Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

For Academic Programs

Informed by your assessment activities related to student learning, what changes have you made in your degree program in the last three to five years? Describe the changes (e.g., curriculum revision, new courses, faculty development), the general results that prompted the changes (e.g., student performance on an assessment measure), and any impact on student learning that you might attribute to these changes.

Faculty have noticed students having difficulty applying theory and concepts about journalism to problems in the real world. This problem was observed through formal assessment of final papers, as well as informally in class discussions. Observations showed that students needed a more thorough and sophisticated understanding of variable concepts, relationships between variable concepts, and how to conceptualize problems and solutions in the "real world" as variable concepts. Understanding of theoretical concepts is a key accreditation criterion for our discipline at the graduate level.

For their major papers in the class (and for their master's projects), students must conceptualize the media solution as an independent variable concept, and the community problem as a dependent variable concept, and provide the logic for the causal relationship between them. After the professor modeled the process to students, the students submitted their solutions to the professor ahead of class time. The professor then modeled the process for the students again in the next class, based on problems he saw in the solutions they submitted. Students then paired up in class and revised their conceptualizations. Class discussion followed. Students were assessed on a rubric that included four measures. All scores improved, except "Are variable concepts at an appropriate level of abstraction?" This was the most difficult task for students, and so this result is not surprising.

To further address this problem of students applying theory to real-world community/media problems, students in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 theory/research courses engaged in a group project whereby they selected a local issue, assessed community judgment of the issue’s importance, and also assessed the degree to which the news media covered the issue. This exercise involved substantial open-ended planning and interaction among the students. It also required students to interact with both the community (via survey administration) and with the media itself (via analysis of content) and to make decisions within the framework of the theory they were applying (in this case "agenda setting theory"). These first two years have been experimental, and we plan efforts to expand this project and assess results in the upcoming year.

Mission / Purpose

To educate students in the tradition of the liberal arts in pursuit of professional, intellectual, ethical and personal goals in a democratic society; to provide leadership in the College and University in writing, reporting, editing, producing and presenting news/information in various forms; to advance the discipline through research and service.

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Discipline Knowledge: Concepts and theories

(Discipline Knowledge): Graduates should understand concepts and theories related to the presentation of images and information to mass audiences.

Connected Documents

Journalism MA Curriculum Map 1
Journalism MA Curriculum Map 2

Related Measures

M 1: Rubric for final theory papers

Faculty rating of knowledge and application of mass communication theories as evidenced by final papers of JN MA students in MC 551: Mass Communication Theory (thesis track students) and JN 552: Journalism Theory and Research (professional track students).

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:

None established.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Revisions for JN 552

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012

In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories ...

M 2: Rubric to assess thesis or research project

Ratings by graduate committee members on student mastery of theory, academic and professional writing ability, and application of applicable tools as evidenced by work on research projects/theses completed at the end of the master's degree in JN 597: Master's Project (professional track students) or JN 599: Thesis (thesis track students).

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project
Target:
None established.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

**Revisions for JN 522**
*Established in Cycle: 2011-2012*
In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories ...

**SLO 2: Skills / Abilities: Write correctly (improvement outcome)**
(Skills/Abilities) Graduates should write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

**Connected Documents**
*Journalism MA Curriculum Map 1*
*Journalism MA Curriculum Map 2*

**Related Measures**

**M 2: Rubric to assess thesis or research project**
Ratings by graduate committee members on student mastery of theory, academic and professional writing ability, and application of applicable tools as evidenced by work on research projects/theses completed at the end of the master's degree in JN 597: Master's Project (professional track students) or JN 599: Thesis (thesis track students).

*Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project*

**Target:**
None established.

**M 3: Supervisor ratings of writing ability, ethical principles**
Ratings of students' writing ability and related constructs and ethical standards, as evaluated by professional supervisors at The Anniston Star for students in the JN 572: Seminar in Professional Journalism experience course. Use of tools and technology and critical thinking also evaluated on this form. (Note: Assessment for professional track students only.)

*Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation*

**Target:**
None established.

**Finding (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
In summer 2013, six graduate students completed professional experiences during the assessment period, as part of our professional collaboration with The Anniston Star newspaper. Students were evaluated for their understanding of journalistic ethics and critical and independent thinking, in addition to other qualities. Students were evaluated on five measures, each on a five-point scale: 5=Excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Good, 2=Fair, 1=Poor. Means were as follows for the five questions:

- General understanding of ethics in news work: 3.83
- Story accuracy: 3.83
- Fairness in reporting: 4.0
- Critical thinking skills: 4.3
- Thinking independently: 4.16

Scores are fairly strong across the measures, but are somewhat higher for individual-level decision making skills (critical thinking, thinking independently) than for understanding of principles and tasks related to ethics. In short, scores here indicate students are thinking for themselves somewhat better than they are adhering to professional principles. This may reflect the fact that core principles are emphasized at the undergraduate level more than they are the graduate level. We have only six data points here, but results indicate there is a place for “refresher” information on core ethics in the master's curriculum.

**M 15: Rubric for final history papers**
A rubric has been established for students' final history term papers. Students' papers are assessed for clarity of theme; thoroughness of research; understanding of existing literature; contribution of paper to our understanding of journalism and its historical context; and clarity of writing.

*Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric*

**M 16: Rubric for final issues and ethics papers**
A rubric is used for the students' final papers to assess their understanding of ethical principles as they apply to ongoing changes in journalism; students' ability to think critically and independently about these principles; thoroughness in research; and clarity of writing.

*Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric*

**Target:**
None established

**M 17: Writing ability: JN 511 written assignments**
Results from course-embedded assessment of writing ability evident in major depth news stories written for JN 511 Depth Reporting. (Note: Assessment for all professional track students, as well as some thesis-track students who may take this course as an elective). Writing is assessed for clarity; accuracy; efficiency; identification of the story's lede or main point; grammatical and style correctness.

*Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric*

**M 18: Writing ability: JN 501 written assignments**
Results from course-embedded assessment of writing ability evident in major depth news stories written in JN 501 Producing Community Journalism. Students in JN 501 continue a year-long project on gathering public records, in
conjunction with the Anniston Star (Note: Assessment for all professional track students, as well as some thesis-track students who may take this course as an elective). Writing is assessed for clarity; accuracy; efficiency; identification of the story's lede or main point; grammatical and style correctness.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**SLO 7: Understand ethical principles**

Students will demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

**Related Measures**

**M 3: Supervisor ratings of writing ability, ethical principles**

Ratings of students' writing ability and related constructs and ethical standards, as evaluated by professional supervisors at The Anniston Star for students in the JN 572: Seminar in Professional Journalism experience course. Use of tools and technology and critical thinking also evaluated on this form. (Note: Assessment for professional track students only.)

