

REPORT OF THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE, AY2020-21

A. **Program Information**

Department: A. Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Program: B.A. and B.S. in Mass Communications

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Introduction and summary

To assess means to measure validity of student learning outcomes (SLOs) in coursework and employ findings in improving curriculum and instruction. Titled Assessment of Learning Outcomes, Standard 9 of ACEJMC mandates that, “The unit regularly assesses student learning and uses results to improve curriculum and instruction,” and that, in doing so, it closes a loop with Standard 2, titled Curriculum and Instruction. Standard 2 reads: “The unit provides a curriculum and instruction, whether onsite or online, that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society.”¹ The assessment process is regulated equally by Kansas State University and the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC).

This report presents findings of direct and indirect measures of the 12 ACEJMC “professional values and competencies” (a.k.a. SLOs) for the academic year 2020-2021, and subsequent recommendations, considering the fact that the pre- and post-test was administered to not the same but different classes. A total of 46 valid responses to the post-test were received from seniors, 39 in spring 2021 and 7 in fall 2020, covering multiple sections of MC580 and MC581. The survey was available to all participants in those sections, across both semesters. Tabulated results are presented below as “Table 1. SLO Means, Standard Deviations, and Frequencies combined for Spring 2020 and Fall 2021.”

Fall 2020 enrollments partially explained the steady numbers of the SLOs relative to AY2019-20. Of the 95 classes listed in the fall 2020 schedule, including online and graduate classes, fewer than 30 saw an enrollment of 80% or more, fewer than 50 saw an enrollment of 70% or more, and the remainder saw an enrollment of 50% or less. The classes were a combination of distance, in-person, and hybrid in keeping with the university policies related to

¹ “A guide to assessment of learning outcomes for ACEJMC accreditation, 2012,” Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, <http://www.acejmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ACEJMC-Guide-to-Assessment-of-Learning-Outcomes.pdf>

COVID-19. Many of the classes of poor enrollment, not surprisingly, continued to coincide with the relatively poor scores evident in the SLOs of “technology” and “writing communication.” They included, to offer a partial list of sections, MC426 (zero enrollment in one section each fall 2020 and spring 2021), MC589 (zero in one section each in fall and spring), MC200 (zero in one section each in fall and spring), MC166 (four in each section in fall and spring respectively), and MC385 (total of 24 students during fall 2020 and 20 students during spring 2021). While the SLO measures were strong overall in 2020-21, SLOs related primarily to writing and technology continue to present a concern that might be addressed by rationalizing courses and marshalling GTAs, particularly in light of the proposed joint curriculum that will mark the school merging with the program in Communication Studies.

The report submits actionable recommendations by the bold-typeface phrase **ought to**. In order to improve some of the relatively poor SLO scores, the school perhaps **ought to** monitor the number of sections and invest more resources to enroll and retain students in the sections of poorer enrolment evident in Table 2, “Enrolled and Waitlisted by Class.” As part of curricular reform related to the proposed merger with Communication Studies, the school **ought to** consider administering quizzes in writing-academy courses MC280 (both sections), MC221 and MC200 to ascertain standard deviations in writing and knowledge competence. Offering writing tutoring in those courses may be necessary by, perhaps, deploying graduate teaching assistants. Additionally, doing a combined-cohort test within two SLOs, “writing communication” and “math skills,” would determine if there is any need to more efficiently combine teaching resources. Finally, the school may want to factor-analyze the writing-academy quiz questions for validity.

Table 1. Number of students participated each semester

Semester	Number of Students	Percent
Spring 2021	39	84.8
Fall 2020	7	15.2
Total	46	100.0

Table 2. Number of students participated from each class

Class Participated	Number of Students	Percent
MC580 Storytelling Across Platforms	1	2.2
MC581 Strategic Communication Campaigns	45	97.8
Total	46	100.0

B. Outcome Report

Include the following information for each outcome assessed this year:

(Note any non-assessed outcomes in the future plans area under Section C)

Assessment Method(s) *(must include at least one direct measure)*

The A.Q. Miller School concluded its annual structured assessment of student learning for AY2020-21 in summer 2021 across, once again, the 12 professional values and competencies (a.k.a. SLOs) of ACEJMC consistently with requirements of the K-State Office of Assessment. The assessment included tests in four writing-academy and two capstone sections, covering pre-majors and seniors. It was designed and administered by the assessment committee with a goal to measure validity of SLOs in coursework and to employ the results to improve curriculum and instruction.

