Program: **BA Journalism**

Department: **Communication Studies**

Number of students enrolled in the program in Fall, 2011: **198**

Faculty member completing template: **Molly Dugan**  (Date: 1/26/2012)

**Period of reference in the template: 2006-07 to present**

1. *Please describe your program’s learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07: Has there been a transformation of organizational culture regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and the capacity to assess progress toward their achievement? If so, during which academic year would you say the transformation became noticeable? What lies ahead; what is the next likely step in developing a learning-outcomes organizational culture within the program?*

At a summer 2011 retreat, the Department of Communication Studies met to discuss the need to revise our assessment plan. We decided that the existing assessment plan was outdated, labor intensive and no longer fully reflected our expectations for what we want students to know upon graduating from our program.

As a result of the retreat, we shifted a majority of the day-to-day information covered in faculty meetings to the listproc in order to spend our regularly scheduled faculty meetings focusing on assessment. We revamped most of our learning outcomes and changed the methods used to collect data. We shifted from using portfolios to using new rubrics. Using AAC&U’s rubrics as a guide, we created rubrics specific to Journalism, which is a professional and highly specialized major, to assess written communication, critical thinking and ethical reasoning. We referred to the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the Poynter Institute and professional organizations to shape our learning outcomes based on industry best practices. Finally, we aligned the Journalism learning outcomes with those of the general Communications major as much as possible.

Our efforts enabled us to produce outcomes that are assessable, align with the Baccalaureate Learning Goals and use appropriate rubrics. The revised data collection process is sustainable, less labor intensive and relies on the efforts of a broad cross-section of faculty, rather than a small committee. All of our learning outcomes were created with assistance from the University Assessment Coordinator (Amy Liu).

Our efforts have resulted in a faculty that is more engaged in the assessment process. We collected pilot data in Fall 2011 to reflect the changes in the assessment plan. Additional data will be collected in Spring 2012.
2. Please list in prioritized order (or indicate no prioritization regarding) up to four desired learning outcomes (“takeaways” concerning such elements of curriculum as perspectives, specific content knowledge, skill sets, confidence levels) for students completing the program. For each stated outcome, please provide the reason that it was designated as desired by the faculty associated with the program.

   a) Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts
      Demonstrate mastery of journalistic style writing for a variety of audiences and media: Use clear and concise language; adhere to Associated Press style; show proficiency in using written English, including proper spelling, grammar and punctuation; construct stories in an organized, logical way.
      Demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal and small group communication: work effectively as part of a team and apply appropriate conflict management skills; solve disputes with interview subjects and editors in an appropriate manner; articulate goals and ideas to interview subjects and editors.

   b) Students will have knowledge of Journalism discipline principles and procedures
      Demonstrate ethical decision-making: Apply ethical principles as practiced by professional journalists in research, interviewing, writing and audio-visuals; recognize their ethical responsibility to the public and the profession; use the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics.
      Demonstrate knowledge of media laws: understand laws that govern journalists’ rights and responsibilities, freedom of speech, libel and slander, public records and open meetings.

   c) Students will think critically when constructing and consuming messages.
      Demonstrate higher-level thinking through ethical decision making, story development and writing: evaluate information and judge its veracity; use appropriate research methods, including interviews, public records and quantitative data to produce high-quality content.

3. For undergraduate programs only, in what ways are the set of desired learning outcomes described above aligned with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals? Please be as specific as possible.

   The department’s learning outcomes for this program align with the BLGs. The BLGs include five areas and the outcomes adopted for this program overlap with four of them, including: Competence in the Discipline, Intellectual and Practical Skills, Personal and Social Responsibility and Integrative Learning.

   Particular emphasis is placed on Intellectual and Practical Skills and Personal and Social Responsibility. The department’s learning outcomes are geared to engage students with critical thinking (see for example, learning outcome C in question 2), written communication (see for example, learning outcome A in question 2) and ethical reasoning (see learning outcome B in question 2.)
4. *For each desired outcome indicated in item 2 above, please:*

   a) *Describe the method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.*

1. Students will communicate effectively in a variety of contexts

   *Demonstrate a mastery of journalistic style writing for a variety of audiences and media:* Use clear and concise language; adhere to Associated Press style; show proficiency in using written English, including proper spelling, grammar and punctuation; construct stories in an organized, logical way.