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

**M 16: Rubric for final issues and ethics papers**

A rubric is used for the students' final papers to assess their understanding of ethical principles as they apply to ongoing changes in journalism; students' ability to think critically and independently about these principles; thoroughness in research; and clarity of writing.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Target:**

None established

**Finding (2013-2014) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**

Data for findings on final issues and ethics papers will be available for entry the first week of May, 2014. They will be entered then.

**SLO 8: Understand history**

Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications, as well as historical context for the principles and laws of press and speech freedom.

**Related Measures**

**M 15: Rubric for final history papers**

A rubric has been established for students' final history term papers. Students' papers are assessed for clarity of theme; thoroughness of research; understanding of existing literature; contribution of paper to our understanding of journalism and its historical context; and clarity of writing.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**SLO 9: Improvement outcome: Writing clarity and efficiency**

Based on recent years' evaluations of writing, and based on conversations with instructors and with editors from our partner newspaper, The Anniston Star, we will assess improvement in students' ability to identify the critical aspects and angles of stories and to communicate these effectively and efficiently.

**Related Measures**

**M 17: Writing ability: JN 511 written assignments**

Results from course-embedded assessment of writing ability evident in major depth news stories written for JN 511 Depth Reporting. (Note: Assessment for all professional track students, as well as some thesis-track students who may take this course as an elective). Writing is assessed for clarity; accuracy; efficiency; identification of the story's lede or main point; grammatical and style correctness.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**M 18: Writing ability: JN 501 written assignments**

Results from course-embedded assessment of writing ability evident in major depth news stories written in JN 501 Producing Community Journalism. Students in JN 501 continue a year-long project on gathering public records, in conjunction with the Anniston Star (Note: Assessment for all professional track students, as well as some thesis-track students who may take this course as an elective). Writing is assessed for clarity; accuracy; efficiency; identification of the story's lede or main point; grammatical and style correctness.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans**

**OthOtcm 4: Recognized Quality**

The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality, including national accreditation, if applicable.

**Related Measures**

**M 8: ACEJMC Accreditation Review**

Results of the review of our graduate program for accreditation by the national accrediting council for our discipline: the Accrediting Council of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). This review assesses several direct measures of quality.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

**Target:**

To achieve reaccreditation from ACEJMC.

**M 9: Awards and recognition**
Honors and recognition given to students and faculty.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target: None established.

OthOtm 5: Program enrollments and degree completions

The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completion.

**Related Measures**

**M 10: Stats on program majors and degree awarded**

University statistics on the number of program majors and degrees awarded during the past six years

Source of Evidence: Benchmarking of learning outcomes against peers

Target: None

**M 12: Analysis of FTE**

Analysis of FTE provided to the larger graduate mission of the college and university through our teaching of MC, CIS, and JN courses open to all graduate students.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target: None

OthOtm 6: Highly valued graduates

The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

**Related Measures**

**M 13: Placement rates**

Placement rates of students in the ComJ MA program.

Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program

Target: None established.

**M 14: Partner newspaper feedback**

Feedback from The Anniston Star, the partner newspaper for our Community Journalism Program

Source of Evidence: Employer survey, incl. perceptions of the program

Target: None established.

**Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)**

**Revisions for JN 522**

In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories were found to be helpful to student projects over the last two years. Also, more attention will be paid to justifying and formulating variable concepts, relationships between variable concepts, and formulation of hypotheses, as some students have struggled a bit in this area. Finally, the instructor will add or alter two in-class and/or homework assignments in order to connect instruction more directly with the daily work of journalism. For example, the fall elections offer an opportunity to connect instruction on surveys and sampling with election polling.

From the instructor's assessment plan: In their papers, students in the JN 552 Theory and Research class identify a problem in the community and a way to use news media to address the problem. In doing so, the students create a theoretical argument for why/how this particular media solution is appropriate for addressing the problem. While instruction in this class has been mostly successful, final papers show that students could benefit from a more thorough and sophisticated understanding of variable concepts, relationships between variable concepts, and how to conceptualize problems and solutions in the "real world" as variable concepts. For their papers, students must first conceptualize the media solution as an independent variable concept, and the community problem as a dependent variable concept, and provide the logic for the causal relationship between them. My educational approach: (1) In the first class, I will instruct them briefly about conceptualizing real-world phenomena as variable abstract concepts; (2) They will email me a paragraph explaining how they will do this for their particular media solutions/community problems; (3) In the next class, I will model this conceptualization process for them, inventing examples (not their own) that incorporate problem areas I saw in their first versions; (4) They will pair up, compare their original conceptualizations, and revise them; and (5) we'll discuss revisions as a class. This will test the effectiveness of modeling relevant examples in an interactive class setting by having the instructor evaluate the drafts and the final versions of the paper on a rubric.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012
**Implementation Status:** Planned
**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**

- Measure: Rubric for final theory papers | Outcome/Objective: Discipline Knowledge: Concepts and theories
- Measure: Rubric to assess thesis or research project | Outcome/Objective: Discipline Knowledge: Concepts and theories

**Implementation Description:** An assessment rubric has been developed to help evaluate student performance as the instruction is revised. This was approved by the assessment office in Spring 2012 and the instructor has received an assessment grant to complete this innovation in measurement of student outcomes.

**Responsible Person/Group:** Wilson Lowery, instructor for JN 552.
Students will be assessed in fall and spring on writing quality, based on a new yearlong reporting project.

I. Statement of the problem area

MA students in the professional track take JN 501 Producing Community Journalism each spring. While the class emphasizes application of tools and technologies, writing quality is an important learning outcome as well. The past two years, students have demonstrated good to very good writing on average, but some students have fallen into the poor and fair range, and we would like to see more excellence demonstrated. Also, the last two years, editors at the Anniston Star, the site of the students’ summer internship, have noted a slight drop-off in news writing quality from previous years.

In 2013-2014, students in the professional track will engage in an additional yearlong writing and reporting project, in conjunction with the Anniston Star editors. In a fall writing course, in the spring JN 501 course, and in Anniston during the summer, students will derive news stories from a database of information about public records. They will write both short and lengthy stories based on this information. They will be assessed by instructors but also will receive feedback from editors at the Star, who will (likely) select some for publication. We will assess several areas for degree of success: (1) Ability to identify the “lead,” or most important and engaging information in the story; (2) Efficiency in writing style; and (3) Grammatical and style correctness. Assessments will take place at the end of the fall writing course and again at the end of the spring production course.

