



Date: June 13, 2017

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

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

CC: Rod Bingaman, Film-Video SLA Team Leader
Ben Cramer, Telecommunications 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: 2015-2016 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 June 25 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 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.
- 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 Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications' student learning assessment program has completed its thirteenth 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. We just completed the second year of our new three-year cycle of assessment in which the faculty representative from each major and Alumni Society Board members reviewed the materials individually and then met for a face-to-face discussion of their findings. Each spring semester four of the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies are reviewed. In summer 2016, with the help of College Ad/PR Network Board volunteers, we initiated assessment of the online Strategic Communications option of the Advertising/Public Relations major. Eight learning objectives were reviewed in order to catch up with the progress of resident instruction program assessment. Faculty representatives created evaluation rubrics that included guidelines for excellent, satisfactory and unsatisfactory work within each criteria.

We plan to continue with this method of review utilizing the expertise of the Alumni Society Board and the Ad/PR Network 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, Public Relations and Strategic Communications degree options within the major. The internship supervisor survey was conducted during the Summer 2015, Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 semesters.

Secondary measures used in the Student Learning Assessment included College-based retention and graduation rates and evidence from student competitions. Future assessment cycles will also utilize student focus group discussions.

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.

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. Reviewers were encouraged to provide comments to support their evaluation of student work.

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 found strengths in each major, but they also found areas that needed improvement. 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. *Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.*

The assessment of reviewers for this standard ranged from “Excellent” to “Satisfactory.” Reviewers found that students across the majors have a generally good understanding of the role of mass communications in issues of domestic diversity. However, students did not always grasp specific cultural, social, and economic distinctions of particular peoples and groups in sophisticated ways. Reviewers for the Journalism major said that while assignments regularly covered such issues as stereotyping and racially charged language, students did not always seem to understand the complexities of gay and transgender issues. Reviewers for the Media Studies major said that while student work reflected a general consciousness of diversity, students could not always articulate them directly.

2. *Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.*

The assessment of reviewers for this standard ranged from “Excellent” to “Unsatisfactory.” Based on the work of students, reviewers found that in most cases students displayed a mature understanding of global diversity and the impact of mass communications, but in some cases they did not. Reviewers praised the assignments that all majors gave students related to this area, as well as the international travel opportunities that all the majors provided to students. However, reviewers in the Public Relations major found that students demonstrated an unsatisfactory level of understanding of global diversity. Reviewers for the Telecommunications major said that students were sometimes prone to using generalizations in arguments about diversity.

3. *Think critically, creatively and independently.*

This competency received high praise from reviewers for all majors. Reviewers for the Advertising major found this to be one of strongest areas of work, with students effectively analyzing situations and data. Reviewers for the Film-Video major said students provided sophisticated analysis and creative examples. Reviewers for the Journalism major said students provided critical, but constructive critiques of television broadcasts. Reviewers for the Public Relations major displayed critical thinking skills in strategic planning for clients. And reviewers for the Telecommunications major said students displayed a strong facility for analyzing the pros and cons of situations, as well as the unintended consequences of decisions.

4. *Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.*

This competency also received high praise from reviewers, but it was more mixed. Reviewers for the Advertising major said students effectively presented their work and critiqued that of others, but the critiques would be more helpful if done in a “business” sense. Students in the Public Relations major provided effective evaluations of a crisis, but the evaluations could have been more extensive. Students in the Media Studies major displayed generally excellent competency in discriminating between competing ideas, policies, and theories, but the

difference between qualitative and quantitative evidence was not always clear. A weakness noted by reviewers of several majors was the writing of students, with too many making errors that proper proofreading should catch.

Survey of Internship Supervisors. During the summer 2015, fall 2015 and spring 2016 semesters, 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 2015-16 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 459 out of 473 supervisors responded, a rate of 99 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 4.53 to 4.84. All but two areas declined slightly from 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 understanding the role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications. The lowest average ratings were for the critical evaluation of student work, and understanding of professional ethical principles.

Secondary Measures

Graduation and Retention Rates. The College’s one-year retention rate for the Fall 2014 cohort decreased by 4 percent to a level of 91 percent. In relationship to the previous year, four-year graduation rates increased by one percent (82.4 percent for the 2011 cohort), as did five-year rates (88 percent for the 2010 cohort), while six-year rates decreased by 1 percent (88 percent for the 2008 cohort).

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.

The College finished second overall in the final standings of the William R. Hearst Foundation’s Journalism Awards Program, where students in the College earned six top-10 awards. A record 1,261 entries were submitted from students from 100 nationally accredited schools.

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

A team of students working for the Centre County Report won a National College Television Emmy Award for a show that included a segment about Penn State reaction after the terrorist attacks in Paris.

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 E.

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, 2015-2016

<u>Advertising</u>
Frank Dardis, faculty team leader
T.J. Brightman, President, A. Bright Idea Advertising and Public Relations
Brian Nawa, Associate Director, Multi-Channel Capabilities, Bristol-Myers Squibb
Cindy Viadella, Marketing Consultant, Media, Marketing & Advertising Industries
<u>Film/Video</u>
Rod Bingaman, faculty team leader
Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor to the Embassy of Haiti
Catie Grant, Producer, WPSU-TV
Mark Stitzer, Videographer/Editor, WPSU
<u>Journalism</u>
Russ Eshleman, faculty team leader
Kurt Knaus, Managing Director, Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy
Dan Victor, Senior Staff Editor, The New York Times
<u>Media Studies</u>
Kevin Hagopian, faculty team leader
Lauren DeCarvalho, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Communication, University of Arkansas
Katherine Hansen, Communications Manager, Procurement, Bank of America
Pam Hervey, Owner & President, Fuel Creative, Inc. & Fuel Pictures LLC
Brandie Martin Nonnecke, Postdoctoral Fellow, CITRIS, UC Berkeley
<u>Public Relations</u>
Marcia DiStaso, faculty team leader
Natalie Buyny, Account Executive, Tierney
Alyson Joyce, Associate, Stakeholder Relations, Seneca Resources Corporation
<u>Telecommunications</u>
Ben Cramer, faculty team leader
Sarah Dell-Aquila, Director of International Research, Nickelodeon
William Massi, Technical Services, HBO
Greg Guise, Senior Cameraman, Al Jazeera English/TeamPeople
Lisa Lucas, Executive Producer, Animal Planet

Strategic Communications

Frank Dardis, faculty team leader

Kathy Heasley, Founder and President, Heasley & Partners

Lauren Raisl, Brand Strategy Manager, Capital One

Maggie Schmerin, Vice President, Account Management, Edelman

3. The intern acted judiciously, creatively and independently.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Average Scores

2015-2016	4.60
2014-2015	4.69
2013-2014	4.63
2012-2013	4.68
2011-2012	4.76
2010-2011	4.44
2009-2010	4.24

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

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Average Scores

2015-2016	4.7
2014-2015	4.73
2013-2014	4.74
2012-2013	4.72
2011-2012	4.66
2010-2011	4.47
2009-2010	4.38

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

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Average Scores

2015-2016	4.79
2014-2015	4.76
2013-2014	4.71
2012-2013	4.77
2011-2012	4.67
2010-2011	4.51
2009-2010	4.26

9. The intern demonstrated sensitivity to the diversity of groups in a global society.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Average Scores

2015-2016	4.80
2014-2015	4.89
2013-2014	4.69
2012-2013	4.82
2011-2012	4.71
2010-2011	4.46
2009-2010	4.30

10. The intern demonstrated an understanding of the role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Average Scores

2015-2016	4.84
2014-2015	4.81
2013-2014	4.70
2012-2013	4.80
2011-2012	4.69
2010-2011	4.47
2009-2010	4.34

Close to the survey: Please offer any additional comments about the skills and abilities of the intern.

Note: The internship survey results are reported for 10 of the 11 questions on the survey. (We asked a second question relating to Value/Competency #10: "The intern critically evaluated the work of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness." The responses to this item were not useful, as many supervisors noted that the interns are usually not in position to evaluate the work of others at the workplace.)

