

Program Assessment

Program Name: Journalism Program Department: Communication and Media

Assessment Year: 2005

Plan Contributors: Robert Miraldi, Howard Good, Donna Flayhan, Pat Sullivan, Robert Miller

Step One : Who are you and how do you do what you do?

I. A. *Mission Statement: (Who are you and what do you do?)*

The Journalism Program is a print-oriented news program that is geared to providing students with the foundation skills that lead to a career in news or public relations. Ethical values surrounding the role and function of the news professional are stressed. The Program also emphasizes the history, traditions, laws and literature of the news profession. In addition, the Program tries to impart lifelong values that citizens and media consumers need in a democratic society.

I.B. *Scope of your program: (What are the boundaries of your program?)*

The Journalism Program emphasizes the development of skills needed for a career in news and the inculcation of the critical thinking skills that makes for thoughtful newgatherers and commentators on civic life.

The primary orientation of the Program is towards the print media, especially newspapers and magazines.

However, increasingly the Program has moved toward an accommodation with the convergence of the news media and the explosion of the Internet. We have a large number of Public Relations and Radio-TV Production and Management majors in our classes.

Nonetheless, the Program continues to teach traditional news writing and news gathering values in its sequence of practical classes. There is also an editing sequence that stresses the management of newsrooms, editing of stories for publication, and the design of news pages.

We do not cover writing news for broadcast or the Internet or writing for Public Relations, although the skills taught in our sequence can easily be adapted to other media platforms.

I. C. *What activities/processes contribute to the program? (How you do what you do?)*

Students learn to gather, evaluate and write news in four practical news classes.

All practical classes are taught in classrooms with computer stations that are all Internet connected with a high-speed laser printer available.

Three of our news classes (Journalism 1, Journalism 2, Feature Writing) are four credits and include extra time for students to work in simulated newsroom and deadline situations.

Students learn editing and design skills in two classes (Copyediting and Layout and Advanced Editing), One of these classes is four credits and allows extra time to work on editing exercises.

All students must take an introductory newswriting class (Journalism 1) before entering any of the other news and editing classes. This class introduces skills and the news mentality.

Classes that follow Journalism 1 are geared to introduce new story forms, as well as improve skills taught in Journalism 1. The goal is for students to steadily add to and improve their skills as the sequence progresses.

In Journalism 2 students are assigned “beats” or areas of coverage on the campus. They develop stories from these beats and write extensively, both in and out of class.

In Public Affairs Reporting students leave campus to write about local, state and national public policy issues, including elections, politics, and all ranges of government activities.

In Feature Writing students expand on the basic news forms and learn to write human interest or “feature” stories that are similar to magazine stories.

Students are required to study various theoretically oriented areas of journalism that attempt to help students to understand the role and function of news in a democratic society that places primary value on information and free and open debate.

Press in America explores the history and traditions – both good and bad – of the news media.

Literature of Journalism finds the links to a creative form of nonfiction and introduces new and innovative ways of envisioning a news story.

Media Ethics helps students confront the ethical dilemmas in the news profession *before* they enter a newsroom.

And Media Law places news in the context of the American tradition of free expression, as well as teaches students what their rights are – and are not – under the First amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Students are required to work for credit in the field as a supervised news intern. Students can work at different news locations once they have completed three news or news-related courses. In a typical year we will have 20 to 30 students in internships in locations ranging from New York City to Albany.

Regular visits to campus by professional journalists complement what takes place in the news classes. Of particular note is the annual James H. Ottaway Sr. Professorship, which brings to campus a distinguished journalist to teach on campus. In its five years we have brought to campus three Pulitzer Prize winners and one of America’s foremost literary journalists.

Step Two: Where are you heading, what performances show your progress?

