



Date: September 30, 2015

From: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
Julie Evak, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education

To: Marie Hardin, Dean
Robert Baukus, Advertising/Public Relations Department Head
Russ Eshleman, Journalism Interim Department Head
Matt Jackson, Telecommunications Department Head
Anthony Olorunnisola, Film-Video and Media Studies Department Head

CC: Rod Bingaman, Film-Video SLA Team Leader
Frank Dardis, Advertising SLA Team Leader
Marcia DiStaso, Public Relations SLA Team Leader
Kevin Hagopian, Media Studies SLA Team Leader

Re: Student Learning Assessment Report: 2014-2015 Academic Year

Action Item for Department Heads

Each program must determine how to best apply the findings of this report “to improve curricula, instruction and learning.” Please respond by or before November 15 with measures: a) already taken, based on earlier Student Learning Assessment reports, and b) being considered, based on this report. What are some realistic short-term and long-term improvements that could be made to your curriculum, and what, generally, would be needed to pursue them?

Executive Summary

- The conclusion for this twelfth annual assessment cycle is that all assessed majors are meeting the learning goals for our 12 professional values and competencies. This assessment also points to areas across the College where we should continue our efforts to focus on key learning outcomes; it also reinforces our understanding that our response to past assessment reviews has yielded positive results and is worth the time and effort involved.
- Several improvements to the feedback for this report were implemented. The direct measure – an assessment of course materials by a team of reviewers – was strengthened

by the formation of an Assessment Advisory Committee, consisting of a faculty representative from each program, and the involvement of the Alumni Society Board in the review of student materials. In addition, the move to a three-year cycle for evaluation of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) 12 values and competencies will enable us to better consider results and implement meaningful responses.

- Each program must determine how to best apply the findings of this report “to improve curricula, instruction and learning.” Faculty across the College will review the findings of this report and plan improvements accordingly.

Introduction

The College of Communications’ student learning assessment program has completed its twelfth year. By all accounts, it is a successful program, and has helped the College identify areas of excellence to maintain and potential weaknesses to address through curricular improvements.

The primary goal for the College’s assessment process continues to be evaluating student learning according to requirements of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). The Council provides criteria and standards for assessment. The three criteria that guide assessment of student learning are *awareness*, *understanding* and *application*. The standards stipulate, in part, that student learning be assessed in 12 areas of competence. (See Appendix A.)

The College uses a combination of primary (direct) measures and several secondary (indirect) measures. The primary measures are a team review of student work that comes mostly from capstone or senior-level coursework, and a survey of internship supervisors. A new process in which the faculty representative and Alumni Society Board members reviewed the materials individually and then met for a face-to-face discussion of their findings was piloted in Fall 2014. The pilot focused on one learning objective: All graduates should be able to “write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.” Faculty representatives created evaluation rubrics that included guidelines for excellent, satisfactory and unsatisfactory work within each criteria. In spring 2015 three additional learning objectives were evaluated through the same process.

We plan to continue with this method of review utilizing the expertise of the Alumni Society Board and will focus on assessment of four learning objectives each year in the three-year cycle. Teams comprising experienced media professionals conducted the reviews except for one program, Media Studies, where doctoral alumni teaching in other mass communication programs also participated in the review. All professionals involved in assessment are College alumni. (See Appendix B for a list of team members who participated in assessment.) One team was organized for each of the College’s degree programs, with separate teams for the

Advertising and Public Relations degree options within the major. The internship supervisor survey was conducted during the Fall 2014 semester.

Secondary measures used in the Student Learning Assessment included College-based retention and graduation rates and evidence from student competitions.

Summary of Findings

Programs were assessed as meeting minimum expectations in all areas based on feedback from the direct and indirect measures we examined. The data suggest that student learning reflects the objectives outlined in the values and competencies adopted by the College. These reviews and other data indicate areas that faculty should address as they contemplate improvements to the curriculum.

Primary Direct Measures

Team Evaluations of Student Work. Student work was selected, organized and distributed to teams of industry professionals and in accordance with the College's assessment plan. Reviewers also received the syllabi for the courses from which assignments were selected. A faculty member in each major summarized the conclusions in a report based on face-to-face discussions with alumni reviewers. The design of our curriculum assures the basic criterion of assessment, *awareness*, is achieved; all students are *exposed* to the 12 values and competencies. However, our aim is always that student learning will rise to *understanding* and *application*.

The review of student work by assessment teams must be understood within its limitations; teams examined course materials from just one section of any particular course although multiple sections were usually offered.

A change to the process was instituted for this cycle. Reviewers rated course materials as "Excellent," "Satisfactory," or "Unsatisfactory" within criteria applicable to the specific learning objective. Competencies determined inapplicable were noted as such on the reviewer grid. This rating system was implemented as a result of reviewer suggestions after the previous assessment period, and it was determined successful in the fall pilot.

Readers should give team reports, reproduced in full in Appendix F, thorough consideration. They contain specific praise, some concerns and useful suggestions for each program's curriculum. The following summary provides only general findings.

Overall, reviews indicate that students are meeting minimum acceptable standards for all values and competencies in the programs reviewed. Reviewers were positive overall about student learning and the quality of the work they reviewed.

Reviewers noted specific strengths in each major. They also found room for improvement, as expected. Team assessments for each competency are summarized below. Not every program is summarized under each standard, however, complete team reports are included in the appendix.

1. *Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.*

Teaching students to write correctly and clearly continues to be a priority of departments. This year, as in past years, assessment of our success in doing so was mixed but generally positive. Overall assessment of writing by journalism was satisfactory with reviewers noting that work was inconsistent. Assessment of writing by public relations likewise was mixed with reviewers giving the student work high marks for clarity and substance, but satisfactory marks for mechanics and style. Overall assessment of film-video students also was “satisfactory” with reviewers noting both strengths and weaknesses.

2. *Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.*

Reviewers gave generally positive reviews for the work of students, while agreeing that some areas needed improvement. Students in photojournalism classes were praised for grasping concepts and producing excellent photographs. Media Studies students showed a demonstrated understanding of the ways in which media imagery functions to shape social and cultural norms, the reviewers found. Students also showed the ability to employ visual imagery as part of their own rhetorical projects. However, the reviewers noted that the presentation of information needs more careful attention to documentation. Reviewers of work by telecommunications students said that assignments had a clear beginning, middle and end and were able to convey the story effectively. However, the pacing was sometimes slow and occasionally lacked context. A lack of action and movement sometimes hindered storytelling as did lack of natural sound. The reviewers said that greater emphasis on preproduction planning would enhance student mastery of this learning objective. The film-video reviewers rated the student work satisfactory to excellent. They praised the technological ability of the students but said the purpose of the work could be convoluted.

3. *Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.*

This continues to be an area where the work of students is decidedly mixed. Public relations students showed a generally outstanding ability to use SPSS statistical software to analyze data from surveys they conducted. Reviewers rated the work by Film-Video students satisfactory to excellent. Media Studies showed an understanding of the methods of statistical collection and evaluation. However, students showed some difficulty drawing subtle inferences from the data they collected. Moreover, small sample sizes constrict some student research projects. Work by students in Telecommunications classes showed minor errors in calculations and some errors in analysis that should have been spotted and corrected in a team report setting. Data

presentation also could have been clearer, the reviewers noted, with better labels and more appropriate use of graphs and charts. The Journalism Department did not provide adequate samples, an indication that there is a problem.

4. *Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.*

This was an area of high praise by reviewers. Telecommunications students showed an ability to use proper focus and depth of field while operating cameras, clear audio recording, satisfactory lighting technique, and appropriate use of editing. Public relations showed excellent proficiency in the use of tools and technologies. The film video students praised the high level of technical skills. The work by advertising students was generally excellent, although reviewers said more context for the work should be provided by the department in order to get a more complete evaluation.

Survey of Internship Supervisors. During the early fall of 2014, internship supervisors responded to a survey assessing interns on the values and competencies.¹ (See Appendix C for survey instrument, results over the past several years and written comments from the 2014 survey.) As in previous SLA surveys, respondents were asked to rate students on a one-to-five scale, with five being the highest rating. A total of 128 out of 132 supervisors responded, a rate of 97 percent.

Survey data suggest that internship supervisors found, on average, that student interns performed well in all areas. Supervisors “agreed” that students met all competencies; average ratings for each ranged from 4.67 to 4.89. All but two areas improved over last year’s survey. It is difficult to assert a trend, however, as our methods preclude us from claiming statistical significance.

The highest average ratings included the competencies of use of tools and technologies, and writing correctly and clearly. The lowest average ratings were for the critical evaluation of student work, and acting judiciously, creatively and independently.

Secondary Measures

Graduation and Retention Rates. The College’s one-year retention rate for the Fall 2013 cohort increased by two percent to a level of 95 percent. In relationship to the previous year, four-year graduation rates increased by five percent to 81 percent for the 2010 cohort, while five-year (87 percent for the 2009 cohort) rates dipped slightly and six-year (88 percent for the 2008 cohort) stayed the same as the previous year.

¹ The internship survey addresses all competencies except images. Diversity is addressed in one item (instead of 2).

National Competitions and Awards. College of Communications students continue to excel in national and regional competitions, evidence that many of the professional competency goals are being achieved. The College strives to maintain a national reputation among academics and professionals for achievement of students in rankings and competitions.

Students in the College earned six top-10 awards in the William R. Hearst Foundation's Journalism Awards Program. More than 1,000 students from the country's 108 nationally accredited schools participated. A team of students working for the Centre County Report won a National College Television Emmy Award for the show "Centre County Report in Cuba."

A team of Penn State students captured third place in the American Advertising Federation's National Student Advertising Competition district presentation and earned a trip to the national finals. College of Communications students also continued to excel, as in previous years, in the AAF Most Promising Minority Program, the Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence Awards, and other state, regional, and national contests. For a list of winners in these competitions, see the appendix.

Appendix A

Professional Values and Competencies for Assessment

Individual professions in journalism and mass communication may require certain specialized values and competencies. Irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

1. understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and assemble and to petition for redress of grievances;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
3. demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
4. demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
5. understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
6. demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
7. think critically, creatively and independently;
8. conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
9. write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
10. critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
11. apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
12. apply basic tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Appendix B
Student Learning Assessment Teams, 2014-2015

Name/Program
<u>Advertising</u>
Frank Dardis, faculty team leader
Stephanie Durkin, Pinnacle Search Partners, LLC
Bob McKinnon, GALEWiLL Design
Meredith Topalanchik, CooperKatz
<u>Film/Video</u>
Rod Bingaman, faculty team leader
Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor to the Embassy of Haiti
Catie Grant, Producer, WPSU-TV
Patrick Mairs, Editor/Producer, The Associated Press
<u>Journalism</u>
Russ Eshleman, faculty team leader
Greg Guise, Senior Photojournalist/Reporter, WUSA-TV
Tom Loebig, Broadcast News
Dan Victor, Staff Editor, Social Media, The New York Times
<u>Media Studies</u>
Kevin Hagopian, faculty team leader
Rob Boulware, Manager, Stakeholder Relations, Seneca Resources Corporation
Karen Kline, Professor, Department of Communications, Lock Haven University
Kurt Knaus, Managing Director, Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy
Michael Liebowitz, Creative Director, The CementBloc
<u>Public Relations</u>
Marcia DiStaso, faculty team leader
Kurt Knaus, Managing Director, Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy
Lauren Sujkowski, Marketing Coordinator, Philadelphia Eagles
<u>Telecommunications</u>
Matt Jackson, faculty team leader
Rob Boulware, Manager, Stakeholder Relations, Seneca Resources Corporation
Mark Lima, Vice President-News, Fusion

3. The intern acted judiciously, creatively and independently.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Average Scores

2014-2015	4.69
2013-2014	4.63
2012-2013	4.68
2011-2012	4.76
2010-2011	4.44
2009-2010	4.24
2008-2009	4.35

4. The intern demonstrated the ability to conduct research and evaluate information.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Average Scores

2014-2015	4.73
2013-2014	4.74
2012-2013	4.72
2011-2012	4.66
2010-2011	4.47
2009-2010	4.38
2008-2009	4.36

5. The intern could use basic numerical and statistical concepts.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Average Scores

2014-2015	4.76
2013-2014	4.71
2012-2013	4.77
2011-2012	4.67
2010-2011	4.51
2009-2010	4.26
2008-2009	4.38

Intern Assessment Survey
Fall 2014
Sample of supervisor comments

[Student] created and independently managed a new social media outlet for the Office of Annual Giving with the expressed purpose of promoting philanthropy to our alumni. [Student's] posts brought life to the social media account and provided updates relevant and interesting to the target audience.

