MEMO

To: Assessment Oversight Committee
From: Department of Communication Technologies
Date: May 8, 2006
Subject: Assessment Review Questions

1. **What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?**
   
   According to our 2005-06 Assessment Procedures, our *program* outcomes are assessed through the following instruments:
   - Graduate placement rate
   - Alumni surveys
   - Senior exit surveys
   - Employer evaluation of interns
   - Employer evaluation of internship program
   - Advisory Council

   In addition, this department conducts annual emphasis reviews at department meetings. These reviews are based on comparisons to other programs in the UW System and beyond, observation of student progress, examination of published research and studies by national organizations in related areas, and other materials. These reviews may focus on curriculum, but are not limited to that topic.

2. **What have you learned as a result?**

   **Graduate placement rate.** Students continue to be placed at relatively high rates, with placement in newspaper reporting, sales, broadcast production, graphic communications, imaging media, and public relations. We have maintained an average of 172 majors over 10 years; current enrollment is at 174 majors. Our placement rate is roughly 90% over that time frame. Over 90% of our graduates remain in Wisconsin. Very few (1 out of 10) pursue graduate school (within 1 year of graduation). We continue to encounter difficulty in gathering appropriate data from graduating seniors and recent graduates about employment. Students do not appear to appreciate our interest in their success, our programming needs to track this information, nor our ability to help them in their early career. [This assessment tool will measure program outcome goals 1-8.]

   **Alumni surveys.** Our alums reveal that they might have benefited from higher academic standards (differentiated from high quality examples of their work). However, these same graduates indicated the need for more consistency and higher standards for faculty/staff hires. This department has experienced significant turnover in the past five years. The staff/faculty appear to be stable at this time, but our alumni may not be aware of this. Graduates agree that their Communication Technologies degree program adequately prepared them for an entry-level position in their chosen career path. They do not appear to agree that the program adequately prepared them to pursue a graduate degree. The respondents felt current faculty/staff (these people were named, generally) were approachable, helpful, and they required high quality of work and skill samples (differentiated from high academic standards). The respondents did not find courses in communication technologies or photography particularly useful, unless the course applied directly to their emphasis. These respondents liked their hands-on and workplace experiences while attending UWP. [Alumni Surveys measure program outcomes 1-8.]

   **Senior exit surveys.** Students participating in these surveys may have a year or a semester left to complete in their degree program; therefore, some respondents may have significant course work remaining. Students rate themselves at a satisfactory level for all of our
program outcomes (on a 4-point scale). Specifically, senior exit surveys revealed the following (Spring 1006 senior exit surveys were not available at the time of this compilation):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Self-rating on 4-point scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Communication (written &amp; oral)</td>
<td>3.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Role of mass media</td>
<td>3.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Concepts, issues in communication technologies</td>
<td>3.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Images</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Legal concepts</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Applying technologies</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Knowledge transfer</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Ethical decision making</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The department prefers a 3-point rating or higher. The lower rating in “legal concepts” was specifically questioned and respondents were asked in a focus-group setting why the rating was below 3. Approximately 1/3 of the students responding had not completed the key core course (3930 Communication Law) at the time of the survey. The students felt the course was challenging and they predicted their scores would be much higher upon completion of that course. When questioned about the scores for developing images, approximately ¼ of the students indicated they had not completed 1930 Basic Photography. Those students indicated they either preferred to take other courses before they worked Basic Photography into their schedules, or they were procrastinating because they did not want to take that course. We asked the students why they rated their ability to discuss the role of mass media in society rather low; a few indicated they “barely remembered” what they covered in 1630 Introduction to Mass Media and that the role of mass media in society was not discussed by any of their other courses (none of these students had taken the second course in this area, 2630 Media & Culture, which is an elective for our majors).

Students continue to highly value hands-on opportunities in courses, including Applied Communication, that focus on producing a specific example of communication tools commonly used in their chosen emphasis.