Intern Assessment Survey
Summer 2015, Fall 2015 and Spring 2016
Sample of supervisor comments

“[Student] was always professional. Very good communicator. Understanding of the types of projects she would be assigned. Reliable. Dependable. Understands deadlines. Arts interest and understanding really helped.”

“[Student] was able to jump right in and begin developing communication materials almost immediately for a very large and complex project.”

“[Student] was extremely well prepared for this internship. She is an excellent writer, soundly trained in the basics of journalism. She grasps assignments quickly and knows how to approach a story without coaching. She possesses good news sense and knows the elements of a good story.”

“[Student] demonstrated exceptional organization and leadership. A large portion of her role was to make sure we hit deadlines and stayed on task. The challenge in an organization like CP2 is we’re all volunteers and have either our own businesses or full-time jobs. She worked with poise, maturity and patience in a role that is challenging at best.”

“[Student] was always willing to lend an extra hand and was proactive in her approach to gain experience in the office. Her ability to approach the full-time staff and execute their objectives was important to our operation and gave her experience in our field.”

“[Student] is a sophomore and did a great job of learning while doing - everything we do here is unusual with this event-what she didn’t know she made a point of learning. It seems unfair to classify this as prepared or unprepared-since no one can really be prepared for the organized chaos that is this event.”

“[Student] came into the internship eager to learn, but could have benefited from additional corporate experience and public speaking/communication skills”

“During her internship, [student] was tasked with preparing several blog posts, calendar listings and press releases-they required little/no changes and were clear for our online communities and the media.”

“Very well prepared and knows all aspects of radio and the social media outlets that go along with radio and communications.”

“[Student’s] courses at Penn State equipped him with a strong foundation of television news and production. He was prepared for, and welcomed, the challenges of this fast paced and stressful industry.”

Appendix D
Retention and Graduation Rates

Year	1-yr retention	4-yr graduation	5-yr graduation	6-yr graduation
2014	91%			
2013	95%			
2012	93%			
2011	93%	82%		
2010	93%	81%	88%	
2009	89%	76%	87%	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/sas/broker.exe? PROGRAM=retcode.retentionweb.sas& SER VICE=pool1>

Report generated 07/02/16.

Appendix E
Student Award Winners, 2015-2016 (Selected Competitions)

American Advertising Federation Most Promising Minority Students Program

Asharae Jones
Isabella Loose

Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts

Centre County Report, November 20, 2015 – Second Television Newscast (airing three days or less)
Centre County Report in Hong Kong – Third Place Television News Magazine
Tyler Feldman, co-anchor – Honorable Mention
Centre County Report, “Sexual Assault on Campus: An Ongoing Issue” – Third Place Television Hard News

Hearst Foundation

Erin McCarthy – Third Place National Writing Championship
Erin McCarthy – Second Place Feature Writing
Garret Ross – Fourth Place Sports Writing
Mary Chuff – Fifth Place Multimedia News
Haley Nelson – Sixth Place Photo Story
Jessica Arnold – Eighth Place Radio News
College of Communications – Second Overall National Standing

IABC Gold Quill Awards

Winner, Communication Training and Education, Student Entry, “Rebranding an Urban Community”
Laica Clerge
Terrence Edison
Taylor Fowler
Sam Newhouse
Emily Shea
Kristin Starke
Casey Weaver

Jim Murray Memorial Foundation Scholarship Competition

Garrett Ross - Winner

National College Television Emmy Awards, Hollywood, CA

Centre County Report, November 20, 2015 – Video Award Winner

Scripps Howard Foundation

Zinnia Maldonado - Roy W. Howard National Collegiate Reporting Award

Mid-Atlantic Emmy Award

Centre County Report, March 20, 2015 – Newscast Winner

Zack Rickens and Meghan Caffrey – Sportscast Winner

Dow Jones News Fund Internship

Jason Addy

Tyler DiSalle

Zack Green

Garrett Ross

Society of Professional Journalists – Region 1 Mark of Excellence Award Winners

Stephanie Distasio – General News Photo

John Baranoski – Sports Photo

Mario Marroquin, Jennifer Meyers, Meg McLaurin and Marley Paul – General News Reporting

Megan Fleming – Online Opinion and Commentary

Jess Arnold – Television Feature Reporting

Samantha Lantz – Television General News Reporting

Scott Cikowski and Tyler Feldman – Television News and Feature Photography

Centre County Report, November 20, 2015 – Best All-Around TV Newscast

Student Keystone Press Awards (Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Foundation)

Mingyu Cheng – Honorable Mention, Sports Photo

Akash Ghai – Second Place News Photo

Cameron Hart – Second Place Feature Photo

Haley Nelson – Second Place Photo Story

Kristen Nelson – Second Place Sports Story

Kristen Nelson – Honorable mention Personality Profile

Boen Wang – Second Place Review

Cameron Hart, Caity Kramer, Haley Nelson – Honorable Mention Photo Story

Student Academy Awards

Caroline Miller – Semifinalist Video

Appendix F
Program Assessment Reports
Alumni Society Board and Ad/PR Network Board Reviews

DATE: May 24, 2016

FROM: Frank Dardis, Associate Professor of Advertising

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

CC: Julie Evak, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education

RE: Department of Advertising Student Learning Assessment Spring 2016: Critical Thinking, Critical Evaluation, Domestic Diversity, Global Diversity

Background

The Department of Advertising has nine learning objectives for its undergraduate 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 2016, the department conducted an assessment of four ACEJMC learning objectives: Critical Thinking, Critical Evaluation, Domestic Diversity, and Global Diversity. Brian Nawa, Associate Director of Multi-Channel Capabilities, Bristol-Myers Squibb; T.J. Brightman, President, A Bright Idea; Cindy Viadella, Principal, Fresh Milk Marketing; and Frank Dardis, Associate Professor, Department of Advertising, met on April 17, 2016 to evaluate samples of student work. Evaluation of each objective is discussed below.

Data Collection

Student work samples were comprised of the following:

- 2 Advertising Campaign Books from the capstone course, *COMM 424 – Advertising Campaigns*. In these, students are tasked with developing an entire campaign for a client: situation analysis, consumer analysis and target selection, secondary and primary research, branding/creative insight, media and other promotional strategies, and evaluation methods.
- 2 example forms of self/peer review from a required course, *COMM 424 – Advertising Campaigns* and *COMM 422 – Advertising Media Planning*. One focuses solely on critiquing others' campaign presentations; the other is a more comprehensive exercise that asks the students to evaluate themselves relative to their peer team members for the entire project.
- 1 example of a class assignment from *COMM 426 – International and Intercultural Strategic Communication* (elective) -- that requires students to specifically consider diverse audiences while implementing strategic plans.

- 1 syllabus from a required course, *COMM 420 – Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations*. Please note that a course requirement mandates that all students must participate in World in Conversation, a university-wide diversity and perspective-expanding initiative.

After reading all of the samples, we evaluated the presence of the four ACEJMC criteria as reflected within the student work using categories of “Excellent” (Outcome is strongly demonstrated), “Satisfactory” (Outcome is demonstrated), and “Unsatisfactory” (Outcome is not demonstrated).

Results

Learning Objective #1: The student will be able to identify leading strategic-communication theories and concepts; and demonstrate the ability to integrate strategic-communication principles in their professional work. (ACEJMC Value: Critical Thinking)

Summary: This outcome received scores of “Excellent” across all four reviewers. Alumni reviewers believed this criterion was effectively demonstrated in student projects, syllabi, and peer evaluations. Reviewers believed that this outcome was one of the strongest points of the work and that students demonstrated deep understanding of industry practices, tactics, and know-how. They were especially impressed with how students analyzed situations and data, backed up opinions/recommendations with facts, and displayed strategic rationale within their work. The department is encouraged to maintain such analytical teaching.