[Student] helped to build the foundation for our social media strategy. She outlined clear objectives, milestones, methods, and backed up her recommendations with hard data. [Student's] recommendations are extremely detailed and supported by reputable sources in the digital marketing space. Her messages were thought provoking and displayed effective methods of practical application.

The intern was tasked with coming up with a final report for suggestions for improvements to our sample room. This report was concise and useful. [Student] was also very able to communicate a clear and concise message to various stakeholders via email as a part of many of her assignments.

[Student] brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position. We look for students who have an ability to apply what they have learned to something they have likely never done before: higher education fundraising. [Student] proved to be an invaluable resource to many projects throughout the course of the semester.

[Student] was able to efficiently and expertly review and research materials and prepare deliverables requested. Worked very well with little direction or supervision.

[Student] did an excellent job of conveying important factual information in a way that would resonate with the target audience. [Student] was able to take previous versions of content in various forms and use an appropriate tone and style for the audience.

[Student] was extremely well prepared for his internship. He had a great deal of experience with production equipment. [Student] produced a program of highlights from the 2014 Arts Fest. It was exceptionally well done.

Appendix D
Retention and Graduation Rates

Year	1-yr retention	4-yr graduation	5-yr graduation	6-yr graduation
2013	95%			
2012	93%			
2011	93%			
2010	93%	81%		
2009	89%	76%	87%	
2008	93%	80%	88%	88%
2007	94%	79%	87%	88%
2006	94%	80%	88%	89%
2005	94%	78%	89%	90%
2004	93%	80%	88%	88%
2003	91%	76%	84%	86%
2002	92%	78%	86%	87%
2001	91%	73%	82%	83%

Data obtained from Enrollment Management Retention and Graduation Reports web site (<https://intranet.uao.psu.edu/intranet> => "Reports & Data" => "graduation & retention rates") Report generated 09/08/15.

Appendix E
Student Award Winners, 2014-2015 (Selected Competitions)

Hearst Foundation

Lee Cary – 6th place in enterprise reporting
Kelsey Tamborrino, 9th place in enterprise reporting
Patrick Woo – 10th place in sports
Carley Mossbrook – 7th place in profile
Rachel White – 4th place in TV broadcast news
Audrey Johnson – 10th place in multimedia news

National College Television Emmy Awards, Hollywood, CA

Christian Heilman, Rachel White and CCR team – Outstanding Magazine Show Emmy for “Centre County Report in Cuba”

Mid-Atlantic Emmy Nominations

Centre County Report – College/University Student Production, newscast
Christian Heilman, Rachel White and CCR team – college/university student production: long-form, “Centre County Report in Cuba”
In the Game - college/university student production: long-form

Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award

Christian Heilman – “Drive-In Theater: Fighting to Stay Open”

Dow Jones News Fund

Myliques Sutton

National Student Advertising Competition (AAF)

The Nittany Group, Team for Pizza Hut, 3rd-place finish at District Two
Co-chairs: Janelle Klueber, Emily Ullmann
Presenters: Rebecca Bryden, Rachel Casciano, Pat Hagan, Ethan Kisan and Janelle Klueber

American Advertising Federation Most Promising Minority Students Program

Jacqueline Lozano, Aizya McGee

Society of Professional Journalists – Region 1 Mark of Excellence awards

Akash Ghai – winner, breaking news photo
Akash Ghai – finalist, feature photo
Caity Kramer – winner, sports photo

Noelle Mateer – finalist, feature writing
Carley Mossbrook – finalist, feature writing
Caroline Briselli – finalist, general column writing (Collegian)
Anna Orso – winner, sports writing
Matt Allibone, Annemarie Butkiewicz, Katy Galimberti, Morganne Mallon – finalist,
general news reporting (CDT Series)
Greg Surine – finalist, online feature reporting (Collegian)
Jessica Paholsky – finalist, online news reporting
Hannah Byrne – winner, online sports reporting
Eric DeBerardinis – best TV sports reporting: “Cuban Boxing: Fighting Through
Adversity”
Centre County Report – best newscast

Student Keystone Press Awards (Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Foundation)

Eric Shultz – 1st place, general news reporting
Lee Cary – 2nd place, feature story
Sam Janesch – 1st place, personality profile
Carley Mossbrook – 2nd place, personality profile
Mitchell Culler – 2nd place, editorial (Collegian)
Bobby Chen – 1st place, sports photo
Kelly Tunney – 2nd place, sports photo
Akash Ghai – 1st place, feature photo
Kelly Tunney – honorable mention, feature photo
Yini Jiang – 2nd place, news photo
Hannah Byrne – honorable mention, news photo
Haley Nelson – 2nd place, photo story
Collegian staff – honorable mention, photo story
Collegian staff – 1st place, layout and design

Pennsylvania Associated Press News Awards

Christian Heilman, Rachel White and CCR team – best documentary, professional
category, “Centre County Report in Cuba”
1st place student TV category – “Tent City: Nittanyville”

Appendix F
Program Assessment Reports
Alumni Society Board Review

Memo

To: Ford Risley, Associate Dean

From: Frank Dardis

Subject: 2014 Advertising Student Learning Assessment: Writing Component

Date: December 19, 2014

2014 Advertising Student Learning Assessment Report: Writing Component

The Advertising Student Learning Assessment team has reviewed student materials from the following classes: COMM 421W: Advertising Creative Strategies, and COMM 424: Advertising Campaigns. The external alumni reviewer was Stefanie Durkin of Pinnacle Search Partners, LLC. To assess the level of student writing, Ms. Durkin and I independently rated each writing sample across four major dimensions: Clarity, Substance, Mechanics, and Style. Within each dimension, the reviewer selected one of three categories of evaluation: excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. As a general guide to ensure consistency, the reviewers employed a rubric that provided specifically detailed descriptions of each category within each dimension. In total, each reviewer evaluated seven writing samples (the same seven for each reviewer), then completed an "overall" evaluation of all the student writing as a whole, using the same rubric described above.

The overall rating for the entire writing competency is "satisfactory." In general, the reviews were quite positive and both reviewers demonstrated a rather consistent level of agreement across most samples and in their overall evaluation, for which there was 100% agreement on the following ratings: Substance as satisfactory; Mechanics as satisfactory; and Style as excellent. The only difference in evaluation was in the Clarity dimension, which I deemed excellent and which Ms. Durkin deemed satisfactory. In providing additional comments, Ms. Durkin noted that she sensed some minor errors within the Mechanics dimension and that some writing samples did not demonstrate enough data or research in the Substance dimension. I had overall comments that most of the writing samples were quite terse and efficient, with many details properly enumerated and justified.

As part of the assessment process, the reviewers also had a chance to meet for a face-to-face discussion about their evaluations several weeks after they had completed them. At this approximately one-hour session, Ms. Durkin and I went over our ratings for each sample, then discussed our overall ratings, as described above. As stated, there was much agreement across all samples and the overall evaluation. In fact, a very positive note is that an "unsatisfactory" score was checked only once across all samples, and this was by only one reviewer within the Clarity dimension for one sample. All other dimensions in all samples were rated as satisfactory or above, with two assignments even being rated as excellent across all dimensions.

In sum, the assessment of the Writing Component for the Advertising major was rather positive overall, both generally and in specific instances. This included evaluation on multiple dimensions across numerous samples, and incorporated both written and spoken validation between reviewers. Reviewers also offered some minor suggestions on how to improve specific writing dimensions overall.

Memo

To: Ford Risley, Associate Dean

From: Frank Dardis

Subject: Spring 2015 Advertising Student Learning Assessment: Images & Information, Tools & Technologies, Numerical & Statistical Competencies

Date: July 12, 2015

2015 Advertising Student Learning Assessment Report: Images & Information, Tools & Technologies, Numerical & Statistical Competencies

The Advertising Student Learning Assessment team has reviewed student materials from the following classes: COMM 420: Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations, COMM 421W: Advertising Creative Strategies, COMM 422: Advertising Media Planning, and COMM 424: Advertising Campaigns. The external alumni reviewers were Bob McKinnon of GALEWiLL Design and Meredith Topalanchik of CooperKatz. To assess the level of student competencies listed above, the reviewers and I independently rated samples of student work across the following dimensions: Application (all three competencies), Message (Images & Information only), and Interpretation (Numerical & Statistical only). Within each dimension, the reviewer selected one of three categories of evaluation: Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory. As a general guide to ensure consistency, the reviewers employed a rubric that provided specifically detailed descriptions of each category within each dimension. In total, each reviewer evaluated several samples of student work within each competency (the same samples for each reviewer) and rated the work along the applicable dimensions.

For Images & Information, Ms. Topalanchik and I demonstrated a rather consistent level of agreement across most samples and in our overall evaluation, for which the vast majority of work was rated as Excellent or Satisfactory in both the Application and Message dimensions. On one sample deemed unsatisfactory, Ms. Topalanchik noted that she would have liked to see more information about the project and what the student(s) were trying to accomplish. She specifically said that “knowing the project challenge” would help evaluators know if the work is answering the challenge or not, versus simply looking at the work by itself with not enough macro-level information about the assignment (although the instructor’s grading criteria were included). This sentiment also was echoed by Mr. McKinnon, who rated the work as unsatisfactory in both dimensions. His comments stemmed from his experience in actually working with clients related to the examples evaluated (food companies and social causes), which was purely coincidental, of course. He suggested that the food work needed to be more socially responsible and that the cause-related work needed to offer more solutions. In a sense, he said that the work seemed to not offer a final “solution” to the problems presented, at least not in the ways he is used to seeing and developing in his profession. In short, he was evaluating the work on how successful or not he thought it would be in his field; he was not necessarily commenting on whether or not there is “evidence” that students are “doing” this kind of work or not in the classes.

In sum, this translated to the larger conversation of how both reviewers agreed that simply seeing student work (an ad layout, pie chart, etc.) obviously shows that the students can “do” the work

(i.e., thus, everything would be rated “satisfactory” just by its mere presence). But the two reviewers wondered how/if the work presented answered a “bigger question” or challenge that the work was supposed to be answering. This sounded like they would have preferred more macro-level context, specifics of the assignment, its place in the syllabus, etc. In essence, it seemed like the two reviewers were more interested in evaluating students’ critical thinking than they were in simply looking if students could physically lay out ads, information, graphs, etc. (Mr. McKinnon more so than Ms. Topalanchik, who did focus on the more micro-level, physical structure of the samples, as did I). Both reviewers also thought that the samples would be easier to understand/evaluate in context of knowing the overall campaigns from which they were taken. In short, I tried to winnow the amount of materials to review down to micro-level, physical examples of students performing the work, whereas the reviewers would have preferred to see – and evaluate – entire campaigns across whatever competencies we’re interested in evaluating. This dynamic basically held across all three competencies in the current report.

