

Report On The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism

MCJ Showcase for Excellence

June 3, 2008

A 2007-08 Assessment: Implementing direct measures of student learning and using the results for program improvement grant. Grant Recipients: Jan Edwards and Candace Egan

MCJ Showcase, April 25, 2008

1. What was the project about?

The purpose of the Mass Communication and Journalism Showcase for Excellence was to identify industry standards of professional performance, engage students in applying these standards in their work, and assess student works using the standards. The department developed the process for assessing student work working closely with mass media industry professionals representing the various options in the major. The project facilitated a collaboration among industry professionals, faculty and students that culminated in the MCJ Showcase of Excellence event on April 25, 2008 where exemplary student works were recognized for their excellence.

Project Goals

The following four project goals were accomplished:

1. Development of an assessment activity that directly measures student learning.
2. Involvement of mass communication industry professionals and potential employers in the evaluation of student work.
3. Creation of a mechanism for students to receive feedback and encouragement about their work from mass media professionals.
4. Development of a model for implementing the MCJ Student Showcase.

What did the project do?

The MCJ Showcase was comprised of five phases.

- Phase one consisted of collaboration between faculty and industry experts in the options to identify key industry standards of excellence. This was followed by the creation of a judging rubric defining the criteria to be used to evaluate student work based on the standards. The rubric became a judging form that rated each criteria on a scale of 0 to 10 and provided sections for comment on each criteria and overall feedback.
- Phase two consisted of the industry professionals meeting with students to explain the targeted industry standards of excellence and the performance criteria that mass media employers expect for practitioners in the field.
- Phase three consisted of the industry professionals judging the projects submitted to the *Showcase* event.
- Phase four consisted of the MCJ Showcase activities on April 25, which included a reception for the students, industry professionals (aka judges), faculty, alumni, friends and family; and the awards presentation to the top student works across the entry categories.
- Phase five consisted of providing the judging sheets to the students and faculty. This enabled students to see how they scored on each criteria and to receive written feedback from the industry judge. Judges provided both praise and suggestions for improvement. Copies of the judging sheets were also given to the faculty.
- Phase six will consist of the assessment of the students' work using the judging sheets and review of a follow-up survey given to the industry professionals. An SPSS analysis will be done on data from the judging sheets and industry professional survey. The faculty will then meet in Fall 2008 to review the data and written comments to determine the strengths and weaknesses

demonstrated by the students and decide what needs to be addressed in the curriculum to improve student learning outcomes.

Students submitted works in a variety of categories including: video, sports photography, sound slide show, newspaper design, graphic design, advertising campaigns, newspaper sales and public relations campaigns. The industry judges completed an evaluation of each student work submitted using judging forms that involved rating each performance criteria on a ten point scale and providing feedback comments. The scores were then averaged and those scoring 9.0 to 10 received the *Award of Excellence* and those scoring 8.0 to 8.99 received the *Award of Distinction*. Following the showcase the students and the department received the judging evaluation forms for each entry. This enabled students to understand how their work stood up to professional expectations and to receive constructive suggestions for improvement.

Nine outcomes of the project were identified with six accomplished to date, two to be completed at the start of the fall semester, and one a potential long-term benefit of the showcase.

1. Planned and executed the first showcase event April 25, 2008.
2. Planned and executed a speaker's forum involving mass communication industry professionals who spoke to classes and served as judges.
3. Developed rubrics (judging forms) for assessing student work based on industry standards.
4. Engagement of mass communication professionals and potential employers with the students and faculty.
5. Improvement in the quality of student work. Students were motivated to produce quality work to be submitted to the showcase. For example, in the Advertising and Public Relations options the industry professionals collaborated with the faculty to develop student assignments that were designed around the judging criteria.
6. Collected data for evaluating the effectiveness of student learning via the judging sheets.
7. Periodic review of industry performance standards and the alignment of curriculum to those standards. SPSS will be used to analyze the scores given for each criteria used to judge student work submitted to the showcase. The data will be reviewed by the faculty at the assessment meeting to be held at the start of the fall 2008 semester.
8. Revision and updating of curriculum and teaching and learning strategies. This will occur during the fall semester after review of the data from the judging sheets and the judge's survey.
9. Recruitment of potential students. The faculty expects that the excitement generated by the first showcase and the improvement in student performance it inspired will contribute to the long-term enhancement of the department which will aid in attracting students to the major.

2. What were your findings?

Analysis of the data collected from the judging sheets will be conducted at the start of the Fall 2008 semester. At the end of May feedback survey's were sent to the industry professionals who judged the students' work. These surveys will be reviewed for general comments and recommendations regarding the strengths and weaknesses of student performance based on the judging criteria.

The level of participation by students in the MCJ Showcase for Excellence was substantial with a total of 91 judging sheets completed across 13 plus categories of entries. Categories included: sound slide show; general photography; sports photography; advertising digital interactive plan; media sales; media plan; public relations interview/article; public relations event plan; print design and layout: brochure; print design and layout: newspaper; campaign plan books; advertising copywriting/product name; consumer and trade ads; video: documentary, news story, TV show, music video, narrative.

The chart below provides a sample of the results showing the number of student participants and the number receiving *Awards of Excellence* and *Awards of Distinction*. An increase in the number of entries worthy of the *Award of Excellence* will be an on-going goal and a measurable outcome of the curriculum revisions and learning strategies developed as a result of the showcase.

Class	Number of Student Participants	Award of Excellence	Award of Distinction	No Citation
MCJ 158 /PR Event	23	1	10	12
MCJ 158 /PR Article	23	5	5	13
MCJ 146 Adv Interactive	26	7	7	12
MCJ 146 Media Buy	26	0	14	12
MCJ 143/ Adv Sales	20	4	1	15

3. How will we use the findings?

The findings, once we complete our analysis of all the data collected, will be used to determine areas of student learning which need strengthening and to acknowledge areas where student performance indicate effective preparation. This will then lead to revision and updating of curriculum and teaching and learning strategies to address areas that need strengthening.

The MCJ Showcase of Excellence will be repeated every other year. This will enable on-going and up-to-date input from industry professionals regarding standards of performance expected in the field. Since the mass communication industry is undergoing rapid changes in all facets of the field it will be important to regularly re-evaluate the performance standards and thus the learning outcomes that are important for students to achieve. The two year time frame will also allow faculty to implement changes and see their impact on student learning. Finally, producing the showcase every other year will prevent the event from becoming onerous for the faculty and industry professionals who devote considerable time and energy to executing all the aspects involved in the showcase.

Based on initial verbal feedback from the judges and faculty (we are waiting for our judge and faculty surveys to be returned) we have found that the Showcase was a huge success extrinsically as well as intrinsically, The event was high-profile among industry leaders and created positive “buzz” with valley professionals. The event also, was a huge success with participating faculty. They have voiced their total commitment to the future of this process.

4. What were the problems and how were they resolved?

This project was a fairly complex undertaking so the problems were those typical to this type of project: ranging from lost facility reservations to last minute additions to the awards program. Since the faculty members coordinating the project are experienced in overseeing and teaching about the execution of major media events and productions the MCJ Showcase did not present any problems that were unmanageable.

Three areas for improvement that will be addressed for the 2010 MCJ Showcase are:

- Judging will not occur on the same day as the event. Prior judging is a necessity to give the judges ample time to spend with the students’ work.

- All participating faculty must establish the judging criteria with their industry professional by the beginning of the spring semester in order to meet deadlines for the students and the event. This will also enable incorporating the judging criteria into class instruction and assignments.
- A follow-up survey will also be distributed to students participating in the Showcase in addition to those provided to the faculty and industry professionals.