“Making the Connection”: Aggregate Internship Data as Direct and Indirect Measure Informing Curricula and Assessment

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Summary of Presentation

Topic: Importance of aggregate internship data in assessment.

Problem #1: Number of non-compliances in ACEJMC assessment.

Problem #2: Non-compliant disparity in curriculum and assessment.

Problem #3: Typical lack of direct measures in assessment planning.

Problem #4: Failure to create appropriate survey instrument.

Background: Literature review of assessment and internships.

Case Study: Overview of assessment process of compliant program.

Recommendations: Best practices in internship assessment.

Goal: Compliance in ACEJMC Assessment of Learning Outcomes.
Assessment and Accreditation

• Assessment *as most important standard* in the ACEJMC accrediting process.

• Unlike other standards, assessment is *intricately and directly linked* to the quality of curriculum and instruction.

• However, assessment standard comprises *nearly half* of all non-compliances in all other ACEJMC standards combined.

• One key to compliance in both standards may lie in *aggregate internship data*. 
# Table #1: Non-Compliances

ACEJMC STANDARDS: PROGRAM REVIEWS / Non-compliances in 9 Standards

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<td>1 Mission/ Gov.</td>
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<td>2 Curriculum</td>
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<td>5 Research</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6 Student</td>
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<td>7 Resources</td>
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<td>8 Prof/Public</td>
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<td>9 Assessment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* undergrad/professional master’s programs reviewed separately

** beginning with 2012-13, reflects non-compliances found during revisits
“Curriculum and assessment standards are closely connected” (Brown, et al., 2012)

Few programs fail both Assessment and Curriculum standards
Assessment Basics: *Two Kinds of Measures*

- Indirect measures capture *perceptions* of learning experience.
  - **Examples**: student surveys, alumni surveys, employer surveys, exit interviews, focus groups, student awards, graduation and employment data.

- Direct measures examine student work to determine if students *demonstrate* competencies required to achieve program goals.
  - **Examples**: examinations, capstone projects, student portfolios, aggregate internship evaluations, course-embedded assessment.

[https://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/2012%20Assessment%20Guide.pdf](https://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/2012%20Assessment%20Guide.pdf)
Use of Aggregate Internship Data

• Aggregate data as direct measure involves feedback from professionals who supervise student interns.

• ACEJMC believes those data inform programs “looking for trend lines that suggest ways to improve curriculum and instruction.”

• Guide makes special reference to internships with key comment (i.e. “if the evaluation instrument is linked to ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies”).

Note: See this link for ACEJMC Values and Competences: http://journalism.ku.edu/acejmc-professional-values-competencies
Goal of Study: Linking Both Standards

Linking Assessment and Curriculum with the internship experience to help earn compliance in Standards 2 and 9.

ACEJMC assessment standard:

- “The unit has a written assessment plan that uses multiple direct and indirect measures to assess student learning” (“Assessment of Learning Outcomes,” 2017).

Internships are essential components of accredited curriculum:

- “Records and statistics on and evaluations of internships, with and without academic credit” (“Curriculum and Instruction,” 2017).
Summary of Literature Review

- Multiple articles note that internships are indispensable and should be part of curricula in journalism and mass communication.
- Summer jobs or student media deemed insufficient in preparing students for workplace demands (Freedman & Poulson, 2015, p. 187-88).
- Formal internship typically viewed as more important than faculty recommendations or GPAs (Poindexter, 2014, p. 2).
- Successful internships associated with high placement rates (Madison, 2014, p. 320).
Socialization a Big Concern

- Students often surprised about workplace demands (Barnett, 2012, p. 271-2).
- They may not know organizational cultures or possess the required skills for adequate performance (Gaitens, 2000, p. 64).
  - Curricula alone cannot correct for that
- Transition becomes more complex for students who create content (Todd, 2009, p. 85).
  - They not only must master skill sets but also form a working knowledge of culture to represent that to audience and clients
- Advising should include contact with internship providers (Sapp and Zhang, 2009, pp. 277-78).
  - This helps in the socialization process
  - Also can inform curricula on employer expectations, industry trends
Importance of Formal Assessment

• Credit alone cannot inform curricula even if faculty share insights from their own internship advising or supervision.
• Faculty think they know about advisees’ readiness for workplace.
  ✓ Based on interaction with providers, class presentations and portfolios
• In reality, we are only making assumptions (Sapp & Zhang, 2009, p. 274).

Curricula enhanced via formal planning, surveying, analysis
Aggregate Data as Baseline Competency

- Accreditation develops *clear curricular standards*, assuring clients and public about “base level” of competency (Savage, 2010, p. 64).
- Accreditation criteria should lead to *standardization of curricula* that prepare students for internship challenges (Savage, 2010, p. 53).
- While programs offer different curricula, internship data provide *commonalties* by which to assess effectiveness (Poindexter, 2014, p. 2).
- This is why the *internship-curriculum feedback loop* is vital in assessment planning in accredited or certified programs.
Concerns: Communication, Instrument

• Internships require *three-way communication* among academic program, student interns and worksite supervisors.

• Regarding assessment, there is a *lack of reliable instruments* to assess quality, let alone how the experience can inform curricula (McDonough et al., 2009, p. 141).
Program Analyzed in Study

- Midwestern school enrolls 900 majors in 3 degree programs (advertising, journalism, public relations).

