

**Assessment Report
Lemke Department of Journalism
University of Arkansas
Spring 2015**

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Introduction.

The Department of Journalism developed a Cohort Analysis Assessment Plan in 2011 in order to assess the effectiveness of our program and enable us to revise our curriculum to improve teaching and enhance student learning. The plan is intended to determine to what extent our students have learned the 12 professional values and competencies identified by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (See Appendix B for ACEJMC values and competencies).

This plan assesses the 2011-2015 cohort of students through their four years as UA journalism majors utilizing a system of direct and indirect measures applied at specific points during that time. We understand that concentrating resources on cohort analysis results in information that is more manageable and more easily applied to bring necessary programmatic change.

According to the Journalism Assessment Plan, the data gathered on student performance through direct and indirect measures, are to be reviewed and recommendations for improvements made in Year IV (2014-2015) and Year V (2015-2016). This is to be done through a report that will be presented to the journalism faculty in the fall 2015 faculty meeting. Faculty will then have the opportunity to consider where and how changes are to be made in the curriculum.

This document serves as that report. It includes (1) an overview of results from the information that has been gathered through direct and indirect measures, and (2) individual reports on each of the direct and indirect measures. The Journalism Assessment Plan provides for five direct measures and four indirect measures; at this stage in our assessment process we have data available from four of the direct measures and two of the indirect measures. Those include the following:

Direct Measures

- 1) Assessment Survey. A 40-item questionnaire addressing the competencies in law, ethics, history and role of professionals, diversity, presentation of images and information, and the application of numerical and statistical concepts.
- 2) Grammar Test. A measure of students' knowledge and use of grammar, spelling and punctuation, based on the Associated Press Stylebook.
- 3) Writing and Critical Thinking Skills Analysis. Comparison of cohort student performance as freshmen and then again as seniors. Students' work on a writing assignment from the freshman level JOUR 1023 (Media and Society) course is compared to their work as seniors on the Journalism Writing Requirement (JOUR 4981).
- 4) Mid-Point Analysis. Evaluation of student performance in the entry-level courses in each of the three journalism sequences (Advertising/Public Relations, Broadcast, News/Editorial). These measures are not for overall comparative purposes, but serve as a point of comparison from year to year. These courses include JOUR 2013, News

Reporting I; JOUR 3073, Broadcast Reporting II; JOUR 3723, Advertising Principles; and JOUR 3743, Public Relations Principles.

Indirect Measures

- 1) Senior Survey. A survey asking students to evaluate the quality of their education as journalism majors through a written questionnaire.
- 2) Internship Supervisor Evaluations. A questionnaire given to on-the-job internship supervisors who oversee journalism majors in internship positions.

The three measures that are to be completed in the future include the following:

Capstone Course Analysis. A direct measure that involves the evaluation of student performance on a final project in a specific senior-level course in each sequence. It is intended to evaluate how well students have mastered learning objectives in the curriculum. This analysis is to be done by sequence faculty during this summer (Year IV, 2015).

Alumni Survey. An indirect method that will be utilized in 2018. Alumni of the 2015 cohort will be surveyed for their assessment of the training they received in our department.

Employer Survey. An indirect method that also will be utilized in 2018. Employers of our 2015 cohort alumni will be surveyed to assess the performance of these former students as employees.

Synopsis of Reports on Direct/Indirect Measures.

As stated in the introduction, the Journalism Department's Cohort Analysis Assessment Plan was designed to determine the extent to which our students have learned the 12 professional values and competencies identified by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

This section provides an overview and summary of the results from the various assessment measures outlined in our plan. We need to think carefully about what this information seems to show us. It can certainly be seen as a clear statement about how well our students are doing; it can also be viewed as a comment on the strength and effectiveness of our curriculum. However, it could as well reveal weaknesses in the instruments we used to measure student performance; if so, we can study this information for guidance in designing better approaches to measurement.

Following are the ACEJMC 12 values and competencies with brief statements of what our assessment efforts have shown about our students' performance on each.

1) *Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in the United States; understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;*

This competency, as well as the next three, is addressed directly in the Assessment Survey. There are five questions on the survey that deal with laws on freedom of speech and press; the focus in those questions is specifically on U.S. constitutional law rather than global press freedom issues. The Assessment Survey is to be revised for administering to the next cohort of journalism students; faculty will consider including questions on issues such as the right to dissent that will require students to consider the status of free speech around the globe. The next survey will also address the issue of intellectual property on the Internet.

2) *Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;*

The Assessment Survey has 10 questions concerning the "history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communication." Some faculty members have already noted the absence of questions about the role of women and minorities in journalism history, and that will be remedied in the revised Assessment Survey. Students' performance in this area of the survey suggests also that some of the questions were too "sequence specific" and might be adjusted.

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;*

The Assessment Survey represented the department's best approach for asking students directly about diversity. There are six questions on the survey that deal with this topic, with somewhat more emphasis on the cultural issues. However, diversity concerns can also be included in the second competency, which addresses the history and role of professionals in shaping communications. As noted above, questions about the roles of women and minorities in media history will be added to the next version of the survey.

4) *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 Survey is also our best measure for assessing students' knowledge of "the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society." However, only three questions on the survey really address this topic. This is an area for faculty to address in considering revisions to the survey

5) *Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;*

Little data was collected at this point in the assessment process on the use of visual images; instead the measures comparing the cohort's performance as freshmen and seniors emphasized grammar and language skills. More data on the use of images will be produced from the Capstone Course analyses. However, this is an issue to be addressed in any adjustments to our assessment plan for the second cohort group.

6) *Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;*

Students' sense of ethics and applying ethical principles was measured in the Assessment Survey, the Senior Survey and the Internship Survey. Students scored high in all three of these measures. It is notable that on-site internship supervisors who are full-time professionals gave students highest ratings for working ethically.