Learning Objective #4: The student will be able to apply measurable benchmarks in analyzing outcomes to evaluate and/or determine success in strategic communication within their own work and in that of others. (ACEJMC Value: Critical Evaluation)

Summary: This skill also was well evidenced in the student work, with three reviewers scoring the outcome as “Excellent” and one reviewer as “Satisfactory.” Reviewers were impressed with how students were forced to present their ideas and defend their work, which is exactly what industry practitioners have to do when they deal with clients every day. The professional reviewers were quite impressed with this occurrence within the curriculum. Reviewers suggested that the department also provide syllabi for all courses from which critical evaluation was presented, and not simply the assignments and/or student work. They also asked for perhaps grading rubrics – if available – for the projects they were reviewing. This would help provide a better overall understanding of the critical evaluation component of the work, they suggested. They also recommend that, rather than simply evaluate the work of their peers in the physical sense, students also should be asked to critique the work in a more “business” sense: how well or not they think the project will actually “work” for the client, based on current wants, needs, opportunities, etc.

Learning Objective #9: The student will demonstrate an understanding of ways to identify and communicate with diverse audiences, and acquire a global perspective of strategic communications. (ACEJMC Values: Domestic Diversity and Global Diversity)

Summary: These two criteria scored “Satisfactory” across all four reviewers. These criteria were deemed as excellent within *COMM 420 – Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations*, a required course, and *COMM 426 – International and Intercultural Strategic Communication*, an elective course. They were not quite as obvious in the other courses, which generally focus on US-based advertising campaigns and do not require that students automatically have to engage diverse audiences, although the projects require consideration of all potential target audiences that would be best for the client to pursue in the most cost-efficient manner. Thus, it was explained in the reviewer instructions that they also should consider the process through which these projects were developed, even though there may not be explicit, manifest content in the final report related to all potential audiences, diverse or otherwise. The reviewers seemed to agree with this notion.

An interesting note here also was the reviewers’ questioning of the necessity of bifurcating the “two” diversities. In a sense, they believe that it’s really the understanding of diverse cultures and customs, and this is needed within the US and abroad. So, in essence, the same principles that apply to understanding “domestic” diversity should translate pretty well to “global” diversity (i.e., understanding that not everyone acts, thinks, and is affected the same way, and that a campaign’s mission is to “speak” the audience’s language). The more strategic point, they suggest, would be to focus on the application and execution of different *strategies* that have succeeded or failed internationally, due to whatever international barriers might have been at play (business customs, cultural meanings of symbols and words, etc.) through a case-study approach. In short, this takes on more of a “global strategy” approach than a “global diversity” approach, and includes global leadership and business-making attributes, much like the “working across borders” program designed by the Wharton School of Business at U Penn.

DATE: June 01, 2016

FROM: Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor to Ambassador of Haiti
Catie Grant, Producer, WPSU Creative Group
Mark Stitzer, Cinematographer/Editor, WPSU Creative Group
Rod Bingaman, Senior Lecturer, Film-Video Production

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

CC: Julie Evak, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education

RE: Film-Video Student Learning Assessment Spring 2016
Critical Evaluation, Critical Thinking, Global Diversity, Domestic Diversity

The Department of Film-Video & Media Studies has eight learning objectives for the Film-Video Production 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 2016, the department conducted an assessment of four learning objectives. Catie Grant, Producer, WPSU Creative Group; Mark Stitzer, Cinematographer/Editor, WPSU Creative Group; and Rod Bingaman, Senior Lecturer, Film-Video Production met on April 17, 2016 to evaluate samples of student work. Clara Benice, Filmmaker/Communications Advisor to Ambassador of Haiti, contributed assessment materials electronically from Washington, D.C. Evaluation of each objective is discussed below.

Learning Objective #6: Analyze and review their own work and that of others for clarity of expression, logic, and creativity, demonstrating proficiency in understanding visual literacy through the use of visual images and sound design. (ACEJMC Value: Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness).

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the Fall 2015 semester were collected from one intermediate level Film-Video course: *COMM 346—Writing for the Screen I*. We reviewed two written critiques, each two pages in length. We used three criteria for evaluating student mastery in applying critical evaluation concepts: analyzing intentions of the piece, assessing strengths and weaknesses, and the clarity of the critique; using a scale of excellent, satisfactory (good), or unsatisfactory.

Summary: Based on our evaluation of student samples, it is clear that the department's curriculum is satisfactory in helping students learn how to analyze and critically evaluate each other's work, including assessing strengths and weaknesses and making suggestions. There were instances where critiques were not as thoroughly detailed, compared to others and technical suggestions were perhaps too biased to one viewpoint. The department is

encouraged to place additional emphasis on more specific directions to encourage clear and concise evaluations.

Learning Objective #1: Practice thinking critically, creatively and independently. (ACEJMC Value: Think critically, creatively and independently).

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the Fall 2015 semester were collected from two intermediate level Film-Video courses: *COMM 342—Idea Development and Media Writing* and *COMM 346—Writing for the Screen I*. We reviewed four written samples, two narrative film analysis assignments and two original scripts, ranging from two to five pages each. We used three criteria for evaluating the student mastery in applying critical thinking appropriately: clarity, substance, and writing; using a scale of excellent, satisfactory (good), or unsatisfactory.

Summary: Our overall conclusion is that this learning objective is being met satisfactorily and that students are learning how to think critically, creatively and independently. Reviewers noted particular strength in the students' construction and writing, both in analysis and creative examples. Some minor errors were noted in proofreading and one reviewer suggested the analysis might be broadened to reflect a deeper interpretation. The department is encouraged to continue these types of assignments with perhaps a view to encouraging students to be more expansive in their commentary.

Learning Objective #7: Recognize the social, economic and technological factors that shape films from different historical periods; gender, race and sexual orientation perspectives; as well as domestic and international cultural contexts. (ACEJMC Value: Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society).

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the Fall 2015 semester were collected from one intermediate and one upper level Film-Video course: *COMM 346—Writing for the Screen I* and *COMM 437—Advanced Documentary Production*. We reviewed one script, five pages in length and two student video projects 8-9 minutes each. We used three criteria for evaluating the student mastery in global diversity: understanding diverse cultures; interpreting analytically, intuitively or narratively; and identifying possible actions or outcomes; using a scale of excellent, satisfactory (good), or unsatisfactory.

Summary: Based on our review of student work, the department is providing students with an satisfactory understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society. Each student sample effectively identified global trends and changes and they appear to be informed about the differences and distinctions. Some work made stronger connections between traits that we all share, while others were more general in their interpretations. While the work was viewed as both excellent and satisfactory, the reviewers felt that greater emphasis on exploring cultural differences in a way that is more revealing and less in the style of a travelogue would enhance student mastery of this learning objective.

Learning Objective #7: Recognize the social, economic and technological factors that shape films from different historical periods; gender, race and sexual orientation perspectives; as well as domestic and international cultural contexts. (ACEJMC Value: Demonstrate an understanding of the gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications).

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the Fall 2015 semester were collected from one intermediate level and two upper level Film-Video courses: *COMM 337—Intermediate Documentary Production*; *COMM 437—Advanced Documentary Production and COMM 439—Advanced Alternative Production*. We reviewed four student video projects 4-8 minutes each and one documentary treatment. We used three criteria for evaluating the student mastery in domestic diversity: understanding diversity: understanding diverse cultures; interpreting analytically, intuitively or narratively; and identifying possible actions or outcomes; using a scale of excellent, satisfactory (good), or unsatisfactory.

Summary: Based on our review of student work, the department is providing students with an understanding of the gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications. Student work overall showed a mature understanding of diversity topics, including both gender and racial identity issues and was rated more excellent than satisfactory. The reviewers complemented the student's efforts. The reviewers felt that the need to further grasp specific cultural, social and economic nuances of particular peoples and groups in a more sophisticated way would enhance student mastery of this learning objective.

