

# **Institutional Effectiveness Report**

**Name of Program/Department:** *Department of Mass Communication*

**Year:** 2015-2016

**Name of Preparer:** Professor Tim Hanson

## **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 the 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; 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 of 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 2015-2016 academic year, the department assessed five Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). The SLOs covered areas such as classifying current trends, determining the veracity of statements germane to law and ethics, describing and identifying issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations, producing artifacts displaying the ability to synthesize foundational knowledge, and showing the ability to identify evolving technologies.

The department employed Pre-test/Post-test forms, departmental rubrics, and *Work Site Supervisor Ratings of Interns* assessments to evaluate the SLOs. Students in Mass Communication (MCOM) 110 performed, on average, at the 80.47167% level when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication. Our target was 80%; therefore, we achieved our target on SLO 1.0. Next, students in MCOM 451 performed, on average, at the 82.6667% level when determining the veracity of ethical statements. Our target was 80%; therefore we achieved our target on SLO 2.0. With regard to SLO 3.0, "describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing..." our target was not achieved in MCOM 201 (73.750%) and MCOM 221 (78.00%), but was achieved in MCOM 301 (90.667%). In each case the target was 80%. Students in MCOM 410 performed, on average, at the 80.00% level when producing artifacts that display their ability to synthesize foundation knowledge and skills. Our target was 80%; therefore, we achieved our target in SLO 4.0. Students in MCOM 230 and 498 performed, on average, at the 76% level when showing their ability to identify evolving technologies in the field of communication. Our target was 86%; therefore, we did not achieve our target on SLO 5.0.

Based on these findings, the Mass Communication Department has developed a Pre-/Post-test process for AY 2016-2017. The Mass Communication Department will use the pre-test information to diagnose levels of understanding in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment.

The Department has developed a more objective "direct measure" of students' ability to comprehend key issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations. The new approach will have a knowledge-based focus, a critical-thinking component, and, in some cases, a requirement that each student produce an artifact that will demonstrate what she or he can do with the information. In addition, the instructor for MCOM 201 has also updated the class text and support materials to include more current topics. Also, we did not achieve our target regarding students' ability to identify evolving technologies. Since this reflected a deviation from our typical results, we will monitor the profiles of our intern placements and look for any trends.

## **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

SLO 1.0: Students in Mass Communication 110, on average, will perform at the 80% level or above when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication.

SLO 2.0: Students in Mass Communication 451 and 455, on average, will perform at the 80% level or above 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, on average, will perform at the 80% level or above 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, on average, will perform at the 80% level or above 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, on average, will perform at the 86% level or above when showing their ability to identify evolving technologies in the field of communication.

## **Assessment Methods**

SLO 1.0: Students in Mass Communication 110 will perform, on average, at the 80% level or above when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication by performing at the 80% level (baseline = 60%) on the departmental post-test.

SLO 2.0: Students in Mass Communication 451 and 455 will perform, on average, at the 80% level or above when determining the veracity of statements germane to law and ethics as it pertains to the conduct of journalists by performing at the 80% level (baseline = 60%) on the departmental post-test.

SLO 3.0: Students in Mass Communication 201, 221, and 301 will perform, on average, at the 80% level or above when describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast and public relations by performing at the 80% level (baseline = 60%) on the department post-test.

SLO 4.0: Students in Mass Communication 410 will perform, on average, at the 80% level or above when producing artifacts that will display their ability to synthesize foundational knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a chosen Mass Communication track by performing at the proficient level (80%; baseline = 60%) on the departmental rubric (used to evaluate a final work product).

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 by performing at the 86% level or above on the *Work Site Supervisor Ratings of Interns* form.

## Assessment Results

SLO 1.0: Students in Mass Communication 110 performed, on average, at the 80.47167% level when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication on the departmental post-test form (baseline = 60%). The target of 80% was achieved for this student learning outcome.

SLO 2.0: Students in Mass Communication 451, on average, at the 82.6667% level when determining the veracity of statements germane to law and ethics as it pertained to the conduct of journalists on the departmental post-test. The target of 80% was achieved for this student learning outcome.

