Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
Degree Program Report

The Department of Communication has three degree programs: Communication Studies, Digital Journalism, and Public Relations. The reports for each program follow, with data tables at the end in an appendix.

College: __CAH_____________ Department: __Communication___________
Program: ___Communication Studies_____ Degree: ___Bachelor of Arts________

1. What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?

   a. Understanding multiple theoretical perspectives and diverse (including western, eastern, and others) intellectual underpinnings of communication.
   b. Competency in presentation, preferably in more than one form.
   c. Enhance students’ civic knowledge and engagement locally and globally for responsible citizenship.
   d. Facilitate disciplinary and interdisciplinary integrative learning for creative inquiry.

2. How were the student learning outcomes assessed?
   A) What methods were used?

   A. Competency ‘1’ has been measured directly in three courses: COM 253—Interpersonal Communication, COM 302—Intercultural Communication, and COM 362—Mediation and Conflict Resolution. The assessment methods were course assignments that focused on multiple theoretical perspectives. COM 362 and COM 253 are taught once a year, and COM 302 is taught each quarter. Students were compared to department standard criteria.

   B. Competency ‘2’ was assessed in a required course, COM 450—Advanced Public Speaking. All Communication Studies students are required to take these courses. Student presentations are compared to a rubric developed by the National Communication Association.

   C. Competency ‘3’ was addressed in COM 207—Introduction to Communication Studies, COM 340 Public Communication Theory and Practice, and COM 350 Persuasion and Culture. They are all required courses. Students were evaluated against professor-developed criteria.

   D. Competency ‘5’ was assessed throughout the curriculum evaluating the opportunities communication studies had to collaborate with and learn from other disciplines. Students were compared to department standard criteria.
B) Who was assessed?

- The number of students assessed (e.g., 23)

C) When was it assessed?

- End of the degree for the students.

3. What was learned?

A. In competency ‘1’, 73.9 percent of students “exceeded expectations” while none was below expectations. This is a satisfactory result.

B. In competency ‘2’, 100 percent of our surveyed students met or exceeded expectations. These results confirm the excellent trend initiated last year.

C. In competency ‘3’, 100 percent of communication students met or exceeded expectations. All of them seem to have implemented assignments with a local or global civic engagement component. These numbers just confirm that this is a program with a clear global perspective.

D. Regarding competency ‘5’, 22.7 percent of our students met and 77.3 percent exceeded expectations. We would like to reach some level of excellence at this point and see our students developing more interdisciplinary projects. The study abroad trip to Morocco of 12 students from different programs can be considered an example of experiential and interdisciplinary integrative learning. We need more like that.

4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?

Regarding the subject of facilitating disciplinary and interdisciplinary integrative learning, the department will redouble efforts to encourage students to participate in conferences, symposia and extra-curricular activities that motivate them to work with students from other disciplines. We expect to continue our faculty-led study abroad programs where students get familiar with other areas of knowledge.

5. What did the department or program do in response to previous years’ assessment results, and what was the effect of those changes?

The communication studies program strengthened its emphasis on different perspectives of communication including adding a collaboration component to encourage students to engage in courses across disciplines and, also, the revamping of the mediation course to reflect a broader crisis and communication foundation.
1. What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?

- We assessed all five learning outcomes this year. I proposed to Bret Smith last spring that we do so every other year so that way we’d have time for any curriculum changes to “play out.” For instance, this past year was the first full year of a new set of changes that were proposed and put forth in the 13-14 school year, effective Fall of 2014. So we are looking at everything this year to see how those changes played out. Indeed, we discovered that many changes were needed.
- The specific student learning outcomes that were assessed
  - All five. See attached Table
- Reasons for assessing the outcomes, with the outcomes written in clear, measurable terms
  - See attached Table. These outcomes were created and vetted during the last round of external accreditation. (I’m sorry I don’t recall the year, but it has definitely been since 2009 or 2010.) We reviewed them again this past spring, prompted by Bret Smith, and while we made some minor adjustments, we found they are still an accurate gauge of what our students need to learn to be successful in the journalism world.
- Which CWU Strategic Plan Outcome do the student learning outcomes relate to?
  - See column two in attached table

2. How were the student learning outcomes assessed?

A) What methods were used?

