

Institutional Effectiveness Report

Academic Year (2014-2015)

Department of Mass Communication

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Mission Statement

The Mass Communication program at Francis Marion University seeks to provide our 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 the media play in America and to encourage them to share the fruits of their intellectual growth. We will provide for our students 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 and be able to think critically and creatively, 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 of communication to better equip them to work in the emerging multi-media work place.

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 into 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.

2014–2015
Student Learning Outcomes & Related
Measures

Student Learning Outcome #1: Develop an understanding of current trends and issues in mass communication.

Measure 1: Pre-test/post-test for all students taking Mass Com 110

Measure 2: On a 1-to-10 scale, students are asked to rate their comfort level in understanding current trends in journalism. This question will be included on the post-test.

Benchmark: At least 70 percent of students should improve by the end of the second test.

Student Learning Outcome #2: Be familiar with law and ethics as it pertains to the conduct of journalists.

Measure 1: Pre-test/post-test for all students taking Mass Com 451 and 455

Measure 2: On a 1-to-10 scale, students are asked to rate their comfort level in understanding media law and ethics. This question will be included on the post-tests.

Benchmark: At least 70 percent of students should improve by the end of the second tests.

Student Learning Outcome #3: Develop a better understanding of writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations.

Measure 1: Pre-test/post-test for all students taking Mass Com 201, 301, 306, 221

Measure 2: On a 1-to-10 scale, students are asked to rate their comfort level of competence in writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations. This question will be included on the post-tests.

Benchmark: At least 70 percent of students should improve by the end of the second tests.

Student Learning Outcome #4: Ability to synthesize foundational knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a student's chosen Mass Communication track. Students should be able to apply acquired knowledge and skills in creating Mass Communication products in a given track.

Measure 1: Successful completion of mass communication products (i.e. Public Relations package, news story, sports broadcast, etc.) as evaluated by an expert in the given field. Experts will use a rubric to evaluate a final product following completion of the two required track courses.

Measure 2: On a 1-to-10 scale, students are asked to rate their comfort level of competence in their chosen specialty area.

Measure 3: To be admitted to the Mass Communication Program, students must achieve a minimum GPA of 2.5 in Mass Com classes.

Benchmark: All students will rank at least 75 percent on the final project required in each track.

Student Learning Outcome #5: Understand and use the changing technologies of communication to better equip students to work in the emerging multi-media workplace.

Measure 1: Work site supervisor ratings of interns

Measure 2: Supervisor ratings of practicum participants

Measure 3: Applications for REAL funding

Results

1. Data from student learning outcomes 1-4 measures will be implemented beginning in the fall of 2015

2. Student Learning Outcome 5 (Measures 1 and 2)

Internships require students to spend a minimum of 135 hours with a newspaper, television station, public relations office or other relevant company. Participation is limited to seniors who have completed 24 hours of Mass Communication coursework and meet high GPA standards.

Assessment of our students who participated in internships are completed by work site supervisors, consists of 10 questions - specifically enumerated below - and an open-ended assessment. This evaluation is submitted to the FMU supervising faculty member at mid-term and at the end of the semester.

Students are rated on a scale of 1-5 -**1 unsatisfactory** to **5 exceptional**. The 10 assessed areas are by column: **1** Quality of work, **2** Production, **3** Attitude toward criticism, **4** Cooperation with others, **5** Dependability, **6** Attendance, **7** Initiative, **8** Appearance, **9** Progress made and **10** Overall Assessment. The chart below shows the average scores.

Work Site Supervisor Ratings of Interns

Internships	#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2007-2008	9	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.7	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.8	4.3	4.7
2008-2009	3	4	4.3	3.7	4.7	4	4.3	3.3	4.7	4.3	4
2009-2010	6	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.5	4.8
2010-2011	2*	3.5	3.5	3.5	4.5	4	4.5	3	5	4	4.5
2011-2012	6	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.7	5	4.8	4.7	5	4.5	4.8
2012-2013	4	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.8	5
2013-2014	5	3.6	4	4	4.4	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.2
2014-2015	5	3.6	4	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.2	4.6	4.4

Practicums were designed to provide more students opportunities to become involved in experiential learning, and to do so as early as their sophomore year.

