

**School of Communication
Mass Communication and Journalism (MCJ) Program
The University of Southern Mississippi**

Assessment Plan

**Adopted: April 9, 2007
Updated: August 20, 2008
Updated: October 22, 2014
Updated: April 30, 2021**

Mission Statement

The mission of the Mass Communication and Journalism (MCJ) program in the School of Communication is to provide excellent education in Journalism, Public Relations and Advertising, and to graduate a highly qualified, diverse group of baccalaureate and graduate degree holders.

Vision:

Our vision is to enhance significantly the instructional, technological, physical, and financial resources of the School in order to offer programs of the highest quality for the benefit of our students, the community, and the professions represented by the school.

Objectives:

- (1) Promote media literacy and knowledge of mediated communication as essential elements of a university education.
- (2) Develop proficiency in the essential practical skills long valued by media professionals: information gathering; effective written, visual and oral communication; and production.
- (3) Foster diversity and the coverage of diversity in the mass media in order to instill knowledge of, respect for, and engagement with the diversity found in the population of the area, state, and nation.
- (4) Integrate knowledge of the evolving new media environment with the understanding of the organization and operations, as well as the historical, social, political, and economic significance of traditional media forms.
- (5) Prepare students for lifelong learning and advanced education as well as professional careers by offering major course work that amplifies the liberal arts education provided by the university's general education core and by infusing the mass communication curriculum with the study of theory, research methods, aesthetic principles and ethical concepts.
- (6) Create an open and diverse learning environment in the classroom, in student media, internships and other venues that foster critical and analytical thinking and stimulate creative activities.
- (7) Cultivate understanding of the global dimensions of media and mass communication education.

- (8) Foster the personal integrity that is vital to high standards of truth, honesty, fairness and clarity necessary for successful careers in the Information Age.
- (9) Produce theoretical and applied scholarship for those who work in and study media institutions that add to the understanding of the mass communication process and its effects, the media industry, the legal and policy environments in which it exists and the historical context from which it continues to evolve.
- (10) Produce creative works that demonstrate and enhance proficiency in creative media practice, either as works of artistic expression or as creative projects that serve specific communication goals.
- (11) Encourage the development of professional and creative activities through class projects, student media, student organizations and other means that contribute to public discourse that is crucial to a free and open society and enrich audiences by providing meaning, context and inspiration.
- (12) Serve the media industry, state, and region through applied research projects, training activities and other endeavors.

Statement on Competencies

The School of Communication MCJ program expects students to graduate with a mastery of the professional values and competencies established by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC).

Graduates of the MCJ program should be able to:

- apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located;
- demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
- present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;

- effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

3. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The unit regularly assesses student learning using direct and indirect measures that engage communication professionals and annually “closes the loop” to make tangible improvements to curriculum and instruction.

Indicators:

- (a) The unit has a written assessment plan that has been implemented, is up to date and addresses contemporary curricular issues, including instruction related to the rapidly changing digital media world.

The unit posts its assessment plan in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its website.
- b) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the professional Values and Competencies of the Council. (See Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction)
- (c) The unit assessment plan uses multiple direct and indirect measures to assess student learning.
- (d) At least one direct and/or indirect measure should include journalism and mass communication professionals engaged in assessment data collection.
- (e) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction. There is substantial, concrete evidence of “closing the loop,” generally and specifically. Multiple examples of “closing the loop” are evident.

Evidence:

A written assessment plan that has been implemented and posted to the unit’s website
 A written statement or matrix describing how the competencies map to course learning
 Records from multiple years, showing information collected from direct and indirect measures, when different measures are assessed if not done annually, and the application of this information and other information gathered during the assessment process to improve curriculum and instruction
 A clear articulation of what constitutes a direct and indirect measure
 Annual assessment reports, analysis and curriculum/program changes resulting from assessment report findings

MCJ Program Assessment Measures

The MCJ faculty recognizes that much of the primary assessment of its students' grasp of specific competencies takes place in the classroom and in the assessment of students' course-related work. This constant and dynamic process is part of the day-to-day educational routine and is formally and informally evaluated in classroom discussions, conversations among faculty, in regularly scheduled faculty and committee meetings and elsewhere. Assessment of specific classroom competencies is described in course syllabi and is documented in the assessment of students' performances. The school's Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation Exam also provides important assessment information about students' writing abilities. Specific assessment tools are described in course curriculum and, for the purposes of the school's self-study for ACEJMC, curriculum-related assessment measures are described in the school's response to Standard 2: Curriculum.