II. Description of the assessment measure (s) to be employed:

Assessment measures for learning approach (this matrix will be completed for both the original and revised versions.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESSFUL = 2</th>
<th>PARTIAL SUCCESS = 1</th>
<th>NOT SUCCESSFUL = 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student has effectively identified the lead information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student writes efficiently (few words, strong impact)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student’s writing is grammatically and stylistically correct.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean differences between the fall scores and spring scores will be assessed.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High
Mission / Purpose
To educate students in the tradition of the liberal arts in pursuit of professional, intellectual, ethical and personal goals in a democratic society; to provide leadership in the College and University in writing, reporting, editing, producing and presenting news/information in various forms; to advance the discipline through research and service.

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Discipline Knowledge: Concepts and theories
(Discipline Knowledge): Graduates should understand concepts and theories related to the presentation of images and information to mass audiences.

Connected Documents
Journalism MA Curriculum Map I
Journalism MA Curriculum Map II

Related Measures
M 1: Rubric for final theory papers
Faculty rating of knowledge and application of mass communication theories as evidenced by final papers of JN MA students in MC 551: Mass Communication Theory (thesis track students) and JN 552: Journalism Theory and Research (professional track students).

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:
None established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
The professor teaching MC 551 in Fall 2012 evaluated the final papers in that class for evidence of firm grasp of theory. Of the six students enrolled, four displayed strong grasp and two displayed an adequate grasp of understanding and integration of the theories. The professor concluded that instruction was mostly successful, but some different theories will be selected to reflect changes in the field -- such changes will need to be made yearly. The instructor also devised some additional in-class exercises this year to help ensure that students understand the nuances of variable relationships and conceptual modeling. From assessing their work on their final paper, it appeared students had a stronger understanding this year on how to interrelate variables and provide justification for these relationships, offering some evidence that the additional exercises helped. The professor teaching JN 552 in Fall 2012 evaluated the final papers in that class for evidence of understanding of theory and its application to a professionally oriented issue. Of the six students enrolled, four displayed strong grasp of their selected theories, and two displayed an adequate grasp. An action plan was put in place to assess student success in working with variable concepts. Students were assessed on the following measures, before and after a teaching exercise. The following are averaged results prior to exposure to the exercise (0=Not successful, 1=Partial success, 2 = Successful); Are concepts variable? (1.17); Are the variable concepts tied logically to the empirical-level phenomena? (1.17); Are the variable concepts an appropriate level of abstraction? (0.66); Is the relationship between the independent and dependent variable concepts logical? (1.0). The following are averaged results following the exercise: Are concepts variable? (1.83); Are the variable concepts tied logically to the empirical-level phenomena? (1.33); Are the variable concepts an appropriate level of abstraction? (1.0); Is the relationship between the independent and dependent variable concepts logical? (1.5). Improvement across all measures is evident, particularly for ensuring concepts are variable. Predictably, the most difficult task rating the lowest score (level of abstraction). The professor concluded that the changes in the instruction and curriculum were largely effective, and plans to continue this exercise, or a variation of it.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Revisions for JN 522
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories ...

M 2: Rubric to assess thesis or research project
Ratings by graduate committee members on student mastery of theory, academic and professional writing ability, and application of applicable tools as evidenced by work on research projects/theses completed at the end of the master's degree in JN 597: Master's Project (professional track students) or JN 599: Thesis (thesis track students).

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

Target:
None established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
The graduate committees of each student evaluated capstone theses/projects for grasp of theory. Committee members rated their grasp of concepts and theories on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). Four students completed their theses (JN 599) in Spring 2013 or Summer 2013. The average score for these four students was 4.25, which indicates the group, on average, fell between Very Good and Excellent. Two of the students fell between "Good" and "Very Good" while the other two students' scores rated as "Excellent." Of the six students enrolled in JN 597 (Research Project) for Spring/Summer 2013, the average score was 4.0. Three
students displayed a "Very Good" to "Excellent" grasp of their selected theories, and three displayed a "Good" to "Very Good" grasp of their theories. Therefore, all students demonstrated a "Good" to "Excellent" in their understanding of theory and its application. Overall, students' work showed that the department's theory instruction successfully conveyed the importance and relevance of theory in conducting research, as well as the assumptions, mechanics and consequences of individual theories. Through their written work and oral defense, students demonstrated an understanding of how theory can be used, in a systematic way, to shed light on real world problems.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

**Revisions for JN 522**
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories ...

**M 4: Student self assessment of theory, writing, tools**
Student survey upon completion of MA program of how helpful the overall program was in improving their grasp of theory, writing, and production tools for journalism.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

**Target:**
None established.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
Logistics prohibited this assessment from being done in 2012-2013.

**SLO 2: Skills / Abilities: Write clearly and correctly**
(Skills/Abilities) Graduates should write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

**Connected Documents**
- Journalism MA Curriculum Map 1
- Journalism MA Curriculum Map II

**Related Measures**

**M 2: Rubric to assess thesis or research project**
Ratings by graduate committee members on student mastery of theory, academic and professional writing ability, and application of applicable tools as evidenced by work on research projects/theses completed at the end of the master's degree in JN 597: Master's Project (professional track students) or JN 599: Thesis (thesis track students).

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

**Target:**
None established.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
Four students completed their theses (JN 599) in Spring 2013 or Summer 2013. The average score for these four students was 4.0, which indicates the group, on average, rated as "Very Good." One of the students rated as "Excellent," two as "Very Good," and one as "Good." Of the six students enrolled in JN 597 (Research Project) for Spring/Summer 2013, the average score was 3.7. One student displayed "Excellent" writing clarity and correctness, three rated as "Very Good," one rated as "Good," and one rated as "Fair." All students have an introductory class that covers the basics of academic style, and academic writing and form is also addressed in the theory courses. For overall writing clarity, the revised graduate curriculum for the professional track requires one writing class and advisers strongly encourage another. Many of our thesis-track students have been professional journalists and are strong writers when they enter the program. Still, advisers often encourage writing electives. Overall, students' work showed that the department's instruction successfully conveyed the importance of clarity in writing -- for both academic and news writing -- and offered students helpful training in writing.

**M 3: Supervisor ratings of writing ability, use of tools**
Ratings of students' writing ability and related constructs and use of tools and technology as evaluated by professional supervisors at The Anniston Star for students in the JN 572: Seminar in Professional Journalism experience course. (Note: Assessment for professional track students only.)