7) *Think critically, creatively and independently;*

Two measures that addressed critical thinking skills – the Writing and Critical Thinking Skills assessment and an aspect of the Advertising/Public Relations Mid-Point Analysis – provided mixed results. The Ad/PR analysis provided the more positive view; students (primarily in their junior year) in that sequence's mid-point evaluation performed well on the critical thinking and analysis aspect of the assessment exercise. However, the Writing and Critical Thinking Skills results were not as strong. In particular students writing their senior research papers were evaluated as being fairly weak in writing analytical conclusions tied to the purpose of their papers and utilizing their research effectively.

8) *Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;*

Students' research skills need more attention, which was demonstrated in results for both mid-point and senior-level measures. Students at the mid-point level for all three

sequences (sophomores and juniors) were beginning to work with gathering and critically evaluating information so we would not expect a high level of mastery. However, the evaluations of the research papers written by the students as seniors showed a mixed performance in the capability to conduct and apply research, at least in the context of that academic exercise. The results of the Capstone Course measures, when they are available, should tell us more about students' skills in professional contexts.

9) *Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;*

The area of correct writing and grammar was the most intensively and extensively evaluated in almost all measures. The mid-point evaluations for all three sequences noted problems with grammar, spelling, punctuation and organization skills, and the Internship Survey gave the lowest ratings for writing clearly and correctly in appropriate forms and styles. The comparison of student cohort writing skills from freshman to senior levels showed some progress overall; the performance of seniors was split among roughly two-thirds who wrote at an A or B level, and one-third who wrote at a C or lower level.

10) *Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;*

In their responses to the Internship Survey, supervisors did comment that some interns did need improvement in proofreading their own work, though most did score well in this area.

11) *Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;*

At this point indications about students' capabilities in applying basic numerical and statistical concepts are available from the Advertising/Public Relations Mid-Point measure which involved a mathematical problem, and from the cohort's responses on the Assessment Survey. The junior level Ad/PR students handled the basic math calculations well. However, the cohort's responses to the math questions on the Assessment Survey were poor with about 80% of seniors taking the survey answering these questions incorrectly.

12) *Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.*

Students measured at the mid-point in the Broadcast and Advertising/Public Relations sequences were found to have a level of technical capabilities that would be expected of sophomores or juniors who are in the early stages of using technology. The Capstone Course measures will tell us more about the degree of mastery students were able to reach as seniors. Students responding to questions in the Senior Survey, however, rated their training on multi-media and technical skills at a very low level.

Reports on Direct Measures.

Assessment Survey

The Journalism Department's Assessment Plan states that the Assessment Survey was to be administered to incoming first-year students in the Fall 2011 semester and again in the Spring 2012 semester. As most journalism majors take JOUR 1023, Media and Society, in their first year, that course was selected for administering the survey. It was given to students in the first week of this course both semesters. It was administered again to students in the cohort when, as seniors, they took JOUR 4981, Journalism Writing Requirement; this was done in the Spring 2014, Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters.

The Assessment Survey is a direct measure comprised of 40 questions addressing the competencies in law, ethics, history and role of professionals, diversity, presentation of images and information, and the application of numerical and statistical concepts. Faculty members have already determined that the next version of the survey will include questions covering the role of women and minorities in journalism history, and the issue of intellectual property on the Internet.

Students were asked to choose from multiple-choice responses to 40 questions that covered a range of journalism practices and matters pertaining to general knowledge of the profession. Faculty from the three sequences contributed questions. Some questions applied to general knowledge and practices in journalism; some to historical background in journalism.

Given the rapid changes in technology used to identify, gather and present news, some of the questions will be updated. The questions should reflect more closely what students know about digital communications, social media and how they use those tools routinely.

The journalism faculty refers to the examination generically as a knowledge assessment. Of the 46 students who took the exam, four showed a slight decline in scoring from the initial test to the exit exam. The decreased scoring ranged from 4 percent to 13 percent.

Two students scored the same on both occasions.

The remainder of the students improved their scores by 4 percent to 92 percent.

A question relating to the First Amendment foundation of journalism showed that more classroom discussion and practice need to take place. For example, asked to choose among five responses to "Which of the following is a true statement about the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution," 54 percent of the students failed to identify the prohibition against government prior restraint. And, while only 20 percent responded incorrectly about the impact of the telegraph and 32 percent did not correctly link the invention of the Internet to the U.S. Department of Defense, 56 percent did settle correctly on Philo Farnsworth as the "father of television."

Questions concerning First Amendment applications, libel, privacy and copyright laws need more airing as technology and innovation outpace laws.

Incoming students have never known life without smartphones. As the faculty updates the knowledge assessment, it will reflect more of the millennial generation's need to understand digital communication and social media.

Grammar Test

Brief explanation of report

The Assessment Plan calls for a Grammar Test to be administered to cohort students as freshmen and again when they are seniors; a comparison of students' performance on the separate administering of the test at the beginning and the end of their journalism studies should provide insights into areas needing attention and improvement.

The plan was carried out. The Grammar Test was given to the cohort students when they were enrolled in the entry level course JOUR 1033, Fundamentals of Journalism; the test was administered again when the students were enrolled during their senior year in JOUR 4981, Journalism Writing Requirement. Data from the results of both tests were entered into a spreadsheet and analyzed.

Results

Grammar and correct word use remain our most difficult fundamental skills to teach. Grammar competence can vary according to sequences. The advantage, however, accrues to the sequence that uses the written word most extensively. Yet, even with that advantage, students in the News/Editorial sequence still stumble over basic rules of grammar.

Errors in noun-pronoun agreement and syntax occur most often, and a good deal of the blame there can go to the metamorphosis of the language. Even errors in syntax appear quite often in the New York Times and syntax is slaughtered so often in broadcasting that teaching students to recognize bad syntax is nearly impossible. They tend to endure the semester, knowing that once finished, the question likely will never again arise.

