

June 7, 2007

TO: Simon Morgan-Russell, Associate Dean,
College of Arts and Sciences
FROM: Terry L. Rentner, Chair, Department of Journalism
CC: Oliver Boyd-Barrett, SCS Director
RE: AY 2006-07 Journalism Department Assessment Report

Department of Journalism Learning Outcomes:

After the completion of the B.S.J students will be able to:

1. exhibit strong journalistic writing, including command of grammar and technical skills, in articles about topics that include the social sciences, the humanities, and the natural science;
2. gather information through interviewing sources and research using libraries, archives, documents, databases, and electronic sources;
3. critically assess, organize and present information for a variety of audiences in at least two media formats and in both written and visual form;
4. perform within professional expectations with regard to deadlines and accuracy and in keeping with media law;
5. critically analyze the development and social impact of the media within diverse domestic and global communities.

We implemented several activities which gave us feedback on all five of our learning outcomes:

2006-07 Assessment Activities:

Activity 1:

The Department of Journalism, as part of the School of Communication Studies, participated in the University Program Review in the fall. Among recommendations, the department is encouraged to include more technology courses in the curriculum. We are in the process of seeking a new position, co-funded by Student Affairs, for a Director of Broadcast News for BG 24. This will be a joint appointment with the Department of Telecommunications in which the new hire would teach one course per academic year in each department. This will allow us to offer Internet Journalism on a regular basis. While this would be an excellent beginning, a new faculty line would need to be secured in order to teach other technology courses in the curriculum. Both external and internal reviewers, along with the Journalism Alumni Board,

recommended a digital photography course that to this point has only been offered every other year. If funding is available, an adjunct who has taught this course before would be available to teach it Spring 08.

Regarding other curricular issues, the program reviewers recommended that students in the public relations sequence be allowed to start their writing course earlier so that they will better be prepared for internships (to this point, we have only been able to offer one section of JOUR 344, Public Relations Writing, once a year, and priority is given to seniors. Very few juniors are able to enroll since the enrollment is capped at 20). This fall, we are offering two sections of this course instead of one and plan to offer one section in spring 2008. We were given an extra adjunct position for fall to allow for a second section of JOUR 344.

The University Program Review did not have any specific recommendations on assessment of student learning, other than to note that the department should use what it has learned from assessment to improve curricular offerings.

Activity 2:

The department will launch its Alumni Mentor Program this fall. Part of this initiative is in response to Dr. Morgan-Russell's recommendation in last year's report for mid-point levels of assessment in our curriculum. This program will match students with alumni in the industry. We would consider the end of JOUR 200, Introduction to Journalistic Writing to be our mid-point. This is when students declare one of our three sequences. They also must have an overall 3.5 GPA and completed JOUR 100 and JOUR 200 with not less than a B/C combination. This usually occurs during the student's sophomore year. The professional will serve as a mentor throughout the remainder of the student's academic career and will be asked to critique the student's work several times. Students will be encouraged to seek advice from their mentor, visit their work environment, and pursue internship and job connections with their professional mentor. Annual feedback from the professional mentors will assess student growth throughout the remainder of their academic years and provide an evaluation of their readiness to enter the profession upon graduation.

The department alumni newsletter, to be mailed early this summer, includes a call for volunteers. Alumni will be able to go to a link on the department's Web site and fill out a simple form.

The first "matching" of students and alumni will occur at the end of JOUR 200 course this fall.

Activity 3:

Again, in response to Dr. Morgan-Russell's suggestion in last year's report for mid-point levels of assessment in our curriculum, we have started implementing assessment activities at the 300-level. One such activity is an assessment by professionals in the community of individual service-learning projects produced in JOUR 344, Public Relations Writing. Each "client" is sent an evaluation form that assesses the student on an array of variables ranging from quality of work to professional attitude. These comments are shared with the students and taken into account for the grade on this project.