II. A. *What are your priority goals for the next five years (5-8 total)?*

1. *What do you want graduates to know? Be able to do? To believe?*

Graduates need:

- To be able think critically about a range of public policy issues.
- To be able to write clearly, cogently, and correctly.
- To be able to understand and write in a variety of news style formats.
- To understand the basic principles of editing and design for print or online publications.
- To be able to gather news and be able to interview, locate public documents, use the Internet, and evaluate sources and the information they provide.
- To be aware of ethical values and understand how to make the thorny choices that face professionals.
- To understand the basic protections offered newsgatherers by the First Amendment and the legal risk journalists often face.
- To understand the traditions, history and literature of the news profession.
- To have experienced work in a professional setting in either news or public relations.

2. *What goals do you have for your program? (e.g. out of class experiences, advising, curriculum, faculty development)*

1. Better integrate theory and practical classes.
2. Find more regular outlets for publication for students as a byproduct of newswriting classes, including possibly connecting the newswriting classes with campus publications.
3. Find ways to move the program toward integrating Internet technology into both theory and practical classes.
4. Find ways to better integrate journalism courses with radio/television and public relations programs, such as through a shared curriculum with the radio/TV and public relations programs.
5. Clarify and align the curriculum of the newswriting and other journalism

classes, with the goal of deciding where one class begins and the others end and where research assignments best work and belong.

6. Maintain better relationships with graduates in the journalism profession with help from the college's administrative staff.

7. Provide better information for students on internship outlets and possibilities.

8. Improve faculty skills and knowledge on using the Internet for research and on Web design.

II. B. *What is the performance you desire to gauge your progress?*

1. Student Learning Performances (outcomes)

Technical competence:

Understand the importance of and how to find and verify facts.

Be able to master various story forms including news and feature.

Be able to edit news stories and design basic news pages.

Academic competence:

Understand the basic norms of professionalism including objectivity, balance, and fairness.

Understand and appreciate the traditions, history and literature of journalism

Understand the contradictions and benefits borne by a commercial system.

Be grounded in basic ethical values that should permeate all aspects of the journalist's work.

Understand the role and function of news and information in a democratic society and how a journalist contributes to democratic values.

Be conversant with various aspects of important public policy issues in the nation and the world.

2. Program Performances

Delineate the boundaries of both technical and theoretical classes.

Measure student skills and knowledge as they leave the program.

Develop a portfolio approach to measure student competencies.

Step Three: Describe your methodology

II. B. 1 and 2 <i>Desired Performance (from previous step)</i>	III. A. <i>What aspects of the performance are critical to measure?</i>	III. B. <i>How (by what means) will you gather the data?</i>	III. C. <i>When will Assessment Begin?</i>	III. C. <i>Who is Responsible for What?</i>
1. Syllabus inventory	a. to ensure key elements are covered in the news sequences	Collection, analysis, synthesis of existing syllabi	Fall 2007	Coordinator of journalism
	b. to allow for overlap in areas that need repetition	Interview with key faculty		Coordinator of journalism
	c. to coordinate scholarly activities – term papers, research essays, etc. -- in theory press classes	Collection, analysis, synthesis of existing syllabi		Coordinator of journalism
2. Portfolio of news stories and essays.	a. judge competency and quality in writing the basic news and feature story so common to journalism.	Students collect in a portfolio of undetermined bulk stories – published and class assignments -- from the core classes.	Begin discussion of portfolio approach spring 2008	Coordinator of journalism
	b. judge competency and quality in writing the essays, commentary and research papers on media-journalism topics	Students collect in a portfolio of undetermined bulk essays from various media theory classes.	Begin discussion of portfolio approach spring 2008	Coordinator of journalism
	c.			
3.	a.			
	b.			
	c.			
4.	a.			
	b.			
	c.			
5.	a.			
	b.			
	c.			

D. What additional resources will you need to complete your plan?

Additional help, preferably from a reliable adjunct, to help with portfolio assessment and to help assess and compile data on syllabubs inventory. Existing faculty cannot be responsible for measuring the performance of the 25 graduating seniors in journalism.