

**Assessment of Undergraduate Student Learning
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
November 2004**

Introduction

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication's assessment of student learning is guided by its mission statement. JMC faculty began discussions on a new mission statement in summer 2003; the new mission statement was approved in December 2003. (Appendix A)

The committee has identified eight areas of knowledge, values, and competencies that we hope undergraduate students will acquire during their education. They are:

- 1) An ability to write clearly and correctly for different audiences.
- 2) A familiarity with the fundamental skills of research and information gathering.
- 3) A proficiency in the analysis and interpretation of scholarly writing.
- 4) A proficiency in the analysis and interpretation of media messages.
- 5) An awareness of the legal rights and obligations of mass communicators.
- 6) An understanding of the ethical responsibilities of mass communicators.
- 7) A knowledge of the workings of mass communication industries.
- 8) An understanding of the experiences and behavior of media audiences.

The Assessment Plan

The Department's assessment plan follows recommendations approved by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the body that accredits journalism and mass communication programs in the United States. While the Department is not accredited by AEJMC, and has no plan to seek accreditation at this time, we still believe that AEJMC provides a strong model for the assessment of student learning.

The AEJMC model endorses multiple measures without endorsing specific quantitative or qualitative measures or standardized tests (see Appendix B). AEJMC's Accrediting Council "encourages programs to develop and apply multiple measures, indirect and direct, that reflect the mission and objectives of the unit"¹

Following AEJMC's model, the Department uses an assessment plan that includes the following indirect and direct measures:

Measures	Learning Goals	Use of Information
Entry-level assessment: To declare their major in JMC,	1, 2	While grades by themselves are not sufficient measures of

¹ Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, "A Guide to Assessment of Student Learning in Journalism and Mass Communication," p. 2. Available on-line at http://www.ukans.edu/~acejmc/BREAKING/Assessment_Guide.pdf, accessed Nov. 3, 2004.

<p>students must earn at least a B in JMC 101 (Introduction to Mass Communication) and JMC 201 (Media Writing).</p>		<p>learning, the JMC curriculum committee uses information on grade distribution to identify potential problems. The committee meets annually with the teachers of these courses to discuss student learning, grading procedures, and course content.</p>
<p>Capstone Course: JMC is currently studying the revision of the content of our capstone course, JMC 661 (Seminar in Mass Communication).</p>	<p>2, 3</p>	<p>The curriculum committee is reviewing syllabi and rethinking the purpose of JMC 661 for helping students achieve their learning goals. This problem was identified through conversations with faculty who regularly teach this course. Feedback suggested that students were not properly prepared to conduct original research in the capstone course. The committee is currently studying ways to address this problem and will make recommendations to the faculty. Recommendations will include an assessment tool for the capstone class.</p>
<p>Student evaluations of courses and teaching: Student evaluations of each course and teacher are conducted every semester. In addition to questions about the instructor, the evaluations also ask for open-ended responses from students about the course (Appendix B).</p>	<p>1-8</p>	<p>Department chair reviews all evaluations for all faculty and makes report/recommendation to the curriculum committee or other appropriate faculty committee.</p>
<p>Review of undergraduate submajors: The structure of the JMC major gives students a great deal of choice over the selection of their coursework. One of the</p>	<p>1-8</p>	<p>The curriculum committee reviewed the transcripts of 312 undergraduates who had completed the major between 1999 and 2003. The committee</p>

