



College of Journalism and Mass Communication

## 2020-2021 Assessment Plan & Results

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications (CoJMC) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) has established student learning goals aligned with the professional values and competencies recommended by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). Additionally, UNL's "Achievement-Centered Education" (ACE) program mandates that all students complete a set of 10 student learning outcomes as part of their liberal arts education. The college offers ACE-certified courses adhering to university-wide standards. This report presents the assessment results for the academic year 2020-2021, aiming to measure the effectiveness of these learning goals.

The college uses two direct and three indirect assessment measures. While some measures, like the Senior Exit Survey, are administered each semester, all measures are administered at least once during the college's ACEJMC accreditation cycle. In addition, the college produces biennial assessment reports as required by the institution. The assessment reports include ACE assessments as well as ACEJMC assessment results.

During the 2020-21 academic year, the college administered one direct measure, the Berens Test and one indirect measure, the Senior Exit Survey, to evaluate the ACEJMC learning outcomes. The scheduled assessment of ACE 10 capstones, which is conducted in coordination with ACE assessment, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Berens Test, which was administered to freshmen, and the Senior Exit survey were consistent in their findings. They indicated areas where students need additional support, including understanding freedom of speech principles, conducting research, applying numerical and statistical concepts and writing.

In 2019, the college implemented new writing requirements within the curriculum for all students intended to improve student learning. Additionally, the college updated its math requirement for students.

## GOALS OF THE UNIT

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications' (CoJMC) student learning goals are consistent with the 10 professional values and competencies as suggested by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). In addition, UNL's "Achievement-Centered Education" (ACE) general education program requires students to complete a set of 10 student learning outcomes as part of their liberal arts education. The college offers some courses that are ACE-certified, meaning they adhere to university-wide standards and regular assessment procedures.

### ACEJMC Student Learning Outcomes

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

1. Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
5. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
6. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
7. Think critically, creatively and independently;
8. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
9. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
10. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
11. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
12. Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

### Achievement-Centered Education Student Learning Outcomes

In addition, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln requires all students, regardless of major, to complete 30 hours of general education courses in its "Achievement-Centered Education" (ACE) program. The program consists of 10 student learning outcomes (three credit hours each) that were developed to help students of every major develop skills, build knowledge, exercise social responsibility, and integrate and apply those capabilities:

Develop intellectual and practical skills, including proficiency in written, oral, and visual communication; inquiry techniques; critical and creative thinking; quantitative applications; information assessment; teamwork; and problem-solving.

- ACE 1: Write texts, in various forms, with an identified purpose, that respond to specific audience needs, incorporate research or existing knowledge, and use applicable documentation and appropriate conventions of format and structure.
- ACE 2: Demonstrate communication competence in one or more of the following ways: by making oral presentations with supporting materials, by leading and participating in problem-solving teams, by employing a repertoire of communication skills for developing and maintaining professional and personal relationships, or by creating and interpreting visual information.
- ACE 3: Use mathematical, computational, statistical, or formal reasoning (including reasoning based on principles of logic) to solve problems, draw inferences, and determine reasonableness.

Build knowledge of diverse peoples and cultures and of the natural and physical world through the study of mathematics, sciences and technologies, histories, humanities, arts, social sciences, and human diversity.

- ACE 4: Use scientific methods and knowledge of the natural and physical world to address problems through inquiry, interpretation, analysis, and the making of inferences from data, to determine whether conclusions or solutions are reasonable.
- ACE 5: Use knowledge, historical perspectives, analysis, interpretation, critical evaluation, and the standards of evidence appropriate to the humanities to address problems and issues.
- ACE 6: Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior.
- ACE 7: Use knowledge, theories, or methods appropriate to the arts to understand their context and significance.

Exercise individual and social responsibilities through the study of ethical principles and reasoning, application of civic knowledge, interaction with diverse cultures, and engagement with global issues.

- ACE 8: Explain ethical principles, civics, and stewardship, and their importance in society.
- ACE 9: Exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of an issue.

Integrate these abilities and capabilities, adapting them to new settings, questions, and responsibilities.

- ACE 10: Generate a creative or scholarly product that requires broad knowledge, appropriate technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, interpretation, presentation, and reflection.

## MEASURES

In 2020-2021, the College of Journalism and Mass Communications administered the following measures:

### *Direct Measures*

- Berens Test: pre-test: the Berens test was administered to incoming freshmen in the college's required college preparation course, JOMC 100: First Year Experience.

### *Indirect Measures*

- Senior Exit Survey: The Senior Exit Survey was administered to all graduating seniors in the college's required exit course, JOMC 098: Senior Assessment.

## 2020-2021 RESULTS

### Berens Test

The Berens Test (named after former associate dean Dr. Charlyne Berens) was developed with models provided by other accredited programs, revised by faculty and approved by the college's executive committee. Revisions since the last site visit have moved away from the cohort-only approach due to data collection logistics, multiple changes in leadership, and the global pandemic. The data collection was restarted in the fall 2020 semester. The test was administered to all incoming students in the JOMC 100 First-Year Freshman Experience course, a one-credit hour required course for incoming freshmen.

