

Department of Communications
Assessment of Learning Outcomes, 2011-2012

Dr. Doug Swanson, Associate Professor/ Assessment Committee Chairman
May 23, 2012

The other members of the committee are: Genele Bellmas, Pam Caldwell, and Emily Erickson. (It should be noted that although the department's committee roster includes other names, the above are the only active faculty members on the committee.)

The Department of Communications was represented at a campus-wide assessment meeting in January 2011. As a result of that meeting, our department drafted an assessment program that identifies seven learning outcomes for all Communications majors and has procedures for measuring and evaluating student learning. Faculty in each of the subject concentrations agreed on outcomes from student learning that are in synch with the department's program learning outcomes. Our program will be operationalized over four years. At the end of each stage of the assessment program, faculty in the subject concentration areas are tasked with 'closing the loop' to assure that our evaluation of student learning results in improved curriculum and instruction.

Our assessment program is documented through an assessment plan and flowchart, curriculum map, and a statement of policies and procedures. These documents and other details of our effort have been uploaded to our Department of Communications Titanium Community.

As of May 2012, core courses that have been assessed include COMM 233, COMM 407 and COMM 425. Assessment in COMM 495 (spring 2012) is being completed.

As of May 2012, Photo communications concentration assessment has taken place in COMM 317.

As of May 2012, Public relations concentration assessment has taken place in COMM 362. Assessment in COMM 464 (spring 2012) is being completed.

We are confident that our assessment program will give us much additional knowledge about what our students know, and how that knowledge is consistent with industry expectations. We are confident that the assessment program will also show us how we can improve and enhance student knowledge in the future, while keeping our curriculum consistent with professional standards.

Assessment summary – CORE

COMM 233: Mass Communications in Modern Society

Fall, 2011 PRE AND POST-TEST RESULTS SUMMARY

The department learning outcomes being measured in this course, consistent with the curriculum map and department assessment plan, are:

Exhibit sensitivity to diversity through communications practices. (outcome #6)

Direct evidence is being collected in support of student learning. As defined by the department assessment plan, direct evidence is: “Student writing/ creative work involving the ability to **describe** a complex situation and **apply** a theory or model to solve it.”

In COMM 233, direct evidence consists of a pretest/ posttest. The pretest was available to students for a total of 16 days. The posttest was available for two weeks at the end of the term.

Pretest: Total started survey 126

Total completed survey 192 (85% completion rate)

Average correct response to all pretest questions: 41.3%

Posttest: Total started survey 166

Total completed survey 159 (96% completion rate)

Average correct response to all posttest questions: 62.7%

(Increase of 21%)

Question#	Pretest correct response	Posttest correct response	Question#	Pretest correct response	Posttest correct response
1	88 %	93%	15	23 %	36%
2	47	73	16	62	79
3	53	58	17	50	75
4	20	73	18	47	53
5	31	44	19	42	41
6	40	79	20	17	54
7	26	94	21	51	70
8	32	65	22	15	44
9	34	40	23	77	85
10	15	16	24	27	67
11	31	61	25	32	44
12	57	56	26	32	62
13	60	69	27	49	63
14	55	72	28	46	91

No questions posed in open-ended item at end of posttest

1/13/2012 djs

Pretest results/ comments were as follows:

Question#	Pretest response	Question#	Pretest response
1	88 %	15	23 %
2	47	16	62
3	53	17	50
4	20	18	47
5	31	19	42
6	40	20	17
7	26	21	51
8	32	22	15
9	34	23	77
10	15	24	27
11	31	25	32
12	57	26	32
13	60	27	49
14	55	28	46

Comments to open-ended item (#29):

1

Saj A. Motley Comm233 8:30AM
Sep 1, 2011 7:44 AM

2

No
Sep 1, 2011 6:39 AM

3

I have never heard of many of these things before but hopefully I will get to learn what they are.
Sep 1, 2011 12:40 AM

4

Interesting survey!
Sep 1, 2011 12:04 AM

5

Oh my God, this was hard... xP
Aug 31, 2011 11:33 PM

6

none
Aug 31, 2011 10:23 PM

7

Alison McCleerey TuTh @ 8:30
Aug 31, 2011 10:19 PM

8

hard.
Aug 31, 2011 9:45 PM

9

Is it normal to know the answers to these questions because on a lot of them I didn't even know what the question was about

Aug 31, 2011 9:25 PM

10

I turned 21 today so i really didnt care about this survey thingy. im just being honest

Aug 31, 2011 8:46 PM

11

where would i have learned all these questions?

