4th year communication studies student with a minor in sales who is slated to graduate in 2022, echoed this sentiment. “It seems like a great opportunity to learn valuable skills that can be used for both personal growth and in a professional setting. The combination of advertising, marketing, and public relations are valuable for any business or company, no matter how small or large.” He is interested in pursuing the IMC minor and has taken three of the required courses, all of which overlap with his minor in sales. Egbert believes that the skills acquired from the IMC minor, such as “marketing fundamentals, public relations practice, and graphic design and video editing”, align with his career goals and interests. “These skills can help me start my own business, which is my long-term goal professionally.”

He is not the only student that believes that the IMC minor is beneficial post-grad. Mia Chaney, a 2nd year statistics major currently in a change of major agreement to switch into communication studies, explained her reason for pursuing the minor. "I have a lot of interests and definitely had a difficult time narrowing them down to one major so the IMC minor perfectly combines journalism, business marketing, and graphic communications which were all things I considered majoring in. My career goals are still forming and pretty broad right now but I want to go into communications and marketing with either an emphasis in advertising or PR, so these classes in the IMC minor not only help me to realize which things I want to pursue in a career but also just give me a good amount of experience." She has taken two classes required for the minor, none of which overlap with the requirements for her future course of study.

Both Chaney and Egbert described the suspension of the IMC minor as "disappointing". Chaney touched on the lack of access to interdisciplinary pursuits at Cal Poly. "I was upset because unless you are a business major, there's only one option to study or minor in marketing when I feel like that's a subject that connects to several other majors. There also isn't a journalism minor which also limits options."

Similarly, both students previously interviewed felt that the lack of communication from the administration about the suspension of the IMC minor was "confusing" and "frustrating". Each provided their own theory as to why the minor was suspended. "I talked with a marketing professor of mine and it seems like the whole department is understaffed. It's a really reasonable excuse, but a little disappointing," Egbert remarked. Chaney also agreed that numbers could possibly be responsible for the IMC minor's current and future suspended status. "I was genuinely confused why they would suspend it when I know how popular it is. I know there's a big chance they suspended it due to too many people applying, but I feel like students are very left in the dark about any possibility of it coming back or the possible introduction of any similar and new minors."

Despite the minor being suspended for the next academic year and an expected graduation date before the potential end of the suspension, Egbert will continue with IMC. "I'm still planning to take a majority of the classes for my own benefit, but it would have been great getting recognition for completing them." Chaney is still hopeful for the return of the minor. "I still plan to take the classes for the minor because they still interest me and I hope that it will be brought back for my last year at Cal Poly."

Graduating Communication Studies student Camryn Monticello was officially accepted off the waitlist for the IMC minor in her 2nd year at Cal Poly, before its suspension. Upon hearing about its suspended status, she reflected on the impact it had on her. "That minor was everything for me. IMC was the best minor because it gave me exposure to business and GRC which I wouldn't have learned in my major."

Sources:

- Spencer Egbert, 4th year Communication Studies student, Sales minor
(805) 459-3942
- Mia Chaney, 2nd year Statistics student, Communication Studies ICMA
(831) 331-1508
- Camryn Monticello, 4th year Communication Studies student, Integrated Marketing Communications minor
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- Integrated Marketing Communications Minor | Marketing Area - Orfalea College of Business
<https://www.cob.calpoly.edu/marketing/integrated-marketing-communications-minor/>