SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY.

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: Communication	Department: Communication
Degree or Certificate Level: M.A.	College/School: College of Arts and Sciences
Date (Month/Year): November 2020	Primary Assessment Contact: Dan Kozlowski
In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2020	
In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2015	

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

We collected data for two PLOs:
PLO2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research.
PLO5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement.

We also sent an exit survey to graduating students in Summer 2020 as an indirect assessment of all of our PLOS.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Students' culminating projects (thesis, applied project, or comprehensive exam) along with their responses during their oral defense were the artifacts used to assess PLO2 and PLO5.

As mentioned, in Summer 2020, graduating M.A. students were sent an exit survey measuring their perceptions of learning across PLOs.

The Madrid campus does not have a graduate program, so they are not included in the learning assessment for the M.A. program.

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT DATA collected this year focused on *PLO2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research* and *PLO5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement*. Culminating projects (thesis, applied project, or comprehensive exam) and oral defenses for each graduating student were evaluated using the rubrics from our assessment plan. All three committee members for each student evaluated the culminating projects and oral defenses jointly after the oral defense and turned in a single assessment of each

student's project and defense to the graduate program coordinator. Nine students completed applied projects, theses, or comprehensive exams this year. Seven committees completed assessment rubrics.

PERCEPTUAL ASSESSMENT DATA were collected through an exit survey of graduating M.A. students and used to assess students' perceptions of learning across PLOs. Five of nine students completed the survey.

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

DIRECT ASSESSMENT DATA

For *PLO2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research*, two of seven students demonstrated capstone level work. Five students performed at the advanced intermediate level on this PLO. [1]

For *PLO5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement*, five of the seven students demonstrated capstone level work and two demonstrated advanced intermediate level work related to this program learning outcome.

PERCEPTUAL ASSESSMENT DATA

Data from the exit survey provided perceptual data on all six PLOs.[2] Four questions asked respondents to rate their level of agreement that they had acquired knowledge related to PLO2. The average response across questions was 4.60/5.00, indicating that most students agreed or strongly agreed that they had acquired the skills to conduct and evaluate communication research.

Three asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement that they can apply theories and practices of social justice and civic engagement (PLO5). The average across these items was a 4.70/5.00. All students agreed or strongly agreed that the program consistently prepared them to apply theories and practices of social justice and civic engagement.

[1]See attached report for aggregate data on student performance for each PLO.
[2]See attached report on means and standard deviations for each item on the exit survey.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

The data indicates that using data from students' capstone projects to gather information about PLO2 and PLO5 seems appropriate. Students' final capstone projects demonstrate the knowledge they acquired in the program with regard to PLO2 and PLO5.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

These assessment results will be shared with the department's Graduate Committee and faculty. We will discuss the results at a faculty meeting.

B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies	• Course content • Teaching techniques • Improvements in technology • Prerequisites	• Course sequence • New courses • Deletion of courses • Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings
Changes to the Assessment Plan	• Student learning outcomes • Artifacts of student learning • Evaluation process	• Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics) • Data collection methods • Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

The Graduate Committee is in the process of developing a revision to our assessment process, especially given recent changes to our graduate curriculum, which are described below.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

During the FA19 – SP20 academic year, we significantly revised the graduate curriculum in light of past assessment reports. We learned that, by taking only one research methods course, graduate students in our department were not gaining enough knowledge and experience in research methods and data analysis to complete the best quality work for their culminating theses and applied projects. Furthermore, recent graduates during exit interviews indicated that additional coursework in research methodology would be beneficial for their professional goals after graduation. As such, we shifted our graduate curriculum requirements from students taking two introductory courses (CMM 5000 - Graduate Study of Communication and CMM 5010 - Reading Foundations in Communication Theory) and one research methods course (CMM 5800 - Research Methods in Communication) to two research methods courses (CMM 5801 Quantitative Research Methods for Communication and CMM 5802 Qualitative Inquiry for Communication and Social Justice) and one introductory course in (CMM 5000).

This was an important curricular change, made in response to previous assessment reports, that improved our program for our students.

B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

The curricular change was implemented just this fall. We will assess the curricular change in Spring of 2022.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

We will be able to assess the impact of these curricular changes when this present class graduates in Spring of 2022.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

After gathering assessment data from students graduating in Spring of 2022, we will have information to review the impacts of the curricular changes on learning outcomes and make any needed adjustments accordingly.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.

I. Direct Assessment Data of PLOs 2 and 5

For each outcome, 1 = Benchmark, 2 = Intermediate Level of Achievement, 3 = Advanced-Intermediate Level of Achievement, 4 = Capstone.

PLO2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research.

	Capstone			Benchmark
Level of Achievement	4	3	2	1
Total	2	5	0	0

Capstone: Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between research paradigm and methodological choices. Makes sophisticated decisions about methods of inquiry that expertly address a particular research purpose/question/hypothesis. Demonstrates an expert understanding of the appropriate criteria for evaluating communication research. Provides a sophisticated explanation of ethics associated with research practice.

PLO5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement.

	Capstone			Benchmark
Level of Achievement	4	3	2	1
Total	5	2	0	0

Capstone: Gives a sophisticated summarization of social justice and civic engagement that displays a nuanced understanding of how they relate to communication scholarship and practice. Analyzes both broad and specific communicative practices in unique ways that yield new ways of thinking about just societies. Shows expert understanding of the principles of social justice and civic engagement and can imagine novel possibilities for expanding or enriching the world.

II. Perceptual Assessment

Outcome Dimensions and Items	*M*	*SD*
PLO 1 Students will communicate effective messages for scholarly and public audiences.		
The program encouraged me to develop my written communication skills.	4.4	.80
I have writing skills that will allow me to communicate effectively and independently in a variety of situations.	4.6	.49
The program encouraged me to develop my oral communication and presentation skills.	4.6	.49
I have oral communication skills that will allow me to communicate effectively and independently in a variety of situations.	4.8	.40
PLO 2: Students will conduct and evaluate communication research.		
The program encouraged me to develop my research skills.	4.4	.80
I am able to gather information from multiple sources and make critical judgments about the value of that information.	4.8	.40
The program helped me understand the relationship between research paradigm and methodological choices.	4.6	.49
The program taught me the appropriate criteria for evaluating communication research.	4.6	.49
PLO 3: Students will apply communication theories to address problems in a broader context.		
I am able to apply communication theory to explain and analyze everyday situations.	4.8	.40
The program consistently emphasized the importance of communication theory.	4.4	.80
PLO 4: Students will demonstrate intercultural communication competence.		
The program consistently emphasized the importance of culture and diversity.	4.2	1.17
I have an understanding of cultures other than my own.	4.2	.75
PLO 5: Students will apply theories and/or practices of social justice and civic engagement.		
The program consistently emphasized the importance of social justice.	4.8	.40
I recognize the various ways communicative practices contribute to and detract from justice in society.	4.6	.49
I understand my civic responsibilities as a local and global citizen.	5.0	.00
PLO 6: Students will analyze the ethical implications of communication and apply ethical principles.		
The program consistently emphasized the importance of ethics.	4.6	.49
I am able to make ethical judgments and take action based on broad knowledge.	4.8	.40