

Institutional Effectiveness Report

Name of Program/Department: Department of Mass Communication

Year: 2016-2017

Name of Preparer: Assistant Professor David Baxley

Program Mission Statement

The Mass Communication program at Francis Marion University seeks to provide its students with guidance and encouragement to develop communication skills needed to begin careers in journalism, public relations and allied professions. For students who do not choose to prepare for a career as media professionals, we expect to illuminate them on media traditions, to inculcate in them an appreciation of free expression, to kindle in them a desire to learn, to help them understand the roles media play in America, and to encourage them to share the fruits of their intellectual growth. We will provide our students with a climate of learning that stresses the importance of personal honor and integrity and promotes the responsibility to serve society through the productive use of their communication talent and training.

Rooted in the liberal arts tradition, we emphasize the value of a broad educational foundation that encompasses the use of English. We want to encourage students to become informed, responsible, and articulate; to think critically and creatively; and, to write well and develop an understanding of media history, ethics and law. We aim to refine students' reporting, writing and presentation skills, including tasks of editing and content production for traditional and converged media. We want our students to understand and use the changing technologies in communication to better equip them to work in the emerging multi-media workplace.

Combining discipline-specific knowledge with expressive, interpretive and reasoning skills, we encourage originality and creativity and promote intellectual curiosity, critical analysis, clarity of thought, precision of language and a desire to continue learning with graduate study. We seek to provide knowledge and the requisite learning skills necessary to fully participate and succeed in a global society as a communication professional and as an involved citizen.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

All Mass Communication students are expected to be able to:

1. Demonstrate and advance academic integrity in all interactions.
2. Demonstrate the ability to use tools and technologies appropriate for the communication professions in which they work.
3. Demonstrate the ability to think independently, critically, and creatively.
4. Demonstrate the ability to write correctly and clearly in forms and style appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
5. Demonstrate the ability to gain the required skills, knowledge, and dispositions to effectively engage the communication professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

Executive Summary of Report

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the Department of Mass Communication assessed five Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). These Student Learning Outcomes help faculty gauge students' retention of various concepts while evaluating pedagogical approaches. Through actionable items, the department faculty are measuring students' understanding of media trends; understanding of law and ethics; ability to write and edit for print, broadcast, and public relations; ability to synthesize foundational information; and understanding and identifying evolving technologies. The Department of Mass Communication continues to monitor these assessments to determine if future action should be taken to correct any lower-than-expected results.

As highlighted in the following pages of this report, the department has developed a more objective "direct measure" of the student's ability to comprehend key issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations. The new approach has a knowledge-based focus, a critical-thinking component, and, in some cases, a requirement that each student produce an artifact in a hands-on learning environment - replicating skills students will need for employment in their chosen field. As a more direct measure through pre-test/post-test assessments, faculty members have been able to closely track specific concepts covered in class. Overall, this direct measure appears to be a useful tool for faculty when gauging SLO achievement. The Department of Mass Communication has been able to diagnose levels of understanding using these methods; faculty has been able to modify teaching and learning activities for the next academic year.

Besides the pre-test/post-test evaluations, departmental rubrics and a *Work Site Supervisor Ratings of Interns* have also been employed to track student progress for the five Student Learning Outcomes.

This report includes results from courses taught during Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. The department is in the process of converting over to the new pre-test/post-test assessment method. We will continue to apply these assessments to even more courses this year to gain a better understanding of student attainment.

Student evaluations have revealed student improvement in every SLO during AY 2016-2017. Eighty-percent of students were expected to show improvement when comparing results of the pre-test and post-test for SLO 1, 2 and 3.

For SLO 1, which includes foundation course MCOM 110, 100% of students showed improvement.

For SLO 2, 96% of students in MCOM 451 and 91.6% in MCOM 455 improved their scores based on the assessment.

For SLO 3, 91.3% of students increased their score from pre-test to post-test in MCOM 201 and 86.6% of students increased their score from pre-test to post-test in MCOM 301. One-hundred percent (100%) of students improved their score in MCOM 221, also included in this SLO.

A departmental rubric was developed for SLO 4 to be used when evaluating students' foundational knowledge and skills for MCOM 410. Student average project grade, based on the rubric, was 82.8%.

Lastly, an intern's on-site supervisor provides a snapshot of his/her ability to identify evolving technologies through the *Work Site Supervisor Ratings of Interns* form in SLO 5, which include MCOM 230 and MCOM 498. On average for students enrolled in MCOM 230, students performed at 93.9% level. On average for students enrolled in MCOM 498, students performed at 76% level.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

SLO 1.0: Eighty-percent (80%) or more of students in Mass Communication 110, on average, will show improvement when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication.