Aug 31, 2011 1:45 PM

12

I thought it was interesting, learned a lot by taking it and furthered my learning.

Aug 31, 2011 12:21 AM

Additional comments or observations:

Many respondents think W. C. Fields was a public relations practitioner.

PDF copy of survey summaries will be retained in Assessment Committee data file.

Assessment summary – Photo Comm
Communications 317 Digital Foundations (3)
SPRING 2012 POSTTEST RESULTS SUMMARY

The department learning outcomes being measured in this course, consistent with the curriculum map and department assessment plan, is:

Apply appropriate concepts, models, and theories of communication to personal and professional situations. (PLO #5)

Direct evidence is being collected in support of student learning.
In COMM 317, direct evidence consists of a 10-item pretest/ posttest.

Individual instructors carried out the pretest via paper and pencil administration. It was subsequently determined to make adjustments in the questions and procedure. The posttest was administered via Survey Monkey at the end of the academic term.

Posttest: Total started survey 105
Total completed survey 103 (98% completion rate)
Average correct response to all posttest questions: 65.6%

Item	Correct answer	SP 2012 Pretest	Posttest percentage correct
1	T	N/A	89.4
2	F		93.3
3	T		94.3
4	C		19.0
5	A		53.9
6	D		74.0
7	C		36.5
8	D		79.6
9	B		43.8
10	D		72.4

Student open-ended responses:

Learned a lot!

If my answers are wrong, it's because I haven't had my caffeine yet this morning, otherwise I'm brilliant!

Summary of Course Assessment – Dr. Swanson’s COMM 362

2010-2012

Dr. Doug Swanson, Department of Communications

	F10 pre	F 10 post	S 11 pre	S 11 post	F 11 pre	F 11 post	S 12 pre	S 12 post	F12 pre	F12 post
n	60	25	38	12	23	10	28	19		

Section I - Direct assessment. Students are asked to identify specific elements of PR tools (Q1, Q3), or specific PR concepts (Q2, Q4, Q5). All figures shown below reflect percentage of correct answers.

** Fall, 2010 pretest Q5 asking about "civic journalism" was changed to identify "citizen journalism" because that concept is also addressed in COMM 361, the prerequisite course for COMM 362. Civic journalism and citizen journalism are different concepts but both are addressed in the curriculum of COMM 362.*

Q#	Q text	F10 pre	F 10 post	S 11 pre	S 11 post	F 11 pre	F 11 post	S 12 pre	S 12 post	F12 pre	F12 post
1	Identify four elements of a news release.	54	84	63	67	78	90	60	85		
2	Distinguish between PR and advertising.	75	72	42	58	59	77	50	68		
3	Define/ distinguish a pitch letter from other tools.	35	88	89	100	95	88	85	89		
4	Define/ distinguish "preemptive strike."	24	80	89	91	76	55	64	73		
5	Define/ distinguish civic journalism.	*	80	88	91	95	88	85	89		
	Define/ distinguish citizen journalism.	12									

Section II - Direct assessment. Students are presented with a series of sentences from PR copy and asked to identify sentences that contain errors. Response options: AP style error, sentence structure error, grammar error, punctuation error, or, no errors.

*** The sentence structure questions were not used until the fall, 2010 posttest.*

Q#		F10 pre	F 10 post	S 11 pre	S 11 post	F 11 pre	F 11 post	S 12 pre	S 12 post	F12 pre	F12 post
6	Correctly identify sentences containing copy errors (10 sentences)	**	48	50	56	35	35	43	58		

Section III - Indirect assessment. Students are presented with a series of five statements asking respondents to describe and rate their "hands on" involvement with public relations concepts and skills. The figures below reflect the percentage of respondents who indicated **agree** or **strongly agree** to each statement.

