

## 2007-2008 Program Assessment Report\*

**Name of Department/Unit:**

JOURNALISM

**List of Programs:**

BACHELOR OF ARTS, JOURNALISM  
MINOR, JOURNALISM  
MINOR, SPANISH-LANGUAGE JOURNALISM

MASTER OF ARTS, MASS COMMUNICATION

**Department/Unit Mission:**

The Department of Journalism strives to prepare its students to become well-educated, principled citizens who are capable of initiating careers as skilled journalists, public relations practitioners and other related communication professionals.

**Department/Unit Goals:**

The Department will help students achieve the following objectives by the end of their program of study:

- 1) Attain competency in writing basics such as grammar and punctuation, word usage and spelling, sentence and story structure and journalistic style;
- 2) Attain competency in the gathering and critical analysis of information using such techniques as interviewing, observation and researching primary and secondary sources;
- 3) Acquire expertise in thinking critically and creatively, while exercising news judgment in the organization and presentation of information in multiple journalistic forms (i.e., print, visual and electronic, and public relations);
- 4) Develop an ethical basis for making journalistic and public relations decisions;
- 5) Develop flexibility in working in evolving mass communication media and environments using a variety of technologies and techniques;
- 6) Understand the historical, theoretical, legal, and societal contexts within which journalists and public relations practitioners work.

**Name of Assessment Liaison:**

LINDA BOWEN

**Name of College:**

MIKE CURB COLLEGE OF ARTS, MEDIA, AND COMMUNICATION

*\*Reports are due to the AMC Assessment Director, Paula DiMarco ([Paula.j.dimarco@csun.edu](mailto:Paula.j.dimarco@csun.edu)) by Friday June 13, 2008.*

**2007-2008 Program Assessment Report**  
**Assessment Activities for BACHELOR OF ARTS, JOURNALISM Program**

Student Learning Outcomes (which SLOs were assessed?)	Assessment Dates (when was SLO assessed)	Assessment Procedures (what did you do?)	Summary of Findings (what did you learn?)	Use of Findings for Program Improvement (what recommendations for program improvement did you make?)
<p><b>(1)</b>  <b>Attain competency in writing basics, such as grammar and punctuation, word usage and spelling, sentence and story structure and journalistic style;</b></p> <p><b>(2)</b>  <b>Students will attain competency in the gathering and critical analysis of information using techniques, such as interviewing, observation, and researching primary and secondary sources in both traditional and electronic means.</b></p>	<p><b>FALL 2007</b></p>	<p>Development of a set of instructional standards including specific learning objectives, skills and expected outcomes, as a result of extensive assessment of a key skills course required of all majors. These standards were distributed and discussed in a special session with faculty members teaching JOUR 110 and JOUR 210 (Writing, Reporting and Ethics I &amp; II). Full- and part-time faculty members were encouraged to include the course-specific learning objectives on their syllabi and to discuss these objectives with their students. In addition, the standards included distinct outcomes, such as: “To ensure that our majors can perform in J310 or J315, the J210 students should report and write a minimum of six to eight off-campus stories...”</p>	<p>For several semesters, Journalism Department faculty members have been involved in evaluating student learning as part of the university’s assessment endeavors. These efforts have confirmed empirical evidence: Many of our majors lack basic writing skills (grammar, punctuation and general style), and their ability to think critically and independently does not meet expectations. These issues are migrating from J110 to J210, where the latest course-embedded assessment revealed competency gaps in several areas, including: organization and structure, “adequate use of primary sources,” the ability to use “interesting and effective writing style” as well as “correct use of journalistic style, grammar and punctuation.” In addition, by the time these students reach J210, many are in need of skills refreshers and remediation across the board – from reporting and writing to style, quotes and attribution, and several other essentials taught in J110. This impedes their ability to acquire the knowledge and skills to adequately perform in the upper division skills courses.</p>	<p>1) Curricular changes are planned to put emphasis on grammar, punctuation and news reporting and writing style. This may involve a qualifying exam administered between the core lower division courses, JOUR 110 and JOUR 210;</p> <p>2) Resurrecting a peer writing/editing workshop, previously staffed by students in a Senior Tutorial supervised by a faculty member.</p> <p>3) A plan to gain support for skills improvement from journalism faculty at the many transfer institutions that feed our program. Many transfer students arrive without having met the standards set for JOUR 110 and JOUR 210. For example, students who take JOUR 110 here are expected to complete at least four out-of-class news-writing assignments. However, that is not the case at many of the community colleges, where the instructors may not be aware of the department’s Student Learning Objectives and expected outcomes.</p>