As a faculty, we have begun discussions on a student portfolio assessment at the mid-point level. Last year, as noted in our assessment report, we began a baseline assessment in JOUR 100, Introduction to Mass Communication. This year, we will begin building on this process through faculty discussions on what we want to require in the mid-point portfolio and in what classes these will be required. Eventually, we will implement a "Phase 3" of this overall student assessment plan with a final portfolio required in the capstone course in their senior year.

Activity 4:

Our very active alumni board has been involved in curriculum assessment on two levels. First, the Alumni Board Curriculum Committee and department chair performed an analysis of other accredited journalism programs similar to BGSU. The committee looked at course offerings at 12 universities to assess the strengths and weaknesses of course offerings. While BGSU was in line with course offerings in the print, broadcast and public relations sequences, our program was behind in offering technology-related courses such as computer-assisted reporting, multimedia journalism, web design and digital photography. While we are able to offer these courses sporadically (either once a year or once every other year) other accredited institutions were offering these on a regular basis. These findings support those found in the University Program Review that recommends a plan to include more technology in the curriculum. Step one of this plan includes the development of a Director of Broadcast News who will teach one course in the department each year. This will allow a faculty member in the broadcast sequence to teach Internet Journalism on a regular basis. An adjunct to teach digital photography will be requested for Spring 2008. A formal plan to address technology-related journalism courses will be submitted to the director by December 2008, as recommended in the program review document.

Second, members of our alumni board continue to be involved in assessment of our capstone courses in the broadcast, print and public relations sequences. Assessment of the broadcast capstone class is attached. Assessment of the public relations capstone course included written comments on the campaign proposals (too cumbersome to include with this report) and judging

of the oral presentations. The print sequence is undergoing some changes, so final projects were not sent to reviewers.

Activity 5:

In response to concerns that the BG 24 news operation has reached its potential and to Dr. Edward Whipple's goal to increase student involvement, two media experts visited the studio operation this spring. Both stayed 2-3 days and worked directly with the BG 24 News students, faculty advisors and others involved in the operation. Their recommendations resulted in a proposal, written by Dr. Boyd-Barrett, SCS director, to hire a Director of Broadcast News. The goal of this is to improve the educational experience of not only those who major in journalism and telecommunications, but for any BGSU student who wants to participate.

Activity 6:

Professionals from both the print and public relations industries assessed the quality of work produced by our students this year. Students in the print sequence designed and wrote the Ohio News Association (ONA) annual newsletter. The students, along with three journalism faculty members, set up news bureaus in the BG News offices and in Columbus where they covered the annual convention. Students interviewed Ohio Governor Ted Strickland, among other top leaders. Feedback from ONA board members was extremely positive, praising the quality of the work and the innovation of being the first ONA newsletter published online.

Students in the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) participated in a state-wide anti-tobacco competition sponsored by Northlich Public Relations, on Cincinnati in May. The BGSU chapter of PRSSA received second place overall and received the top award and trophy for Outstanding Research. Northlich's client is the Ohio Anti-tobacco Foundation, the organization who produced the state-wide "Stand up Against Tobacco Campaign" aimed at young teens. BGSU competed against seven other chapters: Ohio State, Miami University, The Ohio University, University of Cincinnati, Capital University, and Wright State. Otterbein won over BGSU by three points. The third place finish was a distant 40 points behind BGSU.

Professional validations, such as the two listed above, continue to be important and valuable assessment tools for our curriculum and student success.

Overall:

The five learning outcomes for the Department of Journalism have been demonstrated in the above activities. Since last year's report, we also put a plan into action (Activity 2) to assess student progress at mid-point, as suggested by Dr. Morgan-Russell. We will be working on a

portfolio assessment at the mid-point level as well (Activity 3). In addition, we have responded to the University Program Review's recommendations and have begun implementation on some of these (Activity 1). Our assessment activities are conducted in the department but reach beyond the university walls to include alumni and industry professionals.

We look forward to your response of our assessment activities.