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

**Target:**
None established.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
In summer 2013, six graduate students completed professional experiences during the assessment period, as part of our professional collaboration with The Anniston Star newspaper. For the five students with assigned writing duties, the mean score was 4.3 on a 1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent scale. Three were rated as Excellent, one as Very Good, and two as Good. The mean score was substantially higher than the 3.8 average from Summer 2011 and the 3.63 in Summer 2010, suggesting considerable improvement in this area. More of the students interned in Summer 2012 and Summer 2011 took a second writing class; thus, advisers will continue to encourage students to take more than one writing class during their time in Tuscaloosa before they travel to Anniston. In addition, students in 2012-2013 are engaging in an additional writing/reporting project, monitored by department instructors and an Anniston editor (also an adjunct instructor). The Anniston editor noted that he would like to see students improve in their ability to identify lead information and write efficiently. These skill are being assessed in the fall and spring this year via a new action plan. Measures from the evaluation of summer interns in Anniston will be repeated next summer to establish trend data. Although not directly
assessing writing, other items on the supervisor rating sheets are related to writing quality. For the 2012-2013 graduate student interns, mean ratings on the same 1 = Poor and 5 = Excellent were as follows: Spelling = 5.0; Grammar = 5.0; and Quality of finished product = 4.17. These differed substantially from scores from Summer 2012: Spelling = 4.2; Grammar = 4.2; and Quality of finished product = 4.2. A likely explanation for the relatively low score for “Quality of finished product” is the quality of reporting: The supervisor said these students were generally weaker in reporting than the 2012 and 2011 groups. It is important to note that this is a small program, and a strong showing or a weak showing by one student can greatly affect the scores. Data will continue to be gathered in this fashion so that it can be aggregated over a few years to show real trends.

M 4: Student self assessment of theory, writing, tools
Student survey upon completion of MA program of how helpful the overall program was in improving their grasp of theory, writing, and production tools for journalism.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

Target: None established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
Student self-assessments were not conducted as was anticipated, and so no data are available.

M 5: Course embedded: Tools and writing JN 501
Results from course-embedded assessment of tools mastery and writing ability evident in final digital journalism projects completed for JN 501: Producing Community Journalism. (Note: Assessment for all professional track students and some thesis track students who take this course as an elective).

Source of Evidence: Project, either individual or group

Target: None established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
In Spring 2013, six students in the professional track were enrolled in JN 501. Of the six students, three demonstrated excellence in writing ability based on the written work on their final digital projects, two were rated as good, and one was rated as fair, based on an assessment of the text-based material included on the sites. These were similar to results from 2012. Last year’s report suggested efforts to improve skills for students rating below excellent. Toward that end, the 2013 class incorporated additional assignments in news reporting and writing, and students were also strongly encouraged to take writing courses for their electives (four of the six did, though unfortunately, these were among the weaker writers). While results were similar, this class generally rated slightly lower in writing quality than the previous year. While the decline in 2013 was slight (and was for a sample of only six students each year), improvement was not evident, and so the target was only partially met. For the 2013-14 year, all students in this master’s track have been enrolled in an indepth reporting/writing class in the fall, a class that emphasizes fundamental reporting and writing skills to a greater degree than some other writing courses students have taken in previous fall semesters. Students are also involved in an additional yearlong reporting/writing project. Students will again be strongly encouraged to take a writing course as electives in the spring. An Action Plan has been developed, which involves assessing writing at the end of the yearlong reporting project, which we are conducting in conjunction with our program’s partner, The Anniston Star newspaper.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Students will be assessed in fall and spring on writing quality, based on a new yearlong reporting project.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
I. Statement of the problem area MA students in the professional track take JN 501 Producing Community Journ...

SLO 3: Improvement: Apply tools and technologies
(An Improvement Outcome Derived From our 2011-12 Assessment Findings) Students completing the degree program will apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communication professions in which they work.

Connected Documents
Journalism MA Curriculum Map 1
Journalism MA Curriculum Map II

Related Measures

M 2: Rubric to assess thesis or reseach project
Ratings by graduate committee members on student mastery of theory, academic and professional writing ability, and application of applicable tools as evidenced by work on research projects/theses completed at the end of the master’s degree in JN 597: Master’s Project (professional track students) or JN 599: Thesis (thesis track students).

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

Target: None established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
The graduate committees of each student evaluate the capstone projects or theses for evidence of use of tools and technologies appropriate to the project. Students enrolled in JN 597 (Research Project) were expected to gain an understanding of web analytics for their analysis of audience use of, and response to, their website projects. Analytics are covered in the “Assessing Journalism” course. Students learn how to use a variety of web metrics, how to select the appropriate metrics, and how to interpret findings from analytics.

Students also learn to use software for website usability testing, as well as for survey design, and they are expected to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each of these three “applied” methods. Committee members rated students on a five-point scale, from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). Of the six students enrolled in JN 597 (Research Project) for Spring/Summer 2013, the average score was 4.0 (the “Very Good” level).

According to individual scores, one student displayed “Excellent” use of tools and technologies, four rated as “Very Good”, and one rated as “Good.”
Three of the four students who completed a thesis (JN 599) in either Spring 2013 or Summer 2013 conducted quantitative research studies and entered and analyzed data using SPSS. The average score for these four students was 4.0, which indicates the group, on average, rated "Very Good." Averaging the scores across committee members, one student rated between Very Good and Excellent, one rated Very Good, and one rated between Good and Very Good. Data analysis and use of SPSS is only covered minimally for thesis-track students in MC 550. Most work with the program mechanics and applications is done in the actual thesis experience (JN 599). Committee chairs teach the students one-on-one and typically only provide enough instruction for the students to complete their projects. Therefore, full mastery of the program is not a goal at this level. The results of this assessment indicate that the class has an introduction to data analysis and a program, giving students who may go on for further graduate study a basic grasp of a tool they will need to master later in their training.

**M 3: Supervisor ratings of writing ability, use of tools**
Ratings of students’ writing ability and related constructs and use of tools and technology as evaluated by professional supervisors at The Anniston Star for students in the JN 572: Seminar in Professional Journalism experience course. (Note: Assessment for professional track students only.)
Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
This question was inadvertently left off the questionnaire for supervisors in 2013. We will add it to the Summer 2014 review and include it in next year’s measures.

**M 4: Student self assessment of theory, writing, tools**
Student survey upon completion of MA program of how helpful the overall program was in improving their grasp of theory, writing, and production tools for journalism.
Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
Logistics prohibited this assessment from being done in 2012-2013.