Conclusions and recommendations

Faculty in JOUR 1033 / Fundamentals of Journalism echo the difficulty they have in teaching grammar and have adapted a grammar course for students who perform particularly poorly. They've also recommended creating peer mentors drawn from the ranks of graduate students and upper-level journalism majors who demonstrate a high level of grammar competence.

In all but three (3) instances, students who took the initial grammar assessment in JOUR 1033 and the second assessment in JOUR 4981 / Senior Writing, improved their scores. One student from each sequence performed below his initial assessment; one from Advertising/Public Relations scored evenly on the two assessments. Gains from JOUR 1033 assessments to JOUR 4981 assessments ranged from three (3) to nine (9) points.

The faculty member who administered the tests offered several observations:

- Students struggle with pronouns, particularly determining case: nominative or objective;
- Students have trouble identifying prepositional phrases;
- Students find it difficult to determine whether to use that or which, also that and who;
- The use of who and whom, and how they function in sentences, befuddles students;

- Run-on sentences continue to pose problems. Students seem unable to recognize when sentences are complete;
- Students do not routinely recognize compound modifiers;
- Commas challenge students, particularly in regard to placing that punctuation inside quotation marks. Their use of commas appears to be almost indiscriminate;
- Punctuating quotes continues to pose problems;
- Many students have problems overall identifying the parts of speech.

Brief Explanation of Report

The Journalism Assessment Plan requires a comparison and analysis of statistical data gathered on cohort students from two writing assignments. One is an “initial, ungraded out-of-class assignment” completed when they took JOUR 1023 (Media and Society) presumably as freshmen; the second involves the research papers students from the same cohort wrote as seniors in JOUR 4981 (Journalism Writing Requirement).

By evaluating the writing, research and critical thinking skills of graduating seniors as a whole, compared to their work as entering freshmen, we hope to identify areas of weakness, and strength, in the curriculum. We are looking specifically at six areas: students’ capability to clearly articulate a statement of purpose for a paper; quality of content of the paper; organization and writing quality; critical thinking and analysis in the paper’s conclusion; relation of the conclusion to the original purpose of the paper; and correct usage in grammar, spelling and punctuation (GSP).

Results

The first step was to compare the average scores in each of the six areas from the 1023 and the 4981 papers. The principal results from the statistical comparison are:

- There was positive change in all six areas.
- The amount of change varied from +4.3 points to +14 points (details are below).
- The 1023 papers averaged a C score in five areas, from 71 to 78.2. In the sixth area the average was a D (69).
- The 4981 papers averaged a B score in all six areas, from 81.5 to 86.

Here are the details of the scoring in the six areas with the 1023 scores given first and the amount of change in points:

	1023 score	4981 score	Difference in points
Statement of purpose	71.4	85.4	14.0 pt
Content quality	77.6	86.0	8.4 pt
Organization & writing	78.2	82.5	4.3 pt
Conclusion: analytical	69.0	81.5	12.5 pt
Conclusion: relate to purpose	71.0	82.0	11.0 pt
GSP	78.0	84.0	6.0 pt

The second step is to analyze these findings, focusing on those that seem to be most significant and looking more deeply at specific results. Four of these six areas seem to be the most essential to good writing – content quality, organization/writing, analytical conclusions and GSP. In three of these, the freshmen had a high C average that didn’t improve very much in their work as seniors. They made the most improvement in writing analytical conclusions, but then they did start at the lowest point – a D – and only improved to a very low B. This isn’t too encouraging.

It isn’t encouraging either to note that in organization & writing, though they started at a high C, they improved only to a low B. The scores for GSP were frankly surprisingly high considering the problems we see in other measurements of student performance in

grammar/spelling/punctuation. [More on this below.] The area of content quality had the highest score in the senior papers – an 86 – but this is hardly impressive.

A closer look at the GSP scores shows that 55 percent of freshmen scored 90-100, but it's distressing to see that 30 percent of them scored a C or much lower (50 down to 0). Of the seniors 84 percent made an A or a B. Although this would seem to be good news, the low grades still pulled down the average to a mid-level B. Students in a writing field should do much better than this.

Looking more closely at organization and writing is sobering. Of the freshmen, 45 percent scored a C or lower in this area. This improved with their senior papers to the extent that only 31 percent scored a C or lower. Though the remaining two-thirds made a B or A in this area, it should be a major concern to the department that nearly one-third of seniors did poorly in this critical area.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Though a breakdown of students' scores in each of the six areas – and the four areas most critical to writing – showed some gratifying indications of accomplishment in thinking and writing skills, there were plenty of low scores that suggest we're not getting through to about one-third of our students. Following are specific areas for improvement:

- Critical thinking skills. We need to put more emphasis on problem-solving, on identifying key points relevant to an issue, on determining principles useful in weighing those points and on drawing a defensible conclusion.
- Organization of information. We need to focus on the ordering of information so that it makes sense. This goes hand-in-hand with critical thinking skills.
- Grammar/spelling/punctuation. As always, we have to put more effort into reaching the students who have difficulties with GSP; this involves getting across the message that these issues really do matter.

It may help to set specific goals. For example, in the next cohort, we might set these goals:

- Increasing the portion of students scoring a high B or A on the GSP in the Journalism Writing Requirement to 90 percent.
- Raising the average score on Conclusion: Analysis in the senior paper to 85.
- Reducing to 25 percent the proportion of seniors scoring poorly on Organization & writing on the Journalism Writing Requirement.

Mid-Point Course Analyses

Advertising/Public Relations Sequence Midpoint Assessment Report for Fall 2013 / Spring 2014

Ignatius Fosu, Phyllis Miller, Lucy Brown and Jan Wicks conducted a midpoint assessment of Ad/PR Sequence cohort students who were enrolled in JOUR 3723 Advertising Principles, JOUR 3743 Public Relations Principles, and JOUR 4453 (one cohort student only) in fall 2013 and spring 2014. Each faculty member independently assessed the performance of cohort students on competency in Ad/PR writing style, use/application of numbers and numerical concepts, use/evaluation/application of research, use/application of tools/technologies, and critical/creative/independent analysis (where applicable) using the Ad/PR Midpoint Assessment Rubric for JOUR 3723 and JOUR 3743. For JOUR 4453, the Media Plan Assessment Form was used. After completing the independent assessments, we met on June 2, compared scores and discussed our perspectives on how students performed. Finally we developed strategies to adopt in our classes to improve student performance.