Each practicum requires 50 hours for 1 credit of academic work. It may be repeated three times in three different semesters to receive three hours of course credit. Each practicum student is required to keep a practicum log of his/her activities and must submit a midterm report and a final report. Practicum students must also complete the on-line questionnaire posted at the university QEP site called the “Student Rating Form for Nontraditional Learning Activities.

The following summary is the workplace assessments of students made by his/her workplace supervisors. Each student is rated on a scale of 1-5 – **1 unsatisfactory** to **5 exceptional** – in 10 separate categories listed below.

The 10 assessed areas are by column: **1** Quality of work, **2** Production, **3** Attitude toward criticism, **4** Cooperation with others, **5** Dependability, **6** Attendance, **7** Initiative, **8** Appearance, **9** Progress made and **10** Overall Assessment. The chart below shows the average scores. Additionally, practicum participants also complete the on-line questionnaire of the QEP office on campus.

Supervisor ratings of practicum participants

Practicum	#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2008-2009	3	4.7	5	5	5	5	5	4.7	5	5	5
2009-2010	5	4.6	4.4	5	5	5	5	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8
2010-2011	1*	3	3	4	5	4	5	3	3	3	4
2011-2012	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
2012-2013	2	4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	5	5	4.5	4
2013-2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014-2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

3. Student Learning Outcome 5 (Measures 3)

The department applied for and received two REAL grants to take students to New York City in 2015-2016.

Interpretation

Nineteen mass communication majors were graduated this year; 8 in the spring and 11 in the fall. Our department offered 66 courses throughout the year; 28 in mass communication and 38 in speech. The IE report on the **speech program** will be forwarded separately by Dr. Bryan Fisher, coordinator of the Speech program.

The most current information is that we had 72 majors and 15 minors during Spring 2015 semester.

Over the past year, we have monitored minor changes made in class prerequisites to ensure students' accurate progression through the major and have thus far been pleased with the outcome.

In addition, we have continued our on-going upgrade of equipment used by the faculty, despite the budgetary concerns. A computer and overhead projector were installed in the dedicated speech classroom. Also, 15 Nikon cameras were purchased to support our Photojournalism class. For our broadcast track, the university purchased six video cameras and supporting equipment, including tripods, microphones and carrying cases. The department also was able to upgrade its video editing software to Final Cut Pro X.

We also continued to use the department's Facebook page to communicate with our majors, informing them about job openings, scholarship opportunities and accomplishments by Mass Communication faculty and students. As of early May 2015, 168 people had "liked" the page, an increase of about 12 percent.

Our faculty continues to receive high marks from the student questionnaires and exit interviews.

Action Plans

Primary Issues Identified and Actions

NOTE: Bold face indicates 2014-2015 activity.

Issues of Concern 2015	Actions Taken
Increase understanding of current trends and issues in mass communication; be familiar with law and ethics as it pertains to journalists; develop better understanding of writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created evaluation tests that will be given at the beginning and end of Mass Com 110, 451, 455, 201, 301, 306 and 221 • Included in the post-test, students will be asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1-10 their comfort level in understanding the material
Issues of Concern 2015	Actions Taken
Ability to synthesize foundational knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a student's chosen track. Students should be able to apply acquired knowledge and skills in creating mass communication products in a given track.	Beginning in fall 2015, students will be required to produce a final project on which they will be evaluated on a 1-4 rubric.

Issues of Concern 2008-2014	Actions Taken
Hiring and replacing qualified faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired faculty with video production skills • Began working toward hiring a Journalist-in-Residence
Issues of Concern 2008-2014	Actions Taken
Updating course curriculum to comply with today's evolving standards in mass communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminated Print Journalism Track • Created new editing course to include print and online editing concerns • Eliminated Environmental Journalism, Foreign Reporting and History of Journalism • Consolidated History of Broadcast and Print Journalism • Created editing labs for video editing and photojournalism • Offered new course designed to show students how navigating social network web sites are skills being increasingly used by journalists

Issues of Concern 2008-2014	Actions Taken
Adjusting the program's foundation and track requirements in major, minor and collateral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusted prerequisites for Mass Com 451 and 455 • Deleted public relations from Convergence track • Changed track requirements to permit greater choices • Added sports journalism track to major • Changed required courses in track from one to two • Revised department advising form to clarify the order in which classes need to be taken for student to graduate in a timely manner