**M 5: Course embedded: Tools and writing JN 501**
Results from course-embedded assessment of tools mastery and writing ability evident in final digital journalism projects completed for JN 501: Producing Community Journalism. (Note: Assessment for all professional track students and some thesis track students who take this course as an elective).
Source of Evidence: Project, either individual or group

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
In Spring 2013, six students in the professional track were enrolled in JN 501. In this class, they applied the tools they learned in JN 502 Production Tools by working on final digital projects that explored a topic in depth. The projects required students to write stories, shoot pictures and video, edit all materials, and create a multimedia website on a chosen topic. Four students demonstrated mastery of video shooting and editing, one was rated as good, and one as fair in this area. For still digital photography, four students demonstrated excellence, and two were rated as good. For website design and development, three students demonstrated excellence, one was rated as good, and one as fair. For management of content and customization of interactive website features and functionality, three students demonstrated excellence, two were rated as good, and one as fair in this area. As mentioned in last year’s report, most of the graduate students arrive in the program with little or no experience in multimedia and/or web development, and so we take a building-block approach to the skills curriculum. This year we introduced more small, discrete web projects earlier in the year, which allowed closer monitoring of specific skills that closely track skills required for their master’s project websites. The JN 501 instructor understood better this year which students needed additional training in specific skills areas, leading to more effective application of tools and technology by the students. In the 2013-2014 year, the instructor who teaches JN 501 is also teaching the fall technology skills course, and we anticipate this will improve students’ application further.

**Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans**

**OthOtcm 4: Recognized Quality**
The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality, including national accreditation, if applicable.

**Related Measures**

**M 8: ACEJMC Accreditation Review**
Results of the review of our graduate program for accreditation by the national accrediting council for our discipline: the Accrediting Council of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). This review assessed several direct measures of quality.
Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
The journalism graduate degree program was reaccredited in 2009 as part of a larger mass communication unit in the college. The professional programs in APR & the full program in JN were the only two master's programs put up for review, and both were granted accreditation by the Accrediting Council of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) in 2009. ACEJMC evaluated evidence pertaining to
M 9: Awards and recognition
Honors and recognition given to faculty and students.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
None established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
In 2012-2013, the department's master's students and faculty again received recognition and numerous awards at national and regional levels. Two MA students in our professional program completed individual multimedia projects that were recognized nationally in the 25th Annual College News Design Contest through the Society for News Design. The projects, which were part of their master's projects, won honorable mention and were placed among the top student-produced work nationwide in the video or multimedia project category. The 2012 professional track MA students, working at The Anniston Star under a UA adjunct instructor, completed a project on campaign advertising financing: "Air War" won the first place in investigative reporting in the 2012 Alabama Associated Press Managing Editor awards. This is the third year in a row that professional track students have placed first in this category in the APME awards. An investigative project on banned books by the 2012-2013 class has received national recognition (linked from several prominent journalism publications), and is again up for possible statewide awards. Two students in JN 563: History of Journalism class won top student paper awards for their research papers at the 2013 American Journalism Historians Association's Southeast Symposium in Panama City, Fla. Four other students from the class had papers selected for presentation at that conference. Another student history paper was named the Best Graduate Student Paper at the 2012 American Journalism Historians Association's National Convention, held in Raleigh, N.C. Another student's paper was selected for presentation at that conference. Three other graduate students had papers accepted for presentation at AEJMC regional and national conferences in Chicago, Oklahoma City, and Washington, D.C. One faculty member who teaches graduate students was honored by the Alabama State Council on the Arts as Alabama's Distinguished Artist at the 2013 Celebration of the Arts Awards. Another faculty member was selected to attend a prestigious national workshop on entrepreneurial journalism in a competitive nomination process. Two other faculty members were elected to serve in top leadership positions with AEJMC, our field's primary professional organization for mass communication education. One faculty member was elected to the American Journalism Historians Association Board of Directors. Finally, one faculty member was recognized as the Educator of the Year by the Newspaper and Online News Division of AEJMC.

OthOtc5: Program enrollments and degree completions
The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completion.

Related Measures

M 10: Statistics on program majors
University statistics on the number of program majors

Source of Evidence: Benchmarking of learning outcomes against peers

Target:
None

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
In Fall 2013, the MA program (both tracks) had 13 students enrolled, a decrease of 19% from the previous fall, when 16 students were enrolled. We feel the maximum capacity of the program is roughly 20, given the faculty resources we have in the department and the capability of The Anniston Star to employ our students in the ComJ track.

M 12: Number of degrees awarded
Statistics on number of degrees awarded

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
None

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
The graduate committee and graduate coordinator are working to increase recruitment and looking at creative programs to boost enrollment, including the University Scholars dual enrollment program. For degrees awarded, the number increased from 7 in 2011-2012 to 10 in 2012-2013, which indicates that we are moving students through the program efficiently.

OthOtc6: Highly valued graduates
The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

Related Measures

M 13: Placement rates
Placement rates of students in the ComJ MA program.

Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program
Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
Since the Community Journalism program was founded, more than 90% of the graduates had found employment or were enrolled in other graduate programs (doctoral or law) within six months of graduation. For the 2011-2012 class (the most recent in which we have data), 100% were placed within six months of graduation.

M 14: Partner newspaper feedback
Feedback from The Anniston Star, the partner newspaper for our Community Journalism Program
Source of Evidence: Employer survey, incl. perceptions of the program

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met
The publisher and editors from The Anniston Star have praised the collaboration highly, especially in recent years as we've changed the focus of the program to concentrate on digital media production and trained the students on our main campus. The paper continues to invest its editors' time and its financial resources (paying the students in the summer) and has expressed firm commitment to keep the partnership going.

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Revisions for JN 522
In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories were found to be helpful to student projects over the last two years. Also, more attention will be paid to justifying and formulating variable concepts, relationships between variable concepts, and formulation of hypotheses, as some students have struggled a bit in this area. Finally, the instructor will add or alter two in-class and/or homework assignments in order to connect instruction more directly with the daily work of journalism. For example, the fall elections offer an opportunity to connect instruction on surveys and sampling with election polling.

From the instructor's assessment plan: In their papers, students in the JN 552 Theory and Research class identify a problem in the community and a way to use news media to address the problem. In doing so, the students create a theoretical argument for why/how this particular media solution is appropriate for addressing the problem. While instruction in this class has been mostly successful, final papers show that students could benefit from a more thorough and sophisticated understanding of variable concepts, relationships between variable concepts, and how to conceptualize problems and solutions in the "real world" as variable concepts. For their papers, students must first conceptualize the media solution as an independent variable concept, and the community problem as a dependent variable concept, and provide the logic for the causal relationship between them. My educational approach: (1) In the first class, I will instruct them briefly about conceptualizing real-world phenomena as variable abstract concepts; (2) They will email me a paragraph explaining how they will do this for their particular media solutions/community problems; (3) In the next class, I will model this conceptualization process for them, inventing examples (not their own) that incorporate problem areas I saw in their first versions; (4) They will pair up, compare their original conceptualizations, and revise them; and (5) we'll discuss revisions as a class. This will test the effectiveness of modeling relevant examples in an interactive class setting by having the instructor evaluate the drafts and the final versions of the paper on a rubric.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High
Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Rubric for final theory papers | Outcome/Objective: Discipline Knowledge: Concepts and theories

Implementation Description: An assessment rubric has been developed to help evaluate student performance as the instruction is revised. This was approved by the assessment office in Spring 2012 and the instructor has received an assessment grant to complete this innovation in measurement of student outcomes.