However, Tools & Technologies was rated Excellent or Satisfactory by all reviewers in Application, although a general comment by Mr. McKinnon was “it is almost impossible to assess this work in its presented format. While on one level it suggests that students can successfully run reports, it lacks any contextual analysis that would show these reports are useful,” which again, to me, reflects the issue just discussed. Had I provided entire campaign books for each student sample, there would have been the macro-level context that the reviewers were seeking.

The same types of comments were reflected in the Numerical & Statistical competency, which was rated by all reviewers as either Excellent or Satisfactory in the Application condition, and which received two Satisfactory ratings and one Unsatisfactory in the Interpretation dimension, based mostly on the same sentiments above of not being able to determine the usefulness of the information provided without a larger contextual backdrop.

As part of the assessment process, the reviewers also had a chance to meet for a face-to-face discussion about their evaluations several weeks after they had completed them. At this approximately one-hour session, we discussed the issues above. Overall, all reviewers agreed that the samples obviously show that Penn State students can “do” [basically “Satisfactorily” across all three current competencies] the stuff required in the industry, but it was difficult to determine any kind of outcome-based vision or critical thinking skills, which also are important (and I explained that we only were interested in the three above competencies in this semester, and that other competencies like critical thinking also are assessed in other evaluations). However, the advertising reviewers seemed to favor more of the “big picture” presentation of materials rather than piecemeal.

Based on the assessment and discussion of these issues, several specific suggestions were made:

1. Provide reviewers with all ACEJMC assessment competencies for the major, explain the overall process, and explain how the materials they’re evaluating fit into the process, exactly what they’re looking at and what specifically they should judge, etc.
2. Do one of the following:
 - (a) Provide even more context for how the specific assignment/sample fits into the class structure, goals, etc., or
 - (b) simply supply full campaign books to review, and explain which specific parts/competencies are under actual assessment. In hindsight, this is what I was trying to

accomplish by parsing specific examples out – and trying to give reviewers less materials to read/review. But if a greater context of the overall mission/challenge is required to evaluate the work properly, then I suggest the Advertising major should always simply provide final projects from our capstone campaigns class, which on their face are supposed to capture every competency on which we'd ever be evaluated. Then for any particular semester, we can offer further, more specific guidance relative to the competencies under review.

December 10, 2014

To: Ford Risley, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies
From: Rod Bingaman, Senior Lecturer, **Film-Video** Production & Patrick Mairs,
Editor/Producer, The Associated Press
Re: Fall Learning Objective Assessment, **Writing**

The fall trial assessment for AEJMC competency in writing was conducted on Sunday, October 19, at the Nittany Lion Inn. College of Communication alumnus Patrick Mairs, editor and producer for The Associated Press in Philadelphia, met with Senior Lecturer in Film-Video Rod Bingaman.

Six writing samples were provided from Comm 342W, a required junior course, designed to introduce students to modalities of idea development and expression for audio-visual projects. Two samples were documentary treatments and four were narrative screenplays of less than 15 pages.

Mairs found the working hypotheses of both documentary treatments (Barclay Walsh, *Brown: the New Green* & Larissa Gryschuk, *How We Love*) lacking in enthusiasm—indicating that “a more succinct tag line” would better serve the purposes of each document. Both treatments provided satisfactory marks for clarity, substance and style, with the Walsh piece noted as taking a “pragmatic approach in showing the resources it will take to complete the project.” Gryschuk, he felt, could have benefitted from “a clearer vision from the director.” Mairs singled out Walsh’s mechanics as excellent, noting that he “particularly welcomed the director’s inclusion of technical details and budget.”

The narrative scripts ranged from excellent (Janelle Miley, *Treetops*), to unsatisfactory (Mary Kate McMahon, *Leave Room*), with the two others rating satisfactory (Abby Wilson, *Thera-Pry* & Jordan Thompson, *Blocked*). Mairs noted Miley’s realistic dialogue and character interplay, describing the script as “moving and engaging...” and further noting that it “strongly demonstrates the writer’s talent and potential.” While commending McMahon’s clarity, he noted that it was “difficult for the reader to visualize,” the story and that there was “no physical description of any character.” He also noted a number of spelling errors, dropped words and grammatical problems.

Jordan Thompson’s *Blocked* was described as “creative,” taking “a unique approach to a well worn tale.” He found the “sudden, magical fabrication of a completed book” to be somewhat illogical, being as the story concerns overcoming writer’s block. Again the script was “lacking of physical descriptions of characters and locations.” *Thera-Pry* provided adequate descriptions initially, though it felt “more like an isolated scene instead of a short film.” The story was described as “lighthearted... amusing and enjoyable.” Mairs noted format errors, and the author did not include her name on the title page.

As an overview, the quality of the writing assessed was determined to be satisfactory. Mairs and Bingaman discussed ways of improving the assignments, citing three main objectives. The first was to encourage more detailed and vivid physical

descriptions of characters, a fairly universal area of improvement. Second, encourage students to outline work in order to better balance the material structurally. Third, to provide details that might better illuminate character back story so as to contextualize the actions of each character. After reviewing this assessment, an additional objective would be to encourage additional draft writing, which is in keeping with the “W” course philosophy and will help address all three objectives above, giving the instructor the opportunity to correct format, spelling and grammatical errors.

May 14, 2015

To: Ford Risley, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies
From: Rod Bingaman, Senior Lecturer, **Film-Video** Production; Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor, Embassy of Haiti; Catie Grant, Producer, WPSU
Re: Learning Objective Assessment, **Numbers and Statistics**

The spring assessment for AEJMC competency for Numbers and Statistics was conducted on Sunday, April 19, at the Nittany Lion Inn. College of Communication Alumni Board Member Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor to the Embassy of Haiti, met with Senior Lecturer in Film-Video Rod Bingaman. Alumnus Catie Grant, Producer at WPSU-TV, submitted an assessment in writing, as she was on assignment elsewhere.

Two samples were provided from Comm 443, Producing Workshop, a senior level course where students learn producing fundamentals, including budget preparation and research. The two samples were budgets for *Carrie Hope*, a narrative film produced by Abigail Wilson, and *We are Not Alone*, a narrative film produced by Jessica Cody. In the examples provided, the students prepared budgets for capstone projects using Entertainment Partners Budgeting software. The assessment criteria consisted of evaluating Methodology, Computation, and Format. Since both reviewers are producers, this overview was quite rigorous.

The methodology was rated satisfactory overall. Benice asked about the parameters of the assignment and wished aloud that she could have read the scripts in advance. Specifically she wanted to know in what context research would be required and therefore details within departments could be more meaningfully evaluated. Grant thought that crew accounting should be reflected, even if the budget amount is zero, as is the case in student films. She explained that a financial reader would see that crew has been addressed, and therefore better understand what type of budget it was. Both, however, praised the overall attention to detail, information and professional protocols, including contingencies.

Both Benice and Grant rated the Computation criteria as excellent. With the aid of professional software, Grant noted that the details were clear “about what is being purchased in each section, how many and the amount needed.” Benice said this reflected the professor’s thoroughness as well. Entertainment Partners has been gracious enough to provide Film-Video with licenses, including student licenses at a discount, which are certainly a benefit to our students.

The Format was ranked excellent by Benice, though she did caution the students to check their spelling, as it reflects on their credibility. Grant rated the formatting satisfactory, saying that while the budget and top page are easy to read, “That this seems more in line with a materials budget because crew is not mentioned.” Benice noted that page numbers would be helpful, should the reader get the pages mixed.

As an overview, the quality of the Number and Statistics samples were rated Satisfactory to Excellent, depending on the criteria. While our students are using

professional level software effectively, they need to better provide the reviewers with scripts for context in the future. Likewise we need to further clarify the goals of the budgets so that they target the appropriate audience. Last, we need to refine and make clearer our research parameters so that students and reviewers alike can be confident that the results are an accurate reflection of the goals of the assignment.

May 14, 2015

To: Ford Risley, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies
From: Rod Bingaman, Senior Lecturer, **Film-Video** Production; Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor, Embassy of Haiti; Catie Grant, Producer, WPSU
Re: Learning Objective Assessment, **Tools and Technology**

The spring assessment for AEJMC competency for Tools and Technology was conducted on Sunday, April 19, at the Nittany Lion Inn. College of Communication Alumni Board Member Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor to the Embassy of Haiti, met with Senior Lecturer in Film-Video Rod Bingaman. Alumnus Catie Grant, Producer at WPSU-TV, submitted an assessment in writing, as she was on assignment elsewhere.

Three samples were provided from Comm 440, Advanced Cinematography and Lighting Techniques, a senior level course designed to emphasize practical skills and aesthetics of composition, shooting and post-production related to cinematic interpretation. The three samples were movie scenes recreated by the students from the films *Skyfall*, *Capote* and *Fight Club*, respectively. The scenes were assessed based on the following criteria: Camera Movement & Composition, Lighting and Audio.

The alumni rated the Camera Movement and Composition as Excellent. We all found the initial focus change in *Skyfall* a bit lacking for precise timing, though we did not have the original clip to reference. I felt that the depth of field for the *Skyfall* was probably misjudged in the planning stage. Grant noted the difficulty of recreating the scenes in question, while Benice commented favorably on the overall quality of the cinematography across the samples. Without the original clips to compare, as specifically noted by Grant, it is hard to know how close the students came to the original look.

Lighting was rated satisfactory overall. Grant noted minor issues, like an apparent lighting head behind an actor in *Capote*. I felt the matching of color between angles in the same piece a little inconsistent. *Skyfall* showed good contrast and falloff, though again the original was not available to assess its color balance. The fact that the criticisms were minor underscores the overall quality of the student work. All of us found *Fight Club*, shot by Lauren Murphy, to be excellent. The skill to mix colors and control the light-to-shadow falloff here was particularly noteworthy.

It was interesting to compare audio notes, which matched each of our areas of expertise in terms of expectations. Benice noted that is hard evaluate how finished the tracks are supposed to be from the criteria, and unfair to compare student work to multi-million dollar productions. I noted a lack of ambience in the *Skyfall* mix and all of us noted that the club background in *Capote* did not match the space portrayed the scene. The *Fight Club* mix might have benefitted from a hi-frequency element to "top out" the spectrum, in my opinion. Grant was impressed the clarity of the dialogue against the music, and rated the audio excellent. The overall rating was satisfactory.

As an overview, the quality of the Tools and Technology samples were rated Satisfactory to Excellent. Benice and Bingaman discussed ways of improving the assessment by better defining the overall objectives and providing more context. In the future it would be useful to include a reference clip to determine how successfully the students reproduced the original work, though I noted that all cinematography is based upon aesthetics derived from previous work and that each interpretation should stand on its own merits. Overall Grant praised the students for their “high level of technical skill,” and encouraged us to continue to use professional work as a benchmark. In broader terms, Benice stressed that we need to emphasize, “that visual storytelling is our expertise.” It is, in her words, “what distinguishes us from other disciplines.” This, for me, underscored that we should further stress the silent visual content of our work to assure that it is delivering the highest quality aesthetic in the best, most understandable way.

