

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. The School is committed to serving all populations, with special emphasis on marginalized populations who historically have had less access to means of expression and participation. Student learning occurs in the context set forth in the School's mission:

The Mission of the School of Communication: The University of North Dakota School of Communication is a regional, national, and global leader in communication education, research, and outreach. The School of Communication provides comprehensive undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs.

The School of Communication teaches students the professional skills to make critically informed professional and life choices, use technology, and communicate ethically and effectively with diverse communities.

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, 2005-2007 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 integrated major, Communication, organized around the significant public issues of community, information, and technology. The curriculum is designed for student 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 careers and greater capacity to serve the public through continuing periods of change.

The 12 Goals for Student Learning are:Community

1. **Speech communities:** Students understand how language and communication processes create diverse communities.
2. **Diverse identities:** Students understand the role of community and identity (such as race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class and nationality) in how individuals see the world and others see them.
3. **Civic interactions.** Students understand the interactions of individuals, organizations, groups, social movements, and public officials and the conflicts and opportunities that can result.
4. **Critical problem-solving.** Students are able to use ethical strategies to analyze and address the communication problems and opportunities of individuals and groups.

Information

5. **Cultural knowledge.** Students understand the diverse and historically changing ways humans acquire, produce, and share knowledge about the world.
6. **Textual representation.** Students understand theories of textual construction and the legal and ethical considerations of representation.
7. **Interpretive frameworks.** Students understand the role of interpretation in how humans respond to messages and texts.
8. **Responsible message creation.** Students are able to research and evaluate information (including numerical and statistical evidence) and create and edit socially responsible oral, written and visual communication,

Technology

9. **Changing technologies.** Students understand the historical and contemporary context (political, economic, legal and social) of communication institutions and technologies.
10. **Media consequences.** Students understand the consequences for individuals and diverse communities of the use and content of communication media;
11. **Alternative models.** Students understand alternate possibilities for having access to, using, and arranging communication technologies and institutions.
12. **Ethical use.** Students are able 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 Academic Achievement. Senior Portfolio is a one-credit, Level E course required of all graduate seniors. Students review, integrate, and synthesize what they have learned in their program of study by preparing 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. The faculty member of record assesses student achievement of the 12 Goals for Student Learning. Sample portfolios are reviewed by communication professionals external to the School to provide input to faculty on the learning outcomes of the curriculum. A summary of results is prepared by the faculty instructor and provided to the Curriculum, Teaching, and Education Policy Committee for inclusion in its annual assessment report.
2. Level D Professional Achievement. Level D houses experiential learning courses where professional preparation is demonstrated through internships, practica, and individualized independent work. Instructors for each Level D course assess student achievement of the applied Goals 4, 8, and 12 and convey results to the CTEP committee for inclusion in its annual assessment report.

Indirect Methods:

1. Student exit surveys (Conducted in each Senior Portfolio course to determine student perceptions of their program of study). Results are reported annually by the instructor to the CTEP committee for inclusion in its annual assessment report.
2. Enrollment, retention, and graduate rates. (Reviewed to identify patterns or emerging issues). Results are collected by the Director and reported annually to the CTEP committee for inclusion in its annual assessment report.
3. Aggregate grade distribution (Reviewed to assess relationship between level of student performance and standards set for achievement of grades).
4. Student awards, prizes, and other achievements. Results are collected by the Director and reported annually to the CTEP committee for inclusion in its annual assessment report.
5. Alumni surveys (Conducted every 5 years to determine alumni perceptions of the value of their education, their professional and civic achievements, career placements, and admissions into graduate school). The survey is initiated by the Director in consultation with the faculty, and results are reported to the CTEP committee for inclusion in its annual assessment report.
6. UND Administrator, UND faculty peer, and professionals survey (Conducted every 5 years to determine perceptions of the quality of the program, concerns about the program, and student performance in non-communication classes and in the workplace). The survey is initiated by the Director in consultation with the faculty, and results are reported to the CTEP committee for inclusion in its annual assessment report.
7. Syllabi and assignment review (Reviewed to assess follow-through with incorporation of goals, assignments, and other courses of action identified by the faculty). A review of one of the categories of community, information, and technology is conducted each year on a rotating basis by the CTEP committee for inclusion in its annual assessment report.

Report of Evidence

An annual assessment report is compiled by the CTEP Committee for presentation to the faculty for discussion and action in the fall semester. The report will include direct evidence from the Senior Portfolio and Level D and indirect evidence from the student exit survey; enrollment, retention, and graduation rates; aggregated grade distribution; student awards, prizes, and other achievements; and the syllabi and assignment review for one of the categories of community, information, or technology.

Every 5 years beginning with fall 2008, the report will include survey results from alumni and from UND administrators, UND faculty peer, and professionals. The report also will include a summary of actions taken in the previous year as a result of faculty recommendations from the assessment results.

Faculty will discuss the findings, additional observations about student learning, and courses of action to be taken to ensure that assessment of student learning is used to complete the loop of improvement of the curriculum and instruction.

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 8/20/07