Issues of Concern 2008-2014	Actions Taken
Advancing academic integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed academic honors code and pledge • Developed and implemented admission form for major • Posted honor code to department website • Shared honor policy with university committee

Issues of Concern 2008-2015	Actions Taken
Expanding experiential learning opportunities for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied for and received two REAL grants to take mass communication students to New York City • Arranged for one student to attend an out-of-state photography workshop • Applied for and received REAL funds to take four Mass Com Students to New York City in Spring 2014 • Applied for and received REAL funds to take three Mass Com Students to Washington, D.C., in Spring 2014 • Applied for and received QEP funds to send three students to Washington, D.C., to attend The Washington Center's Presidential Inauguration Seminar • Applied for and received QEP funds to send six students to New York City to visit major news organizations • Three students appeared as guests on The Armstrong Williams Television Show • Posted updated internship brochure to web site • Drafted assessment tool for experiential learning • Partnered with WBTW for U-News platform • Post available internships and practicums on department Facebook page • Reestablished departmental QEP committee

Issues of Concern 2008-2015	Actions Taken
Connecting with professionals beyond campus borders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public relations specialist Bob McAlister of McAlister Communications spoke to students at Mass Communication Awards Ceremony • NBC host Bob Dotson spoke to broadcast students • Two Poskito Photo Conference photojournalists spoke to Mass Com Students • News Anchor Paul Caruso spoke to students and parents at awards program • Created Professional Advisory Committee • Scheduled Mass Communication Power Sessions • Hosted numerous media professionals during class visitations

Issues of Concern 2008-2015	Actions Taken
Encouraging, advising, monitoring student progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards program held in April to recognize student achievements • Added a TV, a coffee maker and extra seating in the department's common area to encourage students to spend time in the department and visit with professors • Created and maintain list of student email addresses • Circulated pre-advising circulars each semester • Add student resources to department web page • Created department Facebook page • Created department Twitter account • Continued to update department tracker of majors • Continued to support Student Media Association • Reactivated and sponsored department honor ceremony

Issues of Concern 2008-2015	Actions Taken
Obtaining designated classroom and updating technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New computer and overhead projector installed in CEMC 222 • Fifteen new Nikon SLR cameras purchased for photojournalism course • Six video cameras, tripods and supporting equipment purchased for broadcast courses • Final Cut Pro X video editing software purchased for computers in editing suite • Installing new computer and overhead projector in CEMC 222 • In process of purchasing new Nikon cameras for photojournalism course • Secured 25 site licenses for Adobe Creative Suites • New equipment ordered with \$10,000 IT grant • Improved technology in CEMC 106 • Added three digital cameras for photojournalism

Assessment of the student newspaper, *The Patriot*, by the South Carolina Press Association (SCPA) was added to our evaluation activities in 2010. While a student product, the paper – which also maintains a presence online – includes post-publication review and recommendations by a faculty adviser. The SCPA’s Collegiate Division reviews college and university newspapers from throughout South Carolina and annually presents awards for journalism excellence.

While *The Patriot* is a student newspaper, we suggest it is appropriate that this annual assessment by professional journalists be included in the external evaluation in this department report because: 1) most of the students who participated were mass communication majors or minors and that class instruction is reflected in the student newspaper as a product; 2) the faculty adviser is supplied by our department.

In each of the last eight years, the SPCA’s collegiate division has recognized our newspaper and its staff for excellence. There have been a total of 41 separate awards.

2007-2008:

- Second Place for Best Overall College or University Weekly or Daily

2008-2009:

- First Place for Best Overall Student Newspaper for Colleges Under 5,000 Students
- First Place: Best Humorous Illustration
- Second Place: Best Photograph
- Second Place: Best Front Page Layout
- Third Place: Best Sports Story

2009-2010:

- First Place for Best Overall Student Newspaper for Colleges Under 5,000 Students
- First Place: Best Column
- Second Place: Best Illustration or Cartoon
- Third Place: Best Arts and Entertainment Story

2010-2011:

