Annual Assessment Report to the College 2008-2009

College: Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication

Department: Journalism

Program: Bachelor’s Degree, Journalism

Note: Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator and to the Associate Dean of your College by September 30, 2009. You may submit a separate report for each program which conducted assessment activities.

Liaison: Linda Bowen, assistant professor

1. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s)

1a. Assessment Process Overview: The plan was to assess the student internship program by analyzing (1) information contained in the formal evaluations completed by on-site supervisors at professional news media and public relations outlets in the region, and (2) student-written reports, which are intended to describe and examine their experiences in detail, and their accompanying work samples. For several years, assessment in the Journalism Department has been under the oversight of one person, the liaison. In Spring 2009, a second-year probationary colleague joined the committee, which was expanded again in Fall 2009 with the addition of a senior faculty member who previously served on the university assessment committee. However, major decisions and most assessment activities have involved the entire full-time faculty, which is relatively small (approximately 10). For example, one year, all faculty members teaching one section of a skills course undergoing assessment provided samples for the project, and the entire faculty met to conduct the actual “tabulating” of the results.

1b. Implementation and Modifications: The actual assessment process deviated in one sense in that the Journalism committee members decided to add the Factor Analysis layer (see below) after learning of a similar project detailed in a case study published in Spring 2009 by the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication. The case study assessed the interns’ evaluations against the 11 “Professional Values and Competencies” set by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. The ACEJMC values and competencies are similar to the Journalism internship evaluation categories. This “deviation” proved illuminating in that it showed the measurement of two distinct qualities (external and internal, or professional skills vs. work habits) despite the 15 discrete factors listed on the evaluation form. In addition, it showed similar outcomes to the case study results.

March 30, 2009, prepared by Bonnie Paller
2. **Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project:** Answer questions according to the individual SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, report in the next chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<td>2a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?</td>
<td>Primarily, No. 5: Develop flexibility in evolving mass communication and environments using a variety of technologies and techniques. Secondarily related, No. 2: Attain competency in the gathering and critical analysis of information, using such techniques as interviewing, observations and researching primary and secondary sources, and No. 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).</td>
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<td>2b. What assessment instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?</td>
<td>The “On-Site Supervisor Midterm and Final Evaluation” forms used to evaluate student interns’ performance in both professional skills and personal work habits. (See attachment). Internships, despite the fact that not all students take them, serve as a capstone experience in the absence of a formal “final” course. The evaluation form serves as a measure of students’ learning, as do their own mid-term and final reports, as well as the work samples they are required to submit.</td>
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<td>2c. Describe the participants sampled to assess this SLO:</td>
<td>From Fall 2003 through Spring 2009, approximately 360 undergraduates completed internships to earn 1, 2 or 3 elective credits. During the same time period, 36 additional students attempted internships but did not receive credit. The internship sites included a core of 35 to 40 corporate, independent, and non-profit media (print, broadcast, alternative, Spanish-language, online, photojournalism, and public relations) entities throughout the Los Angeles region. Broadcast outlets and public relations companies represent the majority of internship sites.</td>
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<td>2d. Describe the assessment design methodology:</td>
<td>The SLO was assessed using an existing methodological tool: “On-site Supervisor Mid-term and Final Evaluation” form, which was last revised in Fall 2003. The form asks employers at news and other media outlets to evaluate interns on 15 standards related to professional skills and work habits. The rating on a Likert scale includes: Outstanding – 4; Above Average – 3; Average – 2, and Needs Improvement – 1. An Excel database was created, listing all interns starting in Fall 2005. The database includes interns’ grades (Credit or No Credit) as well as their evaluation scores. The resulting data were used to complete the Factor Analysis. (See below).</td>
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2e. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO:
See attachment: Factor Analysis Results of Employers’ Mid-Term and Final Evaluations of Journalism Interns, Fall 2005-Fall 2008.

2f. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO:
In reality, the assessment process is incomplete since all of the available data from the Journalism internship program has not been fully analyzed. We know that a positive rating bias exists, but we don’t know why, and we haven’t examined the student-written reports or the accompanying work samples required in the program. Nevertheless, the preliminary results give us a foundation from which to make necessary changes to the evaluation form so that the competencies align more obviously with the Department’s SLOs. Other changes that could be made include: (1) altering or eliminating the current pre-requisites to open internships to more students since approximately 100 per year take advantage of the option, or (2) requiring internships as a capstone experience. These suggestions are under consideration as part of ongoing curriculum review (see below). This is not the first time the internship data have been used as an assessment tool or project. In 1998 and again in 2002, Journalism faculty reviewed and analyzed the evaluation data. But, following the 2002 review, although they used the results to upgrade and re-formulate certain requirements, they did not change the evaluation form.