Responsible Person/Group: Wilson Lowrey, instructor for JN 552.

Students will be assessed in fall and spring on writing quality, based on a new yearlong reporting project.

Statement of the problem area

MA students in the professional track take JN 501 Producing Community Journalism each spring. While the class emphasizes application of tools and technologies, writing quality is an important learning outcome as well. The past two years, students have demonstrated good to very good writing on average, but some students have fallen into the poor and fair range, and we would like to see more excellence demonstrated. Also, the last two years, editors at the Anniston Star, the site of the students’ summer internship, have noted a slight drop-off in news writing quality from previous years.

In 2013-2014, students in the professional track will engage in an additional yearlong writing and reporting project, in conjunction with the Anniston Star editors. In a fall writing course, in the spring JN 501 course, and in Anniston during the summer, students will derive news stories from a database of information about public records. They will write both short and lengthy stories based on this information. They will be assessed by instructors but also will receive feedback from editors at the Star, who will (likely) select some for publication. We will assess several areas for degree of success: (1) Ability to identify the “lead,” or most important and engaging information in the story; (2) Efficiency in writing style; and (3) Grammatical and style correctness. Assessments will take place at the end of the fall writing course and again at the end of the spring production
II. Description of the assessment measure(s) to be employed:

Assessment measures for learning approach (this matrix will be completed for both the original and revised versions.)

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Mean differences between the fall scores and spring scores will be assessed.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Course embedded: Tools and writing JN 501 | Outcome/Objective: Skills / Abilities: Write clearly and correctly
Mission / Purpose
To educate students in the tradition of the liberal arts in pursuit of professional, intellectual, ethical and personal goals in a democratic society; to provide leadership in the College and University in writing, reporting, editing, producing and presenting news/information in various forms; to advance the discipline through research and service.

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Discipline Knowledge: Concepts and theories
(Discipline Knowledge): Graduates should understand concepts and theories related to the presentation of images and information to mass audiences.

Connected Documents
- Journalism MA Curriculum Map 1
- Journalism MA Curriculum Map II

Related Measures

M 1: Rubric for final theory papers
Rubric to rate knowledge and application of mass communication theories as evidenced by final papers of JN MA students in MC 551: Mass Communication Theory (thesis track students) and JN 552: Journalism Theory and Research (professional track students).

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:
None established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
The professor teaching MC 551 in Fall 2011 evaluated the final papers in that class for evidence of firm grasp of the theories the student chose to focus on. Of the eight students enrolled, six displayed strong grasp and two displayed adequate grasp of understanding and integration of the theories. The professor concluded that instruction was mostly successful, but some different theories will be selected to reflect changes in the field. The instructor will also devise some additional in-class exercises to help ensure that students understand the nuances of variable relationships and conceptual modeling. The professor teaching JN 552 in Fall 2011 evaluated the final papers in that class for evidence of firm grasp of theory as applied to a professionally oriented issue. Of the eight students enrolled, five displayed strong grasp of their selected theories, two displayed adequate grasp, and one struggled in understanding and application of the theories. The professor concluded that instruction and curriculum were largely effective, though some minor changes were needed. These are described in the attached action plan for JN 552.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Revisions for JN 522
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories ...

M 2: Rubric to assess thesis, research project
Ratings by graduate committee members on student mastery of theory, academic and professional writing ability, and applicable tools as evidenced by work on research projects/theses completed at the end of the master's degree in JN 597: Master's Project (professional track students) or JN 599: Thesis (thesis track students).

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

Target:
None established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
The graduate committees of each student evaluate capstone projects/theses for grasp of theory. Of the six students enrolled in JN 597 (Research Project) for Spring/Summer 2012, four displayed strong grasp of their selected theory or theories, and two displayed adequate grasp in their understanding and application of the theory or theories. Of the four students who completed their thesis (JN 599) in either Fall 2011, Spring 2012 or Summer 2012, three were rated by their committees as displaying a strong grasp of their selected theory or theories and one struggled in the understanding and application of the theory or theories. Overall, students' work showed that the department's theory instruction successfully conveyed the importance and relevance of theory in conducting research, as well as the assumptions, mechanics and consequences of individual theories. Through their written work and oral defense, students demonstrated an understanding of how theory can be used, in a systematic way, to shed light on real world problems.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Revisions for JN 522
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories ...

M 4: Student self assessment of theory, writing, tools
Student survey upon completion of program of how helpful the overall program was in improving their grasp of theory, writing, and production tools for journalism.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

SLO 2: Skills / Abilities: Write clearly and correctly
(Skills/Abilities) Graduates should write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

Connected Documents
   Journalism MA Curriculum Map 1
   Journalism MA Curriculum Map 2

Related Measures

M 2: Rubric to assess thesis, research project
Ratings by graduate committee members on student mastery of theory, academic and professional writing ability, and applicable tools as evidenced by work on research projects/theses completed at the end of the master's degree in JN 597: Master's Project (professional track students) or JN 599: Thesis (thesis track students).

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

Target:
None established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
The graduate committees of each student evaluate these capstone papers (project or thesis) for writing in academic style. Of the six students enrolled in JN 597 (Research Project) for Spring/Summer 2012, three were rated excellent in writing, and and three as good. Of the four students who completed their thesis (JN 599) in either Fall 2011, Spring 2012 or Summer 2012, three were rated by their committees as excellent in academic writing style and one was rated as good. All students have an introductory class that covers the basics of academic style, and academic writing and form is also addressed in the theory courses. For overall writing clarity, the revised graduate curriculum for the professional track requires one writing class and advisers strongly encourage another. For thesis track students, many have been professional journalists and are strong writers when they enter the program. Still, advisers encourage writing electives. The results of this assessment indicate that the curriculum is working well to teach students in both tracks academic writing style and clarity of writing in general.

