



**College of Letters and Science  
Assessment Report**

*(Due back to your Academic Associate Dean by May 1, 1998)*

Department or Program Name: School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Abstract: (This should be a brief summary of no more than 300 words that can be used in the College's report to the Provost's Office. The abstract should indicate the focus of assessment activities during the 1997-98 academic year. It should indicate what actions the department or program is taking to change its program as a result of the assessment. It should indicate whether the assessment was of the Undergraduate Major, the Graduate Program, or both.)

Assessment Tools Used: (Using the attached chart, please specify which assessment activities have taken or will take place in your department or program. Indicate also the year when these activities took place or will take place. If you used other tools, please describe them.)

***Direct Indicators***

	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
National Exams	_____	_____
Local Exams	_____	_____
Capstone Course(s)	_____	_____
Embedded Testing	_____	_____
Student Portfolios	_____	_____
Review theses & dissertations	_____	_____
Performance Evaluations	_____	_____
Pre and Post Testing	_____	_____

***Indirect Indicators***

	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
Student Surveys	_____	_____
Exit Interviews	_____	_____
Alumni Surveys	1997 _____	1996 _____
Employer Surveys	_____	_____
External Reviews	every 7 years _____	every 7 years _____
Board of Visitors	1997	

## **ABSTRACT**

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication uses two primary methods of assessment: an outside Advisory Board made up primarily of media professionals who meet with the director, faculty, staff and students once or twice each year; and an external review process that involves continuous gathering of data, including annual surveys of graduates, and a site visit by external reviewers every seven years. The past year's activities have focused more on the Advisory Board than on the external review. The School has been developing a major plan for revision of its undergraduate professional program. The Advisory Board was consulted extensively as the School's curriculum committee developed recommendations for the revision. These recommendations, which also have major ramifications for future hiring, are now under consideration by the full faculty. Also during the past year, the School used data from annual surveys of recent graduates to monitor success in placement, and as an indicator of overall strengths and weaknesses in preparing students for their fields. This data, too, helped inform development of recommendations for curricular revision.

Narrative: (This should be a report, up to two pages in length, giving the details of the assessment plan and assessment activities.)

Assessment in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication occurs through two major mechanisms: use of an outside Advisory Board, and data gathering and evaluation in connection with the School's plan for major external review of its undergraduate and graduate programs every seven years.

The Advisory Board was officially constituted in fall 1996 and meets either once or twice a year depending on need. Its 12 members, 10 of whom are also alumni, represent all four of the major media fields for which the School offers undergraduate specializations — print news, broadcast news, advertising and public relations. Among the members are prominent newspaper editors and publishers, the CEO of a major advertising agency, the president of one of the state's most prominent public relations firms, and broadcast news executives from Madison and Milwaukee. Board meetings last for a full day, and focus on major issues facing the School.

The Board is an important mechanism for keeping the School closely in touch with the professional communities it serves, acts as a sounding board for ideas, and serves as a consultant on issues and problems. The last two meetings, for example, were devoted to discussion of curricular change in response to fast-changing professional fields, and strategies for balancing the need for up-to-date professional expertise in the classroom with the research orientation of the faculty. During any given meeting, the Board may meet with a number of faculty, staff and students.

The external review process includes a variety of continuing monitoring activities designed to generate both immediate and longitudinal data on all aspects of the undergraduate and graduate programs — curriculum, advising, internship and placement, administration, equipment and facilities and alumni relations. Among these monitoring activities are annual surveys of graduates

and a survey of all alumni of the School's graduate programs. We monitor placement of students as well as their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the program in preparing them for their professional work. Every seven years, following a major internal self-study, an outside team of reviewers is invited to campus to examine the program. Team members include journalism/mass communication faculty from peer research institutions who also have professional expertise in media, at least one academic member from outside journalism and mass communication, and at least one professional practitioner. The goal is to provide a thorough review of the quality and effectiveness of the program at all levels.

During the past year, the Advisory Board and student survey data have already played a major role in revision of the School's undergraduate curriculum. For example, survey data indicated that many students were specializing simultaneously in more than one of the School's undergraduate sequences, which provided confirmation that faculty were on the right track in considering combining some specializations. The curriculum recommendation that ultimately emerged included the combining of sequences. Survey data also confirm that recent graduates have given high marks to the quality of the education they have received in the School. Data also provide us with trends over time on a variety of quality and placement measures.

Meanwhile, the School's director and members of the curriculum committee met with the Advisory Board to discuss such ideas as developing a more generic curriculum that would introduce all students to basic core skills that cut across specializations, whether a structure of specialized sequences continues to make sense in today's environment of new and converging media, and whether there was support for the School's commitment to requiring considerable course work in theory and concepts in mass communication. The Board thus played an important role in development of recommendations brought to the faculty.

Simply put, our assessment activities were directly and productively involved in development of a plan for major redesign of the undergraduate curriculum.