

Journalism B.A. News/Editorial

Journalism B.S. Public relations

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Part I – Journalism Program SLO Assessment Report for 2015-2016

1. **Student Learning Outcome:** The student performance or learning outcome as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

Students will:

Know how to observe and write efficiently and clearly about public policy events and public issues.

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;

SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;

SLO is met without change required

3. **Strategies and methods:** Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

We used a Senior Capstone writing project to measure students' proficiency in researching and writing clearly about public policy topics. Students were required to create and maintain journalism blogs based on public policy topics. Students were expected to base their reporting on reliable sources such as peer-reviewed scholarly studies, public policy reports and statistics from public agencies, state and national public policy organizations and original reporting with experts in their field of study. In addition to classroom instruction in public policy research, students also met with a university reference librarian to find additional avenues for researching their topics.

Students completed eight blog entries throughout the quarter, which were assessed on quality of research and journalistic reporting. Near the end of the

quarter, students were asked to present their blogs to the class. The presentations were assessed on content, presentation quality, and usefulness to students.

The content area was examined for this report. Each blog's content was assessed on how thoroughly the blog addressed the public policy topic, the quality of the student's research and the evidence of a professional journalistic writing style. The class included eight students and six were present for the presentations. The average content score for those six students was an 8.3 out of 10 points. The scores ranged from 8/10 to 9/10.

4. **Observations gathered from data:** Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.

- a. **Findings:** Students selected appropriate public policy topics (such as U.S. foreign policy, the legalization of marijuana, and tuition costs in higher education) and developed their reporting based on credible sources such as peer-reviewed studies and public policy data from government and other agencies. The students demonstrated a satisfactory ability to write in a journalistic style about these topics.

The executive editor of The Spokesman-Review visited the class during the quarter and helped provide feedback on the students' reporting on their public policy topics. He recommended that students additionally focus on individual interviews with experts in their public policy fields.

- b. **Analysis of findings:** While students pursued worthwhile research, their work could be further developed to meet professional standards in the field of journalism with deeper reporting and analysis of their topics. Despite the urging of both the professional editor and the instructor of the course, most students avoided interviewing experts directly.

5. **What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?**

- a) Describe plans to improve student learning based on assignment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising.): Students in

this course will receive further training on reaching out to public policy experts directly as well as researching their subjects with more depth and complexity. The journalism program SLOs are in the process of being updated to better reflect changes in the field of journalism. An additional course is being designed for the journalism program, a 200-level introduction to media writing, which could provide the basis for additional skills and practice in this area.

- b) Provide a broad timeline of how and when changes will be addressed in the coming year:
- Fall 2016: SLOs were revised for Journalism News/Editorial and Journalism Public Relations majors.
- Fall 2016: A new course request will be filed with CPAC for the 200-level introduction to media-writing course.

6. Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.

Faculty in the journalism program will develop assessment strategies to reflect revised SLOs for the two majors.

PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP

FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2014-15 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

1. Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed for 2014-15

Students will:

- Write in both report and feature story forms.
 - Understand local government and the public policy process.
 - Be a critical and analytical observer of the American public policy process.
 - Know how to observe and write efficiently and clearly about public events and issues.
- 2. Strategies implemented** during 2015-16 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2014-15 assessment activities.

The capstone class was redesigned to give students a greater sense of autonomy, self-determination and engagement in the course. Students collaborated with the instructor to design the major projects in the class. Attendance assignments were added to the course Canvas site to support a higher level of participation.

3. **Summary of results** (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.):

These changes led to a deeper student engagement with the public policy research required for this course. Students decided to pursue two major final projects during the course, one a portfolio of opinion writing, which included a redesign of an opinion page or news site. The other was a career-planning project, which included an online portfolio of student work, a resume, a cover letter and a reflection paper on their academic study and career planning in the fields of journalism or public relations.

These changes appeared to motivate students to pursue a deeper examination of their academic work throughout the program and to plan more extensively for the next stage of their careers. Attendance and student engagement improved in the course.

While student feedback indicated that most appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with the instructor in designing the final projects, several students reflected that they struggled to complete all of the work they had assigned themselves. Some said they preferred a more traditional instructor-directed course structure.

4. What **further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery**, etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis?

The journalism program is in the process of developing a 200-level journalism course in media writing designed to help students start developing writing and reporting skills earlier in their academic careers. This additional requirement should help to raise overall student proficiency in these skills.