<p>questions identified by the curriculum committee was whether students were using that freedom to select courses that would aid their plans of study.</p>		<p>found that generally students were taking the classes that would help them in their specific areas of study. The committee decided that the department's advising structure was helping students make wise courses decisions.</p>
<p>Internships: JMC sponsors about 45 interns each academic year. In addition to writing individual summaries/evaluations of their internship experiences, each intern is evaluated by his or her direct supervisor. (See Appendix C)</p>	<p>1-8</p>	<p>JMC's internship committee reviews candidates before they are approved for an internship. JMC's internship director reviews each student paper and supervisor's evaluation and makes report to the department chair, as needed.</p>
<p>Student performance in local, regional, or national contests: JMC students have been active in many competitions. Again, while an indirect measure, it allows the students to put their classroom learning into practice.</p>	<p>1-8</p>	<p>Student advisors report to faculty about the results of student competitions.</p>
<p>Alumni surveys: JMC has been working with the Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Enrollments since 1988.</p>	<p>1-8</p>	<p>The survey allows faculty to compare responses from JMC graduates to national trends. (For a summary of some findings, see Appendix D.) The department chair reviews the results and reports to the curriculum committee.</p>
<p>Course syllabi over time: JMC faculty are continually working to update their courses to meet the learning needs of students. One of the ways we will demonstrate this is through the evolving content of course syllabi.</p>	<p>1-8</p>	<p>The JMC curriculum committee reviews syllabi for various courses as a part of the review process.</p>

Recommendations for improving assessment:

Ethics requirement: During the discussions about the development of a new mission statement, faculty agreed that the department does not put enough emphasis on training students in ethics. JMC has an ethics course in its curriculum, but it has not been taught in years. It will be offered during spring semester 2005 and JMC is currently searching for a tenure-track faculty member to teach and conduct research in the area of media ethics.

Appendix A

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Statement of missions

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication's missions mirror those of the College of Letters and Science and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, an urban research university that features strong professional programs as well as high-quality liberal arts education. The missions celebrate UWM's urban setting as an ideal laboratory for teaching and research about journalism and mass communication. They favor an integrated model of learning instead of a rigid boundary between professional training and the liberal arts.

The department offers its undergraduate students professional training leading to careers in mass communication while at the same time providing the critical reflection about media and society that is prerequisite for effective citizenship.

The department offers its master's students individualized advising from faculty as well as education in the theoretical frameworks and research skills needed to succeed in doctoral programs or to foster innovation in the field of mass communication.

The department promotes national and international prominence in scholarship by hiring and actively supporting faculty who conduct research that generates knowledge about the processes, contexts, and impacts of journalism and mass communication and who engage in critical analysis of the mass media.

The department is committed to sharing the knowledge and skills of its faculty with a variety of constituencies, in southeast Wisconsin and beyond, through outreach and service to the community, media organizations and professional associations, and decision makers in both the public and private sectors.

Mission of the undergraduate curriculum

The undergraduate curriculum of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication is centered on helping students improve their ability to think and communicate clearly, critically, and creatively. The department is committed to liberal arts education as well as to professional training in journalism and mass communication. The department's scholarly and professional missions are equally important; the department's faculty believes that the best professional education is one that is firmly rooted in the liberal arts and in the development of active and responsible citizenship.

Though students may follow different paths through the JMC curriculum, all majors may pursue in-depth knowledge of a specific area through a required submajor and related electives. In addition, all majors have the opportunity to obtain technological

skills needed for employment in the media. The department intends all of its graduates, whatever their submajor or career goals, to be able to demonstrate competence in eight areas. They are:

- An ability to write clearly and correctly for different audiences.
- A familiarity with the fundamental skills of research and information gathering.
- A proficiency in the analysis and interpretation of scholarly writing.
- A proficiency in the analysis and interpretation of media messages.
- An awareness of the legal rights and obligations of mass communicators.
- An understanding of the ethical responsibilities of mass communicators.
- A knowledge of the workings of mass communication industries.
- An understanding of the experiences and behavior of media audiences.

Master of Arts program

The master's program in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication focuses on research and critical reflection about topics related to the mass media. The intellectual engagement and research skills provided by the program prepare students for doctoral work or for new contributions in the field of mass communication. Students receive individualized advising from faculty with national and international reputations.

In addition to completing 24 credits of coursework, each student works with a faculty member to design a thesis about a subject of the student's choosing. The thesis, based on original research, is the culmination of the master's program.

Students who successfully complete the M.A. program should be able to demonstrate:

- An awareness of current trends in mass communication research.
- An ability to generate research questions and hypotheses.
- An understanding of the fundamental principles of research design.
- A proficiency in the analysis and interpretation of scholarly research.
- The capacity to conduct a significant piece of original research.