The overall average scores on the competencies assessed were:

	Writing Style	Use of Numbers	Use of Research	Use of Technology	Critical Thinking
JOUR 3723	3.34	4.46	3.18	4.16	3.33
JOUR 3743	3.44				3.34
JOUR 4453	3	4.33	3.5	4.33	3.22

J3723 – Advertising Principles – Media Plan Assignment

Media Plan Assignment: Students calculate the cost and budget percentages for a three-month media plan. They are given about five to seven magazines from which to select for the plan. Specifically, advertising unit sizes, types (color or black-and-white) and price information are provided for students to calculate a proposed advertising budget, spending \$500,000 (within \$1,000 without going over) over a three month period. Students are taught to calculate CPM (cost per thousand) information for each magazine. They are provided Mediamark-MRI indexes and coverage figures for all magazines to analyze for making recommendations for vehicle selections. After analyzing the data and making selections, they write a paragraph-long rationale explaining why they selected the magazine vehicles and why the vehicles should reach the various segments of the target market.

Writing Style: Some students wrote well, provided good reasons for selecting their magazines for the plan, and explained why the magazines should reach most segments of the target market. Other students exhibited poor grammar and writing style, or failed to identify the scheduling strategy used in the plan and why it was used. In other cases, students provided incomplete or incorrect magazine titles, or failed to explain why the

magazines selected for the plan would reach different segments of the target market. Continuing to encourage students to review and edit assignments before turning them in should minimize such errors among those who are willing to do so.

Use of Numbers: Scores are higher here because most students completed the addition and division calculations correctly. A few students provided incorrect monthly totals or percentages, or omitted them completely. Such errors appeared to be a result of failing to review the table and written justification before turning in the project. Generally, most students were able to correctly calculate costs and percentages, as well as develop a budget within \$1,000 of the \$500,000 total budget without going over. Many were within \$500 of the total as well. The course instructor reviews basic calculations so this method appears to be working well.

Use of Research: A few students and teams were able to use MRI indexes and coverage data to explain why their media plan would reach several key target market segments. While most students report MRI indexes correctly, some are unable to explain why the indexes are used to select magazines. Others do not appear to understand that coverage represents the percentage of the target market that reads the magazine. Therefore some students made errors in using MRI data, or failed to use MRI data. The course instructor will continue to explain how to use and analyze MRI data, focusing on helping students to understand the meaning of these numbers, why they're important, and how to use these data to support recommendations.

Use of Technology: Students are not required to use Microsoft Excel to develop and complete calculations for the three-month media plan. Those who use Excel typically provide accurate spending totals and percentages, and develop a budget within the limits set by the client.

Given that some students have already acquired basic Excel skills, the class might be encouraged to take the Excel short course offered by ITS or Information Technology Services. Or an Excel trainer might come to the class one day to introduce students to Excel, using an old media plan from a previous semester to demonstrate how to complete calculations. Students who know how to use Excel might be encouraged to assist their classmates who don't.

ITS offers Microsoft Office and Adobe Creative courses at <http://its.uark.edu/help/training/>. The training calendar is available at <https://edp.uark.edu/calendar/month.php>. The catalog of ITS courses is found at <https://edp.uark.edu/list.php>.

Critical Thinking: Many students demonstrate basic critical thinking skills by identifying why the combination of magazines selected will reach different segments of the target market. Others explained why they used a larger number of magazines to reach very different target segments. However, some students did not seem to understand that using three similar magazines (e.g., all women's service magazines) with lower circulations and/or higher CPMs would not extend reach in a cost effective manner among a variety of target segments. Perhaps a new example of how to write the one paragraph rationale

for the media plan could be updated to provide more detailed examples of how to apply and analyze data.

J3743 – Public Relations Principles – Introductory PR Campaign Assignment

PR Campaign Assignment: Students write a rationale, cover letter and develop at least two public relations pieces (e.g., flyer, public service announcement) for a local nonprofit campaign.

Writing Style: Some cohort students wrote well and provided good ideas and promotional pieces for the client. Other cohort students provided fairly extensive yet well written copy, while others had good social media recommendations and provided good examples of tweets or messages for the client. However others failed to provide the client's first name, contact information or the cost for consumers to attend or participate in an event in their promotional materials. The instructor should continue to stress that students must review and edit their work carefully to develop an eye for detail and accuracy.

Critical Thinking: Some cohort students designed a new logo (e.g., a campaign March for Babies logo with baby footprints and heart) and created slogans for the PR campaign (e.g., Wine and Swine to reach adult Razorback fans at a wine tasting event). Others provided specific examples for engaging college students in a campaign, such as the What a Senior Means to Me contest where students post a photo and explain why a beloved senior citizen is influenced them in their lives.

A few teams had good ideas but failed to evaluate the possible consequences of their recommendations. One cohort team focused only on college students, tying their major promotion to a drink special at a local bar. These students did not consider that many clients do not wish to be associated with alcohol consumption nor encourage drinking among underage students. Another team proposed hanging a banner near campus with the slogan "Eat for a night, feed a senior for a year." While intended to promote a fundraiser supporting the elderly, consumers might think the "senior" in this case was a college student. The instructor might point out such examples of analytical errors in the future to help students learn to recognize potential problems with their recommendations.

Other Ideas: While the Use of Technology is not formally assessed in JOUR 3743, some teams attempted to design flyers or public service announcements for the client. Perhaps at the beginning of each semester, students could be encouraged to take a free Adobe Creative course, helping to prepare students to take Creative Strategy in the senior year as well.