SLO 2.0: Eighty-percent (80%) or more of students in Mass Communication 451 and 455, on average, will show improvement when determining the veracity of statements germane to law and ethics as it pertains to the conduct of journalists.

SLO 3.0: Eighty-percent (80%) or more of students in Mass Communication 201, 221, and 301, on average, will show improvement when describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations.

SLO 4.0: Eighty-percent (80%) or more of students in Mass Communication 410, on average, will show improvement when producing artifacts that will display their ability to synthesize foundational knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a chosen Mass Communication track.

SLO 5.0: Eighty-six percent (86%) of students in Mass Communication 230 and 498, on average, will show improvement based on their ability to identify evolving technologies in the field of communication.

Assessment Methods

SLO 1.0: Students were expected to show 80% or greater improvement based on results of a departmental pre-test and post-test when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication.

SLO 2.0: Students in Mass Communication 451 and 455 were expected to show 80% or greater improvement based on results of a departmental pre-test and post-test when determining the veracity of statements germane to law and ethics as it pertains to the conduct of journalists.

SLO 3.0: Students in Mass Communication 201, 221, and 301 were expected to show 80% or greater improvement based on results of a departmental pre-test and post-test when describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations.

SLO 4.0: Students in Mass Communication 410 were expected to perform at the 80% level or above based scoring from a departmental rubric when producing artifacts that will display their ability to synthesize foundational knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a chosen mass communication track.

SLO 5.0: Students in Mass Communication 230 and 498 will perform, on average, at the 86% level or above when showing their ability to identify evolving technologies in the field of communication on the *Work Site Supervisor Ratings of Interns* form.

Assessment Results

SLO 1.0: The Department of Mass Communication developed a pre-test/post-test process for AY 2016-2017. A pre-test and post-test were used to evaluate student's learning outcome for Mass Communication 110 (Introduction to Mass Communication). Students were expected to show 80% or above improvement based on the results of the pre-test and post-test.

During AY 2016-2017, Mass Communication department faculty used the pre-test and post-test assessment to more accurately diagnose levels of understanding in order to modify teaching and learning activities during the term; furthermore, the Department of Mass Communication used this new method to improve measurement of student attainment.

Every student in Mass Communication 110 during Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters showed improvement (100%) based on the pre-test/post-test assessment when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication; the results surpassed the target of 80% improvement for each student for this Student Learning Outcome.

SLO 2.0: A Pre-test and Post-test were used to evaluate student's learning outcome in Mass Communication 451 (Media Law). A pre-test and post-test, along with a writing assessment, were used to evaluate students' knowledge in Mass Communication 455 (Media Ethics). Eighty-percent (80%) of the students were expected to increase their scores from pre-test to post-test for this SLO. These assessments gauged students' knowledge of law and ethical dilemmas pertaining to the professional conduct of journalists.

Ninety-six percent (96%) of students showed improvement in their scores when comparing pre-test to post-test on the assessment of media law concepts; therefore, the target of 80% or above was achieved. New pedagogical approaches to enhance student learning were employed by the new faculty member teaching MCOM 451 this academic year. Students were also challenged by writing a research paper incorporating media law concepts throughout the semester along with a group project to improve students' performance on the assessment.

A pre-test and post-test was implemented during Spring 2017 for MCOM 455 where 91.6% of students showed improvement when comparing the assessments; therefore, the target for this SLO was achieved for the course.

SLO 3.0: Students enrolled in Mass Communication 201, 221 and 301 were expected to improve at the rate of 80% based a pre-test/post-test evaluation assessment.

During the 2015-2016 academic year, the SLO for Mass Communication 201 (News and Feature Writing) was not achieved on an assessment to gauge students' writing and editing abilities for print media. Therefore, the professor revamped the pedagogical approach to the course, changing the textbook and incorporating more frequent writing exercises. Based on assessment results, students performed better with the changing of the textbook during both fall and spring semesters. The text provided students with supplemental digital content for this course. Based on the pre-test to post-test evaluation for the fall and spring semesters, 91.3% of students showed improvement. This evaluation focused on writing and editing for print media; therefore, the target of 80% or above was achieved for this SLO.

Students in Mass Communication 221 (Introduction to Broadcast Journalism) are engaging in frequent writing activities. The professor for MCOM 221 has implemented a pre-test and post-test assessment based on writing and editing broadcast news skills. The student assessment data indicated every student improved (100%) when comparing results of the pre-test/post-test evaluation for both Fall and Spring semesters; therefore, the 80% target was surpassed for this SLO.

Students in Mass Communication 301 (Reporting of Public Affairs) were evaluated using a pre-test and post-test exam. The test gauged students' performance of key issues germane to writing and editing for public relations. For the fall and spring semesters, 86.6% of students showed improvement in their scores from pre-test to post-test, achieving the 80% or above departmental goal for this SLO.

