

Assessment Plan

School of Communication, University of North Dakota

The School of Communication offers a comprehensive, integrated curriculum in communication that focuses on how information processes and communication technologies affect and can benefit a diversity of local and global communities. It prepares undergraduate students for careers as ethical communicators with a broad understanding of contemporary communication issues and with skills that are adaptable to a variety of contexts. Student learning occurs in the context set forth in the School's mission:

The Mission of the School of Communication: Through programs of research, education, outreach, integration, and application, our mission is to *access, analyze* and *create* information, addressing regional, national and global issues and communities. The School is committed to serve all populations, with especial emphasis on marginalized populations who historically have had less access to means of expression and participation (Strategic Plan Document, 10/17/00, p.1).

Student learning in the School of Communication occurs in the context of responsibilities set forth in the mission of the University of North Dakota. The relevant section of UND's mission reads:

The Mission of the University of North Dakota: The university encourages students to make informed choices, to communicate effectively, to be intellectually curious and creative, to commit themselves to lifelong learning and the service of others, and to share responsibility for their own communities and the world (p.2, 2001-2003 UND Academic Catalog).

To ensure that the School accomplishes these missions, assessment of student learning is conducted to provide students, faculty, and other constituents with a systematic review of what students are learning and how, for the purpose of continual improvement of student achievement, of the curriculum, of methods of instruction, and of the context within which learning occurs.

Goals for Student Learning

The School offers one major, Communication, emphasizing our mission to access, analyze and create knowledge within the context of the issues of community, information, and technology.

The School's curriculum is organized around student progress toward achievement of 12 Goals for Student Learning, making it a uniquely designed, assessment-led curriculum.

Students, with the approval of a faculty advisor, are able to construct conventional programs of study that follow their career interests in such areas as journalism, broadcasting, public relations, speech, and advertising or that are more individualized.

Goals for student learning represent the core areas of understanding and application that faculty of the School believe all students should achieve prior to graduation, regardless of specific career interests. In fact, achievement of the goals should enable students to be well-rounded

professionals with greater flexibility in their career and greater capacity to serve the public through continuing periods of change.

The 12 Goals for Student Learning are:

Community

- A. To understand how language and communication processes create diverse communities;
- B. To understand the role of community and identity (such as culture, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class and nationality) in how individuals see the world and others see them;
- C. To understand the interactions of individuals, organizations, groups, and social movements and the conflicts and opportunities that can result;
- D. To use an ethical framework to analyze and address the communication problems and opportunities of individuals and groups.

Information

- E. To understand the diverse and historically changing ways we acquire, produce, and share knowledge about the world;
- F. To understand various kinds of messages, stories, images, and texts, how and why they are constructed, and the legal and ethical considerations of representation;
- G. To understand the role of interpretation in how we respond to messages and texts;
- H. To research and evaluate information (including numerical and statistical evidence) and create and edit socially responsible oral, written and visual communication, with attention to the needs and concerns of diverse communities and audiences.

Technology

- I. To understand the historical and contemporary context (political, economic, legal and social) of communication institutions and technologies;
- J. To understand the consequences for individuals and diverse communities of the use and content of communication media;
- K. To understand alternate possibilities for having access to, using, and arranging communication technologies and institutions;
- L. To use communication technologies ethically in conventional, as well as imaginative, ways.

Assessment Methods and Evidence

Assumptions guiding the collection of evidence about student learning are these: that assessment should be conducted systematically and over time, that multiple measures using multiple sources of information are needed to triangulate results, that both qualitative and quantitative methods are of value, that indirect measures are insufficient without direct methods, that assessment of student learning at the program level should not be used for evaluation purposes of individual faculty, and that results should be useful for improvement, not simply additional work to fulfill administrative requirements.

In the School of Communication, assessment of students' level of achievement of the 12 Goals for Student Learning occurs 1) by direct methods using evidence from student work during and at the end of the program of study, and 2) by indirect methods using evidence from students, alumni, faculty, and constituents external to the School of Communication to determine perceptions of the effectiveness of the program and to identify barriers or assets that characterize the learning experience for students.

Direct Methods:

1. Senior Portfolio required of all graduating seniors. A one-credit, Level E course where students review, integrate, and synthesize what they have learned in their program of study. Students prepare an academic portfolio with examples of work, an essay discussing each

goal and their work on the goal as evidence of their achievement of that goal. Segments of the portfolios are reviewed at least one communication professional external to the School faculty. A qualitative analysis and summary of results is compiled by the faculty of record for the course into a report for faculty review and inclusion in the annual assessment report.