M 3: Supervisor ratings of writing ability, use of tools
Ratings of students' writing ability and related constructs and use of tools and technology as evaluated by professional supervisors at The Anniston Star for students in the JN 572: Seminar in Professional Journalism experience course.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

Target:
None established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
In total, six graduate students completed professional experiences during the assessment period (one in Spring 2012 at The Tuscaloosa News and five as part of our professional collaboration with The Anniston Star). As with our undergraduate measure, we changed our evaluation form to have supervisors rate only those with assigned writing duties (the form was modified with the words "if applicable" next to this measure in 2011-2012). For the five students with assigned writing duties, the mean score was 3.8 on a 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Very Good scale. Four of the five were rated as good in writing and one was rated as average. The mean score was slightly better than the 3.63 reported in Summer 2010. More of the students interning in Summer 2011 took a second writing class; thus, advisers will continue to encourage students to take more than one writing class during their time in Tuscaloosa before they travel to Anniston. These measures will be repeated next summer to establish trend data.

Although not directly assessing writing, other items on the supervisor rating sheets are related to writing quality. For the 2011-2012 graduate student interns, mean ratings on the same 1 = Very Poor and 5 = Very Good were as follows: Spelling = 4.2; Grammar = 4.2; Quality of finished product = 4.2; and Editing = 4. These compared with the scores for Summer 2010 of Spelling = 4.8; Grammar = 4.9; and Quality of finished product = 3.9 (Editing was not measured that year). Interestingly, quality of finished product ratings rose although spelling and grammar scored dropped. The supervisor changed between Summer 2010 and Summer 2011, which could account for those differences. In addition, because this is a small program, a strong showing or a weak showing by one student can greatly affect the scores. The faculty members working with this data believe our curriculum and preparation in writing preparation is strong but could be improved. Data will continue to be gathered in this fashion so that it can be aggregated over a few years to show real trends.

M 4: Student self assessment of theory, writing, tools
Student survey upon completion of program of how helpful the overall program was in improving their grasp of theory, writing, and production tools for journalism.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

Target:
None established.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**
The two graduate students enrolled in the section both had experience working with media (either writing or using multimedia tools, such as recording or editing). At the end of the semester, both students had completed in-school service learning hours and helped to produce a newspaper, website, or broadcast. An assessment of their final reflection projects and journals showed that both had demonstrated excellence in academic writing and had incorporated journalistic style conventions (quotes, attribution) into this writing. The instructor concluded that the assessment demonstrated that the class assignments are succeeding in helping advanced students master writing correctly and clearly for the appropriate style. However, it should be noted that the students both were experienced to begin with and the number of students for assessment was very small (2). Therefore, this assessment will be repeated over the next two times this course is offered to garner a larger sample for analysis.

**M 5: Course embedded: Tools and writing JN 501**
Results from course-embedded assessment of tools mastery and writing ability evident in final digital journalism projects completed for JN 501: Producing Community Journalism.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

**Target:**
None established.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**
In Spring 2012, six students in the professional track were enrolled in JN 501. Of the six students, four demonstrated excellence in writing ability based on the written work on their final digital projects, one was rated as good, and one was rated as fair, based on an assessment of the text-based material included on the sites. Overall, writing was strong, although efforts should be made to see whether the students rated below excellence were lacking in skills or effort or whether some help can be given in this area for students who struggle.

**SLO 3: Improvement: Apply tools and technologies**
(An Improvement Outcome Derived From their 2010-11 Assessment Findings) Students completing the degree program will apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communication professions in which they work.

**Connected Documents**
- Journalism MA Curriculum Map 1
- Journalism MA Curriculum Map II

**Related Measures**

**M 2: Rubric to assess thesis, research project**
Ratings by graduate committee members on student mastery of theory, academic and professional writing ability, and applicable tools as evidenced by work on research projects/theses completed at the end of the master's degree in JN 597: Master's Project (professional track students) or JN 599: Thesis (thesis track students).

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

**Target:**
None established.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**
The graduate committees of each student evaluate the capstone projects or theses for evidence of use of tools appropriate to the project. Students enrolled in JN 597 (Research Project) were expected to gain an understanding of web analytics for their analysis of audience use of, and response to, their website projects. Analytics are covered in the "Assessing Journalism" course. Students learn how to use a variety of web metrics, how to select the appropriate metrics, and how to interpret findings from analytics. Students also learn to use software for website usability testing, as well as for survey design, and they are expected to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each of these three "applied" methods. Of the six students enrolled in JN 597 (Research Project) for Spring/Summer 2012, three were rated excellent in their mastery of these technological tools, two as good, and one as adequate. The four students who completed a thesis (JN 599) in either Fall 2011, Spring 2012 or Summer 2012 all conducted quantitative research studies and had to enter and analyze data using SPSS. None were rated by their advisers as achieving full mastery of this program, two were rated as achieving a strong understanding, two were rated as achieving an adequate understanding, and none were rated as failing to achieve a minimal understanding of the program. Data analysis and use of SPSS is only covered minimally for thesis-track students in MC 550. Most work with the program mechanics and applications is done in the actual thesis experience (JN 599). Committee chairs teach the students one-on-one and typically only provide enough instruction for the students to complete their projects. Therefore, full mastery of the program is not a goal at this level. The results of this assessment indicate that the thesis experience provides an introduction to data analysis and a program, giving students who may go on for further graduate study a basic grasp of a tool they will need to master later in their training.

**M 3: Supervisor ratings of writing ability, use of tools**
Ratings of students' writing ability and related constructs and use of tools and technology as evaluated by professional supervisors at The Anniston Star for students in the JN 572: Seminar in Professional Journalism experience course.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

**Target:**
None established.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**
In total, six graduate students completed professional experiences during the assessment period (one in Spring 2012 at The Tuscaloosa News and five as part of our professional collaboration with The Anniston Star). For the first time, we asked supervisors to rate the competence that the graduate students displayed when using the tools and technologies necessary to perform their work. For the six students, the mean score was 4.0 on a 1 = Very Poor, 5 = Very Good scale, with all six students rated as good. Tools need ranged from basic word processing, to digital image capture and producing for online media. These scores, coupled with
the assessment of tools in JN 501 indicate that the curriculum is doing an adequate job of introducing students to tools but not producing anyone with excellent mastery across all tools used in the profession today.

**M 4: Student self assessment of theory, writing, tools**

Student survey upon completion of program of how helpful the overall program was in improving their grasp of theory, writing, and production tools for journalism.

Source of Evidence: Exit interviews with grads/program completers

**M 5: Course embedded: Tools and writing JN 501**

Results from course-embedded assessment of tools mastery and writing ability evident in final digital journalism projects completed for JN 501: Producing Community Journalism.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

**Target:**

None established.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**

In Spring 2012, six students in the professional track were enrolled in JN 501. In this class, they applied the tools they learned in JN 502 Production Tools by working on final digital projects that explored a topic in depth. The projects required students to write stories, shoot pictures and video, edit all materials, and create a multi-media website on a chosen topic.