May 14, 2015

To: Ford Risley, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies
From: Rod Bingaman, Senior Lecturer, **Film-Video** Production; Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor, Embassy of Haiti; Catie Grant, Producer, WPSU
Re: Learning Objective Assessment, **Images and Information**

The spring assessment for AEJMC competency for Images and Information was conducted on Sunday, April 19, at the Nittany Lion Inn. College of Communication Alumni Board Member Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor to the Embassy of Haiti, met with Senior Lecturer in Film-Video Rod Bingaman. Alumnus Catie Grant, Producer at WPSU-TV, submitted an assessment in writing, as she was on assignment elsewhere.

Two samples were provided from Comm 438 and Comm 439, Advanced Narrative and Alternative Filmmaking respectively. Both are one-semester senior level courses in production where students produce work for their overall portfolios. The two samples were *Straight Talk*, a narrative film directed by Allison Ornik, and *Fallout*, an experimental narrative film directed by Sam Zucker. *Straight Talk* concerns a college student, the host of a popular gay blog site, who struggles coming out sexually to his straight friends. *Fallout* is about an on-going argument between a couple over the lack of time the man spends at home. As the fight begins, the film goes from color to black & white and objects begin to levitate around the set. The assessment criteria consisted of evaluating Imagery, Substance, and Style.

We all found the imagery of *Straight Talk* to be excellent. Benice noted that the cinematography and the graphics work both added up to great “branding,” which are essential retention elements, in her experience. She explained that the intentions and tone of a piece are like a product brand, which creates recognition standards to aid in an audience’s understanding. Grant agreed, noting that the imagery was “clear and concise,” and she thought that the film showed a lot of thought about how the audience would interpret the experience.

Fallout invited differing opinions. Benice and Grant both rated it satisfactory, though the shift from color to black and white might have been a bit obvious for Clara’s tastes. She and I both felt like the color change matched the intentions of the piece, though it also masked some shooting deficiencies that would have otherwise been more noticeable. Grant found the framing of the compositions excellent and noted the use of color was “both interesting and useful.”

We all rated *Fallout* satisfactory in terms of Substance. Both Grant and Benice noted that there was confusion about the intentions of the special effects.

As Grant pointed out, the objects continue to float even when the argument is resolved, which makes their purpose for them beginning to levitate less clear. I noted that it is the classic argument in alternative film: should we apply narrative conventions to work that is experimental? In this case, we felt like the filmmaker invited the audience to do so, making

the criticism legitimate. Benice said she lost interest during the audio silence, while Grant noted that Zucker relied too much on the muffled voice tracks to provide meaning. In *Fallout's* defense, we all agreed that the treatment of the subject matter was unique and interesting.

Benice was impressed that *Straight Talk* took a somewhat mediocre script and was able to tell the story in a successful and visual way. Grant particularly liked the use of the “blog in the opening credits—it helped to establish its importance without needing a character to explain it.” I noted that the film is heavier on “idea substance” than it is on creative substance—in other words it takes on a noble subject, which requires certain narrative obligations that are clumsy for an inexperienced storyteller to handle with subtlety. We felt that Ornik handled this satisfactorily.

Straight Talk won high praise from the alumni for its Style, mixing traditional visuals with blog entries. Benice thought the graphics were very professional and was not surprised to learn that the student responsible, Wil Batchelor, is already working for MTV. Grant also said “the party and video confession scenes were really well done.” I feel like the integration of all elements was about right. We deemed this aspect excellent.

For *Fallout*, the alums rated Style as satisfactory. Benice mentioned the apparent mismatch of intention and execution of effects and also said that the length weakened the impact of the piece. Grant had similar concerns, going on to say that the tone of the piece communicated very effectively, while the reasons behind the choices were unclear. I noted that it was a unique treatment of a familiar subject, and that in terms of experimenting with a narrative convention, it was somewhat successful.

As an overview, the quality of the Images and Information samples were rated Satisfactory to Excellent, depending on the criteria. Benice made the observation that “content is centered in the applications that we use.” In other words, it is important to emphasize that our intentions are effectively interpreted through the use of digital techniques, as well as other means of storytelling. Grant praised the technical ability of the students, yet stressed that sometimes the symbolism or purpose was convoluted. I was also struck with this concept of “branding,” and how audience expectations flavor the interpretation of our work.

TO: FORD RISLEY, JULIE EVAK
FROM: RUSS ESHLEMAN, DAN VICTOR
DEC. 16, 2014

JOURNALISM EVALUATION FOR WRITING LEARNING OUTCOME

Summary

We evaluated three student writing examples for each of three journalism writing assignments, and we determined that the overall assessment of student writing was “satisfactory” on the scale of unsatisfactory-satisfactory-excellent.

Overall, we agreed that the student work was somewhat inconsistent, with some students clearly understanding the importance of elements such as accuracy, context and style in their stories, while others were “hit or miss” on those elements.

Clearly, the challenge for journalism instructors continues to be to teach students the importance of getting good content for their stories and presenting that information clearly and correctly.

Evaluation specifics

There were three different types of assignments, and the instructor chose examples that represented students he considered strong, average or slightly below average.

On the first, a 500-word story from an early-semester assignment by a comm460 class covering a speech, we put two examples in the “satisfactory” category and one in the “excellent” category. The two that scored “satisfactory” received that grade on all four evaluation components – **clarity, substance, mechanics and style** – except for one sample that receive “excellent” in the style category. On the example that received the overall “excellent,” three of the four categories were “excellent,” with one getting a “satisfactory” in style.

We discussed the challenge student writers have at the beginning of the semester writing in “newspaper style,” because so few students read news stories of any length – and virtually no students read a lot of newspaper stories, particularly those of any length. Even in a 400-level news writing course, early-semester assignments are often full of first-person references and opinion and lack journalistic style. Instructors spend early weeks of the semester remediating students on those skills.

In contrast, the second assignment we evaluated was a capstone assignment at the end of the semester – in theory, the biggest and best story comm460 students would write during the course.

Our review was of a 1,000-word “controversy” assignment. Students needed to report on an issue in which there were at least two points of view – and then write a full and fair accounting of that issue, incorporating quotations from at least three sources as well as statistics and other factual information that put the issue into context.

The three stories we reviewed ran the gamut – one “excellent,” one “satisfactory” and one “unsatisfactory.” The top-rated story received “excellent” from us on everything but mechanics, which received “satisfactory” for some Associated Press style errors. The

“satisfactory” story was “satisfactory” in all categories. The “unsatisfactory” story failed because of a critical fact error.

Generally speaking, the three capstone samples – also drawn from students who had previously demonstrated a range of skill levels – were of higher quality as news stories than the speech stories. One reason for this was because the instructor allowed the students to submit rough drafts prior to the final deadline, and the students could correct mistakes.

The final assignment we evaluated probably demonstrated the strongest student writing, and it came from a different course – a comm464 opinion-writing course. Students – again, who had previously demonstrated a range of abilities – were to incorporate a personal anecdote, factual/statistical information and a well-substantiated opinion on the topic in a 700-word personal column.

We labeled two examples “excellent” overall, while the third example received a “satisfactory.” In all three cases, the students did “excellent” or “satisfactory” work in terms of clarity, substance and style. Only “mechanics” – often AP style errors – was the drawback.

TO: FORD RISLEY, JULIE EVAK
FROM: RUSS ESHLEMAN, GREG GUISE, TOM LOEBIG
May 7, 2015

JOURNALISM EVALUATION FOR THE FOLLOWING THREE COMPETENCIES:

1. **Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentations of images and information**
2. **Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts**
3. **Apply basic tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work**

Summary

We examined instructor information (syllabi, instructional materials and assignment sheets) and student work (photographs, video and exam answers) for two classes: Comm269 Photojournalism and Comm467 News Editing.

The “images” and “tools and technologies” competencies were used for Comm269 examples, and “numerical and statistical concepts” was used for Comm467.

Our conclusion was that the classes and students were meeting those competencies in satisfactory or higher fashion based on the examples.

Evaluation specifics/discussion

Greg, a professional photo journalist himself, called the instructor materials for comm269 “detailed and easy to read,” and he said the syllabus “emphasized many of the intangibles needed to be a successful photo journalist.” As for the student work, Greg cited several specifics in both still photos and video that showed the students were grasping the concepts of the course, including framing and depth-of-field. “The sports shots in general were terrific. So, too, the picture story,” he said. He noted that students should not be “afraid” to use slow shutter speeds to “amplify” speed.

All three of us noted that some photos were obviously better than others, particularly in terms of composition. Several shots in the Penn State Forensics picture story did not tell the story of forensics. For example, the photo of two forensics students examining a car was taken from such a distance, there was no indication of what they were doing. Likewise, there was a shot of two of the forensics students looking off the page rather than at the crash dummy, raising the question of what they were looking at (probably the instructor).

Therein may have been the biggest criticism we had of the still shots: The captions did not explain what was happening in the photos. Some also contained typos and did not adhere to AP style.

As for the video example, Greg said the work was “nicely shot and sequenced,” but he noted the sound elements were not strong. “But that is a minor nagging point for what is an entry-level class,” he said.

For the comm467 materials related to “numerical and statistical concepts,” we understood that most of the information worth evaluating was in the form of the instructional materials. (The only examples of student work were answers to a handful of math questions in an exam.)

The instructional materials were varied and complete. The instructor set up his unit on numbers and statistics with a PowerPoint lesson on how such information is used in journalism – and why it should be used. Among the materials: an in-class exercise from the Dow Jones News Fund in which students must review and identify either math mistakes or logic.

Also included in the lesson were examples of two news stories – one in which the statistical information in the story was clear, and another in which there were too many numbers that made the story difficult to understand.

In our discussion, Tom pointed out the importance of getting out students to embrace statistics as an integral part of good journalism. He noted that data visualization and digital analytics are becoming increasingly important as journalism continues to move from the printed page to interactive online information – and both Tom and Greg suggested the curriculum needs to get into fields in a larger way.

The Journalism Department has taken that suggestion to heart. Earlier this month, we struck an agreement with Penn State journalism alum Andrew McGill, the graphics editor of the National Journal, to help develop what will be a new, separate course in data visualization – a subject we touch on only in a small way in some existing courses.

To: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
From: Kevin Hagopian, Senior Lecturer, **Media Studies**
Re: Fall Learning Objective Assessment, **Writing**

The fall trial assessment for AEJMC competency in writing was conducted on Sunday, October 19, at the Nittany Lion Inn. College of Communication alumnus Kurt Knaus, Managing Director at Ceisler Media and Issue Advocacy, a 1993 graduate of Penn State in Journalism, met with Kevin Hagopian to discuss student writing.

Several writing assignments were provided from courses in Media Studies, along with the assignment sheets which generated these assignments. Our session on October 19 consisted of two phases. First, a discussion between Kurt and myself on the distinctions between the professional competencies associated with journalism and ad/pr, and those expected of Media Studies. (Mr. Knaus was appreciative of these distinctions, and felt that Media Studies graduates have unique contributions to make to the communications professions such as his.) The second phase of our discussion concentrated on general criticisms of the work submitted based on these distinctions.

For the Department of Media Studies, the results of this initial assessment event were:

1. We initiated conversations with the professional community represented on our alumni board, to clarify the unique positioning of the skills associated with the Media Studies' major in the communications professions. Because our program does not have the conventional competencies of these professions, beginning these conversation was the most valuable aspect of the work we have done on this competency, and we very much appreciate Mr. Knaus' enthusiasm and assistance in helping us begin this process.
2. Formalizing the importance of critical and analytical writing as the cornerstone communications skill of our discipline, and providing a systematic set of discipline-specific evaluation criteria to be communicated to students. We expect this set pf criteria to be of substantial assistance in future external and internal program evaluations of Media Studies.

