COMMUNICATION STUDIES MAJOR/MINOR

ASSESSMENT REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR 2018 – 2019
REPORT DUE DATE: 11/1/19

Who should submit the report? – All majors, minors (including interdisciplinary minors), graduate and non-degree granting certificate programs of the College of Arts and Sciences. Programs can combine assessment reports for a major and a minor program into one aggregate report as long as the mission statements, program learning outcome(s) evaluated, methodology applied to each, and the results are clearly delineated.

Note: Dear Colleagues: In an effort to produce a more streamlined and less repetitive assessment report format, we are piloting this modified template for the present annual assessment cycle. We are requesting an assessment report that would not exceed eight pages of text. Supporting materials may be appended. We will be soliciting your feedback on the report as we attempt to make it more user-friendly.

Some useful contacts:

1. Prof. Alexandra Amati, FDCD, Arts – adamati@usfca.edu
2. Prof. John Lendvay, FDCD, Sciences – lendvay@usfca.edu
3. Prof. Mark Meritt, FDCD, Humanities – meritt@usfca.edu
4. Prof. Michael Jonas, FDCD, Social Sciences – mrjonas@usfca.edu
5. Prof. Suparna Chakraborty, AD Academic Effectiveness – schakraborty2@usfca.edu
6. Ms. Corie Schwabenland, Academic Data & Assessment Specialist- ceschwabenland@usfca.edu

Academic Effectiveness Annual Assessment Resource Page:

https://myusf.usfca.edu/arts-sciences/faculty-resources/academic-effectiveness/assessment

Email to submit the report: assessment_cas@usfca.edu

Important: Please write the name of your program or department in the subject line.

For example: FineArts_Major (if you decide to submit a separate report for major and minor);

FineArts_Aggregate (when submitting an aggregate report)

I. LOGISTICS & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

Eve-Anne Doohan, Chair, Communication Studies Department, edoohan@usfca.edu

2. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? Kindly state "Yes" or "No." Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program.

No.

COMS Major and Minor Mission Statement:

The Department of Communication Studies is a community of scholars whose mission is to empower students to achieve their personal and professional goals through becoming clear, effective, and ethical communicators. Communication Studies graduates will be educated in understanding, critiquing, and producing arguments and texts with the goal of fostering a sense of civic responsibility and a shared commitment to social justice.

3. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2018? Kindly state "Yes" or "No." Please provide the current PLOs below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.
    Note: Major revisions in the program learning outcomes need to go through the College Curriculum Committee (contact: Professor Joshua Gamson, gamson@usfca.edu). Minor editorial changes are not required to go through the College Curriculum Committee.

No.

COMS Major Program Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will articulate and define major theories and concepts used in the study of communication.

2. Students will design a research project that engages scholarly literature to address significant and appropriate questions/issues.

3. Students will demonstrate the ability to select and analyze text(s), collect and analyze data, and answer research questions and test hypotheses.

4. Students will identify and assess the social context for their messages and craft effective messages for specific audiences.

5. Students will be able to identify how communication produces, reinforces, and critiques social inequalities and power relations.

The Communication Studies Minor includes PLOs 1 and PLO 3. Because there are only 10 declared COMS minors, our understanding is that we do not need to submit a full assessment report.

4. **Which particular Program Learning Outcome(s) did you assess for the academic year 2018-2010?**

For the COMS major, we finished the assessment of PLO 2 during the 2018-2019 academic year.

Because the COMS minor only includes PLO 1 and PLO 3, our plan is to assess the COMS minor students when we assess those PLOs for the COMS major (but we will do separate analyses for the COMS minors). Because we have such few COMS minors, however, we are already beginning to collect work products from the COMS minors that we have in class.

II.   METHODOLOGY

5. Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s).

    For example, "the department used questions that were inputted in the final examination pertaining directly to the <said PLO>. An independent group of faculty (not teaching the course) then evaluated the responses to the questions and gave the students a grade for responses to those questions."

