

Detailed Assessment Report
As of: 10/04/2012 09:23 AM EST
2011-2012 Public Relations MS

Mission / Purpose

The mission of the Masters in Public Relations degree program in the School of Mass Communication and Journalism is to provide students graduate-level preparation in communication management skills, communication and public relations theory, information gathering and analysis, as well as a sound knowledge of the role and function of professional communication in public and private organizations in order to prepare them for leadership positions in public relations and related fields and/or to continue their graduate education at a graduate school of their choice.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Mass Communication Theories

Students will demonstrate knowledge in mass communication theories and the ability to integrate these concepts, theories, and principles to public relations problems and opportunities.

Related Measures:

M 1: Comprehensive Exam

Master's degree candidates must pass a six-hour written comprehensive examination that tests the accumulation and integration of knowledge from his or her area of study as well as the ability to evaluate information and ideas. This examination may not be taken until all core and research method courses are completed and the student has no more than six hours of coursework left. The student must stay enrolled in the semester for at least 3 hours when the comprehensive examination is taken.

The comprehensive examination is administered by the Graduate Coordinator. Students may be asked questions from any faculty member from whom they have had courses. Faculty members who submit questions read the answers to their own questions. If a student fails to write a satisfactory answer for any part(s) of the exam, the student will be asked to rewrite the section(s) (either a similar type of question or a second attempt at the same question). The format for the rewrite will be determined by the faculty member who gives the questions. If, after rewriting, the student has still not passed part(s) of the exam, the student's academic committee will meet in order to decide if the student has passed or failed the entire examination.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:

80 percent of students will demonstrate competence in mass communication theories by passing the mass communication theory portion (MC 608) of the comps exam.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

90.9 percent of students (10/11) demonstrated competence in mass communication theories by passing the mass communication theory portion (MC 608) of the comps exam.

M 3: Public Relations Campaign

Students in the Public Relations master's program are required to develop a comprehensive campaign in the Public Relations Campaigns class (MC 621).

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

Target:

80 percent of students will demonstrate competence in incorporating mass communication theories in the campaign planning process, as judged by the professor.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Not Met

73% of students (16/22) and 71% of teams (10/14) in the Public Relations Campaign course demonstrated competence in incorporating mass communication theories in the campaign planning process by including measurable objectives upon which evaluation could be tied in the final project.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

PR campaign theories action plan

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012

About 73% of students (16/22) and 71% of teams (10/14) in the Public Relations Campaign course demonstrated competence in incorp...

SLO 2:Public Relations Theory

Students will demonstrate knowledge in public relations theory and the ability to integrate these concepts, theories, and principles to public relations problems and opportunities.

Related Measures:**M 1:Comprehensive Exam**

Master's degree candidates must pass a six-hour written comprehensive examination that tests the accumulation and integration of knowledge from his or her area of study as well as the ability to evaluate information and ideas. This examination may not be taken until all core and research method courses are completed and the student has no more than six hours of coursework left. The student must stay enrolled in the semester for at least 3 hours when the comprehensive examination is taken.

The comprehensive examination is administered by the Graduate Coordinator. Students may be asked questions from any faculty member from whom they have had courses. Faculty members who submit questions read the answers to their own questions. If a student fails to write a satisfactory answer for any part(s) of the exam, the student will be asked to rewrite the section(s) (either a similar type of question or a second attempt at the same question). The format for the rewrite will be determined by the faculty member who gives the questions. If, after rewriting, the student has still not passed part(s) of the exam, the student's academic committee will meet in order to decide if the student has passed or failed the entire examination.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:

80 percent of students will demonstrate competence in public relations theories by passing the public relations theory portion (MC 620) of the comps exam.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

81.8 percent of students (9/11) demonstrated competence in public relations theories by passing the public relations theory portion (MC 620) of the comps exam.

M 3:Public Relations Campaign

Students in the Public Relations master's program are required to develop a comprehensive campaign in the Public Relations Campaigns class (MC 621).

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

Target:

80 percent of students will demonstrate competence in incorporating public relations theories in the campaign planning process, as judged by the professor.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Not Met

73% of students (16/22) and 71% of teams (10/14) in the Public Relations Campaign course demonstrated competence in incorporating public relations theories in the campaign planning process by including measurable objectives upon which evaluation could be tied in the final project.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

PR campaign theories action plan

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012

About 73% of students (16/22) and 71% of teams (10/14) in the Public Relations Campaign course demonstrated competence in incorp...

SLO 3: Research Skills

Students will be able to gather and analyze information and relate conclusions to the public relations opportunity or problem at hand or apply the findings to organizational strategic planning and/or strategic communication planning.

Related Measures:**M 1: Comprehensive Exam**

Master's degree candidates must pass a six-hour written comprehensive examination that tests the accumulation and integration of knowledge from his or her area of study as well as the ability to evaluate information and ideas. This examination may not be taken until all core and research method courses are completed and the student has no more than six hours of coursework left. The student must stay enrolled in the semester for at least 3 hours when the comprehensive examination is taken.