SLO 4.0: Students in Mass Communication 410 (Advanced Public Relations) produce artifacts that will display their ability to synthesize foundational knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a chosen Mass Communication track through a departmental rubric. MCOM 410 was only offered during Spring 2017. MCOM 410 was only offered during the spring semester. The class average project grade – based on the scoring rubric – was 82.8%, which exceeded the 80% target for this SLO.

SLO 5.0: The department has monitored the profiles of our intern placements more closely during AY 2016-2017 (Mass Communication 230 and Mass Communication 498). The department revamped the student learning outcomes to better fit the needs of students awarded an internship during AY 2016-2017. Several students participated in practicums and internships during the academic year. Assessments completed by an intern or practicum student's on-site supervisor provide a snapshot of his/her ability to identify evolving technologies through the *Work Site Supervisor Ratings of Interns* form.

Students also learn practical experience through enrollment in either course. Students enrolled in MCOM 230 scored at the 93.9% level based off the form; students enrolled in MCOM 498 scored at the 76% level. Therefore, students taking part in the MCOM 498 did not meet the target of 86%. The department will continue to monitor the profiles of our intern placements to ensure accountability.

Action Items

SLO 1.0: Students in Mass Communication 110 showed 100% improvement when comparing results from the departmental pre-test and post-test assessment when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication. The target of 80% was achieved for this student learning outcome.

Based on these findings, the Mass Communication Department will continue to assess student improvement for AY 2017-2018 based on the pre-test/post-test method. This method will allow faculty to diagnose levels of understanding in order to modify teaching and learning activities. A target of 80% will again be used for AY 2017-2018 for this SLO.

Pre-test/post-test assessments will be added for the following courses for AY 2017-2018: Mass Communication 240 (Social Media Impact on Journalism) and Mass Communication 430 (Critical Issues in Mass Communication).

SLO 2.0: Students in Mass Communication 451 showed 96% improvement while students in Mass Communication 455 showed 91.6% improvement based on result of the pre-test/post-test assessment when determining the veracity of statements germane to law and ethics as it pertained to the conduct of journalists. The target of 80% was achieved for this student learning outcome during AY 2016-2017.

Although the target was achieved, the department would like to improve scores even more. The professor for MCOM 451 will be using a new textbook in hopes to bring the rate of improvement to 100%. A new professor will join the faculty of the Department of Mass Communication and will teach MCOM 455; that professor will monitor student progress and will decide if any changes should be made moving forward based on the AY 2017-2018 year-end assessment. A target of 80% will be maintained for this SLO.

SLO 3.0: Students in Mass Communication 201, 221, and 301 showed improvement in scores based on a pre-test and post-test assessment when describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast, and public relations. In each case the target was 80% improvement. In MCOM 201, students showed 91.3% improvement; in MCOM 221, students showed 100% improvement; and, in MCOM 301, students showed 86.6% improvement. Therefore, the target was met for each course.

Students in MCOM 201, 221 and 301 will continue to engage in authentic learning activities in AY 2017-2018 and a target of 80% will be used once again for the new academic year. The department will continue to use the pre-test/post-test assessment method to provide a "direct measure" of student learning.

Pre-test/post-test assessments will be added for the following courses for AY 2017-2018: Mass Communication 210 (Introduction to Public Relations), Mass Communication 306 (News Editing and Design), Mass Communication 310 (Public Relations Techniques), Mass Communication 320 (Broadcast Presentation Skills), Mass Communication 402 (Online Journalism), and Mass Communication 440 (Convergence Journalism).

SLO 4.0: Students in Mass Communication 410 performed, on average, at the 82.8% level when producing artifacts that will display their ability to synthesize foundation knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a chosen Mass Communication track. The target of 80% was achieved for the student learning outcome. A target of 80% will again be used for AY 2017-2018 and a rubric will again be used to evaluate students in this SLO.

A rubric will be used as a semester-ending assessment for the following courses (if offered) for AY 2017-2018: Mass Communication 220 (Broadcast Production), Mass Communication 304 (Photojournalism), Mass Communication 321 (Broadcast Field Production & Reporting), and Mass Communication 421 (Advanced Broadcast Journalism).

SLO 5.0: Students in Mass Communication 230 and 498 performed, on average, at the 84.9% level when showing their ability to identify evolving technologies in the field of communication as indicated by the *Work Site Supervisor Ratings of Interns* form. Therefore, assessment scores were just short of the target of 86%. The faculty will continue to monitor the profiles of our practicum and intern placements during AY 2017-2018. The faculty will make modifications moving forward, as needed.