- All senior portfolios for Fall 2014, Winter 2015 and Spring 2015 were examined. For those portfolios, students are asked to provide a sample of work that proves they have met each learning outcome. A C or B on the assignment means they have met expectations, an A means they have exceeded expectations. A D or F means they failed expectations. Our five Learning Objectives are a mix of performance and knowledge.
- In the LOAs submitted to Bret Smith last spring, our Standard of Mastery was that 90% of students would meet or exceed the standards.
- Students are also asked to write a SWOC analysis, outlining their program’s (and the Com Department’s) strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. This measure is a way to get at holes or weaknesses that might not be otherwise revealed.
- Faculty members also fielded in-person complaints from students in key classes and in SEOIs that they weren’t getting the online, social media and visual skills they needed.

B) Who was assessed?

All Digital Journalism students who took Com 489 in Fall 2014, Winter 2015 or Spring 2015 were assessed. 10 students total

C) When was it assessed?
At the end of the student’s degree. (Students are advised to take Com 489 their very last quarter, though some take it a quarter early.) But typically, these students are exiting the program.

3. What was learned?

- Were the standards of mastery met?
  - **YES** (See attached table)

- Report results in specific qualitative or quantitative terms, with the results linked to the student learning outcomes you assessed, and compared to the standard of mastery (criterion) you noted above
  - See attached table

- Include a concise interpretation or analysis of the results
  - While 100% students had proven they could meet or exceed our learning objectives by way of assignments and news stories published on our student media outlets, the written comments and numerous individual, in-person comments as well revealed deficiencies in getting adequate training in online and social media. Com 226 gave them a strong start, but then Com 306 and its approach of teaching Transmedia Storytelling did not deliver the more advanced online and social media skills they were hoping to learn and that the industry requires. Similarly, students noted the lack of a photojournalist approach to the assignments that comprise the core Visual Storytelling class. (Com 321). Students complained about the WritePlacer test, which is graded by computer, and how they wish they could get a “human” to grade the test. We also heard complaints about the number of credits offered for the weekly student media outlets, and how they didn’t seem “fair” compared with the same number of credits for working for the student magazine, which publishes less frequently.

4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?

- The Digital Journalism faculty had a retreat on Nov. 20, where we discussed these issues and came up with a plan to remedy them, which the Com Department approved on Dec. 4:
  - We created a new class, Online & Social Media Strategies, which will be 5 credits and will be in the “Digital Journalism Core,” required of all students. It replaces the existing Com 306, Introduction to Transmedia Storytelling, which will no longer be required. It is still a valid topic as an elective, however, (albeit more so for film than for journalism students), and it is hoped it might be offered in the future.
  - In consultation with the FVS program directors and the Com 321 teacher, we re-created Com 321 to be a photojournalistic class, also required of all majors. (It was fortunate that FVS had concluded 321 did not serve its needs, either, and it has an existing class it is instead relying on for pre-requisites to upper-level visual classes.) So we were able to step away from trying to make the class fit two different programs and instead make it a pure photojournalism class. Because of its more narrow nature, it will only be taught once a year and in summers until
DJ’s numbers increase. We also added two, one-credit classes that introduce how to use the cameras and basic editing skills, which are existing classes in the FVS program.

- We returned the number of credits of Com 342 Broadcast News Producing back to four from the 1 credit that had existed this past year. The switch to one credit had been tried by the former broadcast professor because he felt strongly the Writing&Reporting specialization and the Broadcast specialization should have the same number of credits. But it’s only possible to teach the software involved in broadcast news producing in one credit. To reflect the greatly expanded role of producers in the modern newsroom, four credits is required.

- We increased the number of credits to 1-3 from 1-2 for the weekly student media outlets, The Observer (Com 468) and CentralNewsWatch Reporting (Com 442.) This brings the credits more in line to reflect the amount of time and care it takes to accurately and thoroughly report and write a story with a minimum of three sources for The Observer, which only with extreme luck can be achieved in four hours outside of class, or for a well-reported “package” for CentralNewsWatch, also which is more likely to take 6-8 hours to produce rather than a mere four hours.