Q#	Q text	F10 pre	F 10 post	S 11 pre	S 11 post	F 11 pre	F 11 post	S 12 pre	S 12 post	F12 pre	F12 post
7	I have good understanding of PR principles.	80	96	80	100	95	99	99	100		
	I have learned about and practice PR writing.	40	96	56	100	67	99	46	100		
	I have real world PR client experience.	30	100	30	57	58	99	28	100		
	I feel knowledgeable, confident in re: my PR skills.	51	88	56	91	58	89	57	100		

	I have a good understanding of PR career opportunities.	73	92	78	91	72	89	48	100		
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Fall 2011 assessment of student learning

COMM 362: Public Relations Writing

Department of Communications Assessment Committee

February 10, 2012

The learning outcomes being measured in this course, consistent with the curriculum map and department assessment plan, are:

(#5) Apply appropriate concepts, models, and theories of communication to personal and professional situations.

(#3) Demonstrate written and oral proficiency appropriate to the entry level of professional practice.

Direct evidence is being collected in support of student learning. As defined by the department assessment plan, direct evidence is: "Student writing/ creative work involving the ability to **describe** a complex situation and **apply** a theory or model to solve it."

In COMM 362, direct evidence consists of a news release assignment produced by students in the latter half of the course (at the midterm point or beyond).

In fall 2011, there were six sections of COMM 362 taught by four different instructors.

Total enrollment: 118

Number of news releases collected for assessment: 89

One faculty member chose to evaluate news releases on his own, using his rubric. Other faculty members chose to have the assessment committee do the evaluation, using instructor-provided rubrics. The committee did so on Feb. 10, 2012. The information below represents aggregated data from all sections of COMM 362.

Number / proportion of news releases considered "excellent" in quality: 16, or 18%

Number / proportion of news releases considered "very good" in quality: 28, or 31%

Number / proportion of news releases considered "satisfactory" in quality: 32, or 36%

Number / proportion of news releases considered "substandard" in quality: 13, or 15%

Summary of results:

- *More than three-quarters of the work (85%) documents student conceptual and writing skills that our faculty considers to be “satisfactory” or better.*
- *Almost half of the student work (49%) documents student conceptual and writing skills that our faculty considers to be “excellent” or “very good.”*
- *A small proportion of the student work (15%) documents “substandard” skills.*

Additional comments or observations:

One faculty member did not follow instructions for evidence gathering and, as a result, no student work was available from that instructor’s COMM 362 section.

Copies of news releases (student names blacked out) are on file, along with copies of the instructor rubrics that were used to evaluate student work.

Assessment summary – CORE

COMM 407: Communications Law

SPRING 2012 PRETEST / POSTTEST RESULTS SUMMARY

The department learning outcomes being measured in this course, consistent with the curriculum map and department assessment plan, is:

Demonstrate a basic knowledge of historical, legal, and ethical issues that affect professional practices. (PLO #7)

Direct evidence is being collected in support of student learning.
In COMM 407, direct evidence consists of a 30-item pretest/ posttest.

Pretest: Total started survey 303

Total completed survey 196 (64.7% completion rate)

Average correct response to all pretest questions: 43%

Posttest: Total started survey 587

Total completed survey 360 (61.3% completion rate)

Average correct response to all posttest questions: 48.6% (increase of roughly 5%)

Question# (correct answer)	Pretest correct response	Posttest correct response	Question# (correct answer)	Pretest correct response	Posttest correct response
1. C	42%	44%	16. C	23%	25%
2. B	41	47	17. A	65	63
3. B	67	67	18. C	07	25
4. A	50	64	19. B	30	44
5. D	48	57	20. B	36	40
6. A	63	72	21. B	76	75
7. D	44	43	22. B	19	24
8. B	41	45	23. A	48	58
9. C	39	41	24. A	58	64
10. B	25	34	25. C	23	34
11. B	64	66	26. D	72	76
12. B	49	58	27. B	34	43
13. D	31	40	28. C	09	15
14. B	19	27	29. B	75	76
15. B	47	44	30. C	45	49

Student comments offered at the end of the pretest:

This just makes me realize that I really need this class.