A pre- and post-test was administered to pre-majors and (a separate class of) majors in both the sequences, Journalism and Digital Media (JDM) and Strategic Communication (SC). Results revealed areas that demanded attention that **ought to** be discussed as part of the merged curriculum with Communication Studies. Written communication (mean 2.3; standard deviation 1.02), critical evaluation (2.2; 0.77), theory in mass communication (1.5; 0.86), freedom of speech (1.8; 1.09), global diversity (2.15; 1.2) and math & statistics (2.04; 1.01) presented returns of most concern. As part of the merger with Communication Studies, the school would do well to invest more curricular resources, including teaching resources, related to these SLOs. Technology (3.0; 1.05) and ethics (3.1; 0.87) returned improved numbers relative to the previous year.

Direct measures used in AY2020-21:

Pre- and post- test ("assessment exam"): Student competencies in each of the 12 learning areas are demonstrated by senior performances on a 50-item assessment exam, administered in our senior-level capstone classes, MC580 Storytelling Across Platforms (8 respondents) and MC581 Strategic Communications Campaigns (38 respondents), as part of a class requirement in the fall and spring semesters. We contrast senior scores with baseline data obtained from pre-majors, who took the same exam as part of a class requirement in MC010 JMC Pre-Major Orientation, in order to gain an appreciation for how our curriculum potentially impacts students in our program.

Table 3. Average points for each SLO (N = 46)

	S1 - Freedom of Speech	S2 - Historical Context	S3 - Domestic Diversity	S4 - Global Diversity
Mean	1.85	2.65	3.07	2.15
Std. Deviation	1.09	1.12	.83	1.21
Minimum	.00	.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Note. Each correct answer received 1 point; 0 here means 0 point, 1.85 for 1.85 points, etc. All SOLs asked 4 questions (4 points maximum).

Table 4. Average points for each SOL (N = 46)

	S5 - Theories	S5.1 Theories - Design	S5.2 Theories - MC	S6 - Ethics
Mean	3.70	2.17	1.52	3.11
Std. Deviation	1.17	.64	.86	.88
Minimum	1.00	.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	6.00*	4.00	4.00	4.00

*Note. Each correct answer received 1 point; 0 here means 0 point, 3.70 for 3.70 points, etc. All SOLs asked 4 questions (4 points maximum) except for S5-Theories with 6 questions/points.

Table 5. Average points for each SLO (N = 46)

	S7 - Critical Thinking	S8 - Research Skills	S9 - Written Communication	S10 - Critical Evaluation
Mean	3.00	2.85	2.28	2.17
Std. Deviation	.89	.94	1.03	.77
Minimum	.00	.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Note. Each correct answer received 1 point; 0 here means 0 point, 3.00 for 3.00 points, etc. All SOLs asked 4 questions (4 points maximum).

Table 6. Average points for each SLO (N = 46)

	S11 - Math & Statistics	S12 - Technology
Mean	2.04	3.00
Std. Deviation	1.01	1.05
Minimum	.00	.00
Maximum	4.00	4.00

Note. Each correct answer received 1 point; 0 here means 0 point, 2.04 for 2.04 points, etc. All SOLs asked 4 questions (4 points maximum).

Internship evaluation: When the school began using data collected from on-site evaluators as a direct assessment tool in fall 2018, it found that not all 12 SLOs could be universally applied by students or reviewed by evaluators in a workplace setting. Relaxed prerequisites for internships meant that an increasing number of students were interning before they had the benefit of taking key knowledge classes such as MC466 Law of Mass Communication and MC396 Research in Mass Communication, whose coursework could be represented in internship skillsets but was not prerequisite for the internship. Since then, internship evaluators have filled out an online Qualtrics survey listing operationalized examples of skills in those learning areas, rating them from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” with an option for “not observed.”

Indirect measures used in AY2020-21:

Two formal indirect measures were employed, the “senior satisfaction survey” and the “alumni satisfaction survey,” both of which were administered annually by the university Office of Assessment. The senior and alumni surveys asked respondents to evaluate school effectiveness in each of the 12 SLOs. Additionally, informal indirect measures were employed: anecdotal feedback from the surveys, observations expressed by faculty and academic advisers about perceived competencies of seniors and the overall strengths and weaknesses of our curriculum and other related services that affect student perceptions of learning. Indirect measures, however, are not offered in reflection under every SLO.

Senior satisfaction survey: It had a response rate of roughly 33 % percent, as only 24 of the School’s 79 graduating seniors participated in the overall survey. The survey was administered over Summer 2020, Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 to students who had applied or were approved for graduation in those semesters. This was above the College of Arts and Sciences response rate (33.4%) and below the university’s (35.3%).

Alumni satisfaction survey: The survey was administered during fall 2020. Only seven of 96 recipients completed the questionnaire yielding a response rate of 7.3%, which was below that of the overall university (10.7 %) and roughly equal to the College of Arts and Sciences (11.8%). The low response rate is likely due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated impact.