- These changes in total increased the number of credits for the Writing&Reporting Specialization to 74, and for the Broadcast Specialization to 75, their levels prior to Fall of 2014.

- In addition, how has/will the department report the results and changes to internal and/or external constituents (e.g., advisory groups, newsletters, forums, etc.)

  - The Fall 2016 Catalog will include the changes. The Com Department has discussed creating a quarterly newsletter, which could include the changes. We will also advertise the changes on the Digital Journalism section of the website and on the Department’s Facebook page, as well as the Facebook page we’re developing to keep in touch with Student Media Alums.

5. What did the department or program do in response to previous years’ assessment results, and what was the effect of those changes?

- Describe any changes that have been made to improve student learning based on previous assessment results

  - We had crafted a handful of changes in 2013-14 and changed the name of the program to Digital Journalism. We tried out a smaller program of 67 credits, with the idea that students would use those extra 8 credits to “get smart” about a topic of reporting they wanted to specialize in.

- Were those changes effective?

  - Only nominally. While the new Digital Journalism name is much more reflective of the industry and is popular with students, there were some late-in-the-game compromises made in the final program that shortchanged the need for increased attention to online, social media and visual communication skills that had driven us to the table for revisions in the first place. Students quickly let us know that the Introduction to Transmedia class was an important and cutting edge skill for producers of Hollywood movies, but held little relevance for the current state of
online, print and broadcast newsrooms, something our talks with professionals confirmed as well. Meanwhile, they were getting introduced to those skills in our revamped Com 226, Introduction to Writing & Reporting for Convergent Media, but had no class in which they were acquiring more advanced and sophisticated tools that the industry now demands. Similarly, the Writing & Reporting specialists weren’t getting enough visual com skills – for both stills and video – that the industry now demands.

- Discuss any changes to your assessment plan or assessment methods
  
  o DJ Program Coordinator Cynthia Mitchell, in consultation with Bret Smith, fine-tuned the assessment plan in Spring 2015. Technically speaking, we are only assessing every other year, in order to give program changes some time to “play out,” and the timetable was supposed to start in 2015-16. But since we saw real issues with the 2014-15 changes, we wanted to take quick action to remedy those, so an “off-year” assessment seemed appropriate.

6. Questions or suggestions? Contact Tom Henderson (henderst@cwu.edu) or Bret Smith (bpsmith@cwu.edu)
1. What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?

We assessed four out of the seven skills we include as a priority for our public relations students. The method of assessment is reviewing their final portfolios in our course COM 489 Portfolio Assessment.

Last year we assessed the following skills:

a. Technical skills: to gather data, to process information, to practice writing
b. Consultant skills: to combine strategies, tactics, and planning in order to achieve goals
c. Persuader skills: to learn how to influence and/or persuade audiences with solid and well-chosen arguments
d. Leadership skills: to work in a team, to understanding Corporate PR, to know how to lead a project, to be critical with others’ work and to understand the ultimate objectives of organizations

All of these skills apply to the University Strategic Plan Outcome 1.1.1: Students will achieve programmatic learning outcomes.

2. How were the student learning outcomes assessed?

A) What methods were used?

Each competency was assessed through appropriate course work. All our students are required to submit a portfolio before graduation that is assessed in COM 489 Portfolio Assessment class. All Public Relations students were evaluated on each of the competencies:

Technical skills were evaluated in COM 208, COM 370 and COM 491/493.
Consultant skills were evaluated in COM 470 and COM 492.
Persuader skills were evaluated in COM 345 and COM 350.
Leadership skills were evaluated in COM 470 and COM 491/93.

The method of assessment was direct including papers, communication campaigns and exams generated in all these classes. Performance and knowledge of the subject were assessed. A "B" grade is considered as meeting expectations while an "A" grade is considered exceeding expectations.

B) Who was assessed?

The population assessed were all the public relations students who graduated that year, a total of 22 students.
C) When was it assessed?

The assessment took place every quarter (Fall 2014, Winter 2015 and Spring 2015).