Outreach and service mission

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to sharing the knowledge and skills of its faculty with a variety of constituencies in southeast Wisconsin and elsewhere through outreach and service to the community, media organizations and professional associations, and decision makers in both the public and private sectors.

The department's outreach and service mission is rooted in the desire of the faculty to play active and meaningful roles beyond the boundaries of the campus. The department seeks enduring partnerships that not only enhance educational options for students but that provide citizens of all ages with the critical thinking and media analysis skills necessary for active participation in democratic life.

Scholarly mission

A central priority of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication is original research that expands knowledge about the processes, contexts, and impacts of journalism and mass communication. The members of the department's research community pursue the topics they think important, using the theoretical orientations and methods of inquiry they deem appropriate.

The department has a national, and increasingly an international, reputation as a center of scholarly excellence. That reputation is based in large part on the publication of high-quality research in refereed journals and in books. The department actively supports the research endeavors of its graduate students, who regularly present their work at academic conferences or in appropriate publications.

Appendix C

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

On/Off Campus Internship Evaluation

Internship Site / Organization: _____

Student's Name: _____

Supervisor's Name/Phone: _____

PART ONE

For each item below, please consider your student intern's performance and circle the appropriate rating.

Writing Skills.....	Excellent	good	average	poor
Motivated.....	Excellent	good	average	poor
Able to learn quickly	Excellent	good	average	poor
Meets deadlines	Excellent	good	average	poor
Takes & follows directions.....	Excellent	good	average	poor
Potential for a career	Excellent	good	average	poor
in this field				

PART TWO: GENERAL COMMENTS

We would now greatly appreciate your comments so we have a better understanding of why you rated your student intern as you did. We will use this feedback when administering a final grade for the student intern's performance in this program. It is extremely helpful if you provide positive comments as well as suggestions on how the student might improve and *a few specific examples and observations*. Please include an additional page with your comments.

*FAX this evaluation **NO LATER THAN AUGUST 11, 2004** to: 414-229-2411, Attn: David Allen, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication,*

Questions? Call David at 414-229-4619 or email dsallen@uwm.edu.

Thank you so much for your participation.

Appendix D

**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Survey of Journalism and Mass Communication Undergraduates
1988-2003**

Employment Status of JMC Graduates, 1988-2002 2003 National Percentages

Full-time employment	62.2 %	62.4 %
Part-time employment	19.5 %	12.6 %
Attending school	.4%	8.7 %
Looking for employment	9.5 %	16.2 %

Primary Job Involves Communication, 1988-2003 2003 National Percentages

Yes	53.5 %	49.8 %
No	27.6 %	25.2 %

Description of Job Activities of JMC Graduates, 1988-2003

Writer/reporter	8.6 %
Editor	1.6 %
Writer/reporter/editor	7.0 %
Graphics	1.1 %
Photographer	.5 %
Graphics and photographer	.5 %
Ad production	.5 %
Ad sales	2.1 %
Public relations production	13.4 %
Corporate communication	10.7 %
Audio-visual production	4.8 %
Technical writer	2.1 %
On-air	2.1 %
Other	11.2 %

Description of Employer, 1988-2003

Daily newspaper	8 %
Weekly newspaper	5.3 %
Wire service	.5 %
Radio	4.3 %
Television	8 %
Radio/television	.5 %
Cable	1.6 %
Public relations agency	1.1 %
Advertising agency	4.8 %
Public relations department	3.7 %

Advertising department	3.2 %
Public relations/advertising department	5.9 %
Magazine	2.7 %
Education	.5 %
Production company	.5 %
Non-media company	4.3 %
Other	4.8 %

Job Offers Available on Graduation, 1988-2003

2003 National Percentages

At least 1 job offer	65 %	64.9 %
Mean number of offers	1.3	1.2

N=286, UW-Milwaukee undergraduates, 1988-2003