Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet

Assessment reports are due the 1st Wednesday after the Fall Term
Email to: assessment@unlv.edu

Program Information:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program Assessed</th>
<th>Journalism and Media Studies, BA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Greenspun College of Urban Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Joel Lieberman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment Coordinator</td>
<td>Stephen Bates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>12/22/2016</td>
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Contact Person for This Report

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<thead>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Stephen Bates</th>
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<td>Email</td>
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Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?

Please limit the narrative portion of your report to no more than four pages. You may attach appendices with data, tables, charts, or other materials as needed. Please explain the relevant conclusions from any appendices in your narrative. Please contact the Office of Academic Assessment if you have questions or need assistance.
2016 Assessment Report

B.A. Degree
Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 21, 2016
Assessment Coordinator:
Stephen Bates, stephen.bates@unlv.edu

Student Learning Outcomes

Our learning outcomes are taken from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC):

1. Analyze and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the rights to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;

2. Analyze the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping journalism, media, and communications organizations;

3. Analyze the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to journalism, media, and communications organizations;

4. Analyze concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;

5. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles in journalism, media, and communications organizations to 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 professional journalism, media, and communications organizations;

8. Craft and deliver effective messages in oral, written, and/or visual forms, as appropriate to the journalism, media, or communications profession in which they plan to work;

9. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy, fairness, clarity, style, and grammar;

10. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;

11. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the journalism, media, or communications profession in which they plan to work;

12. Prepare collaborative projects appropriate for the journalism, media, or communications profession in which they plan to work.
Learning Outcome Assessed in 2016

In 2016, we tested the ACEJMC learning outcome that overlaps with UNLV’s Inquiry and Critical Thinking UULO,

6. Think critically, creatively, and independently

We employed a multiple-choice test of critical thinking, which touched on most of the specific outcomes listed for UNLV’s Inquiry and Critical UULO, particularly

3. Use quantitative and qualitative methods, including the ability to recognize assumptions, draw inferences, make deductions, and interpret information to analyze problems in context, and then draw conclusions.

4. Recognize the complexity of problems, and identify different perspectives from which problems and questions can be viewed.

5. Evaluate and report on conclusions, including discussing the basis for and strength of findings, and identify areas where further inquiry is needed.

6. Identify, analyze, and evaluate reasoning, and construct and defend reasonable arguments and explanations.

Assessment Methods

We decided to use a multiple-choice test as a quantitative method.

We initially explored professionally designed tests of critical thinking, but Lindsay Couzens, the assistant director of academic assessment, told us that UNLV does not have licenses for any such tests. Of fee-based tests, she recommended against the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP); and she said the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT) is skewed toward the physical sciences.

Accordingly, we developed a 20-question test of critical thinking in-house and administered it in several classes in spring, summer, and fall. We chose not to follow a single cohort. Because UNLV students advance at different rates, we also did not distinguish between first- and second-semester students in a given year.

We use a variety of other measures as well, which vary from year to year:

- focus group data
- surveys of self-reported knowledge
- tests
- portfolios
- students’ reflections on their learning
- senior exit surveys
- grades and grading rubrics
- graduation rates
- employment
- evaluations by internship supervisors
Quantitative Results and Program Response

**Overall:** On the 20-question test of critical thinking, students achieved the following average scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>16</td>
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Sophomores, for whom we had the fewest results, scored below freshmen. Otherwise, scores followed students’ years in college. Juniors outscored freshmen and sophomores, and seniors outscored freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, though the junior-senior difference was modest.

We administered the test using Scantron cards, which were hand sorted by the student’s year of study and then scored. Because of the number of responses (more than 300) and the limitations of Scantron scoring, we were unable to make full use of the demographic information that students submitted.

We did manually extract demographic data on a small group of seniors who took the test in fall 2016 in two classes, JOUR 401 “The First Amendment and Society” and JOUR 435 “Mass Communication Research Methods.” We found few differences between the students with the highest scores in each class (ten students total) and those with the lowest scores (nine students total). Ethnicity, sex, GPA, and parental education all were roughly the same in each group. Compared to the highest-scoring students in this very small sample, students in the lowest-scoring group were more likely to be principally interested in television rather than in print, integrated-marketing communication, radio, or visual.

The JMS faculty has begun exploring ways to enhance students’ critical thinking. One approach under discussion is to improve students’ skills of analysis and verification by teaching them to distinguish reliable news coverage from so-called fake news, a particularly timely issue.

Other Results and Program Response

In 2015, an external review and a survey of JMS students recommended more skills classes, more classes taught by practitioners, and other real-world experiences for students. Our response is ongoing, including the following:

**Classes:** We are adding classes in audio production and social media. JOUR 435 “Mass Communication Research Methods” now incorporates data journalism resources developed by Nicar/IRE.

**Faculty:** Two highly experienced journalists joined the program as visiting lecturers in fall 2016: Charles Zobell, the former managing editor of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, and Greg Blake Miller, the former editor of *Vegas Seven*. In addition, a highly experienced magazine writer will join the program as a visiting lecturer for the spring 2017 semester: Amanda Fortini, whose work has appeared in the *New Yorker, Elle, Rolling Stone*, and the *Paris Review*. We are exploring the
possibility of hiring another magazine writer too. Finally, the former photo editor of the Las Vegas Review-Journal, Jim Laurie, has joined the program as a part-time instructor.

Curriculum: The JMS faculty has approved a wholesale revision of the undergraduate curriculum for implementation in 2017. The new curriculum reduces the number of required classes, so that students can take more skills-based electives.

Opportunities for professional experience: In 2016, 103 students served internships in radio, television, print journalism, advertising, public relations, and social media. The majority of those internships were served in Southern Nevada, with several out-of-market placements in New York, Washington, D.C., Hawaii, and Southern California.

Opportunities to cover breaking news: JMS students took full advantage of the presidential debate at UNLV and the election.

- Focusing on the debate and the election, students in JOUR 310 “Advanced Reporting” filed more than 100 articles on the Storify platform.
- In JOUR 313 “Photojournalism,” students covered the debate. Their work was uploaded to a new site, Rebellens, which had more than 2,000 unique views in its first two days.
- Students in two parallel classes combined efforts to produce and promote TV coverage of the debate and the election. A special-topics class, JOUR 490 “Debate and Election Coverage,” created and staffed multiple social-network platforms and promoted the live coverage. On the production side, students from the newscast Studio G worked with the staff of UNLV-TV to provide three hours of live debate coverage, including interviews from “spin alley.” Three weeks later, the same group provided four hours of live coverage of the election, including a block of time in Spanish.
- Students in an audio class were able to interview political operatives for newscasts. Two students were given access to the media center, where they interviewed surrogates for the candidates, and the debate hall, where they broadcast live pre- and post-debate coverage.

Opportunities for students in photography: The JMS program plans to launch a student photo competition in 2017.

Other skills enhancement: In 2015 and 2016, several students participated in MediaShift Hackathons at Arizona State University and the University of Southern California.

UNLV senior exit survey: Unfortunately, results for JMS seniors were not readily available.

Lessons: Assessment

Our quantitative assessment focused solely on critical thinking using multiple-choice word problems. Future assessments might examine students’ understanding of numerical and statistical concepts, as well as discipline-specific knowledge of history, theory, and research methods.

It would be advantageous in the future to use professionally designed tests of critical thinking, even at some cost to UNLV. For all multiple-choice assessment tests, in addition, it would be helpful to have access to a more sophisticated technology than Scantron cards. Currently, we are unable to compare different demographic subgroups other than by hand-sorting cards.