2. Faculty annual review and analysis of student performances at Levels B, C, and D. Faculty for courses in Levels B, C, and D—for fall & spring of the previous year-- will meet towards the end of the academic year by (April 15) to provide a narrative analysis of student achievement or difficulties at each level. A summary of each meeting is provided to the Curriculum, Teaching, and Education Policy Committee (CTEP) for incorporation into faculty discussion of assessment and courses of action at the annual fall retreat. This process should be implemented by the Director.

Indirect Methods:

1. Student exit surveys (Conducted in each Senior Portfolio course to determine student perceptions of their program of study).
2. Alumni surveys (Conducted periodically to determine alumni perceptions of the value of their education and their professional and civic achievements).
3. Enrollment trends (Reviewed to identify patterns or emerging issues).
4. Retention and graduation rates (Reviewed to identify patterns or emerging issues).
5. Aggregate grade distribution (Reviewed to assess relationship between level of student performance and standards set for achievement of grades).
6. Student awards, prizes, placements, and admissions into graduate school (Summarized and reviewed to identify and build on strengths).
7. Administrator, UND faculty peer, and professionals survey (Conducted to determine perceptions of the quality of the program, concerns about the program, and student performance in non-communication classes and in the workplace).
8. Syllabi and assignment review (Reviewed to assess follow-through with incorporation of goals, assignments, and other courses of action identified by the faculty).

School of Communication graduates should be able to:

I. Access Information:

- A. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communication professions in which they work. (Supplements Goals 5,8)

Assessment: Faculty annual review of student performance in Level C. Students in Level C are expected to complete an academic paper of at least eight pages. (Direct Method #2)

- B. Assess information from diverse groups in a global society. (Supplements Goals 1,2,3,4)

Assessment: Survey faculty syllabi, especially Level C “Community” courses, for evidence of diversity emphasis (Indirect Method #8).

Assessment: Require students to include a specific entry in their portfolios that demonstrates that they accessed information from diverse groups to gain new perspectives on an issue or problem (Direct Method #1)

II. Analyze Information:

A. Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts, theories and principles in the use and presentation of images and information.

Assessment: Faculty annual review of student performance in Level C “Technology” using course work as indicators of their performance. (Direct Method #2)

B. Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
(Supplements Goals 4,8,10,12)

Assessment: faculty annual review of student performance in Level C “Information”. (Direct Method #2)

Assessment: Require students to include a specific entry in their portfolios that demonstrates that they understand the ethical implications of their chosen interests. (Direct method #1)

C. Think critically, creatively and independently. (Supplements Goals 7,9,12)

Assessment: Faculty annual review of student performance in Level C courses. (Direct Method #2)

III. Create Information:

A. Create written, visual and verbal projects that communicate effectively and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communication professions, audiences and purposes they serve, including marginalized populations who historically have had less access to means of expression and participation. (Supplements Goals 1,3,6,7,10,11)

Assessment: Faculty annual review of student performance in Level B “Information” courses. (Direct Method #2)

B. Apply tools and technologies, including possibilities that are alternatives to the mainstream media, appropriate for the communication professions in which they work. (Supplements Goals 11,12)

Assessment: Senior portfolios should demonstrate that students have mastered skills in at least two media forms, either from classwork or experiential learning, i.e. internships, etc. (Direct Method #1)

Assessment: Faculty annual review of student performance in Level B “Technology” courses. Direct Method #2)

Report of Evidence

An annual report to be compiled by the CTEP Committee for presentation to the faculty.

Direct Methods:

- Faculty, under the leadership of the Curriculum, Teaching, and Education Policies Committee, will discuss evidence annually. Faculty teaching in each Level will meet to review and discuss student performance in those Levels. A summary and analysis of student progress at each Level will be presented to the CTEP Committee by the end of the spring semester. This information will be reviewed and discussed at the School’s fall retreat where faculty will address concerns and discuss courses of action.
- A summary and analysis of graduating students’ level of achievement of each of the 12 Goals for Student Learning, as determined through the Senior Portfolio reports.

Indirect Methods:

- Student exit surveys implemented by the Senior Portfolio course instructor.
- Other appropriate indirect methods approved by the CTEP Committee.

To ensure that assessment of student learning is used to complete the loop of improvement of the curriculum and instruction, the annual report identifies courses of action for addressing ways that should improve student learning.

Courses of action might include the following:

- Additions, deletions, or modifications of individual courses
- Modifications in curricular requirements
- Development of specific areas of faculty competence
- Shifts in resources for staffing sections, hiring, or equipment
- Shifts in emphasis of goals and assignments across levels or within categories
- Raising standards of performance through grading practices and faculty expectations

Adopted 3/18/02