Generally, seniors felt advising was adequate. We have room for improvement. However, students confused advising effectiveness with difficulties encountered by curriculum reform, changing catalogs, changes in major and/or emphasis, and problems encountered through student choices and success. Students seemed concerned about advising in their chosen minor (only CT majors participate in this survey, so these minors are predominantly in other departments). Students appear to rely very heavily on advising, rather than the catalog, to complete their programs.

Most of our students participate in extra-curricular activities. Of those who did not, the main reason cited was the need to work off campus. Seniors felt we offered enough opportunities to network with professionals, but they didn’t feel that students typically take full advantage of those opportunities. Some students indicated they would prefer more workplace experience and wish they had utilized their internship experiences more fully. Students would also like more field trips. [Senior Exit Surveys assess program outcomes 1-8.]

Employer evaluation of interns. Note: Interns are only required to have completed about half of their program of study when they undertake the internship; this may have some bearing on the evaluations. Employers continue to be very positive about our interns, particularly regarding their communication skills and knowledge of technology. Confidence seems to be an area our interns could work on, and organizational skills may be lacking. Employers indicated these items would improve with more workplace experience. Our interns receive “very good” or “excellent” ratings from their employers (“average,” “marginal,” and “poor” were never selected). [Employer Evaluations assess program outcomes 1-8, particularly 7.]
Employer evaluation of internship program. A survey will be conducted in Summer 2006 to determine the employer evaluation of our internship program. This is a new assessment tool for this department. [Evaluation of the internship program will assess program outcome 7.]

Advisory Council. In Fall 2006, the Advisory Council will be reconvened. This department has not utilized an advisory council for several years, for numerous reasons. The Advisory Council will be unique, in that 3-4 members will be chosen per emphasis. The full council may not be convened each year, but the individual members will be encouraged to visit campus once a year. [Advisory Council involvement will address all program outcomes.]

Emphasis reviews. The annual review of the emphases has revealed a number of potential changes. Imaging Media seems to be coalescing into a focused emphasis, with significant curriculum and staff changes in recent years. Public relations needs minor adjustments, with additional attention to courses related to PR tasks like meeting planning and fundraising. Journalism seems to be a well-defined emphasis, and is the “newest” emphasis in the major. Broadcast production needs few adjustments to curriculum, but perceptions of the emphasis, particularly related to radio, may need attention. Adjustments to faculty load may be necessary. These reviews result in a great deal of paperwork and files, that can be updated annually and reviewed as needed by students, faculty, employers, and Advisory Council members. [Emphasis reviews focus on program outcomes as they apply to a specific emphasis.]

3. What, if any, changes will you make in order to improve student learning?

Several curriculum changes have been recommended and are in the pipeline towards UUCC approval. Notably: We will delete the program outcome that states, “Effectively capture, process, and edit images.” We will no longer require 1730 Introduction to Communication Technologies, 1930 Basic Photography, or 4830 Senior Seminar in the major core (2007-09 catalog). However, appropriate technology-based courses will move to the list of required courses by emphasis (e.g., students in the Imaging Media emphasis will be required to take 1930 Basic Photography).

We are eliminating several elective courses (e.g., Photojournalism, Advanced Multimedia). While this decreases the number of options students have for electives, we don’t have the resources to continue offering so many options. Faculty and staff resources are devoted primarily to required courses.

With the reduction of courses in the core (reducing the number of sections that must be offered) and the reduction of elective options, we can make some changes that address the concerns students and alumni have indicated. Students will be required to have more workplace experience (increasing the internship requirement from 2 credits to 3; increasing the number of internship hours from 100 to 150). We will add a course, Communication Research, which we hope will improve research skills for our students and offer more preparation for graduate study.

Advising has been discussed and adjustments may be needed. All faculty were encouraged to participate in advising development programs. Review of advising options during department meetings may be necessary.

With the cancellation of Senior Seminar, the department must determine the best method for capturing senior exit surveys. These may be added to capstone courses in each emphasis. In addition, each emphasis is required to determine how seniors will complete a final resume, to be placed in their file. The seniors must also complete an electronic portfolio (which the department will post online for each graduating senior for one year).

Other changes to curriculum and teaching style are still under discussion.