The comprehensive examination is administered by the Graduate Coordinator. Students may be asked questions from any faculty member from whom they have had courses. Faculty members who submit questions read the answers to their own questions. If a student fails to write a satisfactory answer for any part(s) of the exam, the student will be asked to rewrite the section(s) (either a similar type of question or a second attempt at the same question). The format for the rewrite will be determined by the faculty member who gives the questions. If, after rewriting, the student has still not passed part(s) of the exam, the student's academic committee will meet in order to decide if the student has passed or failed the entire examination.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:

80 percent of students will demonstrate competence in comprehending and evaluating communication/public relations research in their responses to relevant comps questions (MCJ 526, MC 720).

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

90.9 percent of students (10/11) demonstrated competence in comprehending and evaluating communication/public relations research in their responses to relevant comps questions (MCJ 526, MC 720).

M 3: Public Relations Campaign

Students in the Public Relations master's program are required to develop a comprehensive campaign in the Public Relations Campaigns class (MC 621).

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

Target:

80 percent of students will score 80 or higher on the evaluation of the summative research and evaluation components in the campaign project for MC 621, as judged by their project contact and their professor using a rubric designed to assess the quality of public relations campaigns.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

82% of students (18/22) and 86% of teams (12/14) scored 80 or higher on the evaluation of the summative research and evaluation components in the campaign project for MC 621, as judged by their project contact and their professor using a rubric designed to assess the quality of public relations campaigns.

SLO 4:Application of Skills - Campaign/Strategies

Students will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of mass communication and public relations theories and research by developing a comprehensive public relations campaign or providing in-depth analysis of public relations strategies.

Related Measures:

M 1:Comprehensive Exam

Master's degree candidates must pass a six-hour written comprehensive examination that tests the accumulation and integration of knowledge from his or her area of study as well as the ability to evaluate information and ideas. This examination may not be taken until all core and research method courses are completed and the student has no more than six hours of coursework left. The student must stay enrolled in the semester for at least 3 hours when the comprehensive examination is taken.

The comprehensive examination is administered by the Graduate Coordinator. Students may be asked questions from any faculty member from whom they have had courses. Faculty members who submit questions read the answers to their own questions. If a student fails to write a satisfactory answer for any part(s) of the exam, the student will be asked to rewrite the section(s) (either a similar type of question or a second attempt at the same question). The format for the rewrite will be determined by the faculty member who gives the questions. If, after rewriting, the student has still not passed part(s) of the exam, the student's academic committee will meet in order to decide if the student has passed or failed the entire examination.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:

80 percent of students will demonstrate competence in developing and analyzing public relations campaigns in their responses to relevant comps questions (MC 621, MC 626).

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

100 percent of students (11/11) demonstrated competence in developing and analyzing public relations campaigns in their responses to relevant comps questions (MC 621, MC 626).

M 3:Public Relations Campaign

Students in the Public Relations master's program are required to develop a comprehensive campaign in the Public Relations Campaigns class (MC 621).

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

Target:

80 percent of students will demonstrate competence in developing a comprehensive campaign and

score 80 or higher on the campaign project, as judged by their project contact and their professor using a rubric designed to assess the quality of public relations campaigns.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

91% of students (20/22) and 86% of teams (12/14) demonstrated competence in developing a comprehensive campaign and scored 80 or higher on the campaign project, as judged by their project contact and their professor using a rubric designed to assess the quality of public relations campaigns.

SLO 5:Application of Skills - Internship/Project

Students will develop professional skills through major projects or supervised internships in various media settings.

Related Measures:

M 2: Internship Evaluation

Students in the Public Relations master's program are required to complete a major project or a professional internship in the field of public relations. The project and the internship are administered by the Graduate Coordinator. The internship requires 20 hours per week. The student will be evaluated and graded by his/her supervisor at the end of the internship.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

Target:

80 percent of students who completed internships will achieve ratings of good-to-excellent on professional applications measures of the internship application form, as judged by their internship supervisor.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

92.3 percent of students (12/13) who completed internships achieved ratings of good-to-excellent on professional applications measures of the internship application form, as judged by their internship supervisor.

M 6: Project/Internship Report

Students in the Public Relations master's program non-thesis option are required to either complete a major project or complete a professional internship in the field public relations. The internship and the project are administered by the Graduate Coordinator. Students are required to submit a self-evaluation of the project or internship at the time of completion.

Source of Evidence: Portfolio, showing skill development or best work

Target:

80 percent of students who completed internships will indicate their satisfaction with skills developed during their internships in reports they complete at the end of the internships.

Findings (2011-2012) - Target: Met

92.3 percent of students (12/13) who completed internships indicated their satisfaction with skills developed during their internships in reports they complete at the end of the internships.

