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Academic Learning Compact : Journalism [Effective 2012]

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Academic Learning Compacts
BA Mass Communications & Journalism
2012 – 2013
Due: May, 2013

Academic Program: JOURNALISM & MEDIA STUDIES

Chair: Deni Elliott

Date: May 2013

Summary Statement – Academic Program Performance in 2012-13

Provide a summary statement about academic program performance over the previous year including high points and low points.

This report represents our first attempt to draw more formal ties between our accreditation work and our academic learning compacts – an effort we’re extending across our programs. ACEJMC, our professional accrediting body, identifies 12 foundational competencies to which all journalism programs should teach. These competencies include communication skills, critical thinking, research, numbers, and diversity. They inform many aspects of our curricula, from the makeup of our courses to our assessments. And, we have found that they map naturally to the five ALC categories. With this in mind, we have structured our goals, assessments and criteria for success around our professional competencies. We’ve also reported findings and implications from this past academic year by matching previously-identified goals and assessment categories with the results from specific assessments tied to the same underlying competencies.

We believe the result is an integration of ALC and accreditation reporting that will make both efforts stronger. Once specific benefit we see is the ability to more easily ensure alignment between our competencies – the goals and objectives we teach to – and the assessments we use to measure those competencies.

Using professional competencies as a driving force in our assessment efforts has had several implications on how we report results and even structure our assessments. First, to streamline data collection and develop a more rigorous focus, we’ve decided on two “target” competencies for every course in each of our programs. Courses can teach to more than these two competencies, but these are the ones for which we collect assessment data. By reviewing how competencies are covered across each program, we have been able to ensure that this approach does not result in any “gaps” – all competencies are measured and tracked in multiple courses.

We have also recognized a need to expand on the core competencies prescribed by ACEJMC. With the rise of multimedia reporting, video-based news consumption and interactive infographics, the curricula across our programs have shifted toward a stronger emphasis on *visual literacy*, so we now treat this as a separate competency. Similarly, the seismic shifts on the business side of the news industry have lead us to define a competency specifically in *business and entrepreneurship*. We believe the adoption of these extra competencies may even help our accrediting body expand more rapidly to account for these critical instructional topics.

Academic Program: JOURNALISM & MEDIA STUDIES

Person Responsible: Deni Elliott

Mission of Academic Program (include URL):
List Program Goal(s) / Objective(s): Program Goals / Objectives must be mapped to College Goals / Objectives – use consistent nomenclature. <small>[Please note impact of any changes that were made as a result of 2010-11 assessment]</small>
ALCs must address student learning in four areas: 1. Content/Discipline Skills; 2. Communication Skills; Critical Thinking Skills; and 4. Civic Engagement.

1. Content/Discipline Skills				
Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14
1a. Students will demonstrate an understanding of journalism ethics, law, history, theory and will gain knowledge and understanding from targeted efforts in various classes.	1a. A culmination exam in Senior Seminar, which every student takes during their last semester in the program. The exam requires ethical, legal and professional analysis and decision-making, and understanding of historical/theoretical context. Students demonstrate awareness of contemporary issues affecting news decisions, such as the media industry's shifting economic structure, legal and professional analysis and	1a. We have consistency issues in law and ethics because of retirements and sabbaticals. The law replacement is an excellent adjunct who has taught for us before. The ethics replacement had not taught ethics at this university before (and he will be on sabbatical for the next semester). Further, the ethics course is taught online and on campus, depending on the circumstances. This also makes for consistency issues. Students, however, in either course no matter how it is taught must demonstrate knowledge of relevant principles,	Of the total students in the spring semester of Senior Seminar, 16 showed a clear understanding of how to apply job skills and preparation for interviews to secure jobs in the market. There was enthusiasm throughout in terms of building portfolio's and resume's showcasing work to submit to media organizations. Hearing from working journalists provided first-hand, up close knowledge that students preferred over talking basically with persons outside the workforce.	Finding ways to build in more contact with working journalists and other media professionals might further enhance this capstone experience. Possibly, some of these interactions could be arranged via Skype or some other electronic meanings, giving students a chance to “meet” folks they might otherwise have a chance to encounter.