Presenting student work to a non-academic communications professional such as Mr. Knaus gives us in Media Studies a needed perspective on the ways in which the work done by our students meets the needs of the profession. We look forward to continued collaboration with the professional members of the Alumni Board as we seek to improve our students' work, and make our students' career options as wide as possible.

To: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
From: Kevin Hagopian, **Media Studies**
Re: Learning Objective Assessment, **Numbers and Statistics**

The spring assessment for AEJMC competency for Numbers and Statistics was conducted on Sunday, April 19, at the Nittany Lion Inn after preparatory reading and consideration of sample student papers from courses in Media Studies taught at the intermediate and advanced levels. College of Communications Alumni Board Members met with Kevin Hagopian to critique student writing samples which demonstrated the specific numeracies of our discipline. In addition, an academic specialist in Media Studies was utilized as an outside assessor, following Media Studies' request.

For Media Studies, the Numbers and Statistics competency reveals the conceptual division between our Media Effects concentration on the one hand, and our three qualitative concentrations, Film/Video, Society and Culture, and International Media on the other hand. Media Effects courses articulate the most advanced numeracy in the College, not only collecting statistics, but testing these statistics against standards of validity, and finally, drawing inferences from these statistics. The use of statistical information in the other three concentrations is less central to scholarly protocol, but students must still understand the basic concepts of statistical validity and significance.

Samples of student writing were provided from courses in the Media Effects concentration which exemplified statistical collection and reasoning. The assignment specifications were provided to assessors.

Faculty in Media Studies are committed to promoting the undergraduate Media Studies degree as a modern generalists' degree in the consideration of media to the needs of any organization, including educational, business, professional, technical, and non-governmental sectors. Therefore, we have been pleased throughout this process to have the participation and mentorship of alumni board members as assessors. We must be able to articulate the mission of Media Studies to these constituencies, and teach our students to do likewise in the employment market. In communicating Media Studies' philosophies and practices to professional media practitioners, it sometimes proved challenging to express these philosophies. That is an important lesson for our Media Studies faculty as a whole. The addition of an academic specialist in Media Studies for this process was made at our request, and gave balance to the assessment process. While it is most helpful to meet our assessors face-to-face, particularly during this pilot phase of the assessment process, our students' work must stand on its own. Thus, present or not, the addition of a Media Studies scholar as a member of the assessment team was useful: to bring objectivity to the process, and to bring specialized knowledge of canonical Media Studies teaching and learning styles to their analysis of student work. This is especially important in the case of the statistical collection and reasoning used in quantitative Media Studies.

Our assessors generally found the following: first, that Media Studies students in the Media Effects concentration are familiar with methods of statistical collection and evaluation, and that these methods are being clearly modeled for them. Second, that students have some

difficulty drawing subtle inferences from the data they have collected. Third, small sample sizes constrict some student research projects. It was clear from surveying student papers as a whole that integrating data collection, analysis, and inferential reasoning into a complete rhetorical exercise is intellectually ambitious; once again, our Alumni Board assessors from the media professions were appreciative of the capacities these skills provide for our students in the employment market.

To: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
From: Kevin Hagopian, **Media Studies**
Re: Learning Objective Assessment, **Images and Information**

The spring assessment for AEJMC competency for Images and Information was conducted on Sunday, April 19, at the Nittany Lion Inn. College of Communication Alumni Board Members met with Kevin Hagopian to critique student writing samples which represent the ways in which the concepts of “image” and “information” are communicated to our students and in turn demonstrated by them in Media Studies courses. In addition, an academic specialist in Media Studies was employed as an outside assessor.

For Media Studies, the “Images and Information” competency is at the core of what we do. Our analysis of the image unites both literal imagery and the figurative study of representation; that is, the social meanings behind media messages of all kinds. With regard to information, our students must be able to both analyze it when it is presented to them, and to create it themselves in their research. The two concepts are often fused in Media Studies, where we understand the image itself as a profoundly important type of social and cultural information.

Samples of student writing were provided by faculty in Media Studies, from courses using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Students were called on in these assignments to analyze the image in both literal and figurative ways. Likewise, students were called on to engage information not only as data, and as part of a rhetorically persuasive construction. The assignment specifications students had access to were provided to assessors. Work was not selected on the basis of quality, but rather on the basis of the prominence of this learning competency in the assignment.

Faculty in Media Studies are committed to promoting the undergraduate Media Studies degree as a modern generalists’ degree in the consideration of media to the needs of any organization, including educational, business, professional, technical, and non-governmental sectors. Therefore, we have been pleased throughout this process to have the participation and mentorship of alumni board members as assessors. We must be able to articulate the mission of Media Studies to these constituencies, and teach our students to do likewise in the employment market. In communicating Media Studies’ philosophies and practices to professional media practitioners, it sometimes proved challenging to express these philosophies. That is an important lesson for our Media Studies faculty as a whole. In the work we did with the Alumni Advisory Board in assessing Images and Information, it was gratifying to note the other side of this coin; media professionals who are not otherwise aware of the unique mission of Media Studies are surprised and appreciative of the deep analytical skills which are the basis of media studies. Throughout year’s work, they spoke of this capacity as a previously unthought-of advantage in employing Media Studies graduates.

Our assessors generally found the following: first, that Media Studies students have a demonstrated understanding of the ways in which media imagery functions to shape social and cultural norms, whether they are working in Media Effects or the qualitative

concentrations. A commitment to understanding this power, and deconstructing it, was visible in student work, even when the actual analysis was not distinguished. Second, students showed the ability to employ visual imagery as part of their own rhetorical projects; this capacity for visual quotation, rather than verbal description of visual materials, is an increasingly important part of our students' critical lexicon. Third, students' presentation of information as such could benefit from more careful attention to basic writing and documentation skills, and tests of information breadth and depth when used as support for an argument.

This first assessment process for Images and Information has reminded me that Media Studies' consciousness of the relationship between a sign in media culture and its potential to transform society for good or ill is a genuinely unique selling point of this major in the vocational and academic arenas. We take it somewhat for granted--- but our students have analytical skills which, while they sometimes fall short of the optimums we seek, are nonetheless impressive in the larger society these students will serve.

To: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
From: Kevin Hagopian, **Media Studies**
Re: Learning Objective Assessment, **Tools and Technology**

The spring assessment for ACEJMC competency for Tools and Technology was conducted on Sunday, April 19, at the Nittany Lion Inn. College of Communication Alumni Board Members met with Kevin Hagopian to critique student writing samples which employed the tools and technologies of our discipline. In addition, an academic specialist in Media Studies was employed as an outside assessor.

For Media Studies, the “Tools and Technology” competency is a complex benchmark. Like all majors in the College, the technologies we use are both figurative (intellectual “tools”) and literal (in our case, software). However, as the College’s most concentrated theory major, the literal tools must always be expressions of the figurative ones. Therefore, student writing in Media Studies should demonstrate not only familiarity with the literal tools, but express them in the form of theory, history, and other rhetorical discourses.

Samples of student writing were provided by several faculty in Media Studies, from courses using both quantitative and qualitative methods, in which students both utilized literal tools (including imaging and statistical software), and presented their work via the figurative tools of logic and evidence. Assignments included both group work and individual research papers. The assignment specifications students had access to were provided to assessors.

Faculty in Media Studies are committed to promoting the undergraduate Media Studies degree as a modern generalists’ degree in the consideration of media to the needs of any organization, including educational, business, professional, technical, and non-governmental sectors. Therefore, we have been pleased throughout this process to have the participation and mentorship of alumni board members as assessors. We must be able to articulate the mission of Media Studies to these constituencies, and teach our students to do likewise in the employment market. In communicating Media Studies’ philosophies and practices to professional media practitioners, it sometimes proved challenging to express these philosophies. That is an important lesson for our Media Studies faculty as a whole.

Our assessors generally found the following: first that students grasped the basics of the software they were using in their written work. Second, that students were having some difficulty in getting those tools to serve sophisticated figurative arguments; there was a demonstrable disconnect between literal and figurative tools. Third, although this was not technically at issue in this competency, students’ expository writing skills were judged as ranging from “good” to “fair.” Work was not selected with an eye to showing off our best. Nonetheless, but this finding is significant, as it shows that, in the intermediate and advanced courses from which these samples were taken, students in a major which demonstrates its capacities not through technical or artistic means, but through written communication, must improve.

This first assessment process for “Tools and Technologies” has shown that Media Studies students are using software which expresses the concepts of Media Studies in concrete form, as well as credentialing these in the media professions. However, they are not always successfully contextualizing these tools as part of a larger set of discourses and conclusions. That students are below desirable standards as general expository writers, however, suggests that improvement in general writing skills, including iterative improvement, should have consequent improvement in this contextual arena that is so important to the practice of Media Studies.

TO: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
FROM: Marcia W. DiStaso, Associate Professor
Lauren Sujkowski, Marketing Coordinator, Philadelphia Eagles
SUBJECT: **Public Relations Evaluation for Writing Learning Outcome**
DATE: December 16, 2014

Two reviewers evaluated student assignment samples from public relations classes during the spring 2014 semester in the College of Communications at Pennsylvania State University. The reviewers included Lauren Sujkowski, Marketing Coordinator of the Philadelphia Eagles and Marcia DiStaso, Associate Professor in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations at Penn State.

The student assignments reviewed represented writing from three public relations courses taught in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations:

- Comm 471 – Public Relations Media and Methods (writing)
- Comm 473 – Public Relations Problems (campaigns)
- Comm 497C – Social Media for Public Relations

A total of nine press release writing samples were evaluated based on the criteria of clarity, substance, mechanics, and style. Each sample was independently rated as excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory for the four criteria by each reviewer, and then each writing sample was discussed jointly. The following evaluation overview is the outcome from this discussion.

Clarity

Overall, both reviewers expressed that clarity was the criteria that the writing samples rated the highest. In most of the samples, the central idea was clearly communicated. Four of the press releases contained reports of research where the students typically presented the results in a clear, jargon-free and concise manner.

Substance

Another strength of the writing samples evaluated was their substance. The reviewers felt that the students demonstrated a solid depth and understanding of the topics they were covering. This was quite impressive given the diverse and challenging topics such as homelessness, furniture, diabetes, and alcoholism.

Mechanics

Writing mechanics such as spelling, punctuation and grammar were ranked as satisfactory but were the weakest criteria evaluated for the samples. While the writing was strong overall, some of the writing samples contained errors, however, only in a few cases did an error impede an understanding of the content.

Style

Overall, the style of the press releases was satisfactory, however, some of the sentences contained awkward wording that may be related to the reviewers uncertainty of the audience they were addressing. Additionally, six extremely different formats for a press release were provided

and some were missing writing content such as a call to action and contact information while differences in spacing, use of capitalization, and title length and style were also noted.

Overall, the public relations writing samples were rated between excellent and satisfactory.

Plans for Improvement

The evaluation will be shared with the public relations faculty in an effort to improve student writing. Specific attention will be paid to addressing the concern mentioned in the review about the different press release formats and the importance of maintaining updated requirements for our students.