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

PR campaign theories action plan

About 73% of students (16/22) and 71% of teams (10/14) in the Public Relations Campaign course demonstrated competence in incorporating mass communication and public relations theories in the campaign planning process by including measurable objectives upon which evaluation could be tied in the final project. We did not meet the target (80%). This issue will be addressed in the next academic year. More emphasis will

be placed on the utilization of mass communication and public relations theories in the campaign planning process.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012

Implementation Status: Planned

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Public Relations Campaign | **Outcome/Objective:** Mass Communication Theories | Public Relations Theory

Responsible Person/Group: Graduate faculty in the PR sequence in the School of Mass Communication and Journalism

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?

We are overall pleased with the performance of our students on multiple assessment measures in 2011-2012. The majority of the students in the master's programs in Public Relations successfully passed the comprehensive exam and completed an internship. In the comprehensive exam, they demonstrated knowledge in mass communication and public relations theories and research. It shows that our theory and research courses have helped prepare students for the comprehensive exam. Many instructors require students to complete a research paper and submit it to a conference. A Graduate Research Forum was created to help cultivate research atmosphere among students. Students can present their research and exchange ideas at the monthly forum meetings. The forum also serves as a venue for graduate students and faculty to interact outside the classroom. Last year, 92.3 percent of students (12/13) who completed internships achieved ratings of good-to-excellent on professional applications measures of the internship application form, as judged by their internship supervisor. Student evaluations were overall positive. Over 60% of the students (9/14) were able to find employment within a year after graduation. Even though this is our first time using WEAVE to evaluate learning outcomes, these findings are consistent with our own observations from the past few years. We will continue to look closely at our outcomes and measures in the upcoming year to ensure that our students are succeeding our program.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?

About 73% of students (16/22) and 71% of teams (10/14) in the Public Relations Campaign course demonstrated competence in incorporating mass communication and public relations theories in the campaign planning process by including measurable objectives upon which evaluation could be tied in the final project. We did not meet the target (80%). This issue will be addressed in the next academic year. More emphasis will be placed on the utilization of mass communication and public relations theories in the campaign planning process.

Annual Report Section Responses

Program Summary

The mission of the Masters in Public Relations degree program in the School of Mass Communication and Journalism is to provide students graduate-level preparation in communication management skills, communication and public relations theory, information gathering and analysis, as well as a sound knowledge of the role and function of professional communication in public and private organizations in order to prepare them for leadership positions in public relations and related fields and/or to continue their graduate education at a graduate school of their choice. The Master of Science degree in Public Relations requires 30 hours, with an option of a thesis, major project, or an internship. This is the only Master's program in Public Relations in the state of Mississippi. It is well-known throughout the region for quality education and outstanding alumni. Many of our graduates are leaders in their field and they maintain close ties with the School and the university. Last year, a few of them came back to either give guest lectures or help with portfolio review. To build on our

success and make the program bigger and better, we have been considering the possibility of developing a hybrid program in the future when we have required resources.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

The School of Mass Communication and Journalism will continue to maintain a robust assessment plan to measure the Public Relations program performance and effectively utilize our findings to help improve learning outcomes. We believe there are two areas we need to focus on - students' knowledge of public relations theories and research, and professional training.

(1) Public relations theories and research: Students are expected to master key public relations concepts by reading articles and books in MC 620 (Public Relations Theory) and applying those concepts in public relations practice in MC 621 (Public Relations Campaign) and MC 626 (Public Relations Strategies). Many instructors also require students to complete a research paper in class and encourage them to submit it to a conference. A list of mass communication conferences was compiled by the Graduate Coordinator and was posted online. A reminder email will be sent to all students before the deadline for conference submission. The School would try its best to fund conference travel if a student's paper was accepted. A Graduate Research Forum was created to help cultivate research atmosphere among students. Students can present their research and exchange ideas at the monthly forum meetings. They are also encouraged to take advantage of research opportunities on campus, including present research at the Graduate Student Research Symposium and publish articles in the Synergy Journal. Students' research achievements are taken into account for the Top Master's Student Award given out by the School every year.

(2) Professional training: All students in the Public Relations program are required to complete an internship upon graduation. To help students fully take advantage of the internship experience and help the School of Mass Communication and Journalism receive feedback from both the employer and the student, more detailed instructions were added to the internship forms last year, including agreement form, evaluation form and student feedback form. Many students in the program have full-time or part-time jobs while in school. Some of them have to commute from Jackson, Gulfport, or neighboring states such as Alabama and Louisiana. Therefore, several online/hybrid courses were developed last year so students would be able to have a more flexible course schedule with less distractions. Students are also encouraged to attend career fair/portfolio workshops, join professional organizations (such as PRSSA and AAF), and work for the Student Media Center (such as the Student Printz and WUSM radio station). These efforts should help students develop a stronger resume and prepare themselves for future employment.

Closing the Loop

About 73% of students (16/22) and 71% of teams (10/14) in the Public Relations Campaign course demonstrated competence in incorporating mass communication and public relations theories in the campaign planning process by including measurable objectives upon which evaluation could be tied in the final project. We did not meet the target (80%). This issue will be addressed in the next academic year. More emphasis will be placed on the utilization of mass communication and public relations theories in the campaign planning process.