This year the Communication Studies Department focused its assessment on the senior survey portion of its assessment plan:

**Senior Survey Research Methods**

Survey Field Dates: • May, 2008  
Survey ample Size: • 200 completed surveys  
Sampling Error: • Less than +/- 4.5% (95% confidence level and with a finite population correction)  
Questionnaire • 11 questions  
Unit of Analysis: • Individual student  
Population: • Graduating seniors in Communication Studies and Journalism  
Sample: • Convenience (at tempted census)  
Research method: • Self-report written Questionnaire distributed in classes containing high concentrations of graduating seniors

The survey asked respondents to:

Please rate the effectiveness of the instruction you have received within the Communication Studies or Journalism majors. This survey pertains to your overall instruction in the major, not the instruction in this particular course. If you have filled out this questionnaire in another course, do not answer the questionnaire a second time. Rate each area independently of the other areas.

The response alternatives were scaled from 1 to 5 respectively: “Very Ineffective,” “Ineffective,” “Somewhat Effective,” “Effective,” and “Very Effective.”
The categories were:

- Writing skills
- Oral presentation skills
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Group communication skills
- Information synthesis and evaluation
- Critical thinking
- Communication concepts
- Communication theory
- The application of communication principles
- Career development skills

Results from the survey supported four conclusions:

1. *With two exceptions better than three out of four graduating seniors rated the effectiveness of instruction as either “effective” or “very effective” in every category.*

Expressed as means, eight categories were near 4.0 on the one-to-five scale. The highest scores were achieved for the categories of “Communication Concepts” and “Interpersonal Skills.” Instruction pertaining to communication skills was uniformly rated as positive. For the top eight categories fewer than 8% of the respondents rated instruction as ineffective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>% Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>80.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Concepts</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation Skills</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Skills</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Skills</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Theory</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info Synthesis &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Skills</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. *Students tended to rate instruction in communication concepts, theory and skills positively, but were slightly less impressed with instruction in the synthesis and evaluation of information.*

The mean score for this category was 3.77. Only two out of every three students rated this category of instruction as effective or very effective (68.6%). Specifically, 50.3% rated the category as effective, and 18.3% rated it as very effective. Perhaps the Communication Studies Department can invite the Center for Teaching and Learning to conduct a colloquium on this topic. Moreover it will be part of a discussion the Department intends to have in early October after the results of this survey have been circulated within the Department.

3. *The lowest rated category of instruction was in the area of career development skills.*

The mean score for this category was 3.57. Only one-third rated instruction in this area as “effective” (34.7%). The “very effective” category was visited by 21.1%. Perhaps the department’s curriculum committee should consider this deficit and suggest the offering a new course in “professional development” as a curricular option for seniors. The Department also intends to invite Debra Marcus from the Career Center to enhance our ability to connect our students with career development skills.

4. *Differences between students from different concentrations were statistically insignificant.*

The lone exception to this rule was for Journalism majors in the area of oral presentation skills. Journalism majors gave this category a mean rating of 3.50, whereas the overall rating for the department was 4.03. These same groups of students rated instruction in interpersonal skills a little below the department average (3.87 versus 4.09). Journalism faculty may wish to suggest changes in curriculum. On the other hand, instruction in career development skills was rated slightly higher by Journalism students (3.65 versus 3.57). In this regard Journalism joined
Organizational Communication and Public Relations with the best scores in this area of career development skills. That is an important distinction because these three areas are also the most clearly vocationally oriented of the Department’s concentration.

Anticipated Program Changes

After sharing this report with the faculty in September, the Department has plans for a full faculty meeting devoted to considering the results of this assessment item. We will consult outside agencies like the Center for Teaching and Learning as well as the Career Center on campus given some of the results reported here. Since the Department intends to give this survey to graduating seniors every three years, we will know whether changes made in the department yield positive results by looking at the results of the survey, using the same instrument, three years from now.

Future Assessment Activities

In the upcoming year, the Department will return to reporting assessment results from its capstone senior seminars. In 2009 we anticipate focusing on the Journalism, Digital Media, Government/Journalism, and Public Relations concentrations. In 2010 we will report on the general Communication Studies concentration, Organizational Communication, and Mass Communication concentrations.

Note: An appendix with additional statistical analysis is available from the Department on request.