	decision-making, and understanding historical and theoretical context. Students are also tested in this knowledge through law and ethics classes, with papers and projects.	approaches and knowledge in law and ethics to enable them to identify, examine, and discuss problems or issues encountered in the exam and suggest solutions, or approaches to solutions. Further, they will, where appropriate, be able to identify and discuss appropriate journalistic theoretical and historical context of the problems or issues encountered and explain how that context has changed over time.		
1b. Students will create appropriate materials for a substantial and varied professional portfolio, even if journalism isn't their main career goal.	1b. Students complete a cumulative portfolio in Senior Seminar, the capstone class. The portfolio is either a freestanding website or an on-line blog and comprises a professional resume; statement of career objectives; a job-application letter and packet; and representative samples of news writing; editing; design, photography and other visual communication content; and other areas of journalism and media performance. Faculty evaluate portfolios, but professionals outside the university often provide feedback.	1b. Students will demonstrate proficiency as defined by agreed upon departmental and professional standards in journalistic and media content endeavors as collected from materials they produced in and out of school (as part of their internships, for example) during their time in the department. These standards include, but aren't limited to, topic choice, sources, design, organization, structure, dissemination (if appropriate), style, grammar, visual appeal, and tone.	Of the 26 students in class, 22 received the highest score of 25. The guidelines for developing the portfolio were followed by all students except two who did not complete the assignment timely. The two students who received less than 25 (16 and 20) had good overall class presentations but one did not submit the final portfolio through Blackboard as instructed and received a penalty; the other did not proof resume included and was graded down.	A more rigorous rubric might be considered to differentiate between students who meet the assignment requirements and those who do exemplary work.
1c. Students will Identify and analyze legal and ethical issues in the current highly volatile technological environment.	1c. The department has both law and ethics courses for undergraduate students. Those courses have papers, tests, and projects that assessment student progress in these areas. The Senior Seminar course has an exit exam that also plays a part in this assessment. The department has been a leader in the country among journalism programs	1c. Students demonstrate understanding of basic principles of law and ethics as they apply to journalism and journalism and the new technologies. At minimum this means knowledge of the foundations of ethics, theories, case studies, and application of principles and concepts in real-life journalistic situations. It means understanding the underpinnings of constitutional law that applies to journalism and media, including the	In Communication Ethics, percentage of scores ranged from 71-100 on a scale of 100 per cent. 2 per cent were in the lower range; 10 per cent in the middle range; the remainder (88%) met the competency in the upper range (B or A grade). In the Fall 2012 session of Law, students did uniformly well on the topical essay assessment, reflecting writing and organization skill and basic research skills; as this is primarily a	From the results in Communication Ethics, in the next round of assessment, I will implement the following: (1) earlier tracking of writing, through classroom and out of classroom assignments. (2) increased utilization of graduate assistant in working with students to identify potential problems in mastering major concepts.

	<p>integrating digital technologies, and it continues to add to this area (most recently with social media classes). Law and ethical issues are a part of these new media courses, and assessed through projects, papers, and tests. JMS uses a range of classes in and out of these specific areas to assess student work according to agreed upon departmental standards.</p>	<p>First Amendment, knowledge of at least the most significant legal decisions affecting journalism, and ability to apply legal decisions to current news and media events and situations. And, it means having an awareness of how traditional journalistic law and ethics can and cannot be applied to the so-called new media.</p>	<p>comprehension and analysis course, writing skills apparently have been honed by other parts of the curriculum. In the spring 2013 session, the essay provided students an opportunity to opine on controversial topics covered in class and many engaged those topics more deeply, expanding on in-class discussions with outside research as well as their own views. Results this term were satisfying, but unsurprising in terms of revealing greater depth of student critical thinking. Revision of optional topic choices to spur more provocative discussion may be appropriate for future classes.</p>	
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*Please include multiple assessments. For example: students perform well on classroom assignments, norm-referenced tests/surveys, and they get accepted to graduate school or are employed.