    Important Note – WSCUC advises us to use "direct methods" which relate to a <u>direct evaluation of a student work product</u>. "Indirect methods" like exit interviews or student surveys can be used only as additional l complements to a direct method.

    <u>For any program with fewer than 10 students</u>: If you currently have fewer than 10 students in your program (rendering your statistical analysis biased due to too few data points), it is fine to describe a multi-year data collection strategy here. It would be important to remember that <u>every 3 years</u>, we would expect you to have enough data to conduct a meaningful analysis.

    <u>Important</u>: *Please attach, at the end of this report, a copy of the rubric used for assessment.*

We have a two-part process for assessment. The first involves work products identified by students that we use to develop and test our rubric. As part of our COMS 496: Communication Studies Internship course, students complete a "Learning Assessment and Skills Translation" assignment where they explain what each of our PLOs mean to them and upload a work product from a class that they think demonstrates how they meet each PLO. We find this is a great way to get students aware of the learning outcomes for our major and have them reflect on the coursework they have completed. They also then work on translating the material into skills they could talk about on a resume or in a job interview. For the first part of the assessment of each PLO, we use the materials that students have uploaded. These are used to help us practice with the rubric we have developed and do an initial test of our interrater reliability. For the second part of the assessment of each PLO, we randomly select 10% of students in each class that professors have identified as meeting a specific PLO (via our curriculum map). Professors then pull the work products of the randomly selected students that they think are the best ways to assess the PLO for that particular class. Our PA then redacts any identifying information. The COMS Assessment Committee then trains all of the other faculty on the use of the rubric.

The PLO 2 rubric was developed and practice rating occurred in the fall. Then training of all faculty and rating occurred in January.

We had 127 students enrolled in the Fall 2017 in courses that met PLO 2 (including COMS 203, 252, 254, 350, and 352) and 36 students in Spring 2018 (COMS 253) for a total of 163 students. The work products are from two different semesters and are from the prior year because of a change we made to our assessment plan (we changed our plan to do the complete development of a rubric and rating of work products in one academic year; it used to begin in the spring and finish in the fall, which made the training of and rating by faculty members a bit more complicated). We rated work products from 20 randomly selected students, representing 12% of the students enrolled (as recommended we aim to rate at least 10%). Each work product was rated three times (by three different faculty members). Cronbach's alpha was .720, which indicates that an acceptable level of reliability was reached.

We would like to point out a few things about our assessment plan. All COMS faculty rotate on to the COMS Assessment Committee and serve for two years (with the Department Chair serving as Chair of the COMS Assessment Committee and serving for the duration of their term as Chair). This past year (2018-2019), the COMS Assessment Committee was made up of Marilyn DeLaure, Allison Thorson, and Bryan Whaley, with Eve-Anne Doohan chairing the committee. Fay Chen joined the COMS Assessment Committee in the Spring of 2019 and will serve on the Assessment Committee as she oversees our Public Relations Minor. For this coming year (2019-2020), the COMS Assessment Committee is made up of Fay Chen, Marilyn DeLaure, Allison Thorson, and Bryan Whaley, with Eve-Anne Doohan chairing the committee. Also, all of the faculty serve as faculty raters. We had 100% faculty involvement this past year, which we think is impressive.

III.   RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

6. What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise?
   This section is for you to highlight the results of the exercise. Pertinent information here would include:
   a. how well students mastered the outcome at the level they were intended to,
   b. any trends noticed over the past few assessment cycles, and
   c. the levels at which students mastered the outcome based on the rubric used.

The rubric we developed allows us to indicate what level of achievement was met and to map whether this is the appropriate level of achievement for that particular course (e.g., our foundation course, COMS 203 is supposed to meet PLO 2 at the Introductory level, while one of our methods courses, COMS 254 is supposed to meet PLO 2 at the Mastery level). The results for PLO 2 are below:

Introductory Level (COMS 203):

1 student = 1
3 students = 2
1 students = 3
1 student = 4

These results indicate that all of the students in COMS 203 are meeting PLO 2 at least at the introductory level, with most students surpassing expectations.