TO: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
FROM: Marcia W. DiStaso, Associate Professor
SUBJECT: **Public Relations Evaluation for Numerical and Statistical Outcome Criteria**
DATE: July 14, 2015

Three reviewers evaluated student assignment samples from public relations classes during the fall 2015 semester in the College of Communications at Pennsylvania State University. The reviewers included Kurt Kraus, Managing Director at Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy; Kelsey Thompson, Senior Account Executive at Ogilvy Public Relations; and Marcia DiStaso, Associate Professor in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations at Penn State.

The student assignments reviewed came from the two core public relations courses taught in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations:

- Comm 420 – Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations

A total of three samples were evaluated based on the criteria of application and interpretation. The numbers and statistics in each sample were independently rated as excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory by each reviewer. The faculty reviewer then met with one alumni reviewer over the phone and thoroughly discussed each sample. Then the faculty member discussed the materials with the second alumni reviewer. The following evaluation overview is the outcome from these discussions.

Application

Overall, the three reviewers felt the students demonstrated a satisfactory/excellent use of numbers and statistics. All three samples used SPSS (the statistical software) to analyze data from surveys the students conducted. The reviewers found it difficult to not analyze the ideas, purpose and structure of the assignment samples. However, focusing on the numbers and statistics led to an excellent assessment for two of the samples and a satisfactory/weak assessment of one report. The reason for the lower assessment on the one report was due to a lack of depth and limited analysis in comparison to the other two samples.

Interpretation

Two of the report interpretations were impressive, thorough, and “interesting.” The students showed a strong sense of implications, recommendations and discussion based on the numerical/statistical data. The third report was assessed lower due to its basic discussion and lacking recommendations.

Overall, the public relations numerical and statistical assignment samples were primarily rated between excellent and satisfactory.

Plans for Improvement

The evaluation will be shared with the public relations faculty in an effort to improve student use of numbers and statistics. An emphasis on the importance of interpretation will be discussed since understanding what the numbers indicate is a critical part of research in public relations.

TO: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
FROM: Marcia W. DiStaso, Associate Professor
SUBJECT: **Public Relations Evaluation for Images and Information Outcome Criteria**
DATE: July 14, 2015

Three reviewers evaluated student assignment samples from public relations classes during the fall 2015 semester in the College of Communications at Pennsylvania State University. The reviewers included Kurt Kraus, Managing Director at Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy; Kelsey Thompson, Senior Account Executive at Ogilvy Public Relations; and Marcia DiStaso, Associate Professor in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations at Penn State.

The student assignments reviewed came from the two core public relations courses taught in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations:

- Comm 471 – Public Relations Media and Methods (writing)
- Comm 473 – Public Relations Problems (campaigns)

A total of eight samples were evaluated based on the criteria of application and message. The images and information in each sample were independently rated as excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory by each reviewer. The faculty reviewer then met with one alumni reviewer over the phone and thoroughly discussed each sample. Then the faculty member discussed the materials with the second alumni reviewer. The following evaluation overview is the outcome from these discussions.

The tools reviewed included:

- 2 examples of fact sheets using InDesign
- 3 examples of infographics using Pictochart
- 2 examples of a photo assignment using Photoshop
- 1 example of an app pitch video using Animoto

Application & Message

Overall, the three reviewers felt the application of images and information was stronger than the messages. All had messages but some could have been stronger. It's important for the students to reflect on the question "What's my story?" before creating the images and writing the content.

The reviewers were most impressed with the app pitch for Google Glass and pleased to see the students using new tools like Google Glass and apps. The fact sheets created with InDesign were found to be well designed with good messaging and a strong embodiment of brand personality. The infographics created were the weakest of the samples submitted in part due to a lack of clarity around the purpose of the infographics. The photo assignment samples were appealing and interesting, but some of the assignment directions were not followed.

Overall, the public relations images and information assignment samples were primarily rated between excellent and satisfactory.

Plans for Improvement

The evaluation will be shared with the public relations faculty in an effort to improve student use of images and information. As the role of public relations professionals in social media continues to grow, so does the inclusion of images with information, making this a very valuable outcome for students to master.

TO: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean
FROM: Marcia W. DiStaso, Associate Professor
SUBJECT: **Public Relations Evaluation for Basic Tools & Technologies**
DATE: July 14, 2015

Three reviewers evaluated student assignment samples from public relations classes during the fall 2015 semester in the College of Communications at Pennsylvania State University. The reviewers included Kurt Kraus, Managing Director at Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy; Kelsey Thompson, Senior Account Executive at Ogilvy Public Relations; and Marcia DiStaso, Associate Professor in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations at Penn State.

The student assignments reviewed came from the two core public relations courses taught in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations:

- Comm 471 – Public Relations Media and Methods (writing)
- Comm 473 – Public Relations Problems (campaigns)

A total of nine samples were evaluated based on the criteria of application. The basic tools and technologies in each sample were independently rated as excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory by each reviewer. The faculty reviewer then met with one alumni reviewer over the phone and thoroughly discussed each sample. Then the faculty member discussed the materials with the second alumni reviewer. The following evaluation overview is the outcome from these discussions.

The tools reviewed included:

- 2 examples using Cision (a professional subscription program for creating media lists)
- 3 examples using Pictochart (a professional online tool for making infographics)
- 2 examples using PitchEngine (a professional online tool for creating multimedia press releases)
- 2 examples using social media (social media plans for mock public relations campaigns)

Understanding and Proficiency of the Tools or Technologies

Overall, the three reviewers expressed strong understanding and proficiency in the tools and technologies. The Cision examples were difficult to fully assess without knowing the purpose of the created lists, but they appeared to have the relevant contacts. The Pictochart examples were creative and rated excellent/satisfactory. The students used the templates well, but could have selected stronger or more unique visuals. The PitchEngine examples were assessed as excellent. The tool produces an innovative press release and the examples showcased it well. One of the social media plans was rated as excellent and the other was between excellent and satisfactory. Both student examples showed a strong understanding of the social media tools and analytics.

The reviewers all noted that the samples provided demonstrate the current tools and technologies in the profession. This is very important in such a fast-paced technology driven field.

Overall, the public relations tools and technology samples were primarily rated excellent.

Plans for Improvement

The evaluation will be shared with the public relations faculty in an effort to improve the use of current tools and technologies in the classroom. Staying on top of current technologies can be challenging and the faculty should meet to share lists of tools so they can be made available to all students.

DATE: December 13, 2014

FROM: Rob Boulware, Manager, Stakeholder Relations, Seneca Resources Corporation and
Matt Jackson, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Telecommunications

TO: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean for Undergraduate and Graduate Education,
College of Communications

CC: Julie Evak, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education

RE: **Department of Telecommunications Student Learning Assessment—Writing
Objective**

The Department of Telecommunications has nine learning objectives for the Telecommunications curriculum. As part of the department and college's ongoing assessment program, samples of student work are examined periodically by a committee made up of faculty and industry professionals to assess whether students are demonstrating competency in the established learning objectives. In Fall 2014, the department conducted an assessment of Objective #9: **Communicate clearly and effectively in the form and style appropriate to the purpose.** This learning objective encompasses the ACEJMC value #9: *write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.*

Student writing samples from the Spring 2014 semester were collected from two upper level Telecommunications courses: *COMM 487—Advanced Management and Leadership*, and *COMM 489W—Media and Information Industries*. The samples were reviewed on October 26, 2014 by Rob Boulware, Manager of Stakeholder Relations at Seneca Resources Corporation and current Vice-President of the College of Communications Alumni Society Board of Directors, and Matt Jackson, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Telecommunications. We reviewed four writing samples from COMM 489W, each approximately five pages in length and two samples from COMM 487, each approximately six pages in length. We used four criteria for evaluating the student writing: substance, mechanics, clarity and style using a scale of excellent, satisfactory (good), or unsatisfactory.

Our overall conclusion is that this learning objective is being met and that students in the major are demonstrating competency in communicating clearly and effectively in the form and style appropriate to the purpose. What follows is a summary evaluation of each criterion based on the six samples of student work.

Substance: All six writing samples demonstrated good to excellent mastery of the content being discussed. This included a thorough understanding of the topic, clear understanding of key concepts related to the assignment, logical thought, accurate analysis and appropriate support for conclusions.

Mechanics: Five of the six writing samples demonstrated good to excellent mastery of grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization. We were impressed with the absence of mechanical errors in most of the student samples. The sixth writing sample had too many grammatical errors and was deemed unsatisfactory.

Clarity: Four of the six writing samples demonstrated good to excellent clarity in terms of logical organization of ideas, appropriate use of examples, accurate use of words and avoidance of repetition. One of the writing samples was deemed unsatisfactory because it often contained divergent or contradictory ideas within the same paragraph and another student sample included inappropriate word choice that interfered with meaning.

Style: Five of the six writing samples demonstrated good to excellent style, including appropriate word choice and tone, good use of transitions, and appropriate use and citation of sources. One of the writing samples was deemed unsatisfactory in its use of appropriate style.

Summary: Based on our evaluation of student writing samples, it is clear that the department's curriculum is helping students learn how to *communicate clearly and effectively in the form and style appropriate to the purpose*. The department is encouraged to place additional emphasis on helping students learn to write in ways that improve clarity through appropriate word choice and the logical organization of ideas.

DATE: June 30, 2015

FROM: Mark Lima, Vice President of News, Fusion Media;

Jarred Romesburg, President, Romesburg Media Group;

Matt Jackson, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Telecommunications

TO: Ford Risley, Interim Associate Dean for Undergraduate and Graduate Education,
College of Communications

CC: Julie Evak, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education

RE: **Department of Telecommunications Student Learning Assessment Spring 2015
Numbers and Statistics, Tools and Technologies, Images and Information**

The Department of Telecommunications has nine learning objectives for the Telecommunications curriculum. As part of the department and college's ongoing assessment program, samples of student work are examined periodically by a committee made up of faculty and industry professionals to assess whether students are demonstrating competency in the established learning objectives. In Spring 2015, the department conducted an assessment of three learning objectives. Mark Lima, Vice President of News, Fusion Media; Jarred Romesburg, President, Romesburg Media Group; and Matt Jackson, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Telecommunications met on April 19, 2015 to evaluate samples of student work. Evaluation of each objective is discussed below.

Learning Objective #2: Conduct, analyze, and critically evaluate research appropriately, including the interpretation and presentation of quantitative data (ACEJMC Value: Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts)

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the Fall 2014 semester were collected from one upper level Telecommunications course: *COMM 385—Media Programming Strategies*. We reviewed two team reports, each 10-13 pages in length. We used four criteria for evaluating student mastery in applying numerical and statistical concepts: accurate calculations, appropriate use of concepts, interpretation of data, and presentation of data; using a scale of very good, satisfactory (good), or unsatisfactory.

Summary: Based on our evaluation of student report samples, it is clear that the department's curriculum is helping students learn how to *Conduct, analyze, and critically evaluate research appropriately, including the interpretation and presentation of quantitative data*. There were minor errors in calculations and some errors in analysis that should have been spotted and corrected in a team report setting. Data presentation could have been much clearer, with better labels and more appropriate use of graphs and charts. The department is encouraged to place additional emphasis on helping students learn to develop more sophisticated analytical insights and to present data in the most useable form, such as graphs for time series data.

Learning Objective #5: Apply technological concepts and utilize technological tools appropriately for the telecommunications industries (ACEJMC Value: Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world)

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the Fall 2014 semester were collected from one Telecommunications course: *COMM 282—Television Field Production*. We reviewed six student video projects 2-4 minutes each. We used four criteria for evaluating the student mastery in applying technological tools and technologies appropriately: camera operation, audio, lighting, and editing/graphics; using a scale of very good, satisfactory (good), or unsatisfactory.