DATE: May 19, 2016

FROM: Kurt Knaus, managing director, Ceisler Media and Advocacy
Dan Victor, senior staff editor, New York Times
Russ Eshleman, senior lecturer and head, Department of Journalism

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

CC: Julie Evak, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education

RE: Department of Journalism Student Learning Assessment Spring 2016
Research and Evaluation; Thinking Critically; Global Diversity; Gender Diversity

The three of us met at the Nittany Lion Inn on April 17, 2016, to review samples of student work and instructor teaching materials that deal with four Department of Journalism learning objectives:

- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society.
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.

Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

Data Collection: We evaluated instructor materials and student work for COMM 409 – News Media Ethics. Instructor materials included the course syllabus and the assignment for a specific student project that required students, in two-person teams, to research cases studies of ethical dilemmas involving two news organizations. For the assignment, the students prepared PowerPoint presentations that highlighted their research of the case and included their own evaluations of how the news organizations dealt with the ethical dilemmas. One case involved the publishing of private medical information and a political candidate, and the other case involved the appropriateness of Tweets that were written and published by a New York Times bureau chief and a CNN reporter.

Summary: During our meeting, Kurt and Dan were interested in classroom discussion that was provoked by the PowerPoint presentations. They commended the assignment and the student work as very topical. After considering whether to rate the materials as either satisfactory or excellent, the group voted that it was an **excellent** demonstration of the learning objective.

Think critically, creatively and independently.

Data Collection: This evaluation included materials from Spring 2016 for COMM 480 -- Television News (the Centre County Report). Prior to the meeting, the three of us examined the course syllabus and taped links to the Centre County Report as well as taped links to a class evaluation, in which students and faculty members, as part of a class, critiqued two broadcasts. Also included was the instructor's written evaluation of the same broadcasts. The whole point of the post-mortem exercise for the students is to see flaws, both technical and journalistic, and then figure out how to address those problems in future broadcasts.

Summary: Rating the materials **excellent** for meeting the learning objective, Kurt and Dan both praised the feedback by the students and instructors on the broadcasts and post-mortems. Dan noted: "I was impressed by the process." Kurt's comment about the faculty and students' critiquing the broadcasts: "It was a way to thicken your skin a bit."

Demonstrate and understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society.

Data Collection: We looked at the syllabus and final product – published stories – for COMM 402 – International Reporting. The sample was the Spring 2015 trip to Hong Kong. The syllabus provided an outline that showed how students learn about the cultures of the particular countries that they will visit during Spring Break. These include readings and outside speakers.

The two student stories that comprise this sample – one about shark fin soup, and the other about development of private lands – show specific aspects of Hong Kong and Asian culture versus U.S. culture.

Summary: We rated these samples as **excellent** in showing how our students learn about global diversity. Kurt and Dan wanted to make certain students beyond those enrolled in COMM 402 are being taught about global diversity, and Russ noted that global diversity is touched upon, in some fashion, in other journalism courses, including COMM 409, as well as other COMM courses.

Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.

Data Collection: Once again, we looked at COMM 409 – News Media Ethics – a required course. In terms of domestic diversity, COMM 409 deals with race, religion, sexual orientation and socio-economic class. We looked at specific topics in the syllabus and classroom materials, including racially charged language, stories and words that stereotype, newsroom diversity, reporting groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the use of offensive cartoons in publications. There were two examples of student work: a paper on a

case study involving a story in the Centre Daily Times and the use of the “n-word,” as well as a short profile story of a visitor to the Journalism Department, former New York Times reporter and Pulitzer Prize-winner E.R. Shipp, who discussed her life, growing up as an African-American in the South in the 1960s.

Summary: Kurt was interested in making certain that the curriculum evolves to include additional gay and transgender issues, and he suggested that it might have been good to have E.R. Shipp review the stories written about her to ascertain if the students were really hearing and understanding the lessons of domestic diversity that she was teaching them with her own life story. We rated meeting this learning objective as **satisfactory**.

August 19, 2016

To: J. Ford Risley, Associate Dean, and Julie Evak, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education
From: Kevin Hagopian, Media Studies representative, Student Learning Assessment committee

Re: Student Learning Assessment

The following summary represents the work done on the final phase of the department-specific Student Learning Assessment (SLA) which replaces the learning self-study component of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) accreditation. This work was completed in the Spring semester of 2016. The work consisted of presenting sample student work to be measured against standards for four learning objectives, "Domestic Diversity," "Global Diversity," "Critical Thinking," and "Critical Evaluation" by reviewers from our own Alumni Board, and outside reviewers. The purpose of this final phase of the SLA project, as in previous phases, was to identify student competency, rather than excellence, in these learning objectives, taken *in toto* across their education in the Media Studies major; no one course is expected to satisfy all of these competencies.

Data Collection: A sample of papers from several courses for Media Studies majors were solicited. These included courses taught by full-time faculty and graduate students. Papers ranged in length from 5-15 pages, and included documentation. Student work using both qualitative and quantitative approaches was surveyed, including papers from Comm 205, "Gender, Diversity and the Media," Comm 250: "Film Theory and History," Comm 304, "Mass Communications Research," Comm 411: "Cultural Aspects of the Mass Media," Comm 413: "The Mass Media and the Public," and Comm 419: "World Media Systems." Instructors' written guidelines for specific assignments, including grading rubrics, content requirements, and criteria for general evaluation, were provided to reviewers. Students' work was found to be entirely "satisfactory" or "excellent."

Learning Objective: Domestic Diversity

Conclusions: Although students' work was rated as competent or above, an outside assessor found some vagueness in instructors' articulation of the concept of diversity, noting that the term "Domestic Diversity" itself did not appear on the assignment instructions, though students work reflected general consciousness of the concept of diversity. Since these concepts are so fundamental to our major, students may not feel called upon to articulate them directly, and thus, the use of these concepts in analysis shows fuzziness.

Learning Objective: Global Diversity

Conclusions: Although students' work was rated as competent or above, an outside assessor found some students' overlap in discussing "global" vs. "domestic" diversity to be evidence of lack of clarity in understanding the core concept itself. That is, even students who were skilled in examining instances of diversity, were not as skilled as they should be in expressing the distinctions between theories of diversity nationally, and internationally.

Learning Objective: Critical Thinking

Conclusions: Critical thinking is the basis of Media Studies; for us, almost every other learning objective can be said to come under this umbrella term. Critical thinking is an area where our majors are typically competent. This was the case in the student work examined by the assessors under this heading.

In spite of the overall conceptual quality of the student work examined, assessors noted grammatical and other technical mistakes which reduced the effectiveness of the authors' arguments and analysis.

Learning Objective: Critical Evaluation

Conclusions: Discrimination between competing ideas, policies, and theories was ranked as competent or above. However, the significant differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies and evidence in this learning objective makes it clear that there is a need to revisit several learning objectives to make subtler distinctions, where needed, between quantitative and qualitative concentrations in Media Studies.

Notes on the process: The College and its alumni board is to be commended for "personalizing" the AEJMC's self-study process for each department. Media Studies had been frustrated by a matrix for evaluation of student work that wasn't appropriate for our discipline. Therefore, the self-study process had been less useful to us than to other departments at instituting improvement. By redirecting the self-study process to reflect disciplinary distinctions between majors, Dean Marie Hardin and Associate Dean J. Ford Risley have transformed this process for Media Studies from a reporting of general outcomes to the AEJMC accrediting committee every several years to an iterative process for constant internal improvement between accreditations. Essential to this transformation is the inclusion of outside academic reviewers among the professional reviewers of Media Studies student work. During the last phase of this pilot assessment, covered here, we brought in for the first time two graduates of our Ph.D. program as outside assessors. These individuals, Lauren De Carvalho of the University of Arkansas and Brandie Nonnecke of the University of California-Berkeley, did outstanding work in this capacity. These universities are peer institutions of Penn State. They serve a similar student population, and they face the same challenges of balancing undergraduate teaching with graduate teaching, and with graduate and faculty research missions. These individuals help us to better address unique emphases of the Media Studies discipline, such as long-form academic writing, citation protocols, and precision with statistical and theoretical models. Peer- and external reviewing are a basic protocol in academic media studies, so adding this dimension to the process brings us in line with professional norms in our field. By joining these outside academic reviewers such as these to our "inside" alumni board reviewers, we now have a range of experience that will help faculty address both intellectual excellence and job market realities in our curriculum design and educational strategies. Our "inside" assessors, such as Kurt Knauss and Patrick Mairs, will continue to be essential at helping us as faculty to frame our students' career possibilities as broadly as possible. *Media Studies genuinely appreciates the flexibility of Dean Marie Hardin, Associate Dean J. Ford Risley, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education Julie Evak, and our Alumni Board in encouraging this innovation.*

Having completed the working-up and initial revisions of these standards, we now begin the task of considering the best means of applying these standards on the front-end of student work, to create consistent and teachable learning outcomes across Media Studies, and to orient new faculty, particularly graduate student teachers, in our department's specific pedagogical norms and goals. We believe that explicit invocation and application of these competencies can create a greater intellectual unity among our undergraduate course offerings, and a clear and articulable core narrative of Penn State Media Studies for prospective students, current students, and graduates of our program. We will continue to

refine the standards themselves as disciplinary knowledge in the study of media continues to evolve- as it surely will.