ITS offers Microsoft Office and Adobe Creative courses at <http://its.uark.edu/help/training/>. The training calendar is available at <https://edp.uark.edu/calendar/month.php>. Or an ITS representative might teach the appropriate design program in one JOUR 3743 class each semester, using a program featured in JOUR 4423 Creative Strategy (e.g., Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop or another program used in JOUR 4423). The catalog of ITS courses is found at <https://edp.uark.edu/list.php>.

JOUR 4453 – Media Planning & Strategy – Media Plan

The performance of one cohort student was assessed this year as most cohort students will take the course next year or the year after.

Media Plan: Cohort students develop a local media plan using Excel to achieve appropriate reach and frequency goals on a limited budget (e.g., \$45,000). They are assigned local vehicles and show how to calculate ad prices, GRPs and GIs (taken from local rate cards) in the plan. Students also write media objectives and strategy paragraphs featuring a written explanation and justification of all vehicles used in the plan. This strategic written justification is typically about five pages long, including APA Style citations and references. Therefore this writing assignment is longer and requires the correct use of APA Style.

Writing Style: The student made a number of grammatical and media planning writing style errors. In addition, he failed to provide an adequate level of support and reasons for selecting the vehicles in his plan.

Use of Numbers: The calculations in the plan were correct and the overall budget was within the assigned limit (e.g., within \$100 of \$45,000, without going over). However, in some areas, the student failed to use Excel formulas in the flowchart to complete calculations. The instructors should continue to demonstrate how to use Excel formulas (such as SUM, etc.) in flowcharts instead of calculating totals by hand.

Use of Research: Generally the student used MRI data correctly to justify his vehicle choices and provided some support for his recommendations from outside sources (e.g., vehicle rate cards found online). However in some sections he used less support and fewer sources than we typically see in these plans.

Use of Technology: Overall, data were reported accurately in Excel and he used formulas in some parts of the flowchart. However he did not include formulas in most sections. Instructors might have an ITS Excel expert come to class one day to focus on teaching students how to use formulas in Excel.

Critical Thinking: While he cited and used some research and support, in several parts he did not provide sufficient research detail or explain why the data or research supported his recommendations. Both instructors should continue to model how to find good research sources and how to explain why that research supports one's media recommendations.

Overall Ideas and Recommendations Based on Assessment of All Classes

We should try to show students how to use research to support their recommendations in the JOUR 3723 and JOUR 3743 assignments. For example, all students might be given one article from an industry publication or other quality source that provides relevant

information about the client and product or service. Instructors could provide examples of how to support recommendations from the article in class.

The assignments of cohort students in JOUR 3723 and JOUR 3743 were compared to their initial assessment writing assignment from JOUR 1033. Students who wrote well in JOUR 1033 tended to use correct grammar and spelling in the midpoint assessment assignments as well. However, cohort students who exhibited writing errors in the entry assessment in JOUR 1033 tended to make those same mistakes in the midpoint assessment assignments. Instructors of both classes said they would continue to stress the importance of using correct spelling and grammar, and writing clearly, when submitting projects to the client. Instructors demonstrated and discussed in class good examples of quality student work from previous semesters. The faculty also wondered whether students should be required to demonstrate a commitment and ability to writing well major in journalism. For the second year in a row we discussed whether Ad/PR Sequence students, or all journalism majors, should be required to earn a grade of B or better in JOUR 1033.

We will provide a more detailed analysis of student performance in the capstone assessment media plan in JOUR 4453 in the future as we've had only one cohort student take the class in 2013-2014.

Broadcast Sequence Mid-Point Assessment Report.

The Assessment Rubric scores 27 skills used in the production of TV news packages produced by 12 students in Broadcast News Reporting II, the second broadcast class in the sequence. Scores used include: 5—Excellent; 4—Good; 3—Average; 2—Weak; and, 1-Poor. The stories were reviewed by 5 members of the Broadcast Journalism faculty and scores on each skill were debated and agreed upon.

When the faculty began the assessment of these assignments, we agreed to be critical and based the evaluations on the standard of what a graduating senior in the broadcast sequence should be able to produce. So, it's not surprising the scores were low. We plan to use similar rigor when assessing the work of these cohort students on their final TV news package in TV II.

Overall, scores were relatively low falling mostly in the "Weak" area of our rubric. The average score on 17 of 27 scores in the Rubric ranged from 1.75 to 2.5. The other 10 items were rated from 2.58 to 3.0. Only one item was scored "Average"—that was item #1 (basic English skills, grammar & spelling) with a 3.0.

The lowest scores, and areas of major focus for improvement in the two classes these students have had—B-I & B-II, were in the Advanced Writing/Producing and Technical parts of the Rubric. The tech part is not too surprising as the students were introduced to editing in B-1 and continued to work on that during B-2 when they were introduced to shooting. Their experience in shooting and editing a TV news package is somewhat limited. It was surprising however that scores were so low in a few of the "Basic" areas of audio and video production. Audio levels should be "Good" by this stage of the students' education and they were "Weak" with an average of 2.33. The use of natural sound is another area where improvement is needed. We feel many of the more basic video production elements, while scoring lower than we'd like with these students, will improve with the additional experience gained in TV I & TV II to the point where they will not be making so many mistakes.

Disappointing, but perhaps also not surprising were the relatively low scores in writing correct broadcast style, in particular story leads. Again, we know lead writing improves with experience, but by the end of B-II students should not be making so many mistakes in broadcast style. More attention must be paid to that in both B-I and B-II. Effective use of numbers and graphics were scored the lowest and that didn't surprise us. Graphics aren't useful for every story and some students had little if any experience in using graphics in the limited number of stories they've produced in these two classes.

These students have two broadcast courses left to improve their skills—TV I and TV II. Will they receive enough coaching and experience to receive 4s (Good) and 5s (Excellent) on their final package in TV II is the 64-thousand dollar question. Are there things we can or should add to TV I & II to insure their success?

News/Editorial Sequence Mid-Point Assessment Report.

