

Assurance of Student Learning Reflection 2024-2025

Potter College of Arts & Letters

School of Media & Communication

Journalism 736

Mac McKerral, coordinator

Is this an online program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please make sure the Program Learning Outcomes listed match those in CourseLeaf. Indicate verification here
☐ Yes, they match! (If they don't match, explain on this page under **Evaluation**)

Instructions: For the 2024-25 assessment, we are asking you to reflect on the last three-year cycle rather than collect data. It's important to take time to look over the results from the last assessment cycle and really focus on a data-informed direction going forward. In collaboration with your assessment team and program faculty, review each submitted template from 2021-2024 and consider the following for each Program Learning Outcome, add your narrative to the template, and submit the draft to your **ASL Rep** by **May 15, 2025**.

Program Student Learning Outcome 1

Program Student Learning Outcome	1. Demonstrate an understanding of the principles and laws of freedom of speech/press, professional ethics, cultural proficiency, and the historical role of media institutions in shaping communications.
Evaluation	Using the last three assessment cycles, the learning outcomes are still relevant. While the journalism world has changed significantly during the past several years, the foundations for executing excellent journalism have not. Ethical decision-making remains critical. Understanding the role excellent journalism plays in maintaining democratic standards is more important in 2025 than ever before. And all quality journalism requires the journalist to be able to think analytically to connect the dots that lead to excellent reporting.
Measurement Instruments	The instruments are: • Instrument 1-Direct-Analysis of research papers from sections of SMC 301-Mass Communication Law/Ethics (Rubric) or other defined artifact • Instrument 2-Direct-Analysis of Pre/Post test from sections of SMC 101-Understanding Media • Instrument 3-Indirect-Analysis of aggregate SMC Student Exit Surveys • Instrument 4-Indirect-Analysis of aggregate student awards, graduation rates and employment data The measurement instruments do measure the outcomes. The measurements are a combination of direct and direct, and artifacts are appropriate. The rise of AI poses challenges for all disciplines, and journalism is no different. However, in the Journalism Major, the instruments used are completed in class with no access to the Web, and hence, no access to AI applications. However, the exception would be the direct assessment for SMC 301 Communication Law, the research paper assignment. However, this paper is analyzed by SafeAssign, and by three other AI "sniffers" to ensure the originality of the work. Going forward, AI detectors will improve. The rubric for the research paper topic and the research paper do not need adjustment. It has proven to be effective.
Criteria & Targets	Targets have been made consistently. And the majority of students have routinely achieved the targets. However, the targets are set at 70 percent. So, it will be worth considering raising the targets to 75 percent or possibly 80 percent.
Results & Conclusion	Results: The results are what was expected. Student papers routinely achieve the 70 percent benchmark.

	<u>Conclusions:</u> A possible alternative to the research paper instrument would be assessing in-class essay exams on three key units: Prior restraint, libel and privacy. Students have no access to the Web during these exams, and the exams require students to understand key legal concepts and to use critical thinking and writing skills to apply them to hypothetical cases. The 100-point rubrics for these exams are reviewed and if necessary, revised each semester. What stood out in the SMC 102 assessment is that students coming into the program have extremely weak Language Arts Skills (LAS). Regarding LAS) weakness, the program has struggled with ways to ensure stronger LAS among the students. ENG 101 is required as a prerequisite to the first class in the reporting sequence, JOUR 202 Introduction to Reporting. But it does not seem adequate to ensure basic LAS competency. Valuable instruction time is lost in the semester because of the need to strengthen LAS through teaching basic grammar, rather than journalism. Through the years, the unit has considered other measures to strengthen LAS such as a required English grammar class and/or a LAS pre-test that students would need to pass before taking JOUR 202. In the past, these have proved unworkable. But the discussion on how to strengthen LAS needs to continue, including the aforementioned.
<u>**IMPORTANT - Plans for Next Assessment Cycle:</u>	The SMC underwent the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's (ACEJMC) reaccreditation in 2023. Part of the work related to the reaccreditation involved revising the SMC's assessment plan to meet AECJMC standards. The revised assessment plan will be in place starting in the 2025-2026 academic year. The SMC plan will address assessment in all the SMC's ACCEJMC accredited programs and will integrate the university's mission to prepare students of all backgrounds for communication leadership roles in a global society. Through rigorous coursework, extensive hands-on training and extracurricular activities across all SMC programs, the assessments will foster critical thinking, ethical perspectives, and historical understanding of the current media environment. Faculty within the School will remain dedicated to advancing journalistic practices, broadcasting, visual journalism and photography, advertising and public relations, and will be guided by principles of community impact, technological innovation, collaboration, diversity, and ethical conduct. By aligning assessment with the core values of ACEJMC, the SMC will ensure students master essential competencies to thrive in their careers and contribute responsibly to society.

