Title: What are the barriers to understanding financial concepts for first-year students in the foundational communication course in the public relations degree?

**Project Summary** (50-100 words for the public website):
Appropriate application of financial concepts is a required component for satisfactory course outcomes throughout the Bachelor of Communication - Public Relations degree. Understanding and applying these concepts is a first-step toward financial literacy - a critical component for communication professionals in developing strategic organizational communication and reputation management programs. Many first-year public relations students self-identify as experiencing ‘significant anxiety’ relating to financial concepts within the communication curriculum. This inquiry explores how communication students experience curriculum when learning and applying financial concepts within the framework of required communication project outcomes.

**Revised Research Question:**
*What are the barriers to understanding financial concepts for first-year students in the foundational communication course in the public relations degree?*

**Data Required to Answer your Research Question:**
Quantitative and qualitative data gathering to assess pre-during-post experience from perception to application of financial concepts across the current curriculum in COMM 1841 - Introduction to Public Relations

**Methods of Gathering Data:**
For the fall 2010 semester in COMM 1841 - Introduction to Public Relations, I anticipate quantitative data gathering for all current components of the course, including: the use of Likert-based measures in pre-testing and post-testing surveys administered during the first week of class and following final exams; assessment scores from relevant data points within established course tests, mid-term and final exams; assessment of weekly one-minute paper submissions and indicators of understanding in post-assessment follow-up; and individual and team evaluation survey results.

An additional quantitative data source may include assessment surveys issued at the initial call for participants. Data from both pre and post testing will be compared to determine statistical significance.
Qualitative data may be gathered through one-on-one interviews conducted after completion of the coursework. The interview format would consist of structured questions followed by an open forum to allow discussion to emerge regarding the student experience as they transitioned through their coursework.

I see this research as the initial step in a longer-term, multi-level project throughout the four-year bachelor of communications degree, where students participate in an inquiry, first as incoming students to our introductory course (COMM 1841) and as continuing students in the core communication courses where mathematics/financial concepts are required, including:

- COMM 3855 Research Methods
- COMM 3847 Public Relations Management
- COMM 4841 Strategic Communication Planning and particularly
- COMM 4845 Investor Relations

**Anticipated Evidence:**
I anticipate that pre-testing and post-testing comparison of quantitative data sets would identify positive changes in the student perceptions of the level of difficulty of applying financial concepts to communication projects. I would anticipate that assessment of qualitative data from post-course interviews would reveal emerging themes indicating a positive experience (or increasingly positive perception) of the students’ ability to understand and apply financial concepts.

**Project Timeline (2010 through 2011):**
Jan 2010 - Finalize January Project Snapshot
Feb 2010 - Initial literature search terms - Attend February Off-Site Residency
Apr 2010 - Attend Research/Ethics Workshop - Submit Ethics proposal
May - Aug 2010 - Literature Review - Review and Preparation of all course materials for COMM 1841
Sep - Dec 2010 - Research Project Underway - Teaching COMM 1841
Jan - Apr 2011 - Analyzing Research Data
Apr - Dec 2011 - Submission of proposals to present at appropriate conferences or events internal and external to Mount Royal (MRFA Days May 2011; STLHE; ISSOTL)
Literature Search Results (in categories or by keywords):
Classroom Environment
Classroom Communication
Communication
Corporate financial communication
Educational Strategies
Financial information
Financial/technical writing/communication
Financial stakeholders
Financial market research
Problem Solving
Teaching Methods

Additional Information, Comments, Questions:
Not at this time.