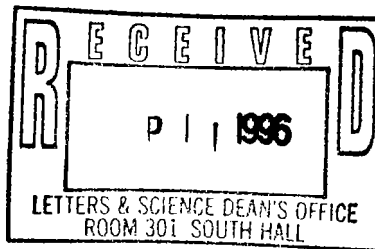


**University of Wisconsin—Madison**  
**School of Journalism and Mass Communication**

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September 11, 1996



To: Alex Nagel, Associate Dean

From: Bob Drechsel, Director

RE: Progress on assessment

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Here is a brief summary of our assessment activity to date. I need to preface this by noting that ours is very likely a different type of assessment activity than most because it we are simultaneously a professional school and academic program, and a substantial component of our assessment will involve an outside review team's work. Another component will be establishment of an advisory board of alumni and media practitioners. It is therefore impossible for me to submit a report describing a pilot assessment program on which we have already acted. We are compiling a self-study, and I am still waiting for data from several committees. But the plan is to invite the outside review team to visit during this academic year.

Here's what has happened thus far:

- Consistent with our guidelines, an Internal Review Committee has been appointed and gathered a substantial amount of data from faculty and staff. We are using a combination of existing statistical data, survey data and interviewing.
- Information has been collected on courses, assignments, exams.
- reports have been solicited from the School's major standing committees: Graduate, Curriculum and Constituent Relations, but not all of these reports -- which are to cover relevant parts of the internal review guidelines -- have been completed.
- two surveys of recent bachelor's graduates have been completed, with data covering placement as well as evaluation of their experience in the School.
- the Graduate Committee has conducted a major survey of all master's and Ph.D. graduates for whom we could obtain mailable addresses. The survey sought information about career paths since graduate and evaluation of the respondents' graduate training at Wisconsin and how it has served them. Data is being analyzed.

**Associate Dean Alex Nagel**

**September 11, 1996**

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- the faculty has developed a master list of possible outside reviewers from which the five-person team will be selected.

Important matters still in progress include:

- analysis of a random sample of undergraduate and graduate student programs in order to better understand the precise curricular tracks students are taking through the program.
- examination of student course evaluations
- final compilation of all of this data into a self-study narrative with substantial supporting appendices.

The self-study document should be completed this fall and invitations extended to the outside review committee, which will visit for two days in the winter. It will conduct additional research, interviewing faculty and staff, speaking with administrators, speaking with students, and ultimately preparing its own report.

Meanwhile, we are at last on the verge of establishing an Advisory Board. I and various members of our Constituent Relations Committee have held a series of meetings with a core group of alumni to discuss the concept and make a final determination of whether it is feasible to proceed. The conclusion reached over the summer was that we ought to proceed this year and form an Advisory Board this fall. Our hope is that the Advisory Board will be particularly useful not only in offering insight on how we might best prepare our undergraduates for work in the mass media, but also provide useful feedback on practitioners' views of our students' performance.

We think this is an ambitious approach to assessment. In some respects it reaches beyond what was expected when we underwent formal accreditation review by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. It is taking significantly longer to implement than we had anticipated (in fact, had I grasped how long it would take, I probably wouldn't have volunteered to take part in the pilot program). But we think this will give us a meaningful evaluation of what we do, and will be far less onerous and more useful in the long run than formal accreditation was.

March 6, 1996

**MEMORANDUM**

**To: Professor Bob Drechsel, Director  
School of Journalism and Mass Communication**

**From: Alexander Nagel  
Associate Dean**

**Re: Department of School of Journalism Assessment Plans**

I am responding (at long last) to the School of Journalism Assessment Plans for the undergraduate major and the graduate program. Your plans articulate a set of educational goals at both levels, and you plan to incorporate assessment of progress towards these goals in the School's plan for external review. The College wants to encourage a variety of approaches to assessment, and the School of Journalism proposal allows us to use external review in one of the pilot. The L&S Academic Planning Council has reviewed this plan, and there are some issues that I think need clarification.

The appendix to your plan provides procedures for an external review, and this includes a summary of the many kinds of evidence that you will require for assessment. However, you are not specific about the timetable for gathering this evidence. You indicate, and we agree, that assessment is a continuous process, and is not just done once every seven years. However, it would be beneficial to the School and to the College if you could provide a timetable of when some of the components of the review process will take place. You indicate that you are conducting a self-study, and that no board of visitors can be in place until the 1996-97 academic year. I ask that you share parts of the self-study with the College and the Academic Planning Council even before the College approves the external review, since it is important that we get feed-back from the pilot assessment plans. Since the College views this process as an experiment, we want to pass along information about successes or failures to other departments in the College.

You do not identify any costs associated with your assessment plan. May I assume that you do not request special funding at this stage? It is possible to make requests for funding for special assessment needs at a later time.

xc: Dean Phillip R. Certain