The purpose was to determine (1) whether the outgoing/graduating seniors group answered a larger proportion of the questions correctly than the incoming/freshman group and (2) to establish a reasonable benchmark for graduating students' achievement in the different areas.

The test asked students to answer 49 multiple-choice questions grouped into the professional values and competencies required by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. The number of questions in each group of competencies ranged from four to five. Each student group's percentage of questions answered correctly was computed. The percentage of correct responses by each student group in each competency category was also computed.

In Fall 2020, JOMC 100 had 121 students complete the Berens pre-test with an average score of 27.9 (56.9%). Below are the scores for each competency category from highest scores to lowest.

Competency Area	% of Questions Answered Correctly (JOMC 100)
Ethical ways of thinking (Q=4)	75.4%
Think creatively and analytically (Q=4)	69.8%
Diversity of audiences in a global age (Q=4)	64.7%
History and role of media in society (Q=5)	63.8%
Apply theories in presenting images and information (Q=4)	56.4%
Use the tools of technology (Q=5)	53.9%
Truth, accuracy and fairness (Q=5)	49.3%
Engage in research and critical evaluation (Q=5)	48.6%
Freedom of expression (Q=5)	46.3%
Understand data and statistics (Q=4)	46.3%
Write clearly and accurately (Q=5)	43.3%

The five highest scoring questions from JOMC 100:

Competency Area	% Answered Correctly (JOMC 100)
In making an ethical decision, a mass communications professional must consider:	90.9%

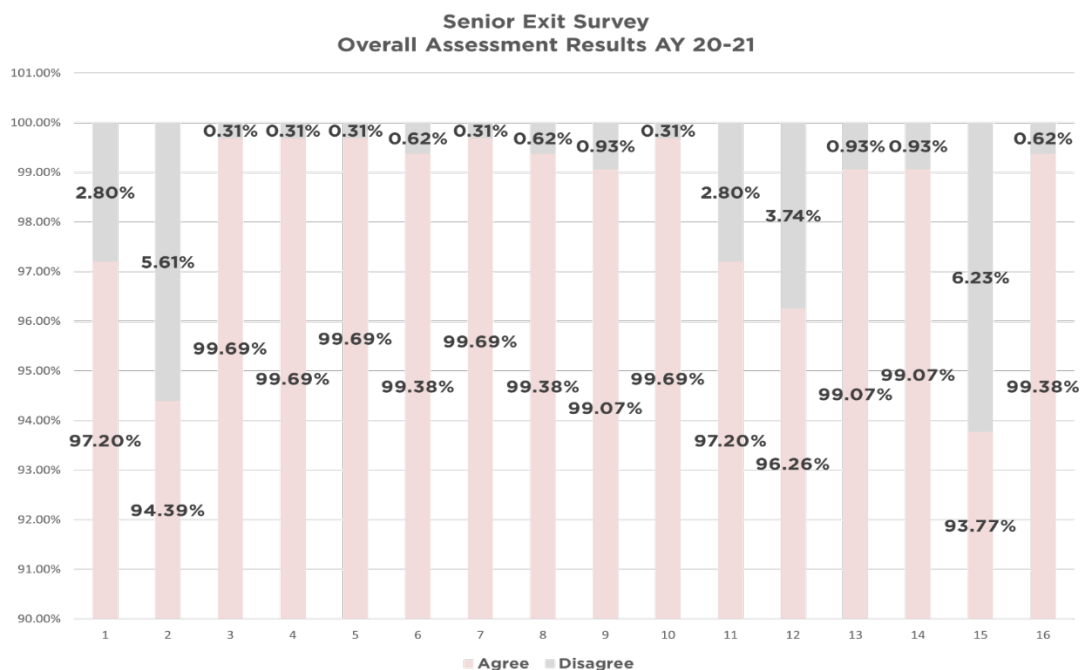
In terms of readability, which typeface style is considered best for use in body copy on electronic displays such as television monitors and computer screens?	83.5%
Digital video editing has changed the way we think about producing videos. Which of the following is NOT an advantage of digital video editing?	81.0%
One of the key ways the news media are helping consumers understand the news is by breaking down complex statistical stories into graphs and charts. This is called:	79.3%
Researchers can gather data using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Which of the techniques below represents a quantitative approach?	78.5%

The five lowest scoring questions from JOMC 100:

Question	% Answered Correctly (JOMC 100)
A public opinion survey finds 60% support for an incumbent. Given a sample size of 800, the margin of error for the survey was +/- 3% at a confidence level of 19 times out of 20. This means that if someone did the survey many times using the same questions and sampling technique, we would expect to get results showing support for the incumbent:	9.9%
Select the sentence with correct grammar and punctuation:	11.6%
Uses and gratifications theory might explain:	15.7%
Unless consent is obtained, which of these would be an invasion of privacy by (mis)appropriation?	17.4%
You are doing research about a company and want to learn whether it has pending lawsuits. What is the best searchable database to use?	28.1%

## SENIOR EXIT SURVEY

Below are the combined results from Academic Year 20-21, including the surveys conducted in fall 2022, spring 2021 and summer 2021. Students can choose between strongly agree, agree (combined into agree), disagree and strongly disagree (combined into disagree) for each statement.