Three students demonstrated mastery of video shooting and editing, two were rated as adequate, and one as poor in this area. For still digital photography, three students demonstrated mastery, two were rated as adequate, and one as poor in this area. For website design and development, three students demonstrated mastery, two were rated as adequate, and one as poor in this area. For management of content and customization of interactive website features and functionality, four students demonstrated mastery, one was rated as adequate, and one as poor in this area.

Because most of the graduate students arrive in the program with little or no experience in multi-media and/or web development, we take a building-block approach to the skills curriculum. We are encouraged by the progress the students made over a semester and a half to demonstrate competence or mastery in these areas on their final projects.

To further student skills and improve the development process of their multi-media websites, we are planning to introduce more small, discrete web projects earlier in the academic year. These assignments will require students to complete a checklist of important skills. By exposing students to complete these smaller web projects in JN 502, we anticipate that they will be better prepared in JN 501 to apply what they have learned to their own multi-media websites. These small projects also will give instructors a better idea about which students need extra work in the various skills areas.

**Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans**

**OthOtcm 4: Recognized Quality**

The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality, including national accreditation, if applicable.

**Related Measures**

**M 8: ACEJMC Accreditation Review**

Results of the review of our graduate program for accreditation by the national accrediting council for our discipline: the Accrediting Council of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). This review assessed several direct measures of quality.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

**Target:**

To achieve reaccreditation from ACEJMC.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**

The journalism graduate degree program was reaccredited in 2009 as part of a larger mass communication unit in the college. The professional programs in APR & the full program in JN were the only two master’s programs put up for review, and both were granted accreditation by the Accrediting Council of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) in 2009. ACEJMC evaluated evidence pertaining to Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty Performance and Professional and Public Service. In its Report on On-Site Evaluation: ACEJMC found the program to be compliant on the above mentioned three standards. The report stated the following strengths of the program: The program [is] highly regarded in the state, region and among peer institutions; This is a highly productive faculty whose intellectual work is disseminated across a wide spectrum of venues; This is a productive faculty that has generated an impressive record of scholarly, creative and professional work.

**M 9: National awards and recognition**

National honors and recognition given to faculty and students.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**

None established.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met**

In the 2011-2012 academic year, our faculty members won three college-wide teaching awards, one university-wide teaching award, two professional writing awards, and placed in one national teaching
OthOtocm 5: Program enrollments and degree completions
The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completion.

Related Measures

M 10: Stats on program majors and degree awarded
University statistics on the number of program majors and degrees awarded during the past six years
Source of Evidence: Benchmarking of learning outcomes against peers

M 12: Analysis of FTE
Analysis of FTE provided to the larger graduate mission of the college and university through our teaching of MC, CIS, and JN courses open to all graduate students.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

OthOtocm 6: Highly valued graduates
The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

Related Measures

M 13: Graduating MA student survey
Data from a departmental graduating MA student survey.
Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program

M 14: Partner newspaper feedback
Feedback from The Anniston Star, the partner newspaper for our Community Journalism Program
Source of Evidence: Employer survey, incl. perceptions of the program

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Revisions for JN 522

In fall 2012, several theories that relate specifically to media and community will receive more attention, as these theories were found to be helpful to student projects over the last two years. Also, more attention will be paid to justifying and formulating variable concepts, relationships between variable concepts, and formulation of hypotheses, as some students have struggled a bit in this area. Finally, the instructor will add or alter two in-class and/or homework assignments in order to connect instruction more directly with the daily work of journalism. For example, the fall elections offer an opportunity to connect instruction on surveys and sampling with election polling.

From the instructor's assessment plan: In their papers, students in the JN 552 Theory and Research class identify a problem in the community and a way to use news media to address the problem. In doing so, the students create a theoretical argument for why/how this particular media solution is appropriate for addressing the problem. While instruction in this class has been mostly successful, final papers show that students could benefit from a more thorough and sophisticated understanding of variable concepts, relationships between variable concepts, and how to conceptualize problems and solutions in the "real world" as variable concepts. For their papers, students must first conceptualize the media solution as an independent variable concept, and the community problem as a dependent variable concept, and provide the logic for the causal relationship between them. My educational approach: (1) In the first class, I will instruct them briefly about conceptualizing real-world phenomena as variable abstract concepts; (2) They will email me a paragraph explaining how they will do this for their particular media solutions/community problems; (3) In the next class, I will model this conceptualization process for them, inventing examples (not their own) that incorporate problem areas I saw in their first versions; (4) They will pair up, compare their original conceptualizations, and revise them; and (5) we'll discuss revisions as a class. This will test the effectiveness of modeling relevant examples in an interactive class setting by having the instructor evaluate the drafts and the final versions of the paper on a rubric.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
- Measure: Rubric for final theory papers | Outcome/Objective: Discipline Knowledge: Concepts and theories
- Measure: Rubric to assess thesis, research project | Outcome/Objective: Discipline Knowledge: Concepts and theories

Implementation Description: An assessment rubric has been developed to help evaluate student performance as the instruction is revised. This was approved by the assessment office in Spring 2012 and the instructor has received an assessment grant to complete this innovation in measurement of student outcomes.

Responsible Person/Group: Wilson Lowrey, instructor for JN 552.
### Curriculum Maps #1  (In which courses or in what activities or assignments are Student Learning Outcomes Addressed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 1 Understand and apply theories</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 2 Write correctly and clearly for audiences</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcome 3 Apply tools and technologies (improvement from 2010-2011)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MC 551: Mass Communication Theory</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 552: Journalism Theory and Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Course 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 501: Producing Community Journalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 572: Seminar in professional journalism/Professional internship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Task</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN 597: Project or JN 599: Thesis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum Map II  (What assessment measures will be employed in which courses/activities/assignments for each Student learning Outcome)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
<th>Course 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MC 551: Mass Communication Theory</td>
<td>JN 552: Journalism Theory and Research</td>
<td>JN 501: Producing Community Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course-embedded rubric for final theory paper</td>
<td>Course-embedded rubric for final theory paper</td>
<td>Course embedded assessment with rubric for final projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JN 572: Seminar in professional journalism/Professional internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (professional journalists) rating of writing quality in professional work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (professional journalists) rating of use of tools and technology in professional work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JN 597: Project or JN 599: Thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty panel review with rubric to assess use of theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty panel review with rubric to assess writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty panel review with rubric to assess proper use of tools in research process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>