**Assessment Report Feedback – Communication Studies**

**Assessment Committee Contact**: Vicki Baker, Economics & Management

*\*Note*: The assessment report/feedback was reviewed/provided by Vicki Baker, Mark Bollman, and Scott Hendrix

Thank you for pulling this report together. I realize your department is VERY short staffed and so I want to let you know that your efforts have not gone unnoticed. You have a great foundation and I am happy to work with you/your department as you move forward in updating this report and as you plan your assessment efforts moving forward.  With that said, below is the feedback.

*Step 1: Mission*

Your mission is very clear and is in line with your stated learning outcomes. In fact, your mission statement discusses student actions and goals/outcomes, which is good.

*Step 2: Outcomes*

I appreciate the three outcomes.  In fact, this works well (too many outcomes *often creates* assessment challenges).  So this will make it easier for you moving forward.

*Step 3: Program Components*

As it stands now, you basically list the program requirements for the communications major; along with the three tracks you have within communications.  As it stands now, this is more a list as opposed to showing how the courses (and associated activities) support and achieve the learning outcomes.  You also have the three tracks (with different required courses).  You need to show/assess that the “same” learning is occurring across the three areas (e.g., that these three areas are achieving the outcomes noted in Step 2).

I would suggest creating a matrix (and I can give you an example) that lists the outcome, the courses that support that particular outcome (keep in mind all your courses DO NOT need to achieve each outcome) and then include examples on a per course basis (again, you do not need to list all classes and activities, but include a sampling) of actual activities, assignments, projects, etc. that are aimed at achieving that outcome. Not all courses equally meet the learning goals/outcomes, so highlight the courses or program components that do specifically target each of the three learning goals, and clearly present the specific relationship(s) of courses back to goal/outcome.

            It might also be helpful to focus only one ONE major to start with—perhaps the major that is most common (in terms of number of students, or curricular requirements, etc.)? Or are all three learning goals/outcomes expected for all COMM majors?

*Step 4: Methods/Data*

You have excellent examples of direct measures of assessment (such as the team presentation viewing to have a standard grading rubric). Keep doing this – and if this model works in other situations for other projects, add to this approach.

You do, however, need to supplement this with indirect measures which can include student focus groups, surveys of graduating seniors or alumni.  I am happy to share the survey created for E&M or to point you towards other resources. Below is a note that clarifies the difference between direct and indirect measures.

In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).

Overall, you are off to a great start and with some tweaking, we’ll get you there!

To:       Assessment committee

From:   Karen Erlandson, chair, Communication Studies

Date:   September 15, 2009

Assessment Committee-

Thank you for your feedback and comments. I appreciate your recognition of the fact that our “department is VERY short staffed and so I want to let you know that your efforts have not gone unnoticed.”  We are indeed very short staffed and this limits the amount of work we can do on assessment related issues.

While I know this is not the job of the assessment committee and is in no way meant as a criticism to the hard work you have all put into this important topic, I would like to make note that if Albion College wants to adopt a climate of assessment, I strongly feel that the college should provide more resources dedicated to this endeavor. Most of us are not trained in assessment, and therefore are not really qualified to develop, administer, or analyze assessment related issues. Further, in departments such as mine, where we have only two tenure-track faculty, teaching and advising anywhere from 60-80 majors and minors and who are also responsible for all of the other departmental and college service (visit days, assessment, student research, publications, committee work, just to name a few), it is almost impossible to complete the assessment work being asked of us. Again, I am in no way impugning your work or the importance of assessment. I just feel that if assessment is worth doing, and I believe it is, it’s worth doing right - and doing it right will require resources.