

ACAJ Plan for Measuring the Achievement of Degree and Program Objectives

The Agricultural Communication and Journalism Program at Utah State University seeks to share the mission statement of the Department of Journalism & Communication. Therefore, we shall be dedicated to fostering mutual understanding among individuals, peoples, and ethnic groups, within communities and across societies. We assert that communication skills as well as an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both the mass media and individuals, whether as producers or consumers of information, are equally essential to mutual understanding and individual freedom in the information age. Therefore, we seek to foster the development of agriculturally literate communication professionals.

To meet the mission of the program, the Agricultural Communication and Journalism Program will offer a varied program of study with the following objectives:

1. Develop in students a high degree of agricultural literacy with a wide variety of agricultural experiences which will provide an adequate reservoir of skills and knowledge in agricultural subjects to meet the need of the agricultural communication profession;
2. Provide students with theoretical and practical understanding of the workings of mass communication principles and practice;
3. Provide students with abilities and practical skills required to work in communications professions;
4. Provide students with a grounding in the philosophical, ethical, and legal frameworks of mass communication, as well as an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of mass communication in a democratic society; and
5. Develop in students critical thinking and analytical abilities, facility in social science research methods, and strong written and oral communication skills within the context of the agricultural industry.

Measures of program assessment will include the completion of a rigorous plan of study with a varied list of required and elective courses, entrance and graduation requirements, student academic career portfolios, capstone course requirements with the option of an internship, exit interviews with an emphasis on program development, and other measurements which Agricultural Communication faculty members are to develop as the program grows cooperatively within the frame work of the Department of Journalism and Communication as well as the Department of Agricultural Systems Technology and Education. For specific descriptions of measurement and assessment, refer to the next section of this document “Expected Standards of Performance”.

Expected Standards of Performance

The Utah State University Agricultural Communication and Journalism Program seeks to work closely with the Utah State University Department of Journalism & Communication. As a result, we adopted the performance standards as listed on the department’s web site with an additional standard concerning agricultural literacy. To further the program goals, graduates should demonstrate the following abilities:

1. **Agricultural literacy:** Background and competency in the food, fiber, and natural resource industries.
2. **Communication skills:** Writing and verbal skills, information-gathering, fact-checking, the synthesis of ideas, deductive logic.
3. **Technological skills:** Both the ability to use effectively as well as the knowledge of current delivery systems for information and their impacts.
4. **Philosophical grounding:** Understanding of the philosophical, historical, ethical antecedents of modern mass communication practice in the context of the First Amendment and a free and open society, and how those lessons apply in day-to-day mass media practice for media producers and consumers.
5. **Critical thinking and analysis:** The ability to evaluate mass media messages and campaigns, to understand how media and society interact and implications of that interaction.
6. **Professional and personal responsibility:** Affirmation of the individual's responsibilities as either a producer or consumer of information in a democratic mass media age.
7. **Market savvy:** Exposure to real-world situations that instruct and demonstrate application of classroom learning.

How or why the standards and competencies were chosen –

Competencies were adopted from those already developed and utilized by the Utah State University Department of Journalism & Communication. To meet the needs of the agricultural industry, the first competency “Agricultural Literacy” was added.

Formative and Summative Assessment Measures –

Coursework – The Agricultural Communication and Journalism Major is designed to develop the needed background knowledge of the agricultural industry as students matriculate through the coursework in the Department of Journalism and Communication. Coursework covers topics in the following fields; animal science, biotechnology, plant science, agricultural business, textiles agricultural sales, agricultural leadership, communication and journalism, and public relations with an emphasis in corporate communication.

Entrance/graduation requirements – All graduates from the department must satisfy requirements for the basic core curriculum and meet the following minimum requirements: (1) Grade point average must be 2.50 or higher in all courses required for the major. (2) Courses required for the major may be repeated only once to improve a grade. (3) Courses required for the major may not be taken for *pass-fail* credit.

Portfolios – Student portfolios are to be developed by all Agricultural Communication and Journalism majors. Portfolios will be introduced in the introductory course – ASTE 1710 and assignments will be made to be appended to the portfolio during the career of the student within the context of ASTE Agricultural Communication courses. Portfolios will be completed and presented in the capstone course – ASTE 4900.

Exit interviews – All graduates in Agricultural Communication and Journalism will complete an exit interview in connection with ASTE 4900 – Senior Project/Agricultural Publications. This strategy will be useful for program and student assessment.

- Agricultural Communication and Journalism faculty should meet before the seminar and prepare specific items of inquiry for all students as they complete their capstone projects/internships.
- University-wide questions should be gathered from the appropriate USU assessment program(s).
- Agricultural Communication and Journalism faculty members should meet soon after the conclusion of the seminar to plan and update the Agricultural Communication program accordingly.

Further program and student assessment – Agricultural Communication and Journalism faculty members should develop additional measurement methods for determining the satisfaction of employers, placement success, and student satisfaction of the program post-graduate. These instruments are to be developed as part of the ASTE Assessment plan which is currently in place.