The News/Editorial Sequence Midpoint Assessment is based on students' performance in JOUR 2013, News Reporting I. This is the first course taken by students in the News/Editorial Sequence; the prerequisite to JOUR 2013 is a grade of C in JOUR 1033, Fundamentals of Journalism.

This assessment was carried out in summer 2014; by that point 12 students from the 2011 cohort had taken JOUR 2013. The assessment of their work in JOUR 2013 is based on a typical news story assignment given after the first third of the semester; the stories are generally 200-300 words long. At this point in the semester, students had been introduced to reporting and writing principles and had practiced using them, but they were not expected to demonstrate mastery. They would have had in-depth instruction in grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence order and active voice in JOUR 1033 (Fundamentals of Journalism), the prerequisite for News Reporting I. The assessment evaluation is based on averages of students' scores in all four areas covered in the rubric, but it also considers variations in performance among the 12 students.

In the first section below the results for each of the four areas of the rubric are given; this includes the average score for each area, a brief explanation of the rubric, and the competencies addressed by the area of the rubric. The second section provides analysis of students' performance, and the last section proposes recommendations for addressing weaknesses that have been identified.

**1. News/Editorial Sequence Course Assessment Rubric – Scoring
JOUR 2013: News Reporting I / 2013**

Scale for Assessment Score:

- 5 – Excellent
- 4 – Good
- 3 – Average
- 2 – Weak
- 1 – Poor

Categories:

Writing, Reporting (Intermediate)

Four items are used in assessing student performance in this basic reporting/writing course. They are based on specific competencies that are identified for each item.

Item 1. Students write clear, correct prose. Story is written using conventions of standard English with correct writing skills, including grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP Style.

Competency:

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

Assessment score: 3

Item 2. Story is written correctly (for News or Magazine) including:

- Direct sentence order
- Active voice
- Accuracy and fairness
- Correct and appropriate attributions

Competencies:

- * *Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.*
- * *Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.*
* *Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.*

Assessment score: 3.58

Item 3. The lede captures the story, including presenting the most important information, and gets readers' attention.

Competencies:

- * *Think critically, creatively and independently.*
- * *Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.*

Assessment score: 2.9

Item 4. The story has a clear focus and is well-organized, from the beginning through the end.

Competency:

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

Assessment score: 3

2. Analysis of Performance

(1) *Story is written using conventions of standard English with correct writing skills, including grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP Style. Score: 3.08*

The score of 3.08 represents "Average" based on our 1-5 scale. This score means a student made 4-5 GSP errors in the story. In the breakdown of scoring for the 12 stories, half of the papers scored 3, and the rest were split between above average and below average scores. In most of the papers, these errors were common misspellings and misuse of commas that suggested oversight or sloppiness; in the lowest scoring papers, however, much more serious errors suggested students didn't know or ignored very basic grammar/spelling/punctuation rules, and didn't bother to check AP style.

(2) *Story is written correctly (for News or Magazine) including: direct sentence order, active voice, accuracy and fairness, and correct and appropriate attributions. Score: 2.25.*

There were two top performing students in this area who both scored 4 (Good), but 4 papers were rated at 1 (Poor); 3 others rated 2 (Weak). Therefore, this was the weakest area for students. Overall, there were six problematic areas: poor word choice, poor sentence order, problems with accuracy, poor order of presentation of information, use of passive rather than active voice, and lack of appropriate (or any) attribution. The most infractions occurred in the three areas of poor word choice, accuracy, and use of passive/not active voice. In general these papers showed a lack of attention to careful writing and to some basic principles of reporting.

(3) *The lede captures the story, including presenting the most important information, and gets readers' attention. Score: 2.92*

The average score of 2.92 (3 is Average) suggests an average performance in writing ledes. The 3 top performing students all scored 4 (Good) on their ledes. Of the remaining nine students, six made an average score, so only three students (one-fourth) were below average on ledes. This is more encouraging. The ledes that had problems were incomplete; one was an excessively long, run-on sentence. The good ledes provided fuller information and were written more efficiently, with an economy of words and in clear prose.

(4) *The story has a clear focus and is well-organized, from the beginning through the end. Score: 3*

These papers fell equally into three groups; that is, four papers scored 4 (Good), four scored 3 (Average) and four scored 2 (Weak). Coincidentally, the papers that scored as Weak also scored poorly in news style (See #2 above).

Overall, this group of 12 students performed at an average level with noted weaknesses in news style. It's helpful to break down the scores for each of the four areas to look more closely at individual scores; this view gives us a clearer sense of the different levels of students. There are three outstanding students in this group, but there are also four students who performed consistently at the Weak or Poor levels. The remaining seven students performed at a roughly average level.

3. Recommendations

The scoring of students in the assessment cohort for the News/Editorial sequence was considered from two perspectives, (1) from grammar, style and punctuation usage, and (2) from the competencies established for writing, critical thinking, journalistic style and writing that reflects the tenets of good journalism.

(1) On the use of conventions of standard English with correct grammar, spelling and punctuation (GSP), the cohort scored an average of 3.08 on the 1-5 scale (5 being the top score). However, the errors ranged from what appeared to be oversight or sloppiness

about correct usage, to more serious errors based on a lack of understanding or a disregard of AP Style. This level of performance did not surprise News/Editorial faculty members who have seen this level of performance in the past and have attempted several strategies to address it, none of which has proved satisfactory.

One suggestion for addressing the GPS issue involves creating a tutoring system for average and below average students. These students would have face-to-face meetings with a tutor who would go through assignments with each student requiring the student to explain and correct errors. The student would then revise the assignment.

(2) The second perspective addresses the “competencies established for writing, critical thinking, journalistic style and writing that reflects the tenets of good journalism.” The cohort scored 2.25 (1-5 scale) in the competency that requires writing in active voice, specifying accuracy and fairness and using appropriate attribution. Because this competency, in general, revealed a lack of attention to careful writing and some principles of good reporting, the News / Editorial faculty who teach JOUR 2013 recommend several steps to improve students’ performances.