I sure hope we learn this stuff this semester because I certainly feel ignorant right now.

Will we receive an overview of these questions throughout the semester? :)

When will we get the answers back?

Why does it have to be so hard?

Were we supposed to have previous knowledge of such events that were mentioned?

Student comments offered at the end of the posttest:

Great Class - learned SO much! Thank you :)

Honestly, from what I learned in 410, and from taking the survey, it was too long, many people lose interest after about 15 questions. Maybe if it was split into two surveys, or there was more incentive than 1 extra credit point. I feel people will just start clicking answers because of its length.

omgzzz

question 9- Is confusing because dead people can't sue but their estates can in California, while a corporation like Exxon Mobil can also sue. It seemed as if each answer was acceptable.

Wish I knew what my score is?

Number 23 needs more information because we don't know when the author died so we can't conclude the actual year that the extra 70 years starts from.

It would be cool if I could see the answers.

This was fun..minus fun

Assessment results cover sheet – CORE

COMM 425: History and Philosophy of American Mass Communication

Fall, 2011 PRETEST AND POSTTEST RESULTS SUMMARY

The department learning outcomes being measured in this course, consistent with the curriculum map and department assessment plan, are:

Demonstrate a basic knowledge of historical, legal, and ethical issues that affect professional practices. (#7)

Direct evidence is being collected in support of student learning. As defined by the department assessment plan, direct evidence is: “Student writing/ creative work involving the ability to **describe** a complex situation and **apply** a theory or model to solve it.”

In COMM 425, direct evidence consisted of a pretest/ posttest. The pretest was available to students for a total of 16 days. The posttest link was made available to faculty the week before final exams. However, it appears not all faculty members may have made the survey link available to students. Responses were obtained from only 9 students.

Total started pretest 82

Total completed pretest 78 (95% completion rate)

Average correct response to all questions: 55.8%

Total started posttest 9

Total completed posttest 9 (100%)

Average correct response to all questions: 72.7%

Improvement of 16.9% though results probably meaningless because of small posttest sample size.

Question#	Pretest correct response	Posttest correct response	Question#	Pretest correct response	Posttest correct response
1	76 %	100%	15	90 %	100%
2	80	66	16	50	66
3	80	100	17	61	77
4	63	55	18	74	100
5	21	100	19	73	66
6	19	22	20	36	77
7	74	100	21	30	44
8	65	66	22	09	77
9	89	88	23	65	77
10	82	100	24	44	44
11	81	77	25	59	88
12	75	88	26	15	55
13	27	22	27	19	22
14	50	88			

One substantive comment was offered: *I remember concepts more than the phrasing of these questions. It would help if there were open-ended questions in which we could share what we know about the subject.*

Results of the pretest were as follows:

Question#	Correct response	Question#	Correct response
1	76 %	15	90 %
2	80	16	50
3	80	17	61
4	63	18	74
5	21	19	73
6	19	20	36
7	74	21	30
8	65	22	09
9	89	23	65
10	82	24	44
11	81	25	59
12	75	26	15
13	27	27	19
14	50		

Comments to open-ended item:

1

It seems that this quiz would have been better to take midway or toward the end of the semester.

Aug 30, 2011 10:40 PM

2

This survey covered material we have not learned in class yet. Was that intentional?

Aug 30, 2011 2:34 PM

3

Felt like it got easier as it went on. But it was a difficult quiz.

Aug 30, 2011 12:38 PM

4

This is great. I dont know most of the answers. I hope we learn about this stuff

Aug 23, 2011 7:10 PM

Additional comments or observations:

PDF copy of survey summaries will be retained in Assessment Committee data file.