<p><b>(3)</b>  <b>Acquire expertise in thinking critically and creatively, while exercising news judgment in the organization and presentation of information in multiple journalistic forms (i.e., print, visual and electronic, and public relations).</b></p>	<p><b>FALL 2007-  SPRING 2008</b></p>	<p>In response to curricular concerns over the dramatic transformation in the profession, particularly related to convergence – in newsgathering, content, and across multimedia platforms – faculty members convened an October brainstorming workshop with several news professionals from the area. The session with the practitioners sparked a formalized year-long effort to study, implement, and test the integration of multimedia tools and techniques in numerous skills courses, such as news reporting and writing, and photojournalism, as well as practica (Daily Sundial, El Nuevo Sol and Scene Magazine).</p>	<p>This project exposed major challenges to address, including:  1) retraining faculty members so they can teach students the necessary skills, such as digital editing, blogging, etc.;  2) purchasing the right tools to facilitate the range of multimedia and new media/Internet storytelling and distribution technologies;  3) figuring out the appropriate curricular changes, i.e., developing new multimedia courses and/or incorporating tools and techniques instruction into existing courses.</p>	<p>Aside from taking steps this summer to revamp the Journalism curriculum, this process has involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio and video equipment and software purchases;</li> <li>• In-house training for most of the faculty, as well as attendance by several professors and instructors at numerous regional and national workshops and seminars;</li> <li>• A series of pilot efforts in the classroom and in practica, such as the Spanish-Language Journalism Minor’s Web site project. The endeavors have included integrating multimedia instruction, such as the use of camcorders, digital audio and video editing tools, and software involved in online storytelling for the Web.</li> <li>• Adding JOUR 495 (Special Topics) New Media to the fall schedule.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(5)</b>  <b>Students will develop flexibility in working in evolving mass communication media and environments using a variety of technologies and techniques.</b></p>	<p><b>ONGOING THROUGH  SPRING 2008</b></p>	<p>Analysis of information contained in employer surveys (Likert scale evaluation) and questionnaires filed by on-site supervisors at internship work sites. (Overall, the internships are evaluated using student-written reports, reaction to the reports by advisers, and the work-site supervisors’ formalized mid-term and final evaluations used in this assessment.)</p>	<p>Annually, about 100 journalism majors complete internships in print, broadcast, and public relations venues. Preliminary analysis of data show, on the scale of 1 (needs improvement) to 4 (outstanding), student performance scores average 3.52, which places them midway between Above Average and Outstanding. Students rated 3.74 in “attitude toward work” and “ability to learn.” They rated 3.05 (or “above average”) in “technical skills,” and 3.2-3.3 in “creativity,” “analysis/critical thinking,” and “written communication.”  (Pending data tabulation: about 100 internships completed in Summer and Fall 2007, and Spring 2008.)</p>	<p>1) Change the on-site supervisor evaluation form to include performance standards that coincide with the Journalism Department’s Student Learning Outcomes, and include a more refined rating system.  2) Consider changing the internship requirements to inspire more students to participate. Data show about one-eighth of majors (811/Spring 2008) complete internships. The number of students has remained static since the last analysis in 2002-03, when the department had approximately 500 undergraduates.</p>