Department: Journalism

Assessment Coordinator: Peggy Watt

Departmental Mission: The Department of Journalism provides students with educational excellence in an experiential learning environment leading to an understanding of the role of mass media in a diverse democratic society, while teaching critical thinking, and the ethical use of traditional and new media.

Department Student Learning Outcomes: Upon graduation, (Department or Program) majors will be able to:

1. Write quickly and clearly on complex topics
2. Demonstrate critical thinking and analysis skills
3. Demonstrate research and editing skills as appropriate to the track (PR, news/ed, visual J)
4. Use technological tools that will enable and enhance the above skills
5. Demonstrate understanding of legal and ethical behavior in journalism and public relations
6. Work as an effective team member, as well as individually

GUR (liberal arts & sciences) Learning Outcomes

7. __________
8. __________
Journalism (cont.)

Student Learning Outcomes (Departmental and GUR) Assessed This Year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Measures</th>
<th>SLOs Assessed</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior evaluations by chair</td>
<td>1,4</td>
<td>Of 62 senior exit interviews submitted in 2011-12, 90 percent of the students rated their writing skills as “excellent” or “very good;” the median rating was 3.2 out of 4. Students consistently praised the courses that enable them to practice their skills, notably the capstone courses for each track and the publications courses.</td>
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<td>Capstone course team projects, which are often service learning experiences</td>
<td>1,3,4,6</td>
<td>Evaluations by community partners are generally positive; some team dysfunction occurs on occasion.</td>
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<td>Performance in internships</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6</td>
<td>All students taking J-430 successfully completed internships in 2011-12; supervisor evaluations average 4.2 (on a 5-point scale) in final evaluations.</td>
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<td>External assessments: Awards, employment</td>
<td>1,3,4,6</td>
<td>Western’s journalism students set a record for the university’s wins in the SPJ regional (5-state) contest for work done in 2011; they won 22 of the 101 awards presented in the categories in which Western competes.</td>
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Changes based on assessment findings:

Professors teaching the capstone courses for each track (J-450 Advanced Reporting for News/Ed, J-404 PR Campaigns for Public Relations; J-446 Advanced Visual Journalism for VJ) regularly reassess the courses and solicit comment from community partners, which are commonly used in all three courses. It was tentatively determined that capstone course enrollment should be as close to the maximum of 18 students as possible, to enable more teams that will compete in their projects for the community partners. (This is especially an issue with the VJ sequence, which has extensive prerequisites and is still the newest track, with somewhat uneven enrollment.)

Faculty will reevaluate the internship process at its fall 2012 retreat. While the internship has long been a key part of the journalism major, and students nearly universally find it a positive experience, several incidents in 2011-12 suggest a need to review policies of approving internship sites to ensure a professional experience (especially when many businesses are looking toward student internships as free labor). Also, faculty will consider implementing a variable credit internship option to accommodate students who wish to spread their internship across multiple academic quarters; while this has been permitted in the past, it sometimes presents a financial burden to students who may have to pay extra for enrolling over the maximum number of credits for a single quarter even though the academic work is spread across several.
It should be noted that the Department of Journalism meets regularly with its Professional Advisory Council, presenting an overview of curriculum, performance and plans, and solicits an evaluation and suggestions from this board of industry professionals. Their input has proved invaluable. The Department (primarily through the chair) endeavors to keep the board apprised and involved by email and phone between meetings, which occur roughly annually.