**Department of Journalism and Public Communications**

**Educational Effectiveness**

**Assessment Plan**

**Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Public Communications**

Adopted by

Department of Journalism and Public Communications BA Faculty:

December 10, 2019

Reviewed by the Academic Assessment Committee: 2/7/20

Reviewed by the Faculty Senate as an information item: 3/6/20

# Mission Statement

The Department of Journalism and Public Communications prepares students to engage in the role that free expression and communication play in a global society. Every semester our students create professional quality (and often published and broadcast) projects in print, audio, and video mediums. They create websites, magazines, documentary films, and strategic communication campaigns. Graduates are prepared for careers and graduate school because of hands-on experience and an emphasis on ethics, communication in a variety of forms and contexts, and critical thinking.

# Program Student Learning Outcomes

Students graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Public Communications will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and the role of journalism and public communications in society;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of diversity in a global society in relationship to communications;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical concepts, legal rights and responsibilities, considerations and practices that guide public communications and research in the field;
4. Gather, critically evaluate, and synthesize information from various sources;
5. Demonstrate the ability to think independently and evaluate their own work and the work of others for accuracy, fairness, clarity, style and correctness;
6. Communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and formats;
7. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts and methods appropriate for the communications professions.

# Measures

The Department of Journalism and Public Communications is at a crossroads in our program. We voluntarily relinquished accreditation with our external accrediting agency in 2018. This year we have worked to streamline our curriculum, with changes to be implemented in fall 2020. We also did not complete academic assessment in 2018-2019, an outcome the majority of faculty did not foresee. However, the moment gave us an opportunity to develop a temporary assessment plan — the one in your hands — as we ask for time to see how the first year of a much slimmer curriculum operates. This assessment plan keeps a couple of features from our existing plan. We have begun to map our PSLOs to determine where they are introduced, developed and assessed within our core courses.

## Direct measures

A portfolio review is used to provide direct measures of program student learning outcomes. Each PSLO will be measured using multiple exit items regarding portfolios of work. Items on the exit portfolio are grouped into domains relevant to each program student learning outcome. The exit portfolio is expected of students during their senior year.

As of the writing of this plan (Fall 2019) the exit portfolio rubric is being written and will be administered to graduating seniors in spring 2020. The faculty are writing this rubric to reflect current PSLOs. The process for this revision is detailed in a later section.

PSLOs are also measured via student artifacts, such as responses to exam questions and journalistic/strategic communications output from coursework. These supplemental direct measures are in development as of this writing.

## Indirect measures

An exit survey of students is administered during their senior year, and may be administered during other points in the curriculum on an ad hoc basis as needed. The items on that survey ask students to reflect on their learning and provide specific feedback for the improvement of the program. Survey items also ask graduates about their plans following graduation.

The Department of JPC also plans to conduct focus groups with graduating seniors. These focus groups would gather qualitative measures of student satisfaction with existing program facilities, services, and course offerings. The goal is that these focus groups will be among the most useful of our assessment methods.

## Influences on data collection

There is no minimum required score on the exit portfolio, and the administration of the exit portfolio is independent of course grades. It is likely that at least some students fail to take the portfolio seriously, resulting in artificially low scores. It is unknown how much this biases scores (if at all). JPC faculty have discussed a variety of ways to solve this problem, but as of the effective date of this plan we have merely noted this is possible.

Focus groups with graduating seniors will be administered by JPC faculty before their final semester grades are transcripted. Graduating seniors may be reluctant to give full voice to concerns in that environment, but getting participation after graduation is not practical. Prior experience suggests that students are more than willing to provide constructive criticism when asked.

The first students to go through this process, May 2020 graduates, will be in a pilot phase to test the rubric with guest reviewers (professional journalists and communicators) and faculty.

# Process

## Faculty involvement and currency

Faculty control the assessment process and assessment is treated as a collaborative endeavor. This assessment plan will be reviewed and approved by faculty vote annually. Revisions will be communicated to relevant College and University officials as required by policy.

JPC faculty have committed to assessment as part of continual improvement of our curriculum. All faculty in JPC are now invested in assessment processes. As was noted above, the program is in the process of redesigning all of the JPC BA assessment measures. The measures and process are therefore in flux as of this writing (Fall 2019).

During AY 2019-2020, program student learning outcomes and curriculum were revised by faculty members and were approved by a majority vote of all faculty. Assessment measures, methods, and curriculum changes resulting from assessment are discussed in the curriculum subcommittee and approved by vote of all faculty. In Fall 2019, JPC faculty continued their efforts to improve assessment, including regular meetings to discuss JPC BA curricular, academic, and programmatic issues.

## Responsible parties

Assessment and curricular development efforts are led by the JPC BA Undergraduate Program Coordinator. This position is appointed at the discretion of the JPC Chair and includes an allocation of workload credit to lead these efforts and complete other curricular tasks.

## Timeline

The entire revised assessment plan will begin first with the exit portfolio pilot planned for spring 2020 as of this writing. Development is proceeding in stages, with completion of one and possibly PSLO per semester starting in Spring 2020. These new items will be included in a fully revised assessment plan as they are completed, with the first new items appearing in Fall 2020. By Spring 2021, JPC faculty will have updated the assessment plan to ensure alignment with current PSLOs. Ongoing revision of the assessment plan is expected as program changes and conformity to UAA’s core competencies are implemented.

The exit portfolio will administered each term. Completion of the exit portfolio will required for graduation. Exit surveys are administered each term, concurrent with the exit portfolio. Analysis of exit survey and exit portfolio results will be included in the annual assessment report, and detailed analyses are shared with faculty each Fall.

Focus groups are conducted each term by the JPC BA Undergraduate Program Coordinator or other faculty. Discussion prompts include questions about specific knowledge and skills, and JPC BA facilities, services, and course offerings.