Developing Level (COMS 252 and 253):

1 student = 2
2 students = 3
2 students = 4

These results indicate that the majority of the students in COMS 252 and 253 are meeting this PLO at the developing level. We learned in using the rubric that it is difficult to apply to COMS 252 in particular, because of the way in which the PLO was operationalized on the rubric. This was important feedback that we learned in the rating of the work products and we will be discussing how to move forward with a rubric that can work for all of our classes in the future.

Mastery Level (COMS 254, 352, and 350):

1 student = 1

2 students = 2

1 student = 3

2 students = 4

2 students = 5

According to our current rubric, mastery is achieved by earning a rating of 5. Two of the students whose work products were rated from classes designed to reach PLO 2 at the mastery level achieved this goal. This particular group of classes had students representing all levels of achievement (from introductory to mastery). This could be due to a variety of reasons. The work products sampled may not have been well matched to the rubric. Because so few student products are rated, there is of course the chance that a low-achieving student happened to be randomly selected. But for our purposes, the most likely explanation for the variety of levels of achievement, and in particular, the finding that only two of the students sampled achieved this PLO at the desired level, is because of a flaw in the rubric.

As we discussed last year, it is easy to score a 1 on the rubric, and it is very difficult to score a 5. While the rubric indicates that a 5 is mastery, it perhaps is more indicative of near perfection. This perhaps then falsely indicates that our foundational courses are too difficult and also falsely indicates that our upper-division students are not achieving the mastery level as frequently as they should. Because of when this rubric was developed and when the rating took place, we were unable to make the changes to the rubric in advance of rating. But moving forward this year, we will be discussing possible ways to keep what we like about our rubrics (that they can be applied to all classes, that they indicate levels of achievement) while also making them more valid in their measurement.

IV.   CLOSING THE LOOP

7. **Based on your results, what changes/modifications are you planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome? This section could also address more long-term planning that your department/program is considering and does not require that any changes need to be implemented in the next academic year itself.**

One possible solution to the observation that it is perhaps too easy to score at the introductory level and too difficult to score at the mastery level is to revise our rubrics. One possible revision is to have a score of 4 or 5 indicate mastery. Another possible revision is that perhaps our scoring of 1 needs to be more difficult. We are going to continue to have discussions about this as we develop the rubric for PLO 3. We would also appreciate any feedback that you might have for us about our rubric. The clear benefit of our rubric is that the level of achievement is built-in, with different components being indicative of introductory, developing, and mastery levels.

8. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2017-2018, submitted in October 2018)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in this report?

Our report last year indicated that we are doing an excellent job with assessment in our department. Indeed, we were very pleased that our efforts were recognized with the "Star Assessment Award" by Dean Camperi. We were complimented on the rigor of our methodology "which exceeds best practices." It was also noted that our report "meets the highest expectations." We did not have any suggestions of things that should be changed or that we needed to implement.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any rubrics used for assessment, relevant tables, charts and figures should be included here)

PLO #2: Students will design a research project that engages scholarly literature to address significant and appropriate questions/issues.

Blank - N/A	1 Introductory	2	3 Developing	4	5 Mastery

None or unclear	summarizes literature but does not offer a significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis about communi-cation	summarizes literature and offers a significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis about communi-cation	synthesizes literature but does not offer a significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis about communi-cation OR summarizes and identifies gaps/makes critiques and offers significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis	synthesizes literature and either identifies gaps/makes critiques, or offers significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis OR inconsistent, not fully synthesized and identifies gaps/makes critiques and offers significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis	Does all 3: synthesizes literature, and identifies existing gaps/makes critiques, which lead to significant/ appropriate question/ hypothesis about communi-cation