Program Student Learning Outcome 2	
Program Student Learning Outcome	Apply analytical reasoning skills using tools and technology appropriate to the discipline in the research, presentation, and evaluation of information.
Evaluation	Using the last three assessment cycles, the learning outcomes are still relevant. While the journalism world has changed significantly during the past several years, the foundations for executing excellent journalism have not. Quality journalism requires journalists to be able to research, interview and think analytically to connect the dots that lead to excellent reporting. The student portfolio review measures all of these and measure whether a student is "job ready."
Measurement Instruments	The measurement instruments are: • Instrument 1-Direct-Analysis of Student Portfolio and/or Capstone Project (Rubric) • Instrument 2-Direct-Analysis of Employer Internship Evaluations (Rubric) • Instrument 3-Indirect-Analysis of aggregate SMC Student Exit Surveys • Instrument 4-Indirect-Analysis of aggregate student awards, graduation rates and employment data The measurement instruments are measuring the outcome. The rubrics remain appropriate. The Journalism Major Professional Advisory Committee was re-established in 2023 and contains a diverse mix of media professionals. Internship evaluations have been maintained for internships done for academic credit and for those not done for credit and provide a valuable assessment tool. A key question on the internship evaluation form is "Would you hire this person or recommend them for hiring or an internship?" During the past three years the

	response to that question has been “yes” for all interns. Student exit surveys were abandoned for several years but have been reinstated. Analysis of aggregate student awards, graduation rates and employment data has become much easier to glean through use of social media sites, such as LinkedIn and through data gathered for the annual SMC Senior Show and the reinstated SMC Student Awards Program.
Criteria & Targets	Targets have been met and exceeded in many cases.
Results & Conclusion	Results: The results are what was expected? What stood out in the assessment cycle over the past three years is that graduates have been able to secure quality jobs in a variety of professional media fields including but not limited to journalism. Conclusions: The SLO and assessment instruments remain valid and valued.
<u>**IMPORTANT - Plans for Next Assessment Cycle:</u>	The SMC underwent the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's (ACEJMC) reaccreditation in 2023. Part of the work related to the reaccreditation involved revising the SMC's assessment plan to meet AECJMC standards. The revised assessment plan will be in place starting in the 2025-2026 academic year. The SMC plan will address assessment in all the SMC's ACCEJMC accredited programs and will integrate the university's mission to prepare students of all backgrounds for communication leadership roles in a global society. Through rigorous coursework, extensive hands-on training and extracurricular activities across all SMC programs, the assessments will foster critical thinking, ethical perspectives, and historical understanding of the current media environment. Faculty within the School will remain dedicated to advancing journalistic practices, broadcasting, visual journalism and photography, advertising and public relations, and will be guided by principles of community impact, technological innovation, collaboration, diversity, and ethical conduct. Within the SMC, the faculty believe in the power of effective communication in real-life situations while navigating today's complex information landscape. The assessments ensure that the curriculum aligns with industry standards and evolving trends in media and communication. It allows faculty to measure student mastery of essential skills, competencies, and ethical standards.

Program Student Learning Outcome 3	
Program Student Learning Outcome	Demonstrate the ability to do ethical journalism.
Evaluation	Using the last three assessment cycles, the program learning outcomes are still relevant.
Measurement Instruments	The measurement instruments are: • Student Learning Outcome No. 3 is assessed primarily in JOUR 426 Advanced Reporting, the Journalism Major Capstone or the course used as its equivalent, when necessary, SMC/SOM 402 First Amendment Reporting. • Students must complete an in-depth, magazine-length reporting project using people, public information, public records, public domain and in some cases, private records (legally). • These are assessed on a 100-point basis with 70 points as a passing grade. The assessment includes contacting sources used in the reporting to gauge accuracy and professional behavior on the part of the reporter. JOUR 426/SMC 402 are the final course taken in the four-course reporting sequence. It should be noted that started in academic year 2025-2026, SMC 402 will only be used as a JOUR 426 equivalent if the student has completed all the JOUR 426 pre-requisites. The measurement instruments actually and accurately measure the outcome. The rise of AI poses challenges for all disciplines, and journalism is no different. However, AI is less effective as a tool for academic dishonesty in reporting classes because of the need for reporters to do extensive interviewing, which is the case in JOUR 426/SMC 402. That said, one student's capstone project was graded “F” for using AI extensively. So, AI use and abuse will need to be closely monitored. The rubric does not need adjustment. Additionally, the reporting produced in these classes is earmarked for the Hearst Collegiate Journalism competition in the “Writing” category. During the past three years, the work done

	in these classes has produced three “finalists” awards (Top 20 placement) in the writing competition. The rubric (if using) work or does it need to be adjusted?
Criteria & Targets	The Criteria for Success does not need to be changed nor do the targets.
Results & Conclusion	The results are what was expected. These semester-long projects involve a high level of one-on one meetings, editing and revision with the faculty member. They are designed for publication and those deemed publishable (a minimum of a “B” grade) are published on the Journalism Major online magazine site, wkujournalism.com. What stood out in the assessment cycle during the past three years is the high quality of work produced by the students in the capstone. The work has led to awards, internships and job offers. Conclusions: The capstone results attest to the validity of the outcomes/assessments.
<u>**IMPORTANT - Plans for Next Assessment Cycle:</u>	Among the goals of the Journalism Major is that each student will graduate with a portfolio of published work (Student Publications work, internships, freelance work and published classroom work) that will lead them to a career first step professionally. This assessment helps ensure that. Monitoring all assessments and instruments will be an ongoing task for the unit.