The Communication Department Assessment Plan

submitted to
the Assessment Committee of Saint Peter’s College

on
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Saint Peter’s College
Jersey City, New Jersey

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Introduction and Mission

The Saint Peter’s College Communications Program was created in Spring 1992 as an interdisciplinary minor within the English Department with an emphasis on speaking, writing and media theory. In fall 1998, the program began to offer a major in Communications with a core curriculum including media history and theory, writing, speaking and ethics. In the spring of 2005, the Communications Program was granted separation from the English Department and it was established as the new Communication Department. In the fall of 2007, the Communication Department began to offer a Minor program in Journalism.

The mission of the Communications Department is to serve the college through courses specifically targeted to writing and speaking, and to prepare Communications majors to become responsible and informed practitioners in their fields.

Committed to the College Mission

The Communication Department commits to the college mission specifically in the following three areas:

1. Developing the whole person for a lifetime of learning, leadership and service in a diverse society
2. Committing to academic excellence
3. Providing education, informed by values, primarily in degree granting programs to students from a variety of backgrounds

Informed by the College Goals

Specific Saint Peter’s College Goals also inform the Communication Department and are implemented in its goal, core and sequence courses. They are:

SPC Goal Number --

1. --Promoting academic Excellence through strong core curriculum and academic programs which emphasize precision of thought, clarity of oral and written expression
2. --Stressing ethical and moral values
3. --Enabling students to acquire knowledge, skills and values needed for society’s response to technological change
4. --Encouraging individual growth through cura personalis
5. --Heightening the awareness of diversity
6. --Advancing education through improvements in curriculum design
7. --Providing opportunities for students to avail themselves of cultural resources in a major metropolitan center

The Goal of the Communication Department

The Communication Department has one major goal which is stated in the college bulletin. It is “Preparing students for careers in media and other fields that demand strong speaking, writing and ethical decision making.”
This statement is directly informed by the college mission and goals 1, 3 and 4.

However, overall objectives of the program are to enable students to:
* Write clearly in different genres including hard news writing, academic writing, and feature writing
* Speak articulately in a variety of stances, importantly persuasively and informatively
* Organize and conduct research for reports and essays
* Speak extemporaneously as individual presenters and members of a panel, as interviewers and interviewees.
* Describe the distinctions among and best uses of specific media -- newspapers, television, radio, film, and books.
* Describe media theories
* Identify major events in the history of mass mediums
* Formulate a personal code of ethics for the workplace
* Prepare majors for careers in media
(Figure 3)

The Assessment Plan of the Communication Department

The Communication Department carries out the college mission and goals, and the program’s own goals through the organization of the program into six separate areas: the Communications core, Communications electives, the outside concentration, the internships, minor program, and administration.

Each of the six areas has objectives and responsibilities for enhancing and fulfilling the student experience at Saint Peter’s College.

Each of the courses in the Communications Department carries out objectives of the program as appropriate.

The Communications assessment plan is designed to follow the Departments’s organization and goals. They were modeled after the Saint Peter’s College mission and goals, which are notably implemented by academics and administration.
Assessment of the Communication Department
Methods and Time Frame
Proper assessment of the Communication Department entails a rotating pattern of assessment to these six areas using traditional assessment tools to measure the correlation between stated student outcomes and actual ones.

To assess the degree to which student outcomes are met, in the eighth year of the rotating cycle the department began a system of assessing the progress of a random representative sample of communication department majors.

Among the tools already being used in the Communication Department are final papers, portfolios, oral presentations, research papers, news articles written by students, student self-assessment in surveys and classes, weekly essays and tests. The first (imperfect) survey of Communication graduates was performed in May 2001.

Maintenance of the Communication Department’s assessment plan will require not only the administration of the time frame and subsequent assessment of the proper areas with the proper tools, but also overseeing the upkeep of the assessment plan itself.

In practical terms, the Chair of the Communication Department should annually review the Communication Department’s assessment plan. (There is a precedent in the Communication Department’s annual report. It is submitted to the President, Academic Vice-President, Dean at the time of the annual Communication Department board meeting. It is suggested that this annual assessment review naturally become part of the report, performed at about the same time.)

Here are the items the director should identify in the review:
1. Whether any new courses or student objectives have been created.
2. Whether any methods of facilitating the six important areas of the program have been added or changed.
3. Whether assessment plan files, assessment instruments, assessment personnel need creating, updating or adding.

This work began in year one of the assessment plan.

Then the Chair can coordinate the assessment plan itself following this schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Assessment Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Assess the Communications Core (2001-2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assess one Communications elective sequence (2002-2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assess the second Communications elective sequence (2003-2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Assess the third Communications elective sequence (2004-2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assess the Communications internship program and the minor program (2005-2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Assess the Communications outside concentration (2006-2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Assess the Communications program administration (2007-2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Year 8 began the assessment of a student sample from newly declared communication majors.

The Chair of the Communication Department should appoint a faculty member to do the actual assessment in each year. This faculty member should receive financial remuneration or course releases commensurate to the assessment work involved.

This faculty member should be responsible for conferring with faculty members, the chair and director of the program to choose or create the appropriate assessment instruments. Once the appropriate tools are chosen to assess one of the areas, those tools should be used consistently. The findings of the assessment should then be returned to the involved faculty members, and chair. Then the results should be used for improvement in student learning through bi-annual meetings of faculty and adjuncts.

Because the Communication Department has only four full-time instructors devoted to classes, there should be a provision to remunerate the number of adjuncts who will make themselves available for the bi-annual meetings following distribution of the assessment results. Full-time faculty from other departments who teach courses in Communication also will be expected to attend the bi-annual meetings.

There should be some discussion among faculty and administration about making the results available to students and outside agencies. Perhaps, a database would be the appropriate vehicle.

In sum, since the assessment of the Communication Department follows its organization, and this organization is identified specifically in figures 5 through 24 of this plan, six branches of the program (named in the rotation above) can identified and assessed independently following an eight year rotation.

The Chair of the Communication Department will have overall responsibility for keeping the assessment plan current and appointing a faculty member to coordinate the actual assessment and to report the results.

The results and the maintenance of all files relating to the Communication Department assessment will be the responsibility of the Chair of the department.

The results of the assessment of the student sample have been reported to the assessment committee in 2009 and 2010, as well as in the Implementation Report submitted in 2011. The department has been satisfied with this process of monitoring actual student progress through the major and it is planning on using the same plan for a new cycle of incoming majors starting in 2012.