1/13/2012 djs

Assessment results summary– Public Relations

COMM 464: Public Relations Management

Spring 2012 (Revised 6/6/12)

The program learning outcomes being measured in this course, as reflected in the curriculum map and department assessment plan, are:

- Demonstrate skills and knowledge for entry into professional practice. (PLO #1)
- Demonstrate effective use of communication tools and technologies appropriate to the entry level of professional practice. (PLO #4)

Direct and indirect evidence is being collected in support of student learning. As defined by the department assessment plan, this evidence involves the following:

Direct: Student writing/ creative work involving the ability to **describe** a complex situation and **apply** a theory or model to solve it.

Indirect: Evaluation of student strengths and weaknesses by industry professionals, and by clients served by student work teams.

Evidence and collection process: Faculty teaching COMM 464 will collect copies of student (team) campaign portfolios and (individual) reflection papers. Faculty will also collect client evaluations of student projects. Portfolios representing the work of least 50 students will be collected, and a large randomly selected group of portfolios will be assessed, along with as many reflection papers as possible. When possible, client evaluations will be reviewed and their comments reported.

Evaluation process: A committee of professionals from the PR workplace will be convened to review the evidence, make a judgment and draft a summary report for the assessment committee.

Spring 2012

Number of students enrolled in all sections:	464A: <u>20</u>	464B: <u>100</u>
Number of (team) campaign portfolios collected:	464A: <u>12</u>	464B: <u>19</u>
Number of (individual) reflection papers collected:	464A: <u>8</u>	464B: <u>48</u>
Number of client evaluations collected	464A: <u>7</u>	464B: <u>0</u>

The professional reviewers were:

Cathi Douglas, Senior Director of Editorial Services – Cal State Fullerton

John Echeveste, Partner – Valencia, Perez & Echeveste Public Relations, South Pasadena, Calif.

Traci Renner, Vice President – GolinHarris, Orange County, Calif.

Portfolios were also reviewed by:

Pam Caldwell, Faculty Director of Internships, College of Communications, Cal State Fullerton

Doug Swanson, Public Relations Concentration Coordinator

See the following pages for the summary of the assessment of evidence.

Summary of the assessment of evidence:

Number of campaign portfolios reviewed, selected at random from the total **19**

Portfolios were evaluated using the standard rubric

Number / proportion of portfolios considered “excellent” in quality: **5, or 26%**

Number / proportion of portfolios considered “very good” in quality: **7, or 36%**

Number / proportion of portfolios considered “satisfactory” in quality: **7, or 36%**

Number / proportion of portfolios considered “substandard” in quality: **0**

Professional reviewer comments about campaign portfolios:

- Relied too much on basic social media tactics – couldn’t quantify results. Too much unnecessary research.
- Well organized but a little short on real substance.
- Well organized and written, lots of good work, a little short on creativity.
- Well written, but no discussion of campaign strategy or tactics (?)
- Not enough detail on campaign strategy or tactics.
- Good organization and strategy – could have devoted more effort to tactics.
- Numerous spelling and grammar errors. Incorrect AP style.
- Not correctly formatted according to directions and table of contents.
- Lacking a few important dates.
- Some excellent research and very impressive presentation.
- Some of the hours spent on activities, fundraisers and materials were impressive.
- Some very impressive media presentations. Broad problem-solving skills.
- I was impressed by the presentation of many of the campaign books.
- Creativity and persistence in obtaining measurable goals was noteworthy.

Reflection Papers – to what extent did students think deeply and write clearly about their experience?**Professional reviewer comments:**

- Good insights on the course
- Perspectives vary on target with what they might experience in a real world situation
- Comments/ input and self-understanding were impressive.

Comments from Doug Swanson:

I read all of the reflection papers. Not a single one of them was negative about the COMM 464 experience. Even though some students wrote that they would not be pursuing a public relations career, all said that they benefited from the class. Many students wrote that this was among the most beneficial courses of their college career, and some wrote that this course was the most valuable they had taken at CSUF. Even though many students ‘missed the mark’ in terms of what we expected from their campaign portfolios, all of the students indicated a high level of satisfaction and learning from the course.

