

Broadcast Journalism

Annual Assessment Report

Literature, Journalism, and Modern Languages

&

Communication & Theatre

2011-2012 Academic Year

Program Mission

The broadcast journalism (BJ) program at PLNU exists to reinforce and support the mission of the university, which is to teach and shape students in the creative, technical, and socialization areas of professional media preparation, and to send students into media industries. These have traditionally included radio and television broadcasting.

Historically, print and broadcast journalists have worked in “silos” as distinct segments of the industry. In recent years, the emergence of online communication has precipitated the idea of convergent journalism. From a professional standpoint, convergence is the practice of print and broadcast journalists using each other’s skills in the reporting and dissemination of news, specifically applied in a Web context.

In order to more closely emulate the profession, the BJ program at PLNU has undergone a number of curricular changes that recognize the importance and necessity of convergent journalism. This has included introducing online components in a number of courses, such as in a TV news production courses and instituting a senior-level multimedia journalism course that brings together print, video and audio skills to produce online news content. In addition, it is requires journalism programs to meet trends in technology by incorporating new media when training future journalists. For example, students need to understand the role of social networks and mobile media in news delivery.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):

The Broadcast Journalism major is a joint program between the Department of Communication & Theatre and the Department of Literature, Journalism and Modern Languages. The PLOs listed below were developed in a collaborative effort between Dr. Sue Atkins (LJML) and Dr. Clark Greer (Communication & Theatre) during spring semester 2011.

PLO 1: Students will identify and articulate the historical development and democratic function of broadcast, print and online media in the U.S.

PLO 2: Students will write news copy clearly and accurately according to news values appropriate to a variety of formats and platforms.

PLO 3: Students will create and edit a news story based on accepted industry standards for the appropriate medium.

PLO 4: Students will employ aural and delivery skills appropriate to various news performance situations.

PLO 5: Students will demonstrate professional socialization skills in various news media environments.

PLO 6: Students will describe major ethical theories and professional codes, apply them to ethical dilemmas, and defend the application of the theory and code to a given situation as a Christian communicator.

Curriculum Map:

Please see Appendix A for the BJ program curriculum map.

Multi-Year Assessment Plan:

Because Broadcast Journalism is a joint major between LJML and Communication and Theatre, assessment methods must be coordinated to coincide with program objectives of two different departments. Given this factor, the broader assessment plan is still in process. Rubrics will be designed to evaluate learning objectives that specifically include writing skills, ability to apply ethical principles to media problems, and an understanding of the historical development of media in the U.S.

Assessment Activities:

Methods of Assessment and Criteria for Success:

Television news stories, specifically packages, of five graduating seniors were used in the assessment. This process primarily covers assessments for PLOs 3-4. The evaluation also partially covers PLO 2, but reviewers based their scores on listening to the story rather than reading a script. A news package opens with video while the viewer hears the reporter's voice. Throughout the story are one or more interviews. Often, the reporter is seen on camera in the middle of the story. Indeed, this was the case with all but two of the stories that were reviewed. The students were asked to submit two stories that represented their best work. Stories were produced as part of a television news production course and/or ran as part of Coastline News newscasts on the university's closed circuit cable channel (Channel 23). Two students did not submit stories for assessment despite repeated requests, so stories from COM313 Television News Production were selected for them.

Stories were transferred to DVDs and mailed, along with a scoring rubric (see Appendix B), to two news professionals. One person is currently a morning news producer at a San Diego TV station. The second reviewer worked for a number of years in TV news and has recently moved into a PR position. Reviewers followed a 10-item rubric on a four-point scale (1=low; 4=high) that assessed story selection and organization, technical skills, and delivery skills. The summary of data below compares 2011 assessment results (based on seven students) with the current year (2012). It should be noted that different evaluators viewed the stories in 2012 than those who evaluated student work in 2011.

Summary of Data collected:

PLO 2 – The mean score is as follows:

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Writing	3.08	2.20

PLO 3 – The mean scores are as follows:

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Organization	3.04	2.20
Topic	3.27	2.45
Visuals	3.15	2.40
Camera	3.04	2.15
Editing	3.08	2.40
Lighting	3.32	2.20
Audio	3.08	2.75

PLO 4 – The following mean scores are reported:

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Performance	2.88	1.61*
Speaking	3.08	1.85

**Based on 18 stories – two did not include stand-ups*

Assessment of PLO 5 was achieved through internship supervisor critiques. At the conclusion of a student's internship, the supervisor provides evaluation on a 5-point scale for nine items. Data below reports internships for three students.