For the purposes of the assessment described in ACEJMC Standard 3 (Assessment), the MCJ faculty has identified six broad measures to assess student learning. They include:

1) Capstone Course (direct measure)

The school's faculty has identified a senior capstone course for each of its degree programs. While the grade in that course works as one measure of assessing a student's overall grasp of the competencies required in her/his program of study, the faculty can – over a period of time – use the overall performance of students in the course as a general assessment of students' awareness, understanding and application of key competencies and values. See Appendix C for the capstone assessment form.

Capstone courses:

Journalism: MCJ 406 (Multimedia Capstone)

Public Relations and Advertising: MCJ 428 (PR and Advertising Campaigns)

2) Senior Portfolio (direct measure)

As part of their capstone experience, seniors are required to complete a Senior Portfolio that 1) provides the school with an important means of assessing student achievement and 2) provides the student with an appropriate collection of work to use in beginning a career as a media professional.

The Senior Portfolio is designed to 1) demonstrate a student's mastery of the basic skills required in their degree program, 2) reflect a student's ability to compete for an entry-level job upon graduation and 3) indicate a student's grasp of the theoretical and conceptual issues that have been introduced in their non-skills courses (history, ethics, law, etc.). Faculty members in each academic area have defined the basic requirements for the contents of the portfolios for the

majors in that sequence. The portfolios are a factor in the grades that seniors receive in their capstone courses.

All senior portfolios are required to be available electronically, allowing easier access to student work by media professionals who serve as external reviewers. Professionals' assessment of the portfolios includes a Portfolio Feedback Form, a rubric that measures learning outcomes described in the school's assessment plan. See Appendix D for senior portfolio requirements by academic program and Appendix E for portfolio feedback form.

3) Internship evaluations (indirect measure)

Students who complete internships for credit are required to complete reports that analyze their experience. The professionals who supervise the internships are required to complete an evaluation that provides the school with feedback about the students' preparedness for pursuing careers in their field. See Appendix F for the internship supervisor evaluation form.

4) Senior Exit Survey (indirect measure)

The Senior Exit Survey, to be completed by all seniors as part of the graduation application process, allows students to evaluate the overall quality of their educational experience. It allows the faculty to ascertain the students' sense of their grasp of the competencies and values identified in the school's Statement on Competencies. It also asks students to describe their plans and their prospects for careers in mass communication and journalism. See Appendix G of the Assessment Plan for a copy of the survey.

5) Alumni Survey (indirect measure)

The alumni survey, administered every five years, allows recent graduates to reflect on their education with the benefit of some perspective. The survey also asks recent graduates to describe their efforts to find and keep jobs in mass communication and journalism. See Appendix H of the Assessment Plan for a copy of the survey.

6) Student Competitions (indirect measure)

Students have the opportunity to compete in a variety of regional and national competitions, including annual competitions sponsored by the American Advertising Federation, Associated Press college competition, the Hearst Foundation, the Southeast Journalism Conference, Mississippi Press Association, and the Public Relations Association of Mississippi.

Students in the school compete annually for 30 scholarships that are endowed or supported by alumni or friends of the school. Students also compete for

nationally competitive scholarships and internships, including those sponsored by the Scripps Howard Foundation, the Broadcast Education Association, the Freedom Forum and by other media foundations and companies.

Appendix A: Student Learning Assessment: Southern Miss Six

Appendix B: MCJ End-of-Year Assessment Checklist

Appendix C: Capstone Courses Assessment

Appendix D: Senior Portfolio Requirements

Appendix E: Senior Portfolio Feedback Form

Appendix F: Internship Supervisor Evaluation Form (Online)

Appendix G: Senior Exit Survey (Online)

Appendix H: Alumni Survey (Online)

Appendix A:

Student Learning Assessment: Southern Miss Six
Adopted, October 14, 2014
Revised, April 7, 2021

1. Demonstrate an appreciation of the relevant constitutional freedoms, history, legal issues and ethical principles involved in mass communication.

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies:

Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located.

Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

Measures:

Capstone Course (direct measure)
Senior Exit Survey (indirect measure)
Alumni Survey (indirect measure)

2. Demonstrate an appreciation of human diversity, domestically and globally, in the creation and interpretation of media content.

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies:

Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.