Summary: Our overall conclusion is that this learning objective is being met and that students are learning how to apply technological concepts and utilize tools appropriately. Students demonstrated a basic competency using appropriate tools and technologies. This included proper focus and depth of field while operating cameras, clear audio recording, satisfactory lighting technique, and appropriate use of editing. Areas for improvement include more use of camera movement and motion within the frame, increased use of natural sound, and use of lighting kits. As industry practices become more sophisticated, students should be taught the most current techniques when possible.

Learning Objective #9: Communicate clearly and effectively in the form and style appropriate to the purpose (ACEJMC Value: Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information).

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the Fall 2014 semester were collected from one Telecommunications course: *COMM 282—Television Field Production*. We reviewed six student video projects 2-4 minutes each. We used four criteria for evaluating the student mastery in communicating clearly and effectively: narrative structure, framing/composition, editing, and use of audio/lighting; using a scale of very good, satisfactory (good), or unsatisfactory.

Summary: Based on our review of student work, the department is providing students with an understanding of how to communicate clearly and effectively, including the use and presentation of images and information. Each student sample had a clear beginning, middle and end and was able to convey the story effectively. The pacing was sometimes slow and occasionally lacked context. A lack of action and movement sometimes hindered storytelling as did lack of natural sound. More sophisticated use of audio to complement the dialogue and visual story is encouraged. The reviewers feel that greater emphasis on preproduction planning would enhance student mastery of this learning objective.



Date: February 1, 2016
From: Ford Risley, Associate Dean **FR**
To: Marie Hardin, Dean
CC: College of Communications Department Heads and Associate Head
Robert Baukus, Russ Eshleman, Matt Jackson, Anthony Olorunnisola,
Maura Shea, Fuyuan Shen
College of Communications Assessment Team Leaders
Rod Bingaman, Ben Cramer, Frank Dardis, Marcia DiStaso,
Kevin Hagopian
Re: Response to the Student Learning Assessment Report for 2014-2015

In September, each department head received the College's annual report on student learning assessment. The report summarized efforts during the 2014-2015 academic year to meet our learning goals. The report concluded that all majors are meeting the learning goals and it noted areas for improvement across the College.

Each department head responded to the report, consulting with faculty where appropriate, and provided plans for improving curriculum as well as suggestions for improving the assessment process. Their comments are summarized below and their full reports are attached to this summary.

Response to the Student Learning Assessment Report

Advertising

In response to the report, the department plans to reemphasize its theory courses and recommend work for students that will help them to better understand theories in the use and presentation of images and information. The department also will refine instruction to advance the research and data analytic skills of its students. The department is already finalizing plans for a new Digital Media minor that will enhance student knowledge of the analytical tools used by professionals.

Film-Video

Based on the feedback in the report, faculty in Film-Video agree that student writing can be improved, particularly in the draft stage of assignments. They plan to put additional emphasis on this in the writing courses. To improve the application of basic numerical and statistical concepts, the faculty are revising a budget assignment used in classes in order that students target the appropriate audiences. Faculty members do not believe that the samples provided to reviewers presented a clear picture of student application

of tools and technologies. They will use different assignments in the future in order to get more useful feedback from reviewers.

Journalism

The department's response noted the measures already underway to better meet the goals evaluated in this cycle. These include an overhaul of Comm 260 (News Writing and Reporting) to make it a blended course with an even greater emphasis on writing, the development of a new Data Visualization course, and the recruitment of a new faculty member with a specialty in emerging digital technology. The department plans to continue expanding the scope of some courses by including additional instruction in the use of statistics and graphics, and also developing at least one new "special topic" course that emphasizes these subjects.

Media Studies

Based on the feedback from the report, faculty in Media Studies are planning changes in the writing-intensive courses, particularly Comm 413W (Mass Media & the Public), to help students improve their writing skills. They agree with reviewers that applying basic numeral and statistical concepts is another area where improvements can be made in the classroom. Faculty members do not believe that the samples provided to reviewers provided a clear picture of the use of theories in the presentation of images and information. They will use different student work in the future.

Public Relations

The response of the Public Relations faculty was integrated with that of the Advertising curriculum and many of the revisions planned for the curriculum planned for Public Relations were the same as for Advertising. The faculty will continue working to improve the writing skills of students, which is especially important in Public Relations. They also will refine instruction to improve the research and data analytic skills of its students. The new Digital Media minor will enhance student knowledge of the analytical tools used by professionals.

Telecommunications

In order to improve the ability of students to conduct, analyze, and critically evaluate research, the department has created a new course, Comm 310 (Digital Media Metrics) that focuses on data analysis and audience measurements. The department also has added two statistics courses to the list of options for the outside research requirement for the major. To help students apply technological concepts and tools, the department has created a new required basic technology course with a weekly lab. To help students communicate clearly and effectively, the department has revised its curriculum to require all students to take a writing-intensive capstone course. The department is also reevaluating the structure of its introductory video production course to place more emphasis on writing.

Suggestions for Improvement of Assessment

This was the first year in which members of the College's Alumni Society Board reviewed student work individually and then met for a face-to-face with department representatives. Although this new system provides effective feedback of the learning objectives, it was generally agreed that the some of the samples used could have provided a better picture of student work.

Advertising and Public Relations Department 2015 SLA Review Comments.

1. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

Report Statement: *Assessment of writing by public relations likewise was mixed with reviewers giving the student work high marks for clarity and substance, but satisfactory marks for mechanics and style.*

Advertising and Public Relations students are appropriately trained in this area. We all need to improve our writing skills and writing intensive courses like COMM 260 and COMM 471 really help our students. We will continue to help students develop appropriate writing skills. As I have mentioned in previous reports, I believe that by the time our students reach the capstone course, they have been had ample opportunity to enhance their writing skills. However, as with any population or cohort, some students will be more proficient and skillful than others. We all need to continue to work on this important skill set! We concur with Dr. DiStaso's comments and suggestions for improvement.

2. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.

Students are exposed to communication theory and practice as a part of the required coursework of the major. Students are less apt to take traditional mass communications coursework. We are considering modifying the theory requirements of the major. Within the college, the definition of theory based coursework has changed over the years. Course substitutions are many can dilute the value of a theory related course. Some faculty feel that our students would clearly benefit from a comprehensive mass communication theory course that could help guide the development of effective campaigns. We note that few of our students are well versed on theory construction or the utility of theory. Indeed I find that few if any of my capstone students can even define theory. This was not the case in the past and a number of the faculty believe that our students would greatly benefit from a more comprehensive knowledge of theory and its applications in applied research. We will look into the nature of the theory courses options and evaluate and recommend theory coursework that we feel is most appropriate and beneficial to the students in our department.

3. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

Report Statement: *Public relations students showed a generally outstanding ability to use SPSS statistical software to analyze data from surveys they conducted*

Survey techniques and interview techniques are tools often used in advertising and public relations. Students are trained in survey design, sampling, interpretation and application of results for the design of effective message strategies for specific audiences. The advertising and public relations students have the most exposure to numerical and statistical concepts in the college, and we are particularly pleased with their performance in this important area. Potential employers also appreciate their training – especially in numerical analysis associated with media planning and research methods. We train our undergraduates to use SPSS and other numerical analysis tools.

Students also need to have a fundamental understanding of qualitative techniques and concepts. We take extra care to ensure that our COMM 420 course covers quantitative and qualitative methods.

All students are required to successfully complete a course in Introduction to Statistical Analysis and COMM 420 Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations. We will continue to refine our research and data analysis skills of our undergraduate student coursework. Also we still need to carefully vet some of the graduate student instructors that teach some of the research course section. The graduate students often are not adequately prepared to teach the course content in a manner prescribed by the Advertising and Public Relations faculty.

The advertising option capstone course COMM 424 has a very strong research component that provides the basis for the strategic decisions the student must make to design their campaigns.

We suggest that materials sent to reviewers include a greater number of campaigns or final papers that employed a variety of research techniques. This varied sample of materials may make it more apparent to reviewers how diligently and rigorously this standard is applied.

4. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Report Statement: *Public relations showed excellent proficiency in the use of tools and technologies. The work by advertising students was generally excellent, although reviewers said more context for the work should be provided by the department in order to get a more complete evaluation.*

We suggest that materials sent to reviewers include a greater number of campaigns or final papers that employed a variety of research techniques. This varied sample of materials may make it more apparent to reviewers how diligently and rigorously this standard is applied. Advertising students are versed in statistical tools, image design tool and a variety of software packages that are used in industry in the research and design, and implementation of effective advertising and public relations campaigns. We also provide students with access to many on-

line professional research resources such as SIMMONS and Ad Spender along with many others. We work closely with the university library to provide such tools and technologies and the college even shares in the associated costs. Our new Digital minor will enhance our student's knowledge of "programmatic" media planning tools and provide them with working knowledge and access to a variety of current "analytic" tools used by industry.

Report Statement: McKinnon suggested that the food work needed to be *more socially responsible* and that *the cause-related work needed to offer more solutions*. I believe this criticism or commentary is wholly inappropriate.

This comment reflects a personal perspective and should not be construed as necessary or appropriate component or context for every student campaign. Our students develop campaigns for many different products and services across a variety of clients. The students are taught that campaigns are developed and structured based on the needs of the client not the political preferences of the designers. While I agree that being cognizant of the social aspects of an advertising campaign is an important consideration, designing a campaign that meets the specific needs of the client is paramount. Requiring that all student campaign projects must be "more socially responsible" imposes a political dimension that may or may not be useful or appropriate. Students are taught to research the political, legal, social, and cultural factors germane to a particular campaign using tools such as PEST and SWOT analyses. Our students are well aware of social/political dimensions, including the concept of social responsibility. Students are taught and will continue to be taught to apply perspectives and evaluative dimensions appropriate to solving the clients' advertising or public relations problem. Students are taught to not impose their own political or social philosophies on the campaign unless they can provide a solid rationale that clarifies the appropriateness of such an approach.

If a particular political or social orientation is included in a project then the student research team, based on a thorough situation analysis, determined that the perspective was appropriate for the client. To develop approaches and solutions based on criteria exogenous to the research based marketing needs of a client is unethical. Our students are taught to understand and recognize inappropriate solutions based on imposed subjective or political criteria.

We suggest that materials sent to reviewers include a greater number of campaigns or final reports that specifically employed a variety of target audiences. A varied sample may make it more apparent to reviewers how diligently and rigorously this standard is applied in our programs. In my experience, student projects reflect a wide variety of diverse target groups and socially oriented approaches depending on the needs appropriate to the campaign.

We concur with Dr. Dardis's summary and comment below.

Do one of the following: (a) Provide even more context for how the specific assignment/sample fits into the class structure, goals, etc., or (b) simply supply full campaign books to review, and explain which specific parts/competencies are under actual assessment. In hindsight, this is what I was trying to accomplish by parsing specific examples out – and trying to give reviewers less materials to read/review. But if a greater context of the overall mission/challenge is required to evaluate the work properly, then I suggest the Advertising major should always simply

provide final projects from our capstone campaigns class, which on their face are supposed to capture every competency on which we'd ever be evaluated.

We concur with Dr. DiStaso's summary and comment below.

The evaluation will be shared with the public relations faculty in an effort to improve student use of numbers and statistics. An emphasis on the importance of interpretation will be discussed since understanding what the numbers indicate is a critical part of research in public relations.

