

A.Q. Miller
School of Journalism and Mass Communications
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
2004-2005 ACADEMIC YEAR

Background:

The assessment plan implemented by the A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications in 2003 established school-wide learning outcomes that mirror the student learning outcomes required by Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). ACEJMC and the Miller School have listed 11 general student learning outcomes (SLOs) upon which students will be assessed:

1. Understand and apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications;
4. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
5. Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
6. Think critically, creatively and independently;
7. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
8. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
9. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
10. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts; and
11. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

The plan calls for measurement of 10 of the eleven SLOs over a four-year period such that each standard will be measured at least once during the cycle. SLO 8, which directs the School to assess student writing quality, will be assessed annually, with writing samples from one of the school's four sequences to be reviewed each year over the four-year cycle.

Assessment Plan for 2004-2005:

The plan established for the 2004-05 academic year stipulated SLOs 7 and 10 to be measured, as well as the SLO 8 writing standard, which assessed writing from the School's Electronic Media sequence. Specifically, the SLOs mandate that Miller School students should meet the following objectives:

Learning Outcome 7: Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

Learning Outcome 8: Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

Learning Outcome 10: Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

A sample of student work was taken from designated classes as described below and evaluated by faculty members who do not teach the designated classes.

Additionally, the Curriculum Committee, the designated group to plan and coordinate the Miller school's assessment strategies, inaugurated an on-line exit survey conducted anonymously among the School's graduating seniors. The results of that survey are indicated later in this report.

Direct Measure of SLOs 7 and 10:

Direct measures of assessment of Learning Outcomes 7 and 10 were conducted within MC 595 Mass Communications Research Methods, a required undergraduate course in which both outcomes are pertinent. Rubrics, which were originally developed by the instructor for grading purposes, also served for the assessment of student learning in the course. The rubrics assessed student learning on a 5-point scale (poor, weak, average, good, excellent) of eight dimensions of individual student research proposals. Students chose one of five research questions provided by the instructor upon which to develop proposals. All of the evaluated rubrics for the class taught during the Spring 2005 semester were included in the measure; mean scores for each were calculated and statistically analyzed. The rubrics and the means for each are enumerated below.

Rubric:	Mean	Mode:
1. Write two correct hypotheses.	3.7	4.0
2. Identify and describe the independent and dependent variables.	3.5	3.0
3. Provide operationalizations for the variables.	3.6	4.0
4. Method selected was appropriate for the hypotheses.	4.2	5.0
5. Proper sample method is selected and size and universe are discussed.	3.8	4.0
6. Describe data collection and coding.	3.8	4.0
7. Describe data analysis, possibly with statistics.	3.4	3.0
8. Describe the report contents.	3.7	4.0

n = 46

The mean and modes for each rubric indicate that students were apparently able to best identify the correct research method to be employed for each of the research questions. The means and modes were lowest for rubrics 2 and 7, although both of these scores were above an arbitrary midpoint of 2.5, given a five-point scale. Indeed, all the means for the rubrics were above the midpoint, indicating that student learning of these outcomes was generally solid.

An additional measure of Learning Outcome 10 was conducted by reviewing worksheets done by students in groups, the goal of which was to guide students through proper

sampling procedures. A score of "25" on this assignment was "perfect." Of the five worksheets analyzed, the scores ranged from a low of 19 to a high score of 24.

RESEARCH CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS

As a major purpose of assessment is to improve student learning, the Curriculum Committee should suggest to instructors of the Mass Communications Research class that they place special emphasis on material related to understanding research variables, their definitions, and application of data analysis, especially regarding choice of correct statistics for particular types of data. Apparently students understand and are able to apply research concepts and practices as conducted in mass communications.

It can be concluded from these measures that students are learning research methods appropriate to mass communications and are being introduced to and are capable of applying the proper statistical concepts, including understanding data analysis and sampling techniques.

Direct Measure of SLO 8:

Direct measures of Student Learning Outcome 8 (writing) were conducted using samples of written work from MC 580 Video Techniques, the highest-numbered course in the School's Electronic Media sequence, with a set of rubrics applied. The writing samples included stories, critiques, and scripts. Rubrics used a five-point Likert scale and were tailored to each sample to match the purpose of the writing.

A news story assignment made up one sample and four rubrics were applied. These are enumerated below along with the means and modes for each.

Rubric:	Mean:	Mode:
Writing appropriately addresses target audiences	4.4	5.0
Writing reflects appropriate organization and use of prescribed formats	3.7	4.0
Writing reflects good integration of source materials	3.9	4.0
Writing has proper grammar and mechanics	3.7	3.0
n = 30		

Rubric:	Mean:	Mode:
Writing reflects important insights and ideas	4.0	4.0
Writing reflects appropriate organization and use of prescribed formats	4.2	4.0
Writing has proper grammar and mechanics	3.8	4.0
n = 32		

WRITING CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS

As the tables above show, students in MC 580 apparently have grasped the concepts of understanding audiences, the use of appropriate formats, and integration of source materials, as well as reflecting insights and ideas. Students performed slightly worse on

proper grammar and mechanics, although, it should be noted that both the means and modes for these rubrics is higher than an arbitrary midpoint. Instruction in that particular course apparently is meeting the stated goals of the course, although some extra emphasis on grammar, mechanics and organization might be appropriate.