Measures:

Capstone Course (direct measure)
Senior Portfolio (direct measure)
Senior Exit Survey (indirect measure)
Alumni Survey (indirect measure)
Internships (indirect measure)
Student Competitions (indirect measure)

3. Demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate and research information and to apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies:

Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

Measures:

Capstone Course (direct measure)
Senior Portfolio (direct measure)
Senior Exit Survey (indirect measure)
Alumni Survey (indirect measure)
Internships (indirect measure)
Student Competitions (indirect measure)

4. Demonstrate the ability to write correctly, clearly, and fairly; and to effectively critique the work of others.

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies:

Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

Measures:

Capstone Course (direct measure)
Senior Portfolio (direct measure)
Senior Exit Survey (indirect measure)
Alumni Survey (indirect measure)
Internships (indirect measure)
Student Competitions (indirect measure)

5. Demonstrate the ability to present visual information effectively and creatively.

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies:

Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.

Measures:

Capstone Course (direct measure)
Senior Portfolio (direct measure)
Senior Exit Survey (indirect measure)
Alumni Survey (indirect measure)
Internships (indirect measure)
Student Competitions (indirect measure)

6. Demonstrate the ability to engage innovative tools and technology.

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies:

Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Measures:

Capstone Course (direct measure)
Senior Portfolio (direct measure)
Senior Exit Survey (indirect measure)
Alumni Survey (indirect measure)
Internships (indirect measure)
Student Competitions (indirect measure)

** These six learning outcomes are used for annual program assessment through WEAVE.*

Appendix B: MCJ End-of-Year Assessment Checklist

Due Date: May 31

Capstone Course

Responsible Party: Course Instructors (MCJ 406, MCJ 428)

Senior Portfolio

Responsible Party: Capstone instructors (MCJ 406, MCJ 428), Assessment Committee

Exit Survey

Responsible Party: Assessment Committee, MCJ Faculty Lead

Student Competitions/Awards

Responsible Party: MCJ Faculty, Student Organization Advisors, Student Media Center Staff

Internship Evaluations

Responsible Party: Internship Coordinator, Assessment Committee

Alumni Survey

Responsible Party: Assessment Committee

MCJ 101 (Mass Communication Minor)

Responsible Party: Course Instructor, Assessment Committee

MCJ 310 (Social Media Content and Strategy Minor)

Responsible Party: Course Instructor, Assessment Committee

Appendix C:

**Student Learning Assessment for
MCJ Capstone Courses**

Course Name: MCJ ###
Semester: Spring/Fall/Summer 20##
Total enrollment: ##

| Target (80%) | Measures | Finding |
|---|---|--|
| Demonstrate an appreciation of the relevant constitutional freedoms, history, legal issues and ethical principles involved in mass communication. | Course assignments (brief description) | ## percent (## out of a total of ##) of students met the target. |
| Demonstrate an appreciation of human diversity, domestically and globally, in the creation and interpretation of media content. | Course assignments (brief description) | ## percent (## out of a total of ##) of students met the target. |
| Demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate and research information and to apply basic numerical and statistical concepts. | Course assignments (brief description) | ## percent (## out of a total of ##) of students met the target. |
| Demonstrate the ability to write correctly, clearly, and fairly; and to effectively critique the work of others. | Course assignments (brief description) | ## percent (## out of a total of ##) of students met the target. |
| Demonstrate the ability to present visual information effectively and creatively. | Course assignments (brief description) | ## percent (## out of a total of ##) of students met the target. |
| Demonstrate the ability to engage innovative tools and technologies. | Course assignments (brief description) | ## percent (## out of a total of ##) of students met the target. |
| Instructor Comments: | | |

Appendix D: Senior Portfolio Requirements

As part of their capstone experience, seniors in the MCJ program are required to complete an electronic portfolio of their work that is to be evaluated by working professionals from the media industry. The portfolio will 1) provide the school with an important means of assessing student achievement and 2) provide the student with an appropriate collection of work to use in beginning a career as a media professional. Students will be advised of the portfolio requirement early in the MCJ curriculum.

The Senior Portfolio is designed to 1) demonstrate a student's mastery of the basic skills required in their degree program, 2) reflect a student's ability to compete for an entry-level job upon graduation and 3) indicate a student's grasp of the theoretical and conceptual issues that have been introduced in their non-skills courses (history, ethics, law, etc.).

