Assessment Plan

The School of Journalism & Mass Communications has worked long and hard at achieving an assessment plan that would not only accurately depict student learning through their major but allow us to track student success after graduation. After several false starts, the School found during the process that our assessment tools failed to provide the necessary information to effectively capture student learning. Moreover, the mission of Journalism often competed with our other majors, Advertising and Public Relations. Each major saw its field advancing in polar directions. We sat down with our prior dean in 2018 and discussed the possibility of developing a unique curriculum for each of our majors. We were in curricular discussions all of 2018 and 2019 and worked with the university administration to refine our roadmaps. Our curriculum was approved in 2019. In light of the rise of fake news, the journalism faculty felt compelled to strengthen its curriculum directed toward the future of the field. Of course, this meant that we would need to create new assessment tools in the midst of changing curriculum (as well as changing colleges, moving to Humanities & Arts in Fall 2019).

Since our 2017 revisit, we have changed our curriculum to a more robust multimedia curriculum, providing students opportunities to work in print, online, broadcast and with immersive technologies. We have created a student media website that features our student productions. The heart of our assessment plan is our portfolio review by external judges. It has been a long road toward achieving a system of external review that we will be able to maintain in years to follow.

As a result of our new curriculum, we needed to refine our assessment tools. It was acknowledged that students learn by providing them with clear goals in each class. Those goals are measured as learning outcomes that must be achieved and measured through exams and activities. Conceptual acquisition is critical to establish media literacy. This can be achieved through foundational courses like *Navigating the News*, the cornerstone of our Journalism program. It was created on the premise that all citizens need to understand the importance of news in a democratic society. Beyond knowledge acquisition, students must acquire the skills to produce the news. They need to apply their knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Our students learn by doing. That means repetition is critical, with students learning to prepare and report the news across various media formats. We acknowledge that students need to achieve the course learning outcomes unique to conceptual and skill-based courses. However, it is important that each instructor seek ways to create assignments that reinforce the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies in each course. As a reminder, these program learning outcomes are noted in each journalism course. We believe that these values are relevant to the professional training of our

students. Instructors should keep these competencies in mind as they prepare and update their syllabus.

Our current assessment plan has taken into consideration lessons learned through the past several years. What follows is our established guidelines for assessing how well our students are prepared to work as professional journalists after graduation.

Assessment Plan (r. 5/20/20)

The Journalism faculty agreed to assess our students' conceptual and skill acquisition through a series of direct measures, specifically pre/post exams, surveys, and external reviews.

Exams: To establish a baseline for entering journalism majors, each student takes a conceptual pretest, which is distributed in lower division courses each fall. Before exiting the program, students take a posttest to assess how well they understand the concepts. The posttests are distributed in the upper division JOUR 140 series. Pretests and posttests should be updated every 2 years and/or as needed.

External review of student work: We regularly invite external reviews to evaluate samples of our student work representative across all areas in our journalism program. Our upper-level courses are project-based so students have many opportunities to create work. Our external reviewers are invited to evaluate the work through a platform that was developed since our last site visit. Student work is assessed based on the 12 ACEJMC competencies. Our first portfolio review was conducted in 2021, and is scheduled again in Fall 2024.

Before the platform was developed, we held an annual showcase every spring in which students exhibited their work to alumni and media professionals (except during COVID-19). These events are well attended by students, guests, alumni, and media types. We still plan to hold the showcase but feel that the platform is a more effective instrument, than our in-person method, for assessment.

We also maintain a digital record of our annual student media awards and honors.

Internship site supervisor survey: Internship supervisors evaluate student performance on the job site. All supervisors are asked to complete a survey of intern work based on the 12 ACEJMC competencies.

Indirect measures: We provide opportunities for students to provide feedback through the senior exit survey. In addition, prior to COVID-19, we also held semester meetings in which students could air their grievances and recommendations to the program director. This has been a useful vehicle for improving our curriculum. We also send out alumni surveys to gauge our graduates' success and to keep track of them professionally.

These results are reported annually to faculty and sent to the curriculum committee for discussion.

Specific Changes Since Last Site Visit

It is important to provide an overview of our recent past and present assessment efforts since the last site visit.

Former Assessment Plan

In Fall 2015, a revised assessment plan was approved and implemented to replace the course-focused assessment the school implemented in the past. However, this plan was found ineffective and much too convoluted. There was not a written assessment plan when the new director arrived in 2016. The plan was subsequently written and has since been revised to meet the goals of the new revised Journalism curriculum. In this assessment plan, common gateway, and culminating courses that all students take were identified where the pre- and post- tests are given. However, JMC faculty continued to seek ways in which to effectively assess learning outcomes, and through the process realized that its entire curriculum for the department needed to be updated.

The New Assessment Plan

The Journalism assessment plan now includes multiple direct and indirect measures to assess learning outcomes. The foundation for the Journalism program rests on the ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies. These are required for assessment as part of our national program accreditation, and they guide our comprehensive learning experience. JMC implemented a new assessment schedule in Spring 2021. This new schedule (see Table 1) responds to the need to simplify the old assessment process. The ACEJMC findings recommended the selection of a few key courses to measure all PLOs. The accrediting body prefers a more consistent and regular assessment of learning outcomes. As a result, the program director and members of the faculty assessment team selected a lower division course that all Journalism students must take: MCOM72: Media and Society and, as of Fall 2020, incoming freshmen are being asked to take MCOM 50. Navigating the News instead.

During this transition period Pre-tests are given to students in MCOM72 and MCOM50 to establish a baseline competence level. Depending on their programs, students will take different capstone courses during their senior years. Post-tests are conducted on the specific capstone courses (e.g. JOUR 140 A-D) to measure the competency level attained for each ACEJMC value or PLO. Finally, most students take MCOM 111 (the capstone internship course) in the summer between their junior and senior year. Employers are asked to complete a survey at the end of the internship period to determine specific skills exhibited and demonstrated by the students.

Table 1: Assessment Plan: Spring 2021 to Fall 2028

SEMESTER	SP 21	FA 21	SP 22	SP 22	SP 23	FA 23	SP 24	FA 24	SP 25	FA 25	SP 26	FA 26	SP 27	FA 27	SP 28	FA 28
COURSE																
MCOM 72/50 PrePostTest	C	C	D	D	I	C	I	C	C	D	I	C	C	D	D	I
JOUR140A-D ExitSurvey	C	C	D	D	I	C	I	C	C	D	I	C	C	D	D	I
MCOM111 Internships	C	C	D	D	I	C	I	C	C	D	I	C	C	D	D	I
Portfolios	C	D	D	D	D	C	I	C	C	D	I	C	C	D	D	I