The pre-requisite JOUR 1033 (Fundamentals of Journalism, or FOJ) should place greater emphasis on journalistic writing. The course is an outgrowth of the former Style & Usage, which taught a broad range of skills in just one semester. That format – even in the updated Fundamentals of Journalism course – might be unrealistic. The News Reporting I faculty agreed that FOJ should place more emphasis on journalistic writing, signaling to FOJ lab students the importance of using the Media Writer’s Handbook as a constant reference. In News Reporting I classes, the faculty will increase the number of writing assignments to provide much-needed repetition and to get students past the fear and tension that they have of writing.

These recommendations (addressing GSP and journalistic writing) require more instructor time. Therefore, the News/Editorial faculty proposes setting up a network of tutors – ideally graduate assistants, but possibly upper-level undergraduates – to help FOJ students with grammar. News Reporting I then would pursue a more rigorous writing and reporting curriculum that would enhance student performance.

Reports on Indirect Measures.

Senior Survey

Brief explanation of report

The Senior Survey is an indirect method of assessment. All students in the cohort completed the survey while enrolled in JOUR 4981 – Journalism Writing Requirement. Responses to 17 questions ranged from: a)excellent; b)good; c)average; d)below average; and, e)poor.

Questions were asked about the quality of teaching and teachers in comparison to instruction and course work outside the journalism department, specific skills, facilities/equipment and advising. The majority of responses were in the “good” to “excellent” range.

Results

The highest marks in the survey came from responses to questions about:

1. Knowledge of journalism professors compared with professors in other departments – 84% of responses were “Good” to “Excellent”.
2. Developing skills in ethical decision-making – 85% of responses were “Good” to “Excellent”.
3. Availability of faculty to meet with students – 84% of responses were “Good” to “Excellent”.

The lowest marks in the survey came from responses to questions about:

1. Involvement in Student Media, Ad Club and other outside activities – 31% of responses were “Good” to “Excellent” and 45% were “Somewhat” or “Not Involved”
2. Teaching multimedia skills – 62% of the responses were “Good” to “Excellent”; 25% responded “Average” and 12% responded “Below Average”.
3. Teaching technical skills – 65% of the responses were “Good” to “Excellent” and 26% responded “Average”.

On the question “How would you rate the overall quality of instruction in the Department of Journalism?” 34% responded “Excellent”; 30% said “Good”; and 43% reported “Average”. We don’t want to be average, but at least no one said “Below Average” or “Poor”.

A bit of a disconnect appears with the high marks for “faculty availability for meeting with students” (84%) and somewhat low marks in the area of academic advising (64%). That may have to do with the fact that Fulbright College actually does all the advising for freshmen and sophomores as well as many upper class students. And, there is no requirement for upper class students to actually see an advisor.

Analysis and Recommendations

The relatively high rating on teaching is a reflection of the quality of the faculty in the department. Improvement in this area might be possible with coaching and if faculty take

advantage of the workshops offered at the university's Teaching Academy. Week-long summer workshops are offered and the department might target key faculty members who would benefit from going to those workshops.

Additional improvement in teaching might be accomplished by making excellent hires in the coming years as several senior faculty members retire. Placing emphasis on hiring faculty with teaching experience, experience in the profession and research or creative scholarship track records may result in hiring people who can bring our teaching scores up even higher.

Specific areas of instruction that need improvement are reflected in these surveys. In particular skills in multimedia and the more technical aspects of our program need improvement. And, work has already begun, particularly in the area of multimedia; we realize multimedia needs more development and should be incorporated across the curriculum. Also, recent upgrades in our computer labs and television equipment should help us do a better job of teaching technical skills students require.

An interesting note about an area of our program given high marks by students – ethical decision making – should increase more in the future as the department begins requiring a class in Ethics in Fall 2015. The Ethics class should build on the emphasis professors already place on the topic in current classes.

The lowest marks – involvement in student media and developing leadership skills – might be connected, and in all honesty, there might not be much we can do about it. From orientation visits on, our students are encouraged to hone their skills and learn new ones by joining PRSSA and Ad Club and working at the Traveler, Razorback, UATV and KXUA radio. Students have lots of other activities, not the least of which includes the part-time jobs that occupy their time and energy. We are looking for future improvement in these low marks, however, given a recent infusion of energy into Ad Club and PRSSA by a new faculty member who joined the department in 2013.

Internship Supervisor Evaluation Report

Brief explanation of report

The internship evaluation is an indirect method of assessment. Professionals who supervise our cohort student interns rate their performance using the Internship Evaluation Form (included in Appendix A of this report). The form includes eight professional skills items that are based on ACEJMC's competencies to assess the intern's performance on a scale of 0 to 5 (from a low of 0 = poor up to a high of 5 = superior). Supervisors also rate student interns on professionalism and work habits. These scores are compiled and averaged for assessment. This report is based on 28 forms for 25 cohort students (because three cohort students completed two internships).

Results

The first step was to evaluate the average scores in the eight competencies and eight indicators of professionalism and work habits.

- The overall average rating by intern supervisors for all competencies and all professionalism and work habits was 4.64 (on a scale of 0 = poor to 5 = superior).
- Twenty or 71.5 % of supervisors reported they would hire the cohort intern for a full-time job, six or 21.4% said they would probably hire the intern, and two or 7.1% would not hire the intern for a full time job.
- The overall average rating for professionalism and work habits (4.75) was higher than for the competencies (4.52).
- For the competencies, cohort interns were rated highest for working ethically and understanding ethical principles (4.81) and lowest for writing clearly and correctly in appropriate forms and styles (4.26).
- For professionalism and work habits, cohort interns were rated highest for willingness to learn (4.88) and lowest for works well under deadline pressure (4.65).

The details of the average scores in the competencies and professionalism and work habits are shown in Table 1 on page 28 of this report. Overall, students performed well on the competencies, with only two averaging below 4.5, so those two are the focus of further analysis.