2. Communication Skills

Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14
<p>2a. Students will demonstrate ability to create multi-media news and other multi-media content consistent with agreed upon standards.</p>	<p>2a. Students create a portfolio during Senior Seminar that includes their news media and other work, including internships, during their time in the program. This is evaluated by the instructor in Senior Seminar and discussed among faculty. Students also complete journalistic assignments in up to four or five journalism writing classes, and produce media content for photography, video, design, and production classes.</p>	<p>2a. All student work must meet professional and/or agreed upon department standards in each of the areas assessed. The student portfolios are essentially high-powered resumes and display the best of the students' work throughout their time here. Class assignments are far more variable, as our students produce hundreds upon hundreds of articles, photographs, videos, web pages, digital design elements, and so forth each semester. While it's not our intention to make every piece of work a party in this analysis, our faculty do discuss and assess student work in general at various points each semester. We use the results of those discussions as part of our ALCs. Their work must meet professional or agreed upon departmental standards, and our goal is for students to produce publishable materials.</p>	<p>In the spring 2013 session of Neighborhood News Bureau, as the semester progressed, students clearly identified sources within the community for newsworthy story ideas much better. In addition, assignments were closer to publishable format upon first submission. Deadlines were met with few exceptions.</p> <p>In the fall 2012 session of Writing for the Mass Media, a wide range of writing abilities was observed. Those that started the class strong stayed that way. Those with weaker writing skills improved overall, though it's somewhat difficult to gauge how significantly.</p>	<p>In Writing for the Mass Media, requiring revisions for at least some of the news stories may provide helpful practice with this step in the writing process and improve overall writing by the end of the term.</p> <p>In the final essays for the spring 2013 session of Intro to Visual Communications, a few excellent students could apply theories to the real world cases. I'd encourage more of those applications if teach this again.</p> <p>For the capture the moment exercise in Intro to Visual Communications, I'd think it would be more meaningful to have a summary at the end of the project, reminding students of the purpose of the project and the power of visuals in communications.</p>

			<p>Our focus on clear, concise, precise writing seemed to resonate for students, though their ability to apply this to their writing assignments was . Students were offered an opportunity to revise to earn back partial points based on feedback on their work. About half took advantage of these opportunities and, by and large, the revised versions showed significant improvements. There is also a strong critical thinking component to this measurement, namely, the ability to show good news judgment by selecting and structuring information (writing strong leads and sticking to the inverted pyramid format). Based on their writing and postmortem discussions, students did quite well on this front. Overall, I would say they left the class with stronger news judgment than writing skills, the former being a difficult area to improve upon in just a few months.</p> <p>In the final essays for the spring 2013 session of Intro to Visual Communications, many students focused merely on visuals' role in storytelling while being asked to compare visuals and words used in journalism. I'd put some</p>	
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			emphasis on the question's key words next time so that more students can pay better attention to the question. Students have struggled to relate visual communication theories to real life examples. Many of them used examples from the course materials in their argumentation, which was fine but not ideal.	
2b Students will conduct journalistic research, employing tools based in traditional and online reporting and other methods that meet agreed on departmental and/or professional standards of quality at the appropriate level.	2b Students are assessed on their research skills in most classes; however, the department created the required undergraduate research methods class expressly for this purpose. Focus depends on instructor, but the fundamental goals and objectives remain the same. The class has two or three dedicated assignments that indicate student competence in these areas and they constitute assessment for this outcome.	2b Students complete the relevant assignments (employing journalism research methods, including basic and other tools such as surveys, reading budgets and annual reports, searching public records, etc.) with a competency that meets or exceeds departmental and/or professional standards, which are consistent and commonly acknowledged. Successfully completed assignments, as assessed by the instructor, and evidence of mastery of journalistic research methods as evidenced by successful completion of class assignments and work included in the final portfolios in the Capstone Course. Further, the Research Methods class has a unit, with assignments, of academic research.	<p>In the spring 2013 session of Research Methods in Mass Communications, the average score on the final was 83%, with 11 students achieving perfect scores. Three students did not complete the final, affecting the overall performance.</p> <p>In the spring 2013 session of Research Methods in Mass Communications, the numbers quiz resulted in a high score of 50, low score of 30 and mean of 46.28. All students who took the quiz got passing grades.</p>	<p>The final exam in Research Methods in Mass Communications will change next semester to include a mix of close- and open-ended questions, add more questions, create pool of questions so that some questions vary from student to student for security reasons.</p> <p>In Research Methods in Mass Communications, the numbers quiz will be revised. The revisions include switching to close-ended questions, adding new questions, developing a pool of questions that Canvas will select from randomly so no 2 quizzes get the exact same questions. This will keep the quiz fresh and will ensure students can't share questions and answers while taking the quiz (since this is an online class and students take the quiz unsupervised).</p>
2c Students will attain the necessary skills and meet the necessary standards to master and/or understand technology required for the field and at play in the field.	2c JMS courses, just as the media industry, increasingly employ new technologies to explore, create, organize, display, present, and disseminate news and media materials, as well as facilitate interaction among citizens and between people and news	2c This knowledge and these skills are measured in a variety of courses. All students, however, must demonstrate the basic knowledge and skills required to produce a multi-media digital portfolio of their work in Senior Seminar. Beyond that, various classes have specific measurements for each of the other requirements for technological competency. These consist of projects and assignments that test students in photography and	In the Fall 2012 session of Infographics, students generally did a better job on their final news graphic projects than in their other assignments, partially because they have more time researching for and	Going forward for Infographics, I'd introduce the final project's requirements earlier in the semester next time, and maybe build the regular assignment into the creation of the final project. With more specific requirements on must-have components, they seemed to have a clearer direction