We believe that the Media Studies undergraduate degree is potentially the best and most marketable generalist degree for college graduates to possess in the 21st century. This self-study process is helping us as a department to move toward making that potential a reality.

TO: Ford Risley, Associate Dean
FROM: Marcia W. DiStaso, Associate Professor
SUBJECT: Public Relations Evaluation for 2015-2016
DATE: May 20, 2016

Three reviewers evaluated student assignment samples from public relations classes during the spring 2016 semester in the College of Communications at Pennsylvania State University. The reviewers included Alyson Joyce, Seneca Resources Corporation; Meredith Topalanchik, CooperKatz & Company; Natalie Buyny, Tierney; and Marcia DiStaso, Associate Professor in the Department of Advertising/Public Relations at Penn State.

This assessment examined the following four learning outcomes:

Critical Thinking
Critical Evaluation
Domestic Diversity
Global Diversity

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 seven samples were evaluated to determine the demonstration of the four learning outcomes listed above. Each assignment sample was reviewed and then all seven were considered when assessing the learning outcome. For example, each reviewer read all the seven assignments. Then ranked the collection as one of the following for the critical thinking outcome: “Critical thinking is strongly demonstrated,” “Critical thinking is demonstrated,” or “Critical thinking is not demonstrated.” Then they selected their ranking for the other three outcomes and provided comments or notes on the assignments and/or the review sheet. The faculty reviewer then met and discussed the materials with the two alumni reviewers (the third alumni reviewer sent her assessment by email and that was included in the discussion). The following evaluation overview is the outcome from these discussions.

The tools reviewed included:

- 2 PR Writing Packets – In these students are tasked with coming up with an idea that is based on reality but fictional. They then put together a concept for a campaign, write materials to support the campaign, and identify ways to evaluate it. Since this is the writing course, the idea behind the assignment is to teach them how to tell a story through various written items. This means that they use their critical thinking and evaluation skills in creating the written items and diversity is both a focus of some and an underlying component of consideration before the items were constructed.
- 3 Ethics Exercises – These pose a challenge for the students to critically consider and evaluate. Note that attached is the assignment directions, three student submissions and the professor’s feedback on each.
- 2 Crisis Response Assignments – For this assignment, the professor provided the questions and the students conducted research to critically think and evaluate the diversity crisis at Mizzou.

Assessment

Overall, the three reviewers felt the four outcomes were demonstrated in the student assignments provided. Most importantly, the alumni reviewers indicated that the assignments prepared the students for the “real world,” and to “hit the ground running” in their internships and post-graduation jobs.

All four reviewers felt that Critical Thinking was strongly demonstrated. This was especially clear in the writing packets that showed full strategic campaigns for clients. Each of the examples were dynamic collections of extensive public relations writing and planning samples.

All three reviewers felt that Critical Evaluation was demonstrated. One area where the student work contained strong evaluation was in the evaluation of a crisis where they showed a clear understanding of the steps and tactics that would be executed during a crisis. Overall, however, this outcome was not ranked as highly since the evaluation of the campaigns was not very strong. While it did exist, the reviewers felt that there was much more the students could have done for evaluation.

Domestic Diversity was an area where two out of the three felt it was strongly demonstrated and two felt it was just demonstrated. The reviewers commended the professors for addressing key issues facing our country today such as STEM education, race relations and inner city crime. It is important that the students gain experience thinking and writing on a variety of topics to help prepare them for their future in communications.

Finally, the Global Diversity outcome was ranked as being demonstrated by two and not demonstrated by the other two. This was a tricky topic to assess. Most of the assignments are US focused, but it is common for professors to address global diversity in the classroom through discussions and lectures. It is important to note that while the student assignment samples were low in this area, all public relations students are required to take the research course COMM420 and that course requires all students to participate in World in Conversation, a university-wide diversity and perspective-expanding initiative.

Overall, the reviewers agreed that the student samples demonstrated critical thinking, critical evaluation, domestic diversity but had a very low level of global diversity demonstrated.

Plans for Improvement

The evaluation will be shared with the public relations faculty in an effort to improve professor and student efforts supporting the four outcomes. The reviewers specifically suggested the students should gain a stronger awareness of channel role and purpose. While the work reviewed was strong, by requiring students to write a specific item, a press release, a Facebook post, a speech, a fact sheet, etc. this hinders their fully understanding what channel to use when, why, and for what audience. It is clear that all the tools need to be covered, but in addition to the tools, it would be valuable for the students to identify why that public relations item should be used

and through what channel it should be distributed to what audience. Additionally, all the reviewers agreed that the students would benefit from taking all the campaign material and writing a two-page overview and PowerPoint. By condensing this impressive collection of written content, the students will be better able to see how it all fits together. Finally, the reviewers felt that a strong fit and need for global and domestic diversity could be in the use of social media since the boundaries of communication over social media are limitless.

DATE: July 11, 2016

FROM: Benjamin W. Cramer, 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 2016

Note: This report has been delayed from its original June 1 deadline due to the need for a second round of comments from alumni reviewers.

REVIEWERS: Greg Guise, Lisa Lucas (original); Sarah Dell'Aquila, William Massi (subsequent)

Various courses taught by the Department of Telecommunications touch upon all twelve of the ACEJMC Values and Competencies. 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 2016, the department worked with selected alumni to conduct an assessment of three Learning Objectives that are modeled on the ACEJMC Values and Competencies: Critical Thinking, Domestic Diversity, and Global Diversity. Comments were gathered from Greg Guise and Lisa Lucas in person at the Alumni event on April 17. These comments were deemed incomplete, so Sarah Dell'Aquila and William Massi were subsequently asked for comments by e-mail. The results of the Alumni evaluations of each Learning Objective are discussed below.

***** Learning Objective: Critical Thinking**

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the 2015-16 academic year were collected from one upper level Telecommunications course: *COMM 385—Media Programming Strategies*. We used three criteria to gauge student performance in this Learning Objective: argument structure, framing and composition, and critical thought. Each was assessed on a scale of very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.

Summary: The first two alumni reviewers, who currently work in the media programming field, noted that the assignments (and subsequent student samples) used outdated industry terminology. The biggest example is "season" for TV shows. These reviewers also suggested that student research should be built upon more granular data on demographics and psychographics, that students of media programming should receive more training in cost/benefit accounting (because the media is a for-profit industry), and that lessons

should be less abstract and more focused on what a professional handles on a day-to-day basis.

The subsequent reviewers noted that the student samples showed a strong facility for analyzing the pros and cons of a challenging situation, while students did a fine job supporting their arguments. Students showed the ability to construct arguments that led naturally to a supported conclusion, with consideration for the possible unintended consequences of a professional's decision. These two reviewers both praised the students' ability to collect and analyze market data in these assignments.