The second step is to analyze in more depth the results that appear most significant. Given that writing clearly and correctly in appropriate forms and styles, while rated as good overall at 4.26, was the lowest average score overall, supervisor comments about writing were reviewed. The comments centered on improving grammar and writing (including using AP style correctly), using care when proofreading, and paying more attention to detail in writing. This was consistent with the second lowest rated competency at 4.28, critically evaluating one's work for accuracy, style, fairness, clarity and grammar.

These same issues were key for one of the two supervisors who reported she would not hire the intern for a full-time job. One student would not be hired because the supervisor wants an employee "whose work does not need to be double-checked" for grammar. The

second supervisor said he would not hire the intern because she “needs to work more for the good of the group.”

Conclusions and recommendations.

While most students performed well, it appears there is a significant minority that needs additional practice or training in writing, grammar and proofreading one’s work. Perhaps students who earn a C in JOUR 1033 Fundamentals of Journalism might be required to take JOUR 1003 Journalistic Writing Skills, an online course. The course description below demonstrates why requiring this course for students who need additional training in writing and analyzing their work should improve their writing skills.

“Journalistic Writing Skills (JOUR 1003) uses a functional approach to improving language skills required for journalistic writing. The writing styles and rules for journalistic writing from the Associated Press Stylebook, used by journalists nationwide, are taught in the course. The purpose is not to produce grammarians, but to help students learn to write correctly using journalistic style. The course will show students correct usage in various journalistic writing situations and provide memory aids to help the student retain the skills.

“Students will gain a practical understanding of grammar as used for journalistic writing and the logic governing syntax and punctuation use in news stories or other journalistic messages. They will learn to analyze grammar and syntax, understand sentence structure, and choose the right words to convey meaning in journalistic writing, among other topics relevant to writing for the journalism field.”

Entering freshmen who score below the ACT national average or benchmarks in English and/or Writing might also be required to take JOUR 1003. For example, “The Reality of College Readiness 2013” (available at <http://www.act.org/readinessreality/13/pdf/Reality-of-College-Readiness-2013.pdf>) suggests that students earning an 18 or below in English and 21 or below in Reading might be required to take JOUR 1003. According to “The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2014” (available at <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr14/states.html>), we must anticipate that many of our incoming students will need additional training in writing and grammar as well as reading, comprehending and reviewing one’s writing. Of Arkansas students who took the ACT, 63% met the minimum English college preparedness benchmark score, while 41% met the Reading benchmark. Many of our students come from Texas, where 60% met the English benchmark and 42% met the Reading benchmark. For Missouri students, 72% met the English benchmark while 51% met the Reading benchmark. Of the 26,237 students enrolled at the UA in fall 2014, 14,629 or 55.8% were from Arkansas, 4,595 or 17.5% were from Texas, and 1,581 or 6.0% were from Missouri.

Table 1: Internship Supervisor Assessment Scores
 (N = 25 Cohort Students—28 assessments—averages not rounded up)
 (0 = Poor to 5 = Superior)

ACEJMC Competencies	Average Rating		
1. Handling Tools & Technologies	4.57		
2. Conduct Research & Evaluate Information	4.55		
3. Write Clearly & Correctly in Forms/Styles	4.26		
4. Critically Evaluate Work for Accuracy, Style, Fairness, Clarity & Grammar	4.28		
5. Use Numbers & Statistical Concepts	4.5		
6. Use Photographs or Visuals	4.68		
7. Work Ethically/Understand Ethical Principles	4.81		
8. Think Critically, Creatively & Independently	4.51		
Overall Average-Competencies	4.52		
Professionalism & Work Habits	Average Rating		
Promptness	4.69		
Maturity	4.74		
Interest in Job	4.74		
Organization	4.73		
Willingness to Learn	4.88		
Works Well with Others	4.85		
Works Well-Deadline Pressure	4.65		
Accepts Criticism	4.77		
Overall Average-Professionalism	4.75		
Overall Average of All Scores			
Overall Average Rating	4.64		
Grade Assigned	A = 27, B = 1		

Appendix A

Internship Evaluation Form

University of Arkansas Department of Journalism

Name of intern _____
 Employer _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 Phone _____ e-mail _____
 Evaluator _____

- A. On a scale of 1-5, please evaluate your intern on the characteristics below, where 5 is superior, and 0 is poor. If you don't know about a certain characteristic, or if it's not applicable to the intern's responsibilities, please enter X. Use additional paper if necessary.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

1. _____ The intern's handling of the tools and technologies appropriate for the profession of this internship.
2. _____ Ability to conduct research and evaluate information using appropriate methods.
3. _____ Ability to write correctly and clearly in required forms and styles.
4. _____ Ability to critically evaluate his/her own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, style and grammatical correctness.
5. _____ Ability to use numbers and statistical concepts.
6. _____ Ability to use photographs, maps, graphs or other visuals as needed.
7. _____ Understanding of professional ethical principles, and ability to work ethically in pursuing truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
8. _____ Ability to think critically, creatively and independently.

- B. PROFESSIONALISM & WORK HABITS

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ Promptness | 5. _____ Willingness to learn |
| 2. _____ Maturity | 6. _____ Working well with clients, sources, colleagues |
| 3. _____ Interest in the job | 7. _____ Working well under deadline pressure |
| 4. _____ Organization | 8. _____ Accepts criticism |

- C. YOUR OPINIONS

1. Do you think this student will succeed in the business?

2. What do you consider the intern's most significant strength?

3. How could the intern improve his/her performance?

4. If your organization had an opening for a person with the background of this intern, would you hire him/her? Briefly, why or why not?

5. What grade do you think this intern should receive? A B C D F
6. Would you be interested in having another intern in the future? _____

 Evaluator's Signature

 Date

Appendix B

Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication: Values and Competencies

The ACEJMC 12 values and competencies:

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:

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