

Assessment Report (June 2016)—Accomplishments and Next Steps

1. Integrated Newsroom.

The Department launched the Utah State News Service, an integrated newsroom designed to serve as a lab for courses in news reporting and production, provide content for on-campus platforms and feed content to professional news organizations. Approximately 90 articles were published on the newsroom's website during the year, and four or five were picked up by professional media.

As the newsroom expands, faculty will continue to track placement of material as a way of evaluating success in meeting skills-oriented departmental learning objectives (i.e., objectives related to demonstrating written, oral and visual communication skills; an understanding of social science research methods; an understanding of journalistic investigation methods; and an understanding of professional standards and conduct).

2. Media Scholars Program.

Through the Media Scholars Program, initiated in 2015/16, students earn points for participating in a range of approved curricular and extracurricular activities designed to broaden and deepen their educational experience. Those with enough points are recognized at the end of the academic year. The first Media Scholar, Melissa Allison, was honored this year.

Plans call for publicizing the program to all JCOM students and tracking a.) the numbers of Media Scholars and b.) participation in specific activities that support departmental learning objectives.

3. Master's Program.

The JCOM master's program has been on hiatus for several years. A committee has been formed to consider whether it is feasible to revive the program and, if so, what form it should take.

Discussion is ongoing; a decision will be made within two years.

4. Student Learning Assessment: Pre/Post.

As in the past, faculty evaluated success in meeting JCOM learning objectives in individual courses by comparing students' work early in the semester with their later work. Two examples follow. The first is from JCOM 2010 (Media Smarts) and is illustrative of the approach in courses using student projects. The second is from JCOM 1500 (Introduction to Mass Communication) and shows the recent adoption of a pre/post survey in a large lecture class.

a. JCOM 2010 (Instructor: Dr. Candi Carter Olson).

Consistent with departmental learning objectives 1 and 3, students are expected to show mastery of social science research skills; written, oral and visual communication skills; and an ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through the media using their understanding of the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical and ethical foundations of the media. Students are also expected to understand the challenges facing

media practitioners (departmental learning objective 4). Students demonstrate mastery of these skills through a progression of three multimedia research projects that require a high level of critical thought and application of course materials. The links below show one group's progression from struggling to understand the course materials on their first project to demonstrating mastery of research and critical thinking skills when it comes to the challenges facing media practitioners on the final project. This group had to redo the first project because they didn't fulfill the project's research or fact-checking requirements. (Multimedia projects do not save multiple drafts, so the original project can't be shown.) The second project was a solid B. The group still struggled with how to integrate research, but the students improved their critical analysis skills and applied course concepts to the analysis sections. The final project shows the group integrating research appropriately and developing in-depth analyses for each of the individual medium sections. This improvement is typical of that shown by JCOM 2010 groups.

<https://gogoldorgohome.wordpress.com>

<http://reggieann741.wix.com/trump>

<http://reggieann95.wix.com/gradingnews>

b. JCOM 1500 (Instructor: Dr. Cathy Ferrand Bullock).

During the fall, a pre/post survey was initiated to evaluate basic student knowledge about and understanding of mass media in a democratic society (departmental learning objective 3). The five-question multiple-choice and true/false survey was given to students early in the semester; the same questions were then included on the final exam. The survey was repeated during spring semester. Statistical analysis showed a significant increase in correct answers at the end of each semester ($p < .001$ for each question).

The faculty's goal is to develop and post a departmental portfolio of examples highlighting students' pre/post work relevant to departmental learning objectives.

5. Student Learning Assessment: Professional Clients.

Some JCOM courses require students to complete work for professional on- and off-campus clients. Feedback from these clients provides important information about how well learning objectives are being met.

JCOM 3320 (Strategic Research Methods in Public Relations), taught by Dr. Debra Jenson, is a typical example. During 2014-2015, students completed a full research project focusing on Special Olympics Utah's Unified Sports programming. In a November 2015 letter to John Allen, dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Special Olympics Utah director of program services wrote:

We received valuable information that our staff was able to utilize to better serve the schools and athletes/partners/coaches participating in this program. Because of the information collected during this project we are also better able to communicate the need for our programming as we have locally relevant data to support our messaging.

This feedback suggests the course helped students understand and apply social science research methods, model professional conduct and demonstrate mastery of skills required to succeed in public relations (learning objectives 1b, 1e and 2).

The faculty's goal is to collect and post additional examples highlighting relevant feedback from class project clients and internship supervisors.

6. Student Learning Assessment: Placement in the Field.

As a professional program, the Department of Journalism and Communication emphasizes mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions (departmental learning objective 2). A primary way this is measured is through successful job placement. Faculty in the broadcast area of emphasis report that 100 percent of the December 2015 and May 2016 graduates interested in employment within the field are already working for television stations.

The faculty's goal is to use LinkedIn, Facebook and Google as well as personal contact to more formally track students graduating in the public relations and journalistic writing areas of emphasis.