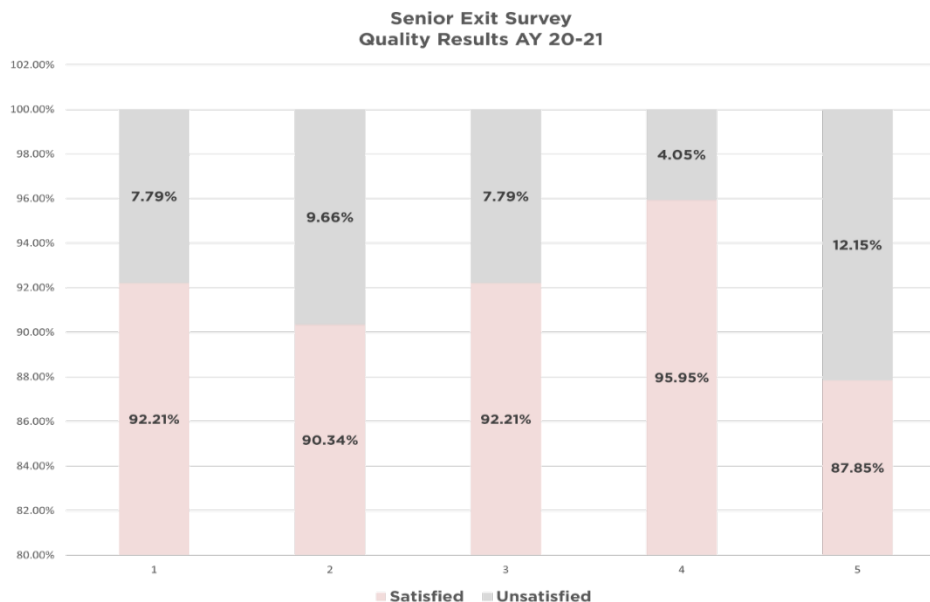


## Questions

1. I understand and can apply First Amendment principles to my work. (Outcome 1)
2. I can demonstrate an understanding of the history and the role of the professions in shaping communications. (Outcome 2)
3. I can demonstrate a respect for colleagues of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
4. I can demonstrate a respect for colleagues of different genders.
5. I can demonstrate a respect for colleagues of different races and ethnicity.
6. I can demonstrate a respect for colleagues of different sexual orientations.
7. I can demonstrate a respect for colleagues from different countries.
8. I can present data, text and images in a professional manner.
9. I can demonstrate professional and ethical principles through my work, including truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
10. I can solve problems creatively, independently and resourcefully.
11. I can conduct research and am able to evaluate information. (Outcome 8)
12. I can write correctly and clearly in styles appropriate to the communications professions. (Outcome 9)
13. I am able to critically evaluate the quality of my own work for fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
14. I am able to critically evaluate the quality of the work of others for fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
15. I understand and can apply basic numerical and statistical concepts. (Outcome 11)
16. I can apply tools and technology appropriate to the communications profession in which I plan to work.

The top five areas of concern are highlighted in red.

The survey also asks some general questions about the quality of the student's experience in the college. Students can choose between very satisfied, satisfied (combined into satisfied), unsatisfied and very unsatisfied (combined into unsatisfied).





## Questions

1. The advice, counsel, and guidance you received from the faculty in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications.
2. The advice, counsel, and guidance you received from the academic advisors in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications.
3. The education you received in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications.
4. The availability of the equipment in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications outside of class time.
5. The College of Journalism and Mass Communications has prepared you for success in your chosen profession.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Berens test and senior exit survey demonstrates that students struggle with the following learning outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;

**Outcome 8:** Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;

**Outcome 9:** Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;

**Outcome 11:** Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;

## Closing the Loop

### **JOUR 200a Fundamental or Editing and Reporting I**

In 2018-2019, a faculty task force reviewed the college's writing courses and recommended changes to improve students' ability to write correctly and clearly. In the fall of 2019, the college implemented a new structure for writing instruction. All students, regardless of major, must complete JOUR 200a Fundamentals or Editing and Reporting 1. Following this course, students will be required to complete a second required writing course that is specific to their discipline. We expect this change will improve instruction in writing and improve student learning.

### **Updated Math Requirement**

On Feb. 5, 2019, the college approved an updated math requirement to specify more clearly which math courses student may complete.