   For this learning outcome, papers from upper-division students in our senior seminar class (Jour. 135) are randomly sampled. Faculty members use the AAC&U’s Written Communication rubric to score these selected final stories. The rubric is comprised of five dimensions that include: context and purpose for writing, content development, genre and disciplinary conventions, sources and evidence and control of syntax and mechanics. Each dimension is scored on a five-point scale that ranges from a value of “0,” indicating that it does not meet the benchmark to “4,” indicating capstone proficiency. (See Appendix A)

   *Demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal and small group communication:* work effectively as part of a team and apply appropriate conflict management skills; solve disputes with interview subjects in an appropriate manner; articulate goals and ideas to interview subjects and editors.

   For this learning outcome, interview subjects and editors will be randomly sampled through the use of surveys about their experiences with our upper-division Journalism students. These surveys will be conducted in three reporting and writing classes, including Jour. 135 and Jour. 130 A&B. The department is now developing the survey, and we expect to begin distribution in Spring 2012.

2. Students will have knowledge of Journalism discipline principles and procedures

   *Demonstration ethical decision-making:* Apply ethical principles as practiced by professional journalists in research, interviewing, writing and audio-visuals; recognize their ethical responsibility to the public and the profession; use the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics.

   *Demonstrate knowledge of media laws:* understand laws that govern journalists’ rights and responsibilities, freedom of speech, libel and slander, public records and open meetings.

   For both of these learning outcomes, students complete an examination that was constructed, vetted and approved by faculty. The examination is a quantitative competency measure. (See Appendix B)
3. Students will think critically when constructing and consuming messages. Demonstrate higher-level thinking through ethical decision making, story development and writing: evaluate information and judge its veracity; use appropriate research methods, including interviews, public records and quantitative data to produce high-quality content.

For this learning outcome, papers from an ongoing class project in upper-division students in Jour. 130 A&B will be randomly sampled. The department reviewed AAC&U’s Critical Thinking and Inquiry and Analysis rubrics, but decided to create a modified rubric to better reflect the role of journalists in society. Faculty members will use a new rubric – based on the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics – to score these selected stories. The rubric is comprised of five dimensions including: accuracy, thoroughness, balance, story development and research quality. Each dimension is scored on a five-point scale that ranges from a value of “0,” indicating that it does not meet the benchmark to “4,” indicating capstone proficiency. This rubric is under construction, but the department will begin collecting data in Spring 2012. (See Appendix C)

b) Include a description of the sample of students (e.g., random sample of transfer students declaring the major; graduating seniors) from whom data were/will be collected and the frequency and schedule with which the data in question were/will be collected.

All data is a random sampling of program majors. Data collected is spread across the entire academic year. All learning outcomes are included in the annual data collection.

c) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument” (e.g., survey or test), “artifact” (e.g., writing sample and evaluative protocol, performance review sheet), or other device used to assess the status of the learning outcomes desired by the program.

Two rubrics, one examination and one survey are used for assessment purposes. The examination and one rubric (learning outcome “a” in question 2) are attached. The survey and second rubric (learning outcome “c” in question 2) are being developed.

d) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.

The department began a pilot study of the assessment plan in Fall 2011. Data has been collected and will be reviewed by the entire faculty in Spring 2012. Additional data is being collected in Spring 2012, which will cover all learning outcomes presented here.

5. Regarding each outcome and method discussed in items 2 and 4 above, please provide examples of how findings from the learning outcomes process have been utilized to address decisions to revise or maintain elements of the curriculum (including decisions to alter the program’s desired
outcomes). If such decision-making has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

As indicated in this document, the department is in the process of collecting data to reflect the refined learning outcomes that were approved in Fall 2011. In Spring 2012, the entire faculty will meet to review collected data on all of the learning outcomes. We will review the data and discuss any perceived deficiencies in the department. We expect that any changes to curriculum deficiencies will be implemented in Fall 2012.

6. Has the program systematically sought data from alumni to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the program’s learning outcomes? If so, please describe the approach to this information-gathering and the ways in which the information will be applied to the program’s curriculum. If such activity has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

The department has not previously gathered data from alumni in a systematic way. We have some unofficial data available to us based on the public nature of many of our graduates’ work, such as bylines, but have not created a formal plan for tracking alumni. While we don’t have any plans in place to gather alumni data, we are hopeful that a new effort to revive the Communication Studies alumni organization will assist us with engaging alumni in assessment in the future.