3. What was learned?

The standards of mastery were met in all areas.

a. Technical skills: 60 percent exceeded expectations, 30 percent met expectations and 10 percent showed no evidence.
b. Consultant skills: 60 percent exceeded expectations, 30 percent met expectations and 10 percent showed no evidence.
c. Persuader skills: 60 percent exceeded expectations, 30 percent met expectations and 10 percent showed no evidence.
d. Leadership skills / Working in a team / Understanding of Corporate PR: 60 percent exceeded expectations, 30 percent met expectations and 10 percent showed no evidence.

The standards of mastery were met with a high percentage of students who met or exceeded expectations. We believe, however, that 10 percent of students who do not show evidence of having a minimum standard of mastery in any of the learning outcomes is still too high. That is due in part to the fact that some students do not save their assignments but also can be the consequence that not all the professors in the program give the same priority to the same learning outcomes.

4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?

We don’t think that great changes are needed in the program. If anything, all the professors who teach courses in this program, as well as the professors who teach COM 489, should be better coordinated to give priority to the same learning outcomes and/or use the same terms of reference when doing assessment of learning outcomes. A traditional problem is that a number of our key faculty in the area of public relations rotate every year.

These results will be debated in a general department meeting with other faculty from the communication department.

5. What did the department or program do in response to previous years’ assessment results, and what was the effect of those changes?

We hired a new tenure-track professor last year who is a specialist in financial communication and investor relations. It has been an effective addition because our students, as their exit essays demonstrate, are demanding more classes with business and marketing content.

We have made great progress avoiding overlap in different classes but we need to do more to make sure the overlap between our foundation class, COM 270, and the basic PR writing class, COM 208, is minimal.
Appendix – Tables of Assessment Data

Communication Studies Major – Learning Outcomes
Academic Year 2014-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Studies: Student Learning Outcomes (performance, knowledge, attitudes)</th>
<th>Doesn't meet</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1:</strong> Understanding multiple theoretical perspectives and diverse (including western, eastern, and others) intellectual underpinnings of communication.</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2:</strong> Understanding the principles of human dialogue together with competency in creating and sustaining that dialogue.</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3:</strong> Competency in presentation, preferably in more than one form.</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4:</strong> Competency in construction and analysis of persuasive discourse intended to influence beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices.</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5:</strong> Competency in systematic inquiry in the analysis of communication systems and processes (the process of asking questions and systematically attempting to answer them, and understanding the limitations of the conclusion reached).</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Relations Major – Learning Outcomes
Academic Year 2014-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Relations: Student Learning Outcomes (performance, knowledge, attitudes)</th>
<th>Doesn’t meet</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Technical skills:</strong> To gather data, information processing, practice writing, etc…</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Consultant skills:</strong> To combine strategies, tactics and planning in order to achieve goals.</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Specialization:</strong> To know in-depth at least one of the Public Relations specialties that has reshaped the PR landscape in recent years (industry, business or organization; PR practice areas).</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Leadership skills / Working in a team / Understanding of Corporate PR:</strong> To know how to lead a project, be critical with others’ work and understand the ultimate objectives of organizations.</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Persuader skills:</strong> To learn how to influence and/or persuade audiences with solid and well chosen arguments.</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Journalism Major – Learning Objectives
## Academic Year 2014-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journalism: Student Learning Outcomes (performance, knowledge, attitudes)</th>
<th>Doesn’t Meet</th>
<th>Meets</th>
<th>Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Technical skills: Students will be able to create news stories by discovering and evaluating diverse sources, work a beat, do computer assisted research. Students will be able to produce quality audio and video, to write thorough and compelling articles in a variety of styles and to build effective Web sites. (COM 208, 306, 308, 310, 342, 442)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ethical behavior: Students will understand the historical, socio-political and cultural contest for the ethical decisions they must make. Students will be able to uphold the legal and ethical principles and responsibilities of a free press, committed to the First Amendment and to the press’s role as a “watchdog” in society.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Specialization: To know in-depth at least one journalism specialization: print, online, or broadcast. To be able to demonstrate professional quality work in one field.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Leadership skills / Working in a team: Students will be able to work as a team to produce media products for general distribution – NewsWatch, Observer, Pulse.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Convergent media skills: Students will be able to use multiple media outlets to the deliver the content they gather.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>