3. How do your assessment activities connect with your department’s strategic plan?

Journalism’s assessment activities connect both with the College Planning Initiative for CAMC and with standards set by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). Currently, the Journalism Department is involved in a reaccreditation self-study in preparation for a site visit in February 2010. Among the nine accrediting standards is the following: “The unit regularly assesses student learning and uses the results to improve curriculum and instruction.” Assessment also links to ongoing full-faculty discussions about much needed major revisions to the curriculum. In the last year, based on both formal and informal assessment activities, faculty members have explored several proposals for making major changes to the curriculum last revised in 2004. Included are an “entrance” exam (see below) as well as capstone courses – both of which would provide a more consistent means of assessment measures.

March 30, 2009, prepared by Bonnie Paller
4. Overall, if this year’s program assessment evidence indicates that new resources are needed in order to improve and support student learning, please discuss here.

One new resource that would improve and support student learning in Journalism is a pre-test or qualifying exam as a way to assess the skills of incoming students, either as freshmen or transfer students. Several CSU Journalism programs use a “qualifying” or assessment exam to establish the skill level. These tests typically are multiple-choice, with questions on grammar, punctuation and style (writing mechanics). This would be helpful to establish a baseline from which to conduct any future assessment of the program. For example, at one CSU institution, the Journalism department partners with the university testing center to administer and tabulate this exam. At another, students take a short course in writing mechanics before they take the test. In both cases, they must attain a certain score to enroll in the beginning news writing and reporting course. Students have multiple chances to pass the exam.

5. Other information, assessment or reflective activities not captured above.

N/A

6. Has someone in your program completed, submitted or published a manuscript which uses or describes assessment activities in your program? Please provide citation or discuss.

N/A
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Liaison: Linda Bowen, assistant professor

1. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s)

1a. Assessment Process Overview: Provide a brief overview of the intended plan to assess the program this year. Is assessment under the oversight of one person or a committee?

We assessed the Spring 2009 MCOM 698C Thesis course, which is the graduate culminating experience, on four measures. The assessment was conducted under the oversight of the Graduate Coordinator.

1b. Implementation and Modifications: Did the actual assessment process deviate from what was intended? If so, please describe any modification to your assessment process and why it occurred.

Our internal assessment has previously been based on faculty evaluation of a thesis as a whole, which is determined by alternative, qualitative means. However, we implemented a quantitative measure this year to fit with the norms of assessment at the university.

2. Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project: Answer questions according to the individual SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, report in the next chart below.

2a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

SLO No. 3: Create a plan for and conduct independent research about Mass Communication with an emphasis on journalism either as a research topic or through the reflective application of journalism.
2b. What assessment instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

A 4-point rubric, applied to five indicators from the Mass Communication Program Assessment Plan.

2c. Describe the participants sampled to assess this SLO: discuss sample/participant and population size for this SLO. For example, what type of students, which courses, how decisions were made to include certain participants.

We selected three of seven students who completed their theses in Spring 2009. MC698C Thesis consists of units that operate similar to an independent study but is a much larger endeavor as it is the culminating experience of the graduate program. Students work independently under the supervision of a thesis chair. We selected theses specifically with the aim of including a representative of a traditional academic work as well as thesis projects.

2d. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

The SLO was assessed using a 4-point rubric, applied to five indicators from the Mass Communication Program Assessment Plan. The category is “Preparing a thesis or thesis project.” The indicators are: Students can 1) collect data to be analyzed; 2) analyze and evaluate the data in the findings; 3) assess how their work relates to previous research; 4) provide an overall assessment of their own project’s strengths and weaknesses. Each of these was rated on the following scale: Unacceptable; Acceptable; Strong; Exemplary.

2e. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the data were analyzed and highlight important findings from the data collected.

Students were rated either strong or exemplary in all categories, except No. 4, provide an assessment of their own project’s strengths and weaknesses. The strength of students’ work lay in their ability to collect and analyze data. In some cases, students need to further develop their ability to critique their own work as well as to connect it to prior research.

2f. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Think about all the different ways the results were or will be used. For example, to recommend changes to course content/topics covered, course sequence, addition/deletion of courses in program, student support services, revisions to program SLO’s, assessment instruments, academic programmatic changes, assessment plan changes, etc. Please provide a clear and detailed description of how the assessment results were or will be used.

This fall we are focusing more in the student research methods class on how to link student
findings to related research articles through in class discussions. We believe that the weaknesses can best be addressed within the research methods class and the class in which students write a proposal for their theses.

3. **How do your assessment activities connect with your department’s strategic plan?**

One of our goals has been to encourage more students to pursue thesis projects as opposed to traditional theses, and to make sure that these projects rise to the level of complexity and difficulty of a traditional thesis. Two of the theses considered here were projects and were rated almost as high as (in some cases higher than) the traditional thesis. We believe we have begun making good progress toward re-orienting some students toward significant thesis projects.

4. **Overall, if this year’s program assessment evidence indicates that new resources are needed in order to improve and support student learning, please discuss here.**

The Mass Communication program has a course on the books that has not been taught in many years that we now believe could be reintroduced and would provide greater opportunities for student to pursue thesis projects.

5. **Other information, assessment or reflective activities not captured above.**

N/A

6. **Has someone in your program completed, submitted or published a manuscript which uses or describes assessment activities in your program? Please provide citation or discuss.**

N/A