7. Does the program pursue learning outcomes identified by an accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization as important? Does the set of outcomes pursued by your program exceed those identified as important by your accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization?

The learning outcomes developed for the Journalism major align with the standards set forth by the accrediting institution, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, and with those of professional organizations. Our Journalism program is not accredited. Only approximately one-quarter of the more than 450 Journalism programs in the U.S. are accredited. While certainly accreditation is a worthy goal for our program, the requirements are such that it will not be feasible in the near future. (For example, accreditation requires a 15-1 classroom teacher-student ratio and a majority full-time faculty.) Further, many industry experts say that accreditation is not necessary to ensure a quality program.

8. Finally, what additional information would you like to share with the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities regarding the program’s desired learning outcomes and assessment of their accomplishment?

The Journalism faculty in the Communication Studies Department has made great progress in adapting our learning outcomes to the BLGs. The University Assessment Coordinator helped us to refine our expectations, and we are very appreciative of her work.
The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

**Definition**

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

**Framing Language**

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The most clear finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses on assessment of how specific written work responds to specific contexts, guided by standards for written work that are informally varied but generally recognized to be important. The central question guiding the rubric is “How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?” In focusing on this question, the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers’ fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writers’ growing engagement with writing and disciplinary process through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers’ work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing— in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate.

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators’ White Paper on Writing Assessment (2008; www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2008; www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/125784.htm).

**Glossary**

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- **Content Development**: The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.
- **Context of and purpose for writing**: The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer’s intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; or they might want to argue with other writers, or with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.
- **Disciplinary conventions**: Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic. Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer’s purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.
- **Evidence**: Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers’ ideas in a text.
- **Genre conventions**: Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices, e.g. lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays.
- **Sources**: Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes -- to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

For more information, please contact value@aacu.org.
**Written Communication VALUE Rubric**

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

**Definition**

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capstone</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Context of and Purpose for Writing**
Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s). | Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work. | Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context). | Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions). |
| **Content Development** | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work. | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work. | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work. | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work. |
| **Genre and Disciplinary Conventions**
Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary). | Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices | Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices | Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation | Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation. |
<p>| <strong>Sources and Evidence</strong> | Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing | Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing. |
| <strong>Control of Syntax and Mechanics</strong> | Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free. | Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors. | Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors. | Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number wrong</th>
<th>Percentage correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Under what conditions is it appropriate to alter a photograph?</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is libel?</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Which of the following is an example of a libelous statement?</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Which standard of fault applies to public officials and figures in libel cases?</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Actual malice is defined as:</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Which libel fault standard is easier for plaintiffs to prove?</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. It is not possible to libel a dead person</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When is it OK to take pictures or video of the exterior of a private residence?</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Which of the following is not one of the main sections of the ethics code of the Society of Professional Journalists?</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ethical journalists should avoid accepting gifts or food from their sources.</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. California's Shield Law protects journalists from:</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. For libel cases, a public official is defined as anybody on a public payroll</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. What is meant by qualified privelege?</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Reporter Janie Jones works in her free time on the re-election campaign for President Barack Obama. This is an example of:</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. All material on the Internet is free for the taking.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=21
Class average 57%
PREAMBLE
Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society’s principles and standards of practice.

SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT
Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.
Journalists should:
► Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
► Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
► Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
► Always question sources’ motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
► Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
► Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
► Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
► Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.
► Never plagiarize.
► Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
► Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
► Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
► Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
► Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
► Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
► Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
► Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public’s business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

MINIMIZE HARM
Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.
Journalists should:
► Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
► Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
► Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
► Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
► Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
► Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
► Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
► Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

ACT INDEPENDENTLY
Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.
Journalists should:
► Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
► Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
► Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
► Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
► Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
► Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
► Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

BE ACCOUNTABLE
Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.
Journalists should:
► Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
► Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
► Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
► Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
► Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is voluntarily embraced by thousands of journalists, regardless of place or platform, and is widely used in newsrooms and classrooms as a guide for ethical behavior. The code is intended not as a set of “rules” but as a resource for ethical decision-making. It is not — nor can it be under the First Amendment — legally enforceable.

The present version of the code was adopted by the 1996 SPJ National Convention, after months of study and debate among the Society’s members. Sigma Delta Chi’s first Code of Ethics was borrowed from the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1926. In 1973, Sigma Delta Chi wrote its own code, which was revised in 1984, 1987 and 1996.