***** Learning Objective: Domestic Diversity**

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the 2015-16 academic year were collected from two upper level Telecommunications courses: *COMM 385—Media Programming Strategies* and *COMM 489w – Advanced Telecommunications Topics*. We used three criteria to gauge student performance in this Learning Objective: argument structure, framing and composition, and analysis of domestic diversity. Each was assessed on a scale of very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.

Summary: The first two alumni reviewers did not comment on this objective. The subsequent reviewers found that students were prone to using generalizations and personal opinions in arguments about diversity, with one reviewer using the term “underachievement” to describe the readability of the student papers. Given current social controversies, it is possible that students are reluctant to tackle controversial topics in this area, or as one of the reviewers hinted, students are unable to consider them. It was also noted that some of the student samples showed signs of forming a conclusion first and then finding stories or quotations to prop up that conclusion.

***** Learning Objective: Global Diversity**

Data Collection: Samples of student work from the 2015-16 academic year were collected from two upper level Telecommunications courses: *COMM 385—Media Programming Strategies* and *COMM 489w – Advanced Telecommunications Topics*. We used three criteria to gauge student performance in this Learning Objective: argument structure, framing and composition, and analysis of global diversity. Each was assessed on a scale of very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.

Summary: The first two alumni reviewers did not comment on this objective. The subsequent reviewers provided comments similar to those for **Domestic Diversity** above. Here, students were also prone to listing possible solutions at the ends of papers as if those solutions were unquestionably the right thing to do, with no support for whether those solutions are practicable or why they are necessary. “Barriers to Entry” was noted as a key missing concept in the student samples. One reviewer also noted that an assignment about something in another country does not necessarily lead to knowledge of “diversity” if the research and conclusions are constructed with the same old strategies. Another omission noticed by one of the reviewers was that students generally did not consider the political

systems of other countries, while assuming that problems can be solved with American-style politics.

***** General Comments**

Dissatisfaction with student writing skills was a common theme with all reviewers. This can probably be considered a challenge for higher education in general, and much bigger than this assessment process, but everyone noted that employers want strong writing skills immediately.

DATE: September 14, 2016

FROM: Frank Dardis, Associate Professor of Advertising and Lead Faculty of Strategic Communications Program

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

CC: Julie Evak, Coordinator of Undergraduate Education

RE: Online Bachelor's Degree in Strategic Communications: Student Learning Assessment Summer 2016: Write Clearly and Correctly, Apply Numerical and Statistical Concepts, Apply Basic Tools and Technologies, Images and Information, Critical Thinking, Critical Evaluation, Domestic Diversity, Global Diversity

Background

The online Bachelor's Degree in Strategic Communications has nine learning objectives for its undergraduate curriculum. As part of the 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 Summer 2016, the department conducted an assessment of eight ACEJMC learning outcomes or values: Write Clearly and Correctly, Apply Numerical and Statistical Concepts, Apply Basic Tools and Technologies, Images and Information, Critical Thinking, Critical Evaluation, Domestic Diversity, and Global Diversity. These eight learning values are incorporated within six Strategic Communications learning objectives, as outlined below.

Kathy Heasley, Founder and President, Heasley & Partners; Lauren Raisl, Brand Strategy Manager, Capital One; Maggie Schmerin, Vice President, Account Management, Edelman; and Frank Dardis, Associate Professor, Department of Advertising, and Lead Faculty of the online Strategic Communications Program evaluated samples of student work. Evaluation of each objective is discussed below.

Data Collection

Student work samples were comprised of the following:

- 2 Online Discussion Boards and 1 reaction paper from *COMM 428A – Principles of Strategic Communications* (required). In these, students are asked to share thought and opinions on important contemporary topics and issues in the industry.
- 1 Methods, Results, and Implications Paper assignment from *COMM 428D -- Research and Analytics* (required). In this assignment, students are asked to select a client, conduct secondary and primary research for the client, properly analyze and explain the results,

and suggest practical strategies and implications for the client based on the research efforts.

- 1 Social Measurement Project and 1 Social Strategy Project from *COMM 428E -- Social Media Strategies* (required). The Measurement Project gives students an opportunity to learn how to monitor social media content in a way that provides insight into what companies want to get out of social media. The Strategy Project requires students to create their own social media campaign for a selected client.
- 1 Current Analysis Project from *COMM 428C -- Strategic Communications in a Global Environment* (required). This project asks students to select an American-based client that also operates in a foreign country and to conduct a market, consumer, and social analysis that leads to the suggestion of practical strategies and implications for the client.

After reading all of the samples, we evaluated the presence of the eight ACEJMC criteria as reflected within the student work using categories of “Excellent” (Outcome is strongly demonstrated), “Satisfactory” (Outcome is demonstrated), and “Unsatisfactory” (Outcome is not demonstrated).

Results

Overall

Overall, evaluations from all reviewers were very positive. No reviewer ever rated any competency as “Unsatisfactory.” Additionally, for each reviewer, a majority of the eight competencies were rated as “Excellent” rather than “Satisfactory” (three reviewers marked 6 criteria as Excellent and 2 as Satisfactory, although these were not always the same competencies for each reviewer; one reviewer indicated 5-to-3). Several outcomes received unanimous ratings of “Excellent.” One outcome (Domestic Diversity) received unanimous “Satisfactory” ratings. Reviewers noted that much diversity learning is enhanced as professional experience increases.

Learning Objective #1: The student will demonstrate effective communication skills in written, oral, and visual formats, and across multimedia platforms. (ACEJMC Value: Writing clearly and correctly)

Summary: This outcome received scores of “Excellent” for three reviewers and “Satisfactory” for one. Most reviewers believed that the writing was “concise and engaging,” “not overly verbose,” and “clearly articulated.” The reviewer who rated the work as Satisfactory noted that the student work demonstrated “structured thinking, effective communication, and is generally easy to follow.” The suggestions for improvement (among 2 reviewers) indicated that more attention should be given to avoiding grammatical, capitalization, and spelling errors.

Learning Objective #2: The student will be able to describe qualitative and quantitative research methods; evaluate information from primary and secondary sources; and collect, synthesize, and analyze data to provide insight with empirical underpinnings. (ACEJMC Value: Apply Numerical and Statistical Concepts)

Summary: This outcome received scores of “Excellent” for all four reviewers. Reviewers indicated that they were impressed with the methods and intel used, the evaluation tools, and the very actionable insights that were offered based on the provided results and data. Suggestions for improvement included providing a more precise operational definition for certain measurement terms (e.g., “high usage”).

Learning Objective #3: The student will be able to describe how technologies shape the way people perceive and interact with the world; and demonstrate an understanding of the tools and technologies appropriate for strategic communications. (ACEJMC Value: Apply Basic Tools and Technologies)

Summary: This outcome received scores of “Excellent” for three reviewers and “Satisfactory” for one. Reviewers indicated an appreciation for students’ awareness of the tools and resources used to garner info in the industry and transform these into strategic communications. Another reviewer noted the impressive integration of the tools of the trade for online PR. One minor suggestion included incorporating an SEO assignment into student work, but this might actually occur even though none were included in the sample of materials. Another reviewer suggested including more evidence of digital ad campaigns (which currently is not a primary focus of the program, but which can be discussed).

Learning Objective #4: **The student will be able to identify leading strategic-communication theories and concepts; and demonstrate the ability to integrate strategic-communication principles in their professional work.** (ACEJMC Value: Understand concepts & apply theories in the use and presentation of images & information).

Summary: This outcome received unanimous “Excellent” ratings. Reviewers noted students’ ability to use visuals, captions, imagery, and graphs to enhance clarity and understanding, and how the projects reflected tactical and thorough communication. One reviewer particularly liked the incorporation of practical, strategic recommendations based on the imagery.


Learning Objective #5: **The student will demonstrate an understanding of ways to identify and communicate with diverse audiences, and acquire a global perspective of strategic communications.** (ACEJMC Values: Domestic Diversity and Global Diversity).

