Department: Journalism

GUR Assessment:

1) Department: Journalism

2) Assessment Coordinator(s): Carolyn Dale

3) GUR Competency Being Evaluated (GUR competencies here).

Competency 1 - Analyze and communicate ideas effectively in oral, written, and visual forms.

4) Please describe the performance(s) used to assess student outcomes toward the GUR competency (performances could include term papers, pre-post exams, presentations, etc.).

In exit interviews, students were asked both about improvement in writing ability and usefulness of core requirements including J207 Newswriting – our GUR course.

5) Please describe how you analyzed those student performances.

Analyzed 43 exit interviews to determine how students felt the J207 course as a whole contributed to their writing and success in the major. In particular, looked at questions 2, 3 and 6 –and mentions of J207 - as listed below:

2: What opportunities or activities did journalism classes provide to help you develop as a writer?

3. Are you a better writer now than when you entered the major? Why or why not?

6. Which core requirements in the major did you find most useful? Are there any changes you would like to see in the major requirements?

6) Using the categories from the appropriate GUR competency rubric, describe your assessment of students’ performance toward that competency. For example, for Competency #1 you should address contextual knowledge, focused development, organization, and conventions.

Contextual Knowledge: The comments showed that students understood how concepts from their GUR course carried through to other formats and other classes. Nearly half of the students mentioned J207 specifically as important in developing writing focused on audience and situation. They understand the idea that learning the basics in J207 allows them to “write anything.”
Focused Development: Students say that their stories in newswriting helped them understand flow and structure necessary for a good story. Many students said that it is because of the J207 class that they were later able to write feature stories, video scripts, public relations materials and more. This is further reinforced by the examples given in question 4 (*Tell us about a story, article, paper, design or visual project you completed that most fully demonstrated the knowledge and abilities you gained in your journalism major emphasis*). Students talk about their best stories having good ledes, good sources and good conclusions.

Organization: Again, student comments about future writing and J207’s importance in them getting to that point shows that they understand organization. In addition, they understand the overall organization of the place the GUR has in the major.

Conventions: One of the primary purposes of J207 for the major, aside from basic writing, is to introduce students to AP Style, which is used in their following courses. Most students mentioned their understanding of AP Style as critical to their writing improvement and ability – and J207 as the building block that got them there.

7) Did you add any assessment criteria for this competency beyond those listed on the rubric? If yes, please describe here.
No.

8) If you answered yes for (7), describe your assessment of students’ performance toward these additional criteria.

9) As you consider your data, what would be appropriate next steps to improve students’ performance toward the selected GUR competency? Please indicate any professional development resources that would help you support students’ progress toward the selected GUR competency.

Contextual Knowledge: Make explicit to students the importance of J207 in the major. Also, next year set up a review for specific J207 stories.

Focused Development / Clarity and articulation: Faculty teaching J207 meet during the year for brown bag lunches to discuss improvements. Ensure that this is a topic for at least one of those meetings next year. Again, set up a review of specific J207 stories.

Conventions: Based upon the results of this assessment, exit interviews and the department’s ongoing advising and assessment of student course outcomes, we have proposed requiring students in the major to pass J207 with a B- before proceeding on to the advanced J307 Reporting course. This has been approved by the CHSS Curriculum Committee and is in process to be in place by the 2015-16 catalog. This change will help students understand the
importance of mastering AP Style and journalistic writing in order to have success in the future. Also, we will consider having students in the next level courses – or the capstone courses – reflect on J207 and how what they learned there is important in the current course/major overall.

Departmental Assessment:

Assessment Coordinator: Carolyn Dale

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, Journalism 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 Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Analyze and communicate ideas effectively in oral, written, and visual forms.
2. Analyze and interpret information from varied sources, including print and visual media.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessed This Year:

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<tr>
<th>Assessment Measures</th>
<th>SLOs Assessed</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tr>
<td>A systematic summary of intern supervisors’ evaluations</td>
<td>1,4 (Dept)</td>
<td>Intern supervisors rate Journalism interns very highly in terms of writing skills and technology. The overall rankings stay well above 4 (very good) on a 5-point scale for all attributes. In terms of professional skills related to writing quickly and clearly and technological skills, supervisors rank</td>
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students at a 4.5 for grammar, 4.6 for accuracy and 4.69 for meeting deadlines. Students are ranked at 4.72 for knowledge of necessary software. One area that ranks lower than a 4.5 is use of AP style at 4.45. In terms of development of skills during the internship, beginning rankings are all between average (3) and very good (4) with final rankings above a 4. Writing features and profiles, for example, goes from a 3.78 to 4.65. One area that starts at the lower end of average (3.48) and so does not surpass 4.5 at the end of the internship (ending at 4.41) is “Writing for the web.” Some areas for improvement include writing for the web and AP style/grammar.

In exit interviews, all students say they are “much better writers” following the program. Many students point to J207 Newswriting, a GUR course, as important to their success as writers. They say it introduces them to journalism and AP style and provides a solid foundation for all future journalism courses including PR courses, VJ courses and news-ed courses. Students also stress the editing/InDesign and digital media technology they learn throughout the sequence as important. Some students do stress that they wish there were more courses in a given sequence on design, video or photography.

Changes based on assessment findings:

One change for next year is to allow students in the news-editorial or public relations sequence to substitute one digital media or photography class for a publication. This will help address the desire for more courses in those areas (visual journalism courses are required to take four courses in those areas while news-ed and PR majors are not required to take any) and improve technological skills and web-based writing.

We also continue to look for ways to improve students’ use of AP style and grammar. One proposed change for next year to help with AP style among news-editorial majors (those who need it the most) is requiring a B- in J207 Newswriting prior to taking J307 Reporting. The B- is already required for the major but some students take J307 having only passed J207 and their
issues with AP style, writing and grammar are reflected in those grades. This will help make them more successful in the course and in ensuing internships and jobs.