Client Evaluations – *to what extent were clients satisfied with students' abilities?*

Comments from Doug Swanson:

None of the COMM 464B sections provided client evaluations, and it is not known whether the client evaluation is used in these sections of the course. A total of 13 client evaluations were sought from clients served through COMM 464A (PRactical ADvantage Communications, the student-run agency). Of the 13, only 7 clients returned a completed evaluation form.

These evaluations could best be described as “a mixed bag.” Some clients were thoroughly pleased with the students' campaign work. Other clients were greatly displeased. To be fair to the students, it should also be noted that each of the clients that expressed displeasure also was reported by the student team to be problematic. Students reported that clients were non-responsive to student suggestions, did not return phone calls or e-mails, and presented the students with unrealistic expectations at the outset of the campaign.

Even with a 'client services agreement' in place to explain the student-agency-client relationship, it is easy for the client to forget that students are still learning. I also think that when a client doesn't pay for services, that client has little investment in the outcomes and can easily be critical of the work performed by students on the client's behalf.

Additional comments from Doug Swanson:

I did a formal review/ grading of the 12 campaign portfolios submitted for COMM 464A (which was the class I taught). Additionally, I informally reviewed many of the other portfolios that were presented to the outside professionals. Here are some concerns I have after my review:

- **Organization at the expense of content** – While most of the portfolios are exceptionally well organized, for some, that organization was at the expense of content. In other words, I looked at a lot of fancy and expensive notebooks with content insufficient to document a strategically sound, successful campaign. (Some notebooks had each page encased in a plastic page protector. This is completely unnecessary.)
- **Executive summaries** were verbose and redundant. The executive summary is to be just that – a 'summary' and not a repeat of information contained in the client introduction.
- **Failure to follow instructions** - Students were provided with detailed written instructions of how to assemble the notebook, how many copies to provide, how to provide an additional CD-R copy, and how to assemble and submit a reflection paper. In my estimation, only about 70% of the students successfully followed all of the instructions. Errors included: no CD submitted; CD not labeled or files not separated into chapters; reflection paper not submitted, or not submitted with removable cover sheet to allow anonymity; 'anonymous' reflection paper submitted with student name written in narrative.
- **Claims of 'fact' were stated with no research support.** Some portfolios had no researched, documented facts about the client other than what was provided by the client's web site and supporting materials. There was a decided lack of **market analysis**. Even non-profits have 'competitors' in the marketplace, but some notebooks demonstrated no acknowledgement of that. Very few of the portfolios I saw documented in any way that the work done by the team was professionally appropriate. Even the COMM 464 textbook was infrequently cited.
- Numerous **APA reference format errors** – even in portfolios that had lengthy reference lists.

- **Poor writing and proofreading** was evidenced throughout the work. Most portfolio narratives reflect passive voice, with verbose sentences and lengthy paragraphs. Many students do not know the difference between the words *their* and *there* or *your* and *you're*. Many students do not know the difference between the words *bias* and *biased*, or *lose* and *loose*. Many students do not know how to use an apostrophe to reflect the singular possessive, plural or plural possessive.
- Finally, a large percentage of the campaigns conducted for nonprofits reflected that **students were extensively involved in fundraising**. This fundraising included cold calling to businesses and individuals, soliciting cash or in-kind donations, and driving to pick up donations for use by the nonprofit. I am concerned about this because of the ethical implications that are presented when students are using state resources (the COMM 464 class) to solicit funds for nonprofit organizations. I do not see a conflict with students *creating campaigns and communication materials to assist nonprofits in fundraising*. But when students are actually doing the fundraising and gathering the donations for the client, I am troubled.

What happens now?

The department's assessment plan calls for the assessment report to go to the PR concentration faculty. Then, the PR concentration faculty will be responsible for any curriculum change or other proposals, consistent with existing department guidelines.

The results of this assessment will be reported to the faculty, and the faculty will have the option in the fall semester of taking any action they deem appropriate.

June 4, 2012

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Swanson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "D".

Dr. Doug Swanson, APR
Assessment Committee Chair
Coordinator, Public Relations Concentration