Summary: Domestic Diversity received unanimous ratings of “Satisfactory,” while Global Diversity received 2 “Excellent” and 2 “Satisfactory.” This likely is partially due to the provided main assignment reflecting an international project. Most reviewers indicated that the Domestic diversity outcome was adequate and that students demonstrated a grounding in how strategic communication can affect diverse audiences. But all reviewers indicated that the component could be enhanced. Regarding Global Diversity, most reviewers sensed a positive trend in that students were being appropriately challenged and prepared for international work, at least in terms of thinking internationally (i.e., that “America does not equal global”). This was deemed as a positive. For both Global and Domestic Diversity, some naivete on behalf of the students was sensed, but as one reviewer noted, “the diversity components could be strengthened, but from my personal experience, this is a skill communicators are better able to demonstrate with experience.”

Learning Objective #6: The student will be able to apply measurable benchmarks in analyzing outcomes to evaluate and/or determine success in strategic communication within their own work and in that of others. (ACEJMC Values: Critical Thinking and Critical Evaluation).

Summary: Both outcomes were unanimously rated as “Excellent.” Reviewers were impressed with students’ ability to establish their own opinions and to effectively draw conclusions in a collaborative environment. Reviewers believed that students demonstrated a strong sense of conviction and a firm grounding in considering thought-provoking ideas and paradigm shifts. Suggestions for improvement included not overstating the assumption of “black-versus-white” outcomes (i.e., realizing that things are sometimes more complex than an all-or-none solution), and in having students better question the legitimacy of some of their sources.



Date: June 29, 2017
From: Ford Risley, Associate Dean 
To: Marie Hardin, Dean
CC: Bellisario College of Communications Department Heads and Associate Head
Russ Eshleman, Matt Jackson, Anthony Olorunnisola,
Maura Shea, Fuyuan Shen
College of Communications Assessment Team Leaders
Rod Bingaman, Ben Cramer, Frank Dardis, Marcia DiStaso,
Michael Elavsky
Re: Response to the Student Learning Assessment Report for 2015-2016

Each department head received the College's annual report on student learning assessment. The report summarized efforts during the 2015-2016 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

Based on the feedback in the report, the department plans to offer its global diversity class, COMM 426 (International and Intercultural Strategic Communications) every year. The faculty also plan to incorporate more about global diversity into other courses in the curriculum. The department will be hiring several new faculty members in the next two years and their expertise should address some other areas of concern expressed by the reviewers.

Film-Video

Based on the feedback in the report, the faculty in Film-Video will search for more ways to insert diverse cultural views into the curriculum. This will create more opportunities for students to interact with other populations, both as filmmakers and film subjects. The faculty also will better clarify the expectations of student critiques. They plan to develop specific guidelines for peer evaluations, which should make the feedback process more useful for students.

Journalism

The department's response noted the measures already underway to better meet the goals evaluated in this cycle. To better address one important aspect, domestic diversity, students in COMM 409 (Media Ethics) and COMM 460 (Reporting Methods) now have assignments on LGBT issues. In terms of global diversity, the department offered special courses that gave students the chance to visit Cuba and England. Faculty want to give more assignments that encourage students to think critically. The issue of "fake news" is providing faculty one way to do that.

Media Studies

Based on the feedback from the report, the faculty in media studies plan to incorporate more global diversity in various courses in order that students better understand the commonalities of people. Faculty members do not believe that the samples provided to reviewers provided a clear picture of students' ability to differentiate between quantitative and qualitative evidence. They will use different student work in the future. The faculty share in the frustration of reviewers with the relative weakness of students in critical evaluation and writing. The department is committed to making writing a core part of courses across the curriculum.

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. Reviewers agreed that students need a stronger awareness of channel role and fairness. The department has recently launched a new Digital Public Relations class that addresses this area, in part. The department also plans to develop a new class in Public Relations Media, that will eventually become part of the core curriculum.

Telecommunications

To address the issue of domestic diversity, the department has an ambitious goal to have a diversity module in every course in the curriculum. Many courses include a discussion of disparate access to technology across diverse populations and the implications of data analytics for diversity. The department has started an embedded course where students take part in international travel to experience another culture, most recently to Cuba and Hungary. The faculty recognize that critical evaluation and writing has been an area of weakness and the department now requires a writing-intensive capstone course.

Suggestions for Improvement of Assessment

This was the second 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. The system is providing effective feedback on the learning objectives

and assessment team leaders enjoy hearing directly from reviewers. Assessment team leaders worked to provide better samples of student work in this cycle and, as a result, the reviews were more valuable.

To: Ford Risley, Associate Dean, Donald P. Bellisario College of
Communications
From: Fuyuan Shen, Head, Department of Advertising and Public Relations
Date: June 25, 2017
Subject: Response to the 2015-16 Assessment Report

The faculty in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations appreciate the assessment teams' positive reviews of our programs, curriculum and our students' performance in all areas that were assessed this year. The report has also identified several areas where improvement is needed. Below is our response to the recommendations and suggestions by the assessment teams.

1. Reports by both the advertising and public relations assessment teams have identified global diversity as an area where improvement is needed. The advertising reviewers suggested that to achieve global diversity, we need to focus *“the application and execution of different strategies that have succeeded or failed internationally, due to whatever international barriers might have been at play (business customs, cultural meanings of symbols and words, etc.) through a case-study approach.”* The PR assessment report suggested that our public relations material has demonstrated a *“low level of global diversity.”*

In light of this feedback, the advertising and public relations faculty will work together this coming year and discuss how to enhance the integration of global diversity contents in our classes. We plan to offer our global diversity class, COMM 426 – International and Intercultural Strategic Communication, every year. COMM 426 does address the issue of overcoming cultural barriers in strategic communications. Different instructors may have different pedagogical approaches to this issue. We will work with instructor of this class in the future to make sure that the evidence of student learning in this area is present in future assessment material.

We currently do not have a public relations class that focuses on global diversity. Many of our classes, however, can incorporate contents related to global cultures and contribute to our students' understanding of global diversity. Our digital public relations class is particularly appropriate for this purpose. We plan to explore ways of enhancing global diversity contents in our public relations classes.

2. Within the area of public relations, the reviewers suggested that *“the students should gain a stronger awareness of channel role and purpose.”* The report states, *“While the work reviewed was strong, by requiring students to write a specific item, a press release, a Facebook post, a speech, a fact sheet, etc. this hinders their fully understanding what channel to use when, why, and for what audience. It is clear that all the tools need to be covered, but in addition to the tools, it would be valuable for the students to identify why that public relations item should be used and through what channel it should be distributed to what audience.”*

This is an excellent suggestion. The department has made a strong effort in the past year to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of the role that different media play in public relations. We currently offer a digital public relations class that focuses on the variety of digital tools available for strategic communication purposes. A significant part of the class addresses the uses and functions of social media in public relations.

In addition, we have recently started discussing the possibility of developing a new class in public relations media. Our public relations faculty studied the curricula of peer institutions and concluded that we need a new PR media class. We can offer the class as an elective first, and then, gradually introduce it as part of our core curriculum in PR. I strongly believe that with our digital public relations class and our new class in PR media, we will be able to significantly enhance students' awareness and understanding of media or channels, and the roles they play in strategic communications.

3. This is the first time that our BA degree program in strategic communication has been assessed. As the report noted that for *"each reviewer, a majority of the eight competencies were rated as 'Excellent' rather than 'Satisfactory.' Several outcomes received unanimous ratings of 'Excellent.' One outcome (Domestic Diversity) received unanimous "Satisfactory" ratings. Reviewers noted that much diversity learning is enhanced as professional experience increases."*

We appreciate the positive reviews of our online BA program. We will continue to find ways to ensure the program's high quality. We will work with our instructors to ensure that our online degree program continues to demonstrate evidence of excellence in all competences. We also note that on the issue of domestic diversity, the online program received four ratings of "Satisfactory," the lowest ratings of all competences. This is clearly an area that needs improvement. We will communicate to our instructional team about this, and make sure that our online courses cover diversity contents and issues.

