Undergraduate Program Assessment

Department of Journalism

Students majoring in Journalism will learn and be able to demonstrate through the basic requirement of Newswriting & Reporting:

- Critical Thinking: How to think in a critical, systematic and constructive way about the issues facing the rapidly changing world of journalism and how the work of journalism can impact our democracy.

- Team Work: How to work with others to both do journalism in the traditional sense and to communicate effectively across multiple platforms.

- Reporting Skills: How to interview, take notes, use basic audio and visual skills, understand and use public records; understand and access public meetings, use of basic research tools including LexisNexis, database and Web research, use public relations sources, follow up on leads and maintain relationships with sources.

- Writing Ability: How to tell a story, formulate basic leads, construct news and feature stories, including use of quotations, transitions, attribution, accuracy, grammar and AP style.

- Understanding of basic concepts: How to take in and apply basic information on journalism law, such as libel, protecting sources and access to information; ethics, including accuracy, fairness, diversity, conflicts of interest and privacy; impact of the 24-hour news cycle, new technologies, multiplatform delivery and changing distribution systems; the importance of visual media, and other professional standards, such as developing good news judgment, interactions with sources and editors and keeping one’s opinions out of a story.

- Development of socio-cultural awareness: How to further understanding of the society in which they live, the world on which they report and their own role as journalists and citizens.

Assessment Tools

- Journalism regularly reviews its Newswriting & Reporting foundational course, through instructor discussion, surveys of student majors, University course evaluations, senior survey data, review of student work and conversations with upper level writing teachers and with students themselves.

Highlighted Recent Activities

Journalism historically has scored at the top of all SBS departments in terms of undergraduate teaching evaluation data, in part because of our student-centered major, small classes with high teacher-student contact and individual feedback and strong advising program. Our assessment includes constant consultation with majors through formal and informal conversations with faculty and through surveys. The Journalism Director also has consulted with student focus groups.

- We expect to gauge reaction to our new requirements going into effect in Fall 2013 using the same techniques. While requiring the same number of credits, we have replaced two electives with a multimedia requirement and a second advanced writing class in order to increase the rigor of the major and better prepare our students for the working world that awaits them.

- We have strengthened an already well received advising system, with the help of our relatively new faculty advisor. He is available to students upon request and makes it a point to reach out to each student whose gpa falls below 2.5. He uses three to five Journalism Peer Advisors in his efforts to speak with potential and accepted students as well.

- Extensive communication remains a key to our efforts. We have reached out to students early on with letters, direct emails and a Facebook page. Once they are admitted, they enroll in a five-week Journalism Success
seminar that acclimates them to the major, stresses the need for internships, encourages study abroad and acquaints them with all campus media. This seminar has been instrumental in preparing students for the rigors of Newswriting & Reporting. We use our Monday Memo, our website and the Journalism Launchpad Blog to continue advising students as they move through the major. Our website recently added an interactive Journalism requirements page to help students consider their options as they select requirements and electives.

Program Assessment

- Next steps include a May meeting of all Newswriting and Reporting and Intro to Multimedia instructors to assess the year’s classes, particularly the initial use of a computerized grammar module in Newswriting; another survey of students who’ve taken basic writing courses, and development of a Moodle page for all sections of these courses that includes resources and exercises, with a section page for each instructor.

- Will be carried out by the Director in consultation with the Curriculum Committee.