	and other media organizations. Students can no longer learn how to report and writes, but must also be knowledgeable about a range of media technologies. Most JMS courses focus on multi-media production, and specific courses focus on specific technologies, including social media, photography, video storytelling, web production, and convergence. Students will show evidence of having learned the necessary skills to at create and maintain webpages (at least by using templates), produce and manipulate images, create basic designs, and produce cross-platform media information. They will at least be able to create a multi-media portfolio of their JMS work.	video production competencies, as determined by departmental and professional standards; in web production, as determined by departmental standards; in convergence or multi-media platform production, as determined by departmental standards; in knowledge of and basic skills in analysis of use of social media, as determined by course standards; and in knowledge of the theories and approaches to visual communication, as determined by course standards.	creating their final projects.	than before in terms what to do. The drawback though is they all aim to infographics for magazines. Maybe next time, I'd give them or remind them of more media options. It's a challenging class for journalism students who are not used to visual thinking and storytelling. They developed technological skills in this class, specifically vector image creation though Adobe Illustrator. Students also faced other challenges, such as research, news writing and editing, using numbers and critical thinking. I hope more students would take this course and use the skills into their news reporting courses and internships.
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*Please include multiple assessments. For example: students perform well on classroom assignments, norm-referenced tests/surveys, and they get accepted to graduate school or are employed.

3. Critical Thinking Skills

Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14
3a. Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically and imaginatively when systematically anticipating, identifying, analyzing and resolving ethical, legal, practical and other professional and academic problems or issues.	3a. Two required "foundation" courses -- Media Ethics and Media Law -- focus on critical thinking skills through readings, reports, examinations and research papers. Most courses in the program, however, address critical thinking skills, including research methods, beginning reporting, visual communication, mass communications and society, and various skills and concept classes. Critical thinking is one of the major assessments of the culminating exam in Senior	3a. Demonstration of intellectual abilities associated with critical thinking (including examining, applying, conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, appraising) to address and/or resolve issues with clarity, discipline, reason, and creativity in accordance with agreed upon departmental standards. Students exhibit through papers, discussions, projects, and culminating exam the ability to examine, conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize and appraise issues and problems related to a range of elements in news and media, and in academic and other research. Some areas evaluated by grades on specific assignments. Student performance also evaluated at a program level in faculty discussions in which faculty members assess classes and determine how students' critical thinking efforts can be improved.	In the spring 2013 session of Mass Communications and Society, the average score on the My Media Audit was 21 out of 25 possible points, or 84%. 83 students scored an A, 69 a B, 17 a C and 21 a D or lower.	After four years of development, My Media Audit data collection project worked extremely well this semester. Despite complexities of project, there were very few glitches, student engage was very good and student response was favorable.

