

DATA-BASED DECISIONS

Department of Journalism & Communication, 2005-06

The department took the results of an anonymous poll of 50 graduating seniors using an online survey in the spring of 2006 and discussed the results at two faculty meetings, in March and April 2006. The discussion was supplemented by faculty evaluation of the portfolios produced by students in the spring 2006 Senior Seminar, JCOM 4000, class taught by Dr. Edward C. Pease.

The department faculty decided to take three concrete steps and explore others for the future.

Step No. 1: Develop a way for students to challenge the JCOM 2160 class, Introduction to Online Journalism (formerly JCOM 2110), that would allow students to skip the class if they can demonstrate a minimum skill level. Assistant Professor Nancy Williams agreed to work on the challenge format over the summer of 2006 to see how this best could be done. If implemented, the test would be administered by Professor Williams and/or Department Head Mike Sweeney. It would eliminate from the class those students who feel the class is not challenging enough, while keeping the class available for those who need its skills. This test also would reduce potential enrollment, which in previous years has resulted in waiting lists for entry into the class.

Step No. 2: A grammar section will be beta-tested in the JCOM 1130 Beginning Newswriting class (formerly JCOM 1110) in fall 2006.

Step No. 3: The JCOM department head has agreed to explore partnerships with other organizations on campus and in the community to bring in new income. These might include cooperative arrangements with other departments in seeking federal grants. Discussions were initiated in April 2006 with M.K. Jeppesen, vice president for information technology.

Other options for exploration include increasing the number of student assistants in large classes, particularly Mass Media Law; re-examining the role of the Senior Seminar class and some others; and finding ways to pay more to adjuncts and assistants in order to attract and keep high-quality instructors throughout the curriculum.

--Michael S. Sweeney, interim department head, April 28, 2006