SLO 3.0: Students in Mass Communication 201 performed, on average, at the 73.750% level when describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast, and public relations (baseline = 60%). Although the class performance represented a positive percent change of 23% over the baseline, the target of 80% was not achieved for the student learning outcome.

SLO 3.0.1: Students in Mass Communication 221 performed, on average, at the 78.00% level when describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing for broadcast (baseline = 60%). Although the class performance represented a positive percent change of 30% over the baseline, the target of 80% was not achieved for the student learning outcome.

SLO 3.0.2: Students in Mass Communication 301 performed, on average, at the 90.667% level when describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing for print and public relations (baseline = 60%). The target of 80% was achieved for this student learning outcome.

SLO 4.0: Students in Mass Communication 410 performed, on average, at the 80% level when producing artifacts that will display their ability to synthesize foundation knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a chosen Mass Communication track (baseline = 60%). The target of 80% was achieved for the student learning outcome.

SLO 5.0: Students in Mass Communication 230 and 498, on average, at the 76% 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. The class performance represented a negative 12% change over last year's performance and a negative 5% change over the baseline. The target of 86% was not achieved for the student learning outcome.

## **Action Items**

SLO 1.0: Students in Mass Communication 110 performed, on average, at the 80.47167% level when classifying salient aspects of current trends and issues in mass communication on the departmental post-test form (baseline = 60%). The target of 80% was achieved for this student learning outcome.

Based on these findings, the Mass Communication Department is developing a Pre/Post-test process for AY 2016-2017. Even though the target was achieved, the Mass Communication department will use the new Pre-test to more accurately diagnose levels of understanding in order to modify teaching and learning activities during the term; the Mass Communication department will use the new post-test to improve measurement of student attainment.

SLO 2.0: Students in Mass Communication 451 performed, on average, at the 82.6667% level when determining the veracity of statements germane to law and ethics as it pertained to the conduct of journalists on the departmental post-test. The target of 80% was achieved for this student learning outcome.

Even though the target was achieved for this SLO, the department decided to make changes to better evaluate indications of student achievement. The new evaluation process has a knowledge-based focus and a critical-thinking component.

SLO 3.0: Students in Mass Communication 201, 221, and 301 performed, on average, at the 73.750%, 78.00% and 90.667% levels, respectively, when describing and identifying key issues germane to writing and editing for print, broadcast, and public relations (baseline = 60%). In each case the target was 80%.

Based on review of the data, Mass Communication faculty concluded that students needed more application opportunities in the curriculum. Therefore, students in MCOM 201, 221 and 301 will engage in authentic learning activities in AY 2016-2017.

Instructors in these courses have developed activities for their students that match as nearly as possible the real-world tasks of mass communication professionals in the field. The tasks students are required to undertake are complex, ambiguous, and multifaceted in nature, requiring sustained investigation. The expectation is that this inquiry will draw on the existing talents and experiences of students, building their understanding of course content through participation. The department will also utilize a new pre/post-test process that will provide a more objective "direct measure" of student learning. This new process will have a knowledge-based focus and critical-thinking component.

The instructor for MCOM 201 is modifying the Pre/Post-test process for AY 2016-2017 by introducing a new textbook with supplemental digital content and a test

bank for MCOM 201. The Mass Communication Department will use the pre-test information to diagnose levels of understanding in the areas of writing and editing for print, broadcast, and public relations in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment.

SLO 4.0: Students in Mass Communication 410 performed, on average, at the 80% level when producing artifacts that will display their ability to synthesize foundation knowledge and skills with specialized instruction within a chosen Mass Communication track (baseline = 60%). The target of 80% was achieved for the student learning outcome.

SLO 5.0: Students in Mass Communication 230 and 498 performed, on average, at the 76% 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. The class performance represented a negative 12% change over last year's performance and a negative 5% change over the baseline. The target of 86% was not achieved for the student learning outcome.

Since these numbers reflect a deviation from our typical results, we will monitor the profiles of our intern placements in 2016-2017 to better determine if this was an idiographic or an actual nomothetic event.