	Seminar. These are all evaluated by the relevant instructors based on standard criteria.			
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4. Civic Engagement:

Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14
4a. Students will demonstrate awareness of human, educational, environmental and other similar needs of the community and through the community the public at large. In doing so, they will tell untold stories, create awareness between politicians and the community, give voice to those reluctant to speak out on their own through responsible community journalism, as enhanced by civic engagement projects	4a. Through a variety of classroom experiences, students participate in projects, activities, and assignments that require civic engagement, including working with community groups, non-profits, and other organizations on a range of community-oriented issues. In some classes, students solicit proposals for grants, assess them, and award funding. Most of these activities require journals, papers, or other reporting mechanisms, which faculty members evaluate. These instructors then discuss the activities and their merit with the rest of the faculty. Students will use many of the same principles in developing stories and projects in other classes as well.	4a. Students participate in formal and informal civic engagement activities in two required and other classes, and through journals, papers, and other reporting mechanisms in which they recount experiences; research, analyze, and report community issues; note successes and address ways to overcome failures; produce in-house and publicity materials; and engage in other activities, practices demonstrating awareness they gained in civic engagement experiences. Efforts in these activities result in more knowledge and understanding of communities and their residents and ideas about challenges and triumphs from these communities. Ideally, this makes for better journalists and citizens. It also should manifest in stories, articles, projects and papers they produce in other classes. These should clearly demonstrate characteristics associated with sensitivity, diversity, cultural awareness, etc. Assessment done by instructors in relevant courses.	In the spring 2013 session of Mass Communications and Society, the average score was 76%. 55 students earned an A, 43 a B, 62 a C and 32 a D or lower. The final exam is an imperfect measure of historical knowledge alone. This is because history of mass media is unavoidably integrated with many other facets of study. However, the final exam is generally reflective of their historical knowledge since so many of the questions relate to historical aspects. Because it covers so much material, the final exam tends to be extremely challenging for many students.	

Please include multiple assessments. For example: students perform well on classroom assignments, norm-referenced tests/surveys, and they get accepted to graduate school or are employed.

5. Multiculturalism / Diversity

Goals/Objectives	Means of Assessment/ Corroborating Evidence*	Criteria for Success	Findings	Plan for Use of Findings in 2013-14
5a. Students will demonstrate professional roles and responsibilities to identify and address issues of concern (community knowledge, prejudice, stereotyping, inclusion, crime, schools,	5a. Students in NNB report from the Midtown community and provide stories, features, and photographs to local news outlets and its website. Most other courses have a diversity	5a. Student articles and stories in NNB and other classes reflect awareness of community/diversity/multicultural issues they get through the program. They will show, among other things, awareness and knowledge of issues relevant to the communities reflected in the types of articles they choose to write or	In the fall 2012 session of Neighborhood News Bureau, all students received full credit on their profile stories. The students were challenged to think outside the box in making the stories creative but factually. In working with the fifth	The success of the NNB profile story activity points to the need to explore more partnerships with community schools and organizations to assist

<p>businesses, etc.) in the diverse communities served by journalists.</p>	<p>/multiculturalism component in which students address community issues related to prejudice, stereotyping, inclusion etc. Students in several classes participate in civic engagement projects that require learning about communities and their issues. Senior Seminar includes a culminating exam that addresses student knowledge in community and diversity issues and their portfolios demonstrate that knowledge and awareness in the published and other work they've done. Course instructors assess all these, and bring up these issues in faculty meetings.</p>	<p>content they choose to create, the range of sources cited and other measures of inclusiveness, the sensitivity to portrayals of underrepresented groups, the descriptions and approaches, the tone, and other agreed upon standards and guidelines for creating news and media content that met minimal departmental and/or professional standards for diversity. Faculty evaluators use papers, projects, journals (often from participation in civic engagement projects) to determine student knowledge of communities and community issues.</p>	<p>graders, our students were able to achieve all goals in making friends with the young students and getting them to talk about their life styles. Students, JMS and fifth graders, bonded; a media presentation of the stories was shown to the fifth and third graders at the Christian school. This assessment increased awareness for our students of some of the activities African-American students address daily and how families vary. Our goal to get our students out of their comfort zone was achieved, better preparing students for a career in journalism. In the spring 2013 session, most students earned 45 points (out of 50). Overall, the students were first reluctant to take on this assignment but generated newsworthy stories. Three profiles were published; others would have been eligible to publish had the students submitted rewrites by deadline but did not.</p>	<p>students in forming connections between their course work, their neighborhoods and their work beyond college.</p>
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