

# New degree focus helps health professionals boost their communication skills

By Charles Najera, ASU News  
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Communication plays a critical role in nearly every aspect of health and wellness. It shapes how patients understand information, how teams collaborate and how health organizations engage the communities they serve.

But communication is rarely the primary focus of professional training. As health care and wellness organizations face increasingly complex challenges, professionals need advanced communication skills to navigate change, foster understanding and improve outcomes.

The [Hugh Downs School of Human Communication](#) is addressing that challenge with a new [health communication concentration](#) within its online master's degree in communication program, launching in fall 2026.

The program arrives at a time when organizations increasingly recognize communication as a critical professional skill. Health care is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the labor market, and organizations across health care, public health, nonprofit, government, and community and wellness settings need professionals who can communicate clearly, build trust, lead effectively and support better outcomes for the people they serve.

"Communication is often the factor that determines whether good ideas, effective programs and quality care have an impact," said Professor Laura Guerrero, director of the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication. "Across health care and wellness organizations, professionals are being asked to lead teams, engage communities, navigate change and help people make informed decisions in increasingly complex information environments. Those challenges require more than technical expertise. They require strong communication skills."

Unlike programs rooted in public health or health care administration, the health communication concentration approaches health through a communication lens. Students will explore how communication shapes understanding, engagement and decision-making across a range of health-related contexts.

These include patient-provider communication, health education, community engagement, organizational leadership, team communication, digital health communication, health advocacy and strategic communication campaigns.

That distinction matters for working professionals whose work intersects with health but who are not pursuing clinical careers. The concentration is designed for communicators, educators, managers and nonprofit professionals who want the tools to communicate more effectively, lead with confidence, and create positive change within their organizations and communities.

[Raena Quinlivan](#), director of online graduate programs, emphasized the concentration's focus on practical application and real-world impact.

"We want graduates to leave the program with tools they can apply immediately in their professional roles," she said. "Whether they're managing a team, creating a communication campaign, working with patients or building community partnerships, we want them to see communication as a skill they can use strategically to solve problems and help their organizations achieve their goals."

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## Interested?

The fully online, 30-credit program can be completed in as little as one year. Designed with working professionals in mind, it offers the flexibility to continue your education while balancing career and personal commitments.

[Learn more and apply.](#)

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## Main image



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