**Drake School of Journalism and Mass Communication**

**Departmental assessment plan**

*Updated December 1, 2023*

The Drake School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) educates strategic global thinkers with diverse media and communication skills and a solid ethical underpinning who are prepared to respond to a rapidly changing media environment. In addition, the [Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication](https://www.acejmc.org/) (ACEJMC) requires all accredited programs to “regularly assess learning using direct and indirect measures that engage communication professionals, and annually ‘close the loop’ to make tangible improvements to curriculum and instruction.” To meet these goals, the School is committed to creating a culture of continuous evolution and improvement of its curriculum through the following ways:

1. The SJMC faculty develops a multi-year plan to strategically evaluate the curriculum. The School’s assessment regime is conducted in consultation with the University’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), which also requires an annual report on the unit’s progress.
   1. The SJMC assessment is guided by the School’s [core competencies](https://www.drake.edu/sjmc/about/ataglance/competencies/), which are based on the [professional competencies](http://www.acejmc.org/policies-process/accrediting-standards/) required by the ACEJMC.
      1. The core values are included in course syllabi with the goal that students become aware of them and their relevance in particular classes.
      2. The core competencies are mapped against SJMC courses to ensure that all competencies are addressed across the curriculum and regularly assessed.
   2. Each year, the SJMC dean, associate dean and assistant dean work with OIRA staff to identify the most effective method to assess an area of competency, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels.
   3. At the first faculty meeting of the year, the SJMC faculty discuss the competency to be assessed and determine the most appropriate classes in which to incorporate this assessment.
   4. At the end of the academic year, the assessment data is collected and analyzed with the aid of OIRA staff. Faculty review the results and “close the loop” by incorporating any needed changes into the curriculum.
   5. The curricular changes are incorporated into the assessment regime to ensure they are effective as intended.
2. In addition to the annual assessment project, the School conducts ongoing assessment activities as part of curriculum and academic practice:
   1. **Capstone projects:** The SJMC requires both undergraduate and graduate students to complete a culminating experience, or capstone, in their final-year coursework. The challenging capstone projects provide a concrete measure of graduating students’ skills. The projects are reviewed by the major faculty annually to identify any gaps in proficiencies that must be remedied. The graduate committee reviews the capstone projects in the master’s program. **[Direct assessment]**
   2. **Professional feedback**: Communication professionals and community clients provide feedback on student work throughout the curriculum, as do judges in the contests to which SJMC student work is submitted and professionals who supervise student internships for credit. **[Direct assessment]**
   3. **Core Values Inventory:** Students are tracked over the course of their Drake undergraduate education as to their understanding and mastery of the School’s core values. Each fall, the “Core Values Inventory” is administered early in the semester to first-year students enrolled in JMC 030 Mass Media in a Global Society. The inventory is again administered to graduating seniors in their capstone classes to allow them to self-assess their progress. **[Indirect assessment]**
   4. **University surveys:** SJMC results from the Drake Student Survey and National Survey of Student Engagement are analyzed in areas related to the SJMC core competencies and accreditation standards. Identified gaps inform changes in curriculum and areas such as advising and student services. **[Indirect assessment]**
   5. **Course evaluations:** End-of-semester course evaluations offer students an opportunity to share comments about the course and instructor. The course evaluations become part of the dean’s annual performance discussions with faculty and are considered in the Tenure and Promotion process. **[Indirect assessment]**
   6. **Graduation exit interviews:** One-on-one interviews are conducted with all students prior to graduation to receive feedback on the curriculum and suggestions for improvement. **[Indirect assessment]**
   7. **Graduate accomplishment data:** The SJMC works with the University’s Career Services team annually to determine graduates’ post-graduate success in employment and continuing education. **[Indirect assessment]**
   8. **Ongoing curriculum review:** SJMC faculty continually review their classes to ensure currency of instruction, consult with industry experts, including members of the School’s National Advisory Council, and collaborate to revise core and major curricula when needed. **[Indirect assessment]**
   9. **Responsibility:** Primary responsibility for carrying out the assessment plan rests with the Office of the Dean; responsibility for responding to the assessment findings in terms of curriculum changes rests with the faculty. Assessment is a collaborative effort of the School’s administration, faculty, staff and students.