4. We appreciate the assessments made by the outside reviewers. Our goal is to provide high quality education to our students. Our faculty will continue our discussion of the assessment feedback throughout the year. Our immediate goal is to hire additional advertising and public relations faculty who are committed to high quality teaching and can help us enhance our curriculum. We will continue to find ways of improving the course contents and/or developing new courses that can strengthen student's competence in all assessment areas.

Date: June 25, 2017

From: Anthony Olorunnisola, Film-Video and Media Studies Department Head
Maura Shea, Associate Department Head

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

Re: Student Learning Assessment Report: 2015-2016 Academic Year – **Film/Video & Media Studies response:**

The evaluation of the Film/Video & Media Studies students' work with respect to the three learning objectives was overall very positive. Excellent evaluations outweighed the satisfactory. In no category was students' engagements judged unsatisfactory.

Reviewers did suggest that we look for ways to strengthen students' understanding of and ability to articulate certain concepts.

In the **Film/Video program**, one actionable suggestion was to clarify expectations of student critiques. We will work to develop specific guidelines for peer evaluations, which in turn will make the feedback process more useful to the students. We will continue to emphasize the need for proofreading in both creative and professional writing.

Students in **Film/Video & Media Studies** have work to do in order for the department to increase proficiencies in the domestic and global dimensions of diversity objectives. We will look for ways to incorporate diverse cultural views into the curriculum and to explore all manners of diversity more substantially for a deeper understanding of innate differences. This may include creating more opportunities for student filmmakers to interact with diverse populations on both sides of the lens, as filmmakers and as film subjects.

Instructors in Media Studies will work to expand offers such that students leave classes with ability to proceed beyond understanding commonalities of diversity issues across contexts to increasing proficiency in identifying and articulating factors that underscore experiential differences between contexts.

The portion of assessment that scored as excellent the ability of students in Media Studies to evaluate their own work and others' critically elates us. Assessors, however, adjudged that students are often unable to differentiate between quantitative and qualitative evidence. This latter assessment is somewhat vague and difficult to interpret and, consequently, tough to convert into an actionable plan. It is on the surface difficult to fathom the idea that students cannot tell the difference

between categories of evidence. Our guess is that assessors may have in mind the fact that students in Media Studies are less quantitatively proficient than in other departments. If so, it is far easier to aver that the assessors' conclusion was influenced by the particular courses under review, a sample that does not represent the gamut of courses that expose students to quantitative evidence and the ability to process them.

We share the assessors' frustration with the relative **weakness of majors** – across the board of the College's departments – **in writing**. It does appear that the Writing-intensive courses may be inadequate to cure this malaise. Given that we are a College of Communications, our students carry an added burden of proofing to others [including future employers] how they could graduate and carry our diplomas without the ability to write with proficiency. Though there is need for a College-wide conversation about the place of writing in our curriculum, this department will continue to work within the areas of focus to ensure that "writing" remains a core portion of assignments across the board of courses.

**TO: Ford Risley, associate dean for undergraduate and graduate education
Julie Evak, coordinator of undergraduate education**

FROM: Russ Eshleman, senior lecturer and head, Department of Journalism

JUNE 15, 2017

RE: Response to 2015-2016 Student Learning Assessment report

The committee found the selected courses met or exceeded the four learning objectives: domestic diversity, global diversity, thinking critically and critical evaluation, generally praising the individual assignments and student samples. The consensus was that the department should strive to make certain these objectives are taught and mastered throughout the curriculum.

On the short term, instructors have made and will continue to make changes to assure these objectives are expanded within existing courses or emphasized in new courses. Long term, the department is amid an evaluation and potential overhaul of the journalism curriculum, and the SLA recommendations for all learning objectives will be an integral part of any changes.

DOMESTIC DIVERSITY: Indeed, while one reviewer was concerned that the focus on domestic diversity centered solely on race, because of the student samples provided, he was subsequently directed to lecture materials that showed significant class time allotted to LGBT issues.

The department focus on LGBT issues has evolved naturally, as LGBT issues comprise a larger portion of mainstream news coverage. To that end, the issues have become an integral part of theory classes, such as News Media Ethics, as well skills-based classes, such as Reporting Methods. In the latter, for example, students are given assignments in which they are instructed to seek out for their interviews LGBT members from the community. Likewise, students are encouraged to do reporting on people who are dissimilar from themselves.

GLOBAL DIVERSITY: The department's commitment to this area has also grown. Since the committee's evaluation and excellent rating of the International Reporting class, for example, the department has expanded its international offerings. Under the direction of John Affleck, director of the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism, students have traveled to Cuba for a reporting assignment and will travel to London in September 2017 for a documentary film project. These instances require students to learn about different cultures as they report on them.

THINK CRITICALLY: Again, while the committee, based on student samples, was impressed with what the department is already doing, this particular learning objective within the curriculum will expand — and has already expanded — because of contemporary forces: namely, the attention being paid to so-called “fake news.”

The divisiveness of the 2016 presidential election required journalism instructors in virtually all classes to discuss more thoroughly such points as what constitutes “news,” what are legitimate sources of news and what makes a legitimate source. In a phrase, “critical thinking” has become and will play an even bigger role in journalism courses. Separate from this SLA report, a department curriculum committee has just wrapped up a nine-month evaluation of the journalism curriculum. In its work, the committee talked with journalism industry experts who underscored the importance of establishing a curriculum in which students must learn to think critically about the roles and methods of journalism. A likely result of this committee’s efforts will be a new or modified introductory journalism course that emphasizes critical thinking.

CRITICAL EVALUATION: This learning objective goes hand-in-hand with the previous one, as it requires students to look closely at the work and decisions of journalists. This is an item the SLA committee deemed to be very important, and it will certainly remain a prominent part of the curriculum.

SUMMARY

The SLA committee’s evaluation and recommendations come at a nice time, coinciding with a report from a Department of Journalism committee that examined the curriculum. Much of what the SLA committee said shows up in the recommendations of the department committee. The Journalism faculty will begin its work to turn the recommendations into action beginning in Fall 2017.

Department of Telecommunications
Response to 2014-15 Student Learning Assessment Report
Submitted June 21, 2017
Matt Jackson, Department Head

The College of Communications' Student Learning Assessment (SLA) Report for the 2015-2016 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:

- (1) Critical thinking: think critically, creatively and independently
- (2) Domestic diversity: demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications
- (3) Global diversity: demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society
- (4) Critical evaluation: critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

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 two 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.

(1) **Critical thinking:** think critically, creatively and independently

The evaluation team concluded that this objective is being met and that students showed "strong facility for analyzing the pros and cons of a challenging situation," but that the assignments include some outdated industry terminology and could be more detailed in approach.

Recommendation: The department continues to emphasize critical thinking in all of its courses. The curriculum is currently being tweaked to keep the management sequence up to date. We anticipate this will enhance critical thinking.

- (2) **Domestic diversity:** demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications

The evaluation team noted that students seemed hesitant to engage with this topic and often fell back on generalizations. As noted in the report, the current political climate of intense partisanship has made addressing diversity issues in the classroom difficult.

Recommendation: The department continues to work on implementing a diversity module into every course in the curriculum. Many courses include a discussion of disparate access to technology across diverse populations and the implications of data analytics for diversity.

- (3) **Global diversity:** demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society

The assessment team felt assignments could be more focused to address global diversity issues and that students did not appear to engage in critical thinking when addressing global diversity.

Recommendation: The department has recently implemented an embedded course where students engage in international travel to experience another culture (most recently Cuba and Hungary). Recent capstone topics include issues related to children in global conflict zones and disparate access to technology. We hope these changes will result in stronger student engagement with global diversity issues in coming years.

- (4) **Critical evaluation:** critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

The evaluation team was dissatisfied with students' writing skills. This has been a longstanding issue for the major and the university as a whole.

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. All students in the major are required to take multiple courses focused on writing skills: COMM 160, ENGLISH 030, ENGLISH 202, and a writing-intensive capstone course.