- First Place: Best Single Advertisement Design
- Second Place: Best Front Page Layout and Design
- Second Place: News Story Category
- Third Place: Best Humorous Illustration Cartoon
- Honorable Mention: Sports Photography

2011-2012:

- First Place: General Excellence
- First Place: Feature Story
- First Place: Photograph
- First Place: Sports Photograph
- First Place: Single Advertisement
- Second Place: Front Page Layout and Design
- Second Place: Humorous Illustration or Cartoon
- Second Place: Single Advertisement
- Third Place: Sports Photograph
- Third Place: News Story
- Third Place: Humorous Illustration or Cartoon
- Third Place: Sports Story
- Third Place: Photograph (tie)
- Honorable Mention: Arts and Entertainment Story

2012-2013:

- First Place: General Excellence
- First Place: Sports Story
- Second Place: Page One Design
- Second Place: Humorous Illustration or Cartoon
- Third Place: Single Advertisement
- Third Place: Humorous Illustration or Cartoon
- Third Place: Arts & Entertainment Story
- Honorable Mention: News Story
- Honorable Mention: Feature Story

2013-2014:

- Second Place: News Story
- Third Place: Feature Story
- Third Place: Page One Design

2014-2015

- **First Place: General Excellence**

External Input

The **external input** consists of advice and opinions expressed about the quality of the Mass Communication program made by outside professionals who are working currently with media organizations and who visit mass communication classes.

Numerous members of the media were on campus the past year, accepting invitations to speak to students in classes and other venues. Among them were Bob McAlister of McAlister Communications, photojournalist Rebecca Ducker, Morning News reporter/photographer Gavin Jackson, Chris Burgin of Cumulus Broadcasting, independent broadcaster Mike Hogewood and FMU Sports Information Director Mike Hawkins.

Exit Interviews

Exit interviews with seniors, who have graduated either at the winter or spring commencements, are computed and summarized. These interviews are conducted during the last week of class and consist of their evaluations of the Mass Communication Department both on a written response to a standardize questionnaire and in a face-to-face interview with the department chair.

We graduated 22 students with B.A. degrees in Mass Communication during the year; 10 of them in December and 12 students in May.

The average rating of the 15 seniors completing exit interview forms is summarized in the chart below.

Each student expressed his/her views on the department on eight scale questions and eight open-ended questions. The questions on the chart below are: **2** How much has your major prepared you for employment or graduate school? **3** How satisfied are you with the career guidance? **4** What is your assessment of the Mass Com program? **6** What was the quality of your mass communication courses? **7** How do you rate your instructor's knowledge of the courses taught? **8** How do you rate the preparation your instructors put into the courses taught? **9** How do you rate the variety of courses offered in mass communication? **11** How satisfied are you with the faculty accessibility outside the classroom? The chart below shows the average scores with **1** the lowest and **10** the highest:

Average scores of seniors participating in Exit Interviews

Year	#	2	3	4	6	7	8	9	11
2015	12	7.9	7.5	8.1	8.1	9.3	9.0	7.6	8.6
2014	15	7.7	7.0	7.1	7.7	8.7	8.2	7.3	8.7
2013	16	7.8	8.8	8.1	8.5	9.5	9.2	8	9.3
2012	30	7.6	7.8	7.6	8.2	9.4	9.1	7.6	9.0
2011	17	8.3	7.6	8	8.4	9.4	8.9	7.1	9.1
2010	14	7.3	7.8	8	8	9.1	8.6	7.4	8.8
2009	19	8.3	7.6	8.3	8.6	9.3	9.3	7.7	9.1
2008	35	8.7	8.3	8.5	8.7	9.6	9	8.2	8.1

The questionnaire may offer more insight in narrative form, and during the face-to-face interview, which permits elaboration and questions. The narrative questions include: 1) What are your immediate plans? 2) What extracurricular activities have you participated in at FMU? Would you recommend anything additional be created? What? 3) What new courses would you add to the mass com program and what existing course, if any should be deleted. 4) Do the facilities of the department meet your expectations? If not, what should be added or improved? 5) Were mass communication materials sufficiently available to you in the library? 6) What do you think are the major strengths of the mass com program? 7) What specific suggestions do you have to make the major better? 8) How would you describe your overall satisfaction with your major? We also provide an opportunity for other comments.