Journalism

As part of their capstone experience (MCJ 406), seniors in the journalism program are required to complete an electronic portfolio of their work that is to be evaluated by working professionals from the media industry. This portfolio will be in the form of a multimedia website that houses the major journalism projects they have worked on throughout their academic career.

The portfolio will 1) provide the school with an important means of assessing student achievement and 2) provide the student with an appropriate collection of work to use in beginning a career as a media professional.

Each student should have the following components in their completed portfolio:

- A resume
- A sampling of the student's best work in formats (broadcast, photo, print, multimedia) that reflects both their plans of study and their career goals. Possible work for the student portfolio could include but is not limited to:
 - For broadcast students – A reel of their best work (uploaded to YouTube, Vimeo, or elsewhere) that includes a sampling of their best work, either that which has already been broadcast or which has been prepared for class
 - For print students – A sampling of the student's best work published in the Student Printz and elsewhere. Anywhere from five to 10 articles is best, the more variety the better. The range of stories should include a mix of articles, including a breaking news story, in-depth feature or issue story (1000 words), and/or a document-based enterprise story with data visualization
 - For photo students – A photo story of at least 12 photographs with accompanying captions or story overview
 - For all students – A sampling of work, be it scripts, writing samples, or other print or multimedia storytelling, from formats outside of their core specialty. The best portfolios represent a wide skill set that will appeal to the broadest range of media employers. To that end, approximately a quarter to a third of a student's portfolio should represent work outside of their core specialty

- An essay or personal statement about the contents of the portfolio that addresses related theoretical and conceptual issues (for instance, media history, law, ethics and theory) or a copy of an essay written for a class that reflects a student's grasp of theoretical and conceptual issues.

Additionally, at least two of the stories/articles/packages included in the portfolio should deal with issues related to diversity and inclusion within the Pine Belt community or in Mississippi.

Public Relations and Advertising

As part of their capstone experience (MCJ 428), seniors in the public relations and advertising program are required to complete an electronic portfolio of their work that is to be evaluated by working professionals from the related industry. This portfolio will be in the form of a multimedia website that houses the major public relations and advertising projects they have worked on throughout their academic career.

The portfolio will 1) provide the school with an important means of assessing student achievement and 2) provide the student with an appropriate collection of work to use in beginning a career as a media professional.

Each public relations and advertising student should have the following components in their completed portfolio:

- A resume
- Appropriate writing samples produced in and outside the classroom
- Appropriate samples of graphic work produced in and outside the classroom
- Sample work that demonstrates an appreciation of human diversity
- The campaign book produced in the PR and Advertising Campaigns course
- An essay or personal statement about the contents of the portfolio that addresses related theoretical and conceptual issues (for instance, media history, law, ethics and theory) *or* a copy of an essay written for a class that reflects a student's grasp of theoretical and conceptual issues

Appendix E: Senior Portfolio Feedback Form



Portfolio Feedback Form

Dear (Reviewer):

Thank you for serving on the 2021 School of Communication portfolio review panel! Your feedback plays a huge part in determining the quality of the portfolios and will help improve our overall curriculum.

The School of Communication and its accrediting agency, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), have established a set of learning objectives for our students. We would like your help in assessing these learning objectives in the portfolio review. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not at all, 5 = very much), please indicate your response to the questions in the feedback form.

You may also note when the question is not applicable (NA) to a particular portfolio.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email me.

Thanks again!

Student's Major: _____

Does the student's sample work reflect an appreciation of human diversity?

NA Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Does the student's sample work reflect an ability to critically evaluate and research information?

NA Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Does the student's sample work reflect an ability to write accurately, clearly, and fairly?

NA Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Does the student's sample work reflect an ability to present visual information effectively and creatively?

NA Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Does the student's sample work reflect an ability to effectively use tools and technology in her/his chosen field?

NA Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Is the student's resume professionally presented (*appropriate format and information, free of spelling or grammatical errors, etc.*)?

NA Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Does the student's work reflect a basic level of proficiency in her/his chosen field?

NA Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Does the portfolio need significant improvement? Please enter your comments in the box below.

NA Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

| |
|-----------|
| Comments: |
|-----------|

Overall, I would rate this portfolio: (*Please circle*)

(5) Outstanding (4) Above Average (3) Average (2) Below Average (1) Needs Improvement

Appendix F: Internship Supervisor Evaluation Form (Online)

Appendix G: Senior Exit Survey (Online)

Appendix H: Alumni Survey (Online)