PLO 5 – The following mean scores reflect evaluations of internship supervisors (*based on internships of two students in 2010-11 and three students in 2011-12*):

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Attitude	5.00	5.00
Dependability	4.00	5.00
Quality of Work	4.50	4.30
Maturity/Poise	4.50	4.70
Judgment	4.00	4.30
Ability to Learn	4.00	4.70
Initiative	4.50	4.30
Relations Others	5.00	4.70
Quantity of Work	4.00	4.00

Assessment Results:

News story production:

This is the second year using the attached rubric, so we are able to compare the 2011 and 2012 students. As noted in the data above, there was a decrease in scores in all categories. Low scores might partly be attributed to the transition to a new curriculum. Stories used in this analysis represent a range of story production based on the number of stories that students produced during their time at PLNU. Some projects that were critiqued originated in COM313, which the student might have taken two years ago. Not all students in this graduating class were required to take COM413 Advanced TV News Production, since they entered PLNU under the catalog previous to the changes in the Broadcast Journalism curriculum. Only majors who transferred to PLNU in the past two years were required to take the advanced course. This creates somewhat of a disparity in the development of TV news production abilities in that some students took only one TV news class, while others had an opportunity to hone their skills in the advanced class. Broadcast Journalism majors also are required to take COM425 Advanced TV Production twice. Those students usually are required to produce news packages for Coastline News; however, COM425 is not a news specific course, so students did not have hands-on critiques of their work from a journalism perspective.

The reviewers offered some important comments about the students' work. Of primary importance is the nature of the story and the topics that are selected – they are not all newsworthy. Students have often looked for stories on campus. Although some subjects of news value occur periodically at PLNU, most news happens off campus. Starting in fall 2012, students in Advanced TV News Production will be required to report stories off campus. The

Coastline News manager has also been instructed that all stories must originate off campus. In addition to the issue of news values, few stories produced by students are hard news and tend to be feature-oriented. This often results in a story that sounds more like a public relations piece than a news story. According to one reviewer, some stories had newsworthy topics, but lacked human interest and effective interviews. In one instance, the other reviewer said she could not determine the focus of the story.

Technical work seems to be another problem with these stories. Students learn the basics of TV field and studio production in COM243 and have weekly experience with cameras and editing in COM313 TV News Production. However, it appears that students, overall, are not paying attention to details. Motivation to produce the best story possible might be the heart of the problem. As much as we try to emphasize storytelling in the news courses, all components go hand-in-hand to accomplish that goal. A story that starts with a poor topic, coupled with bad lighting, shot composition and editing only gets worse. Students are consistently admonished to take a portable light kit for interviews, yet do not want to take the extra effort to do so. Similarly, they are reminded to shoot from various angles and perspectives to provide choices when editing, but finishing a story quickly seems to take priority.

Performance also was a problem with these evaluations. Broadcast Journalism majors now are required to take Voice and Diction. This should be a great help in increasing the performance numbers for news delivery. One of the reviewers noted that the vocal work for one story was not correct for news. In another story, the same reviewer stated that the student needs to lower his voice. The other reviewer noted that vocal work in some stories lacked energy. COM413 Advanced TV News Production has included anchoring workshops. Given the

results of this assessment, it is apparent that more time needs to be spent in improving the reading and on-camera delivery techniques of the students.

Internships:

Students continue to evidence quality in their internships. Scores for attitude continue to be consistently at the top in both this year and 2011. It is also encouraging that the score for dependability increased over the previous year. Additional increases were noted for maturity, ability to learn and judgment. High scores in those four areas suggest that students are excited about their work and show promise in the ability to improve on the job. The increase in judgment over 2011 suggests that students are better understanding how to make good decisions in news.

According to the internship supervisor reports, students had lower scores from 2011 in quality of work, initiative and quantity of work. The score for Quantity of work remained the same as 2010-2011. Students have a great attitude and have inherent abilities to do news work, but their quality of work declined. This seems to correspond to the comments from our story evaluations in that technical quality is about average. Students need to take initiative to improve their work. In TV news courses, it seems that students had to be reminded to consider story topics, lighting and camera work. To succeed in this business, they will need to accomplish their work with high quality on their own, and find ways to get more work accomplished. TV news reporters are increasingly expected to fulfill multiple jobs (traditional and new media).

It was surprising to see a decline from 2011 in the Relations with Others category. News is a team effort, whether it involves one other person (such as a videographer) or the entire news department. It is difficult to determine what might be causing the downturn in the relationships

number. Perhaps students are too individualistic in their work. Given the increased use of technology (e.g., cell and social networks) to communicate and decreased interpersonal interactions, we might be seeing the results of inability to socially interact face-to-face. This does not bode well for reporters who must have excellent interpersonal skills to conduct interviews.