Student Exit Survey Questionnaire:

The on-line exit survey for graduating seniors was designed in 2004 by the School's Curriculum Committee as an indirect measure to: 1) determine student perceptions of their mastery of all student learning outcomes and 2) to seek feedback on other issues, such as curriculum, teaching quality, advising and overall student satisfaction with their experiences at Kansas State University.

To administer the survey, graduating seniors were contacted and asked to visit the student exit survey site and fill out the questionnaire.

The first four questions sought basic information about the respondents including their primary sequence of study and degree path (Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science), sex and overall grade point average.

Question 5 asked respondents of the likelihood that they will enter a profession strongly related to journalism and mass communications.

Question 6 focused on two areas: 1) student satisfaction with their sequence, curriculum, faculty, advising, registration and facilities; and 2) their perceptions of comprehension of the School's 11 learning objectives. A five-point Likert scale was used for collecting responses to each question. The survey form also allowed students to enter verbal comments pertaining to their experiences at K-State.

Exit Survey Quantitative Feedback:

The following is a compilation of the data from the student exit survey. A total of 72 out of 103 possible respondents completed the survey. Two possible respondents opted out.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF LIKELIHOOD TO ENTER PROFESSION

What is the likelihood that you will enter a profession strongly related to journalism and mass communications?

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Very Likely	37	51.39
Likely	17	23.61
Don't Know	12	16.67
Unlikely	4	5.56
Very Unlikely	2	2.78

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE SCHOOL

The A. Q. Miller School has prepared me well to enter the profession.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	9	12.5
Agree	30	41.67
Neutral	25	34.72
Disagree	8	11.11
Strongly Disagree	0	0

I think the A. Q. Miller School offers high quality undergraduate education.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	9	12.5
Agree	33	45.67
Neutral	21	29.17
Disagree	9	12.5
Strongly Agree	0	0

I think the school's curriculum had an appropriate focus on theory.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	4	5.56
Agree	29	40.28
Neutral	30	41.67
Disagree	9	12.5
Strongly Disagree	0	0

I think the curriculum had an appropriate focus on skills building.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	10	13.89
Agree	29	40.28
Neutral	14	19.44
Disagree	16	22.22
Strongly Disagree	3	4.17

I was satisfied that I had good options for JMC elective courses.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	11	15.28
Agree	30	41.67
Neutral	13	18.06
Disagree	13	18.06
Strongly Disagree	5	6.94

I think that faculty care about the students.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	22	30.56
Agree	37	51.39
Neutral	8	11.11
Disagree	3	4.17
Strongly Disagree	2	2.78

I was satisfied that students were supportive of each other.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	21	29.17
Agree	35	48.61
Neutral	12	16.67
Disagree	4	5.56
Strongly Disagree	0	0

The system for advising is functional.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	7	9.72
Agree	23	31.94
Neutral	18	25
Disagree	16	22.22
Strongly Disagree	8	11.11

The system for registration is functional.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	10	13.89
Agree	27	37.50
Neutral	19	26.39
Disagree	15	20.83
Strongly Disagree	1	1.39

INFORMATION ABOUT FACILITIES AND COURSE AVAILABILITY

The computing labs offered proper equipment.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	10	13.89
Agree	19	26.39
Neutral	12	16.67
Disagree	20	27.78
Strongly Disagree	11	15.28

The computing labs offered proper software.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	12	16.67
Agree	35	48.61
Neutral	8	11.11
Disagree	14	19.44
Strongly Disagree	3	4.17

The computing labs had adequate open hours.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	9	12.5
Agree	30	41.67
Neutral	18	25
Disagree	14	19.44
Strongly Disagree	3	4.17

I had reasonable access to JMC equipment such as cameras, audio recorders and other equipment.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	11	15.28
Agree	35	48.61
Neutral	20	27.78
Disagree	5	6.94
Strongly Disagree	1	1.39

The physical facilities offered a positive educational setting.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	4	5.56
Agree	24	33.33
Neutral	17	23.61
Disagree	16	22.22
Strongly Disagree	11	15.28

Classes I needed were available in the semesters I needed them.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	13	18.06
Agree	24	33.33
Neutral	17	23.61
Disagree	15	20.83
Strongly Disagree	6	8.33

PERCEPTIONS OF THE SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

I am confident that I understand and apply the First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	23	31.94
Agree	35	48.61
Neutral	12	16.67
Disagree	2	2.78
Strongly Disagree	0	0

I am confident that I understand the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communication.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	18	25
Agree	33	45.83
Neutral	18	25
Disagree	2	2.78
Strongly Disagree	1	1.39

I am confident that I understand diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	15	20.83
Agree	38	52.78
Neutral	14	19.44
Disagree	5	6.94
Strongly Disagree	0	0

I am confident that I understand concepts and can apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	11	15.28
Agree	42	58.33
Neutral	14	19.44
Disagree	5	6.94
Strongly Disagree	0	0

I am confident that I can work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.

REPSONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	31	43.06
Agree	34	47.22
Neutral	4	5.56
Disagree	1	1.39
Strongly Disagree	1	1.39
No Response	1	1.39

I am confident that I think critically, creatively and independently.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	35	48.61
Agree	29	40.28
Neutral	5	6.94
Disagree	2	2.78
Strongly Disagree	0	0
No Response	1	1.39

I am confident that I can conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communication profession.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	18	25
Agree	40	55.56
Neutral	6	8.33
Disagree	7	9.72
Strongly Disagree	1	1.39

I am confident that I can write correctly and clearly in form and styles appropriate for the communication profession, audiences and purposes they serve.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	29	40.28
Agree	34	47.22
Neutral	7	9.72
Disagree	2	2.78
Strongly Disagree	0	0

I am confident that I can critically evaluate my own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	24	33.33
Agree	38	52.78
Neutral	7	9.72
Disagree	2	2.78
Strongly Disagree	0	0
No Response	1	1.39

I am confident that I can apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	14	19.44
Agree	31	43.06
Neutral	15	20.83
Disagree	9	12.5
Strongly Disagree	3	4.17

I am confident that I can apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communication profession.

RESPONSE	(N)	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	25	34.72
Agree	33	45.83
Neutral	11	15.28
Disagree	2	2.78
Strongly Disagree	0	0
No Response	1	1.39

Exit Survey Qualitative Feedback:

STUDENTS' WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments tended to focus on three areas: curriculum, advising and facilities, which tended to support the quantitative findings above.

In terms of curriculum, graduating seniors tended to focus on the need for more software training. Although students receive the basics of the software packages they are expected to know in industry settings, comments tended to reflect that limited class and lab software applications might not be sufficient to help students develop adequate mastery of the software. Some advertising graduates reflected a need for a more specific focus for advertising majors, perhaps putting advertising in two tracks, creative and planning. Other general curriculum comments tended to focus on the need for more elective courses to be offered each semester.

Students had generally positive comments about pre-major advising and the helpfulness of the office staff in facilitating the advising and enrollment process. Students expressed some concern regarding faculty advising, citing such problems as advising errors and faculty apathy towards advising as major problems.

A majority of the comments focused on facilities, including the overall deteriorating physical condition of Kedzie Hall. Equipment problems were also heavily mentioned, including outmoded and outdated broadcasting equipment in McCain Auditorium.

"Closing the Loop" and Recommended Action:

In sum, both direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes and the senior exit survey indicate that the Miller School tends to do a good job overall in meeting objectives in the classes target for assessment. Additionally, the senior exit survey indicates high marks for all stated learning objectives.

However, the assessment procedure does indicate some areas of potential concern for the School's Curriculum Committee and the Director and faculty at large:

- Direct assessment of the core research class indicates that students possibly need more concentration in defining research variables in terms of defining and applying them.
- Research instructors may want to spend more time concentrating on the choice of appropriate statistical analysis tools for particular types of data.
- Assessment of writing data in the video production course indicates that while students master the skills of story construction, grammar and organization skills tend to be low. The Electronic Media sequence may wish to review writing standards and indicate points in the curriculum where a review of basic grammar is appropriate.
- While indirect assessment tends to support student satisfaction in the assessed areas as well as the eleven SLOs addressed in the School's document, other issues relating to student learning have been identified here, namely student concern for more electives and the need for greater concentration in software applications. Advertising students indicated a need for a possible two-tiered sub curriculum in the sequence focusing on either planning or creative tracks.
- Finally, the indirect measures seem to indicate student concern about the School's advising procedures and the condition of learning facilities, with comments focused on the state of Kedzie Hall and the School's failure to upgrade equipment and technology. While the facilities question is largely a monetary issue, advising is an issue that can be addressed within the School's present resources. The School's Director, the Associate Director for Undergraduate Studies and the Curriculum Committee should work to improve the process through better communication among faculty and students regarding the curriculum and the overall advising process.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

The School has already begun addressing some communication problems that diminished the effectiveness of the overall undergraduate advising process last year. In November 2005, the following measures were taken:

- The School's web site was updated to reflect curriculum changes and help provide students with a better idea of course sequencing and how the overall journalism curriculum is constructed.
- A printed curriculum guide that explains the process is being published and will be available to students and faculty in time for summer and Fall 2006 advising, which will begin in March 2006.
- An easy-to-use advising guide for faculty members who do student advising has been developed. The guide provides the proper sequencing for journalism classes

at a glance and specifies the prerequisites that students must meet in order to advance through the School's curriculum.