We will continue to develop the ability of our students to analyze and understand numerical analysis. While we know that our students get significant training in this area, we know that numerical analysis is hard for many to master. One can witness the misinterpretation of numerical data almost on a daily basis many professional arenas. We will continue to work to reduce misinterpretation and the associated ethical consequences.

Thank you for the time and effort behind this useful feedback.

We appreciate the assessments made by the outside reviewers. Providing high quality education is the central facet of our responsibility as teachers and mentors. Our students continue to remain our first priority. The Student Learning Assessment initiative provides valuable insights that can help us fine tune our pedagogy. Our faculty will continue our discussion of the SLA feedback throughout the year.

To: Ford Risley, Associate Dean
From: ANTHONY OLORUNNISOLA, Head Department of Film/Video & Media Studies
Subject: 2014 Student Learning Assessment: Film/Video & Media Studies
Date: December 19, 2014

Please find enclosed key findings of the 2014 SLA report and recommendations for improvement of “curricula, instruction and learning.” At the end of each component, you will find indications of measures: a) already taken, based on Student Learning Assessment reports; b) being considered, based on this report; c) realistic short-term and long-term improvements that could be made to the F/V & MS curriculum, and what, generally, would be needed to pursue them.

1. **Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.**

Overall assessment of Film-video students was deemed “satisfactory”. Reviewers noted both strengths and weaknesses.

Primarily, the Film/Video representative [Prof. Rod Bingaman] has communicated findings and recommendations with respect to this and other components to ALL faculty, especially those with teaching responsibility pertinent to writing. Specifically, the Film/Video faculty are committed to the objective of encouraging additional and clearer draft-writing. The latter is consistent with the “W” course philosophy and should help address all core objectives identified in the language of this component.

Media Studies representative [Prof. Kevin Hagopian] communicated findings and recommendations regarding this component to ALL faculty, especially those with responsibility for teaching the program’s writing-intensive course. The notion and importance of instilling critical and analytical writing skills in our students is indeed the cornerstone of our discipline. As such faculty in courses beyond the writing-intensive course will continue to provide discipline-specific [international; film studies, etc.] critical writing exposure to students. We expect – and fairly so – to be able to submit documentation of activities with respect to this component in future internal and external program evaluations of Media Studies.

2. **Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information**

Media Studies students were adjudged to show a demonstrated understanding of the ways in which media imagery functions to shape social and cultural norms. Students also showed the ability to employ visual imagery as part of their own rhetorical projects. However, the

reviewers noted that the presentation of information needs more careful attention to documentation.

Faculty in the Media Studies infer from foregoing assessment that the measure of students' competence in this area was indeed one-sided because it was predicated only upon application of theories to images. Interpretation of measures that need to be taken in the future is to – in response to recommendation – provide samples from courses that indeed lead students to apply theories to the appreciation and presentation of information.

The film-video reviewers rated the students' work as satisfactory to excellent. They praised the ability of the students but said the purpose of the work could be convoluted.

Faculty in Film/Video appreciate foregoing qualification of the quality of students' work as observed and are committed to keep up the good work. Faculty will also take care to ensure that the purpose of samples presented in response to this Component will have better clarity than samples presented for completed assessment.

3. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts

Reviewers rated the work by Film-Video students satisfactory to excellent.

Faculty in Film/Video have taken note of this positive assessment. In addition and to make samples of students' work in this respect clearer to assessors, attention will be given to clarifying the goals of the budgets so that they target the appropriate audiences. In addition, there is realization that research parameters can be better refined and clarified so that students and assessors can, respectively, measure results vis-à-vis goals of respective assignments.

Media Studies students showed an understanding of the methods of statistical collection and evaluation. However, students showed some difficulty drawing subtle inferences from the data they collected. Moreover, small sample sizes constrict some student research projects.

Faculty in Media Studies appreciate and confirm assessors' observation about students' ability to draw inference from findings. Clearly some students have difficulty with integrating data collection, analysis, and inferential reasoning into a complete rhetorical exercise. Nonetheless, such an expectation is NOT intellectually unrealistic as a marker for expectations. The intention of the faculty is to, in the future, make students' ability to convert findings into inferential data – a higher level of analysis – a yardstick for measuring excellence.

Where sample sizes constrict students' research projects, faculty with teaching responsibility in the area note that semester time left for data collection – after pre-requisite skill sets such as statistical analysis that students should have are re-taught and new skills are added – is typically too short and can only lead to small and manageable

sample sizes. Nonetheless and hopefully, the skill sets that should transfer to handling larger data should be available to students.

4. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Film video students were applauded for the high level of technical skills.

Faculty in Film/Video began conversation focused on ways of improving assessors' rating of this component. One approach considered is to better define the overall objectives and to provide clearer explanation of the context. Samples submitted for future assessment will include a reference clip that will help assessors review and, hopefully, determine how successfully the students reproduced the original work. Samples will also better showcase students' work and underscore level of technical expertise in visual storytelling without mortgaging delivery with the highest quality of aesthetic content.

Though assessors' commentary in this regard did not rate Media Studies, it is notable that this first assessment that includes employment of "Tools and Technologies" has shown that Media Studies students are using software which expresses the concepts of Media Studies in concrete form.

The overarching and outstanding challenge is to encourage a pedagogical process that enables students to better contextualize these tools as part of a larger set of discourses and conclusions that they draw about the advancement and transformation of media. Students in Media Studies should and will continue to be exposed so they have the ability to monitor and effectively appraise developments in the contextual arena that is fundamental to the practice and study of Media.

TO: Ford Risley, interim associate dean, College of Communications

From: Russ Eshleman, interim head, Department of Journalism

Date: October 12, 2015

Re: Actions taken as result of 2014-15 Student Learning Assessment Report

Journalism has met or exceeded the following learning goals evaluated in 2014-15:

- Write clearly and correctly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audience and purposes they serve
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- Apply basic tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts

Based on the findings and discussions with members of the outside assessment teams, the department faculty has developed several initiatives to bolster the curriculum, recognizing that journalism as an industry continues to change. These initiatives are designed to make students better prepared for their careers.

Among the changes at least partially derived from or inspired by the assessment findings:

1. **Overhaul of Comm260, News Writing and Reporting.** Although already under way prior to the assessment team's evaluation of writing, the revamping of the basic journalism course has been designed to place a greater emphasis on writing skills. Now a "blended" course, with information placed on line, the course includes twice-a-week writing labs in which instructors work closely with students on their writing assignments. Another feature of the course is that while students continue to write each week, they are writing fewer different kinds of assignments – a way to emphasize rewriting and concentrate on basic reporting and writing skills.
2. **Development of a Data Visualization course.** As outside evaluators Greg Guise and Tom Loebig noted during their review of "presentation of images and information" and the application of "basic numeral and statistical concepts," journalism has been changing its definition of "story" from merely words and photos to graphics that tell an entire story. With that in mind, the department has contracted with Andrew McGill, an alumnus who is the graphics director of the National Journal, to develop an online course. The idea is that students will be able to take a single course to learn non-traditional story forms.
3. **Recruitment of faculty.** The department is currently embarking in a search for a tenured or tenure-track faculty member whose specialization and interests include those involving emerging digital technologies in journalism. Ideally, that person will continue to move the department's curriculum from print to digital journalism.

4. **Development of an online journalism degree.** Although it is not a direct result of the assessment process, the department is working with the Penn State World Campus to develop an online degree that will include many items discussed during meetings with the outside assessment evaluators. For example, an online course to be developed for Comm460, Reporting Methods, will most certainly include instruction in the mining of data and statistics – and how to use the information in stories.

Short-term goals based on Student Learning Assessment discussions/reports:

- a) Continue to expand the scope of individual courses by including additional learning in writing and use of statistics and graphics. These changes can be made in a variety of “traditional” print courses, such as Comm460, Comm469 and Comm481.
- b) When feasible, develop “special topics” courses that would provide students with more capstone experiences in writing and data analytics and visualization. (In Fall 2016, Knight Chair John Affleck will teach a course that uses statistical information to develop in-depth sports reporting/writing projects.)

Long-term goals based on SLA discussions/reports – as well as faculty vision:

- a) Continue hiring faculty with expertise in emerging forms of digital journalism. As non-tenure track, fixed-term faculty retire, the department should fill those positions with people from industry who have current experience in social media, analytics and data visualization.
- b) Find additional ways to publish and display student work

Department of Telecommunications
Response to 2014-15 Student Learning Assessment Report
Submitted December 8, 2015
Matt Jackson, Department Head

The College of Communications' Student Learning Assessment (SLA) Report for the 2014-2015 academic year evaluated the Telecommunications curriculum on four of the twelve professional values and competencies established by ACEJMC (these four competencies are condensed into three learning objectives for the major as described below). An assessment team made up of three industry professionals evaluated samples of student work from a subset of Telecommunications courses to determine if evidence existed for student awareness, understanding, and application of those four values and competencies. The Telecommunications learning objectives that were evaluated in this cycle were:

Learning Objective #2: Conduct, analyze, and critically evaluate research appropriately, including the interpretation and presentation of quantitative data (ACEJMC Value: Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts);

Learning Objective #5: Apply technological concepts and utilize technological tools appropriately for the telecommunications industries (ACEJMC Value: Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world); and

Learning Objective #9: Communicate clearly and effectively in the form and style appropriate to the purpose. (This objective encompasses two ACEJMC objectives: Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information; and write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve).

The Telecommunications curriculum includes 23 courses that cover a wide range of topics and industries, from the traditional broadcast industry to the rapidly growing wireless telephone industry. Student work from only four of these 23 courses was included in this assessment, thus providing a very narrow range of student learning for evaluation. Moreover, even within the courses used for this assessment, only a sample of student work was examined from just a few of the assignments included in each course. The members of the assessment team independently rated all the assignments submitted for review.

Learning Objective #2: Conduct, analyze, and critically evaluate research appropriately, including the interpretation and presentation of quantitative data.

The evaluation team concluded that this objective is being met but that there is room for improvement in students' use of charts and graphs. The evaluation team wrote, "The department is encouraged to place additional emphasis on helping students learn to develop

more sophisticated analytical insights and to present data in the most useable form, such as graphs for time series data.”

Recommendation: The department has created a new course COMM 310: Digital Media Metrics that focuses on data analysis and audience measurement. We believe this will provide new opportunities for students to master these skills. In addition, the department has added two Statistics courses to its list of options for the required outside research requirement for the major.

Learning Objective #5: Apply technological concepts and utilize technological tools appropriately for the telecommunications industries.

The evaluation team concluded that this objective is being met but that there is room for improvement in use of natural sound, camera movement and lighting.

Recommendation: The department continually strives to provide production experience for its students. Video production is just one aspect of mastery of technological tools. The department has created a new required technology course with a weekly lab that teaches students to use a variety of technologies, including development of web pages, audio and video files and more. We believe this required course will ensure that all students in the major will learn how to use a variety of technological tools appropriately.

Learning Objective #9: Communicate clearly and effectively in the form and style appropriate to the purpose.

The evaluation team’s conclusion is that this learning objective is being met. The writing samples were rated high in terms of substance, mechanics and style with room for improvement in terms of writing clarity. The video samples also demonstrated competency in visual communication and storytelling. The reviewers found room for improvement in the use of audio and dynamic camerawork and preproduction planning.

Recommendation: The department will continue to stress effective communication throughout its curriculum. The department recently revised the curriculum to require all students to take a writing-intensive capstone course. We believe this will strengthen mastery of this learning objective. The department is currently reevaluating the structure of its introductory video production course and it has expanded its advanced production offerings to provide additional opportunities for student mastery of these skills.