

Teaching and Learning Project Assessment Report

Program or Unit: Journalism Program

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What we wanted to learn about our students

1. What Institutional Student Learning Outcomes and/or Program Student Learning Outcomes does this project assess?

PSLO #3 — At the completion of the Journalism Program students will possess a portfolio of published work suitable for internship/job applications and interviews

2. What is the research question investigated by this project?

What is the impact of the completion of multiple newspaper-related courses on the quality and diversity of the student's portfolio?

3. Why is this research question of importance to the program? What background information is needed to understand the rationale for this project?

Journalism majors either transfer or seek employment after completing the Journalism program. In the current AA, only 6 units transfer as major requirements to CSU: Journalism 10 and 35. But Journalism 15, 15, 20 and 30 are required for the degree. Some students seeking a quicker transfer question whether they should take additional units. The CSUs tell us anecdotally that students who transfer in with Publication Production experience are stronger than their native students, or than student who transfer in without such experience. SFSU, in fact, uses production experience as criteria in helping them decide which students to admit into an impacted major. We would like to reinforce for students that they will leave the program with a stronger, more diverse portfolio if they complete these additional units. (As an aside, production units will be part of the new AAT in Journalism).

What we did

We used direct measures of assessment to evaluate this PSLO: The publication portfolios (stringbooks) of students required by Journalism 10, 15, 16, 20 and 30 courses were assessed by course instructors for evidence of quality and diversity using a rubric with a 5-point scale (see attached). The tool measures both course and program SLOs and calls for both student self-evaluation and instructor evaluation. For this project we used only the instructor evaluation since instructors are familiar with professional work standards. We also used only the PSLO scale (the CSLO scale is used as part of single-course grading).

The most diverse portfolio would contain a body of work in five major areas: objective reporting, opinion writing, photojournalism, informational and illustrative graphics, and news presentation (page design). Students with work in just one category are scored with a one, and students with work in all five categories are scored with a five.

There is also a quality component integrated into the assessment tool, and averaged together with the quantity and breadth of material.

In assigning an overall score for the publication portfolio, we rounded up or down to the nearest whole number: 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, with 5 being the top score and representing a strong, diverse portfolio.

What we learned about our students

We analyzed the publication portfolios of 44 students enrolled in Journalism 10, 15ABC, 20ABC, 20 and 30 in Spring 2012. Since portfolios are updated from course to course, and are therefore comprehensive, here are the results based on the number of newspaper-related journalism courses that students took up to and including Spring 2012:

Portfolio score	1 course	2 courses	5+ courses
1	5 students	0 students	0 students
2	16 students	2 students	1 student
3	3 students	3 students	0 students
4	0 students	3 students	7 students
5	0 portfolios	0 students	4 students

With the exception of a few outliers, the results confirm what we expect: the more publication experience students have, the stronger and more diverse their portfolios. We would expect students completing just one course to score a 1 or 2, those completing two courses to score 2 or 3, those completing three courses to score a 2, 3 or 4, and those completing four or more courses to score 3, 4 or 5, depending on which courses they completed. You will note the number of courses taken by students in the program jumps from two to five or more. That is because majors often take more than one course in a single semester after their first course or two in the program.

The outliers in the one-course category scoring a 3 were a result of majors becoming so excited about working for the paper that they completed additional work not required for the course. There were no outliers in the two-course category. The one outlier in the five-plus course category represents a DSPS student with weak skills yet great desire and persistence.

What we plan to do next to improve student learning

Overall, students are performing as expected as they progress through the program, specifically in terms of this particular PSLO, but what we did learn is that the portfolio self-evaluation tool is still confusing to some students. When we last assessed using a portfolio self-evaluation/evaluation tool, we found it needed extensive revision. And although it is much improved in this iteration, it still needs some tweaking. We will work on revising it over the next few semesters.