- School passed assessment standard based in part on survey instrument informing curricula, ACEJMC values & competencies.

- Required internship involves a minimum 400 hours of supervised employment with an approved provider.

- Overseen by a faculty member who supplies additional guidance, views survey results and grades a final portfolio.

- Internship serves as the school’s unified capstone experience.
Survey sent to intern, supervisor at midterm and end of each semester.  
5-point Likert-scale (1 = “strongly disagree,” 5 = “strongly agree”)

Survey measures:
1. general abilities in workplace
2. specific skills
3. job-related skills
4. interpersonal communication
5. professional conduct
6. overall performance
General Abilities in the Workplace
1. Intern understands the role of communication as it relates to the mission and goals of our organization.
2. Intern understands and can apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice.
3. Intern works ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
4. Intern shows sensitivity to diversity and cultural issues in verbal and visual communication.
5. Intern is able to think critically and independently.

Specific Skills (NOT All May Be Applicable To Each Job)
6. Intern writes correctly and clearly in appropriate forms and styles.
7. Intern understands and/or uses good visual communication concepts and techniques.
8. Intern demonstrates creativity in completing assignments.
9. Intern can apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
10. Intern demonstrates adequate skills in appropriate technology and software.
11. Intern demonstrates research/fact finding skills.
12. Intern can critically evaluate his/her own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

Job-Related Skills
13. Intern's academic preparation was adequate for this internship.
14. Intern is eager to learn new skills.
15. Intern is well organized and has good work habits.
16. Intern is able to work under pressure.
17. Intern has good problem-solving skills.
18. Intern meets deadlines.
19. Intern is completing a sufficient quantity of work.

Questions 1-12, ACEJMC Standards.
Questions 13-34 idiosyncratic to school’s curricular concerns.

Interpersonal Skills
20. Intern works well with others.
21. Intern communicates well with others.
22. Intern deals effectively with conflict.
23. Intern is able to take direction.
24. Intern accepts constructive criticism.
25. Intern asks questions when he or she doesn't understand.

Professional Conduct
26. Intern has an appropriate level of self-confidence.
27. Intern has a positive attitude.
28. Intern is at work when needed and is punctual.
29. Intern dresses appropriately for this environment.
30. Intern willingly accepts responsibility.
31. Intern demonstrates appropriate office etiquette.

Overall Assessment
32. Intern is making a strong contribution to our organization.
33. The quality of the intern's work is high.
34. Overall, I am satisfied with this intern's performance.
Some 190 students completed their 400-hour internship between Oct. 16, 2014 and Oct. 15, 2015.

Of those, 64 were advertising majors; 79, journalism; and 47, public relations.

In tables that follow, values and competencies are abbreviated.

Table 3, “Sample Results: Student vs. Employer Final Survey,” show student perception of performance (indirect) compared to supervisor assessment of performance (direct measure).

Table 4, “Sample Results: Employer Final Survey and Degree Comparison,” show how supervisors in advertising, journalism, and public relations rated overall performance.
### Table #3: Student v. Employer Data

ACEJMC Competencies (highest to lowest rated) for internships completed 10/16/2014 – 10/15/2015

**Overall (ADVRT, JL MC, P R majors combined)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Final (n=190)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Employer Final (n=190)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ethics</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>1. Ethics</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Role of communication</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>2. Diversity</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Diversity</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>3. Role of communication</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Think critically</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4. Visual Communication</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Research</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Creativity</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically evaluate</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>8. Think critically</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. First Amendment</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>9. First Amendment</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table #3: Discussion

- Interestingly, variations in indirect (*student perception*) and direct measures (*supervisor evaluation*) are remarkably similar.
- Top three (*ethics, diversity, role of communication*) only slightly different in each sample.
- Writing and statistics (*ranked at bottom 11, 12*) also are same.
- Students, in general, rated themselves higher on Likert scale.
- Essentially, there was agreement between the two groups.
Table #4: Survey & Degree Comparison


Employer: Competencies by Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACEJMC Values and Competencies</th>
<th>ADVRT N=64</th>
<th>JL MC N=79</th>
<th>PR N=47</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Role of communication</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. First Amendment</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ethics</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Diversity</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Think critically</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Write</td>
<td>4.62</td>
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<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Visual communication</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Creativity</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Statistics</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Technology</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Research</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>4.61</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: *School believes anything below 4.5 should be discussed in curriculum committee* to see if course work is delivering adequately on ACEJMC values and competencies, along with other idiosyncratic concerns (Questions 13-34).
Survey Invites Employer Comments

Sampling:

• “As multimedia on the web becomes even more tightly embedded into every-day journalism in the corporate world, students hone photography, Photoshop, HTML formatting and other media skills.”

• “Learn basics of Google Analytics: (This speaks to the need to know various types of software, web applications, etc., when heading out into the workforce.)”

• “Additional training on Adobe Creative Suite would be beneficial.”

• “In order to succeed in any field, students must be more assertive and self-initiate thoughts and interests into tangible goals. Contributing more as in more ideas, etc., will allow the person to grow as a writer.”

• “Good writing and photography skills will also be valued by potential employers -- keep honing your skills in these areas!”
Closer Look at Standards 2 and 9

• ACEJMC might look at the correlation (or lack thereof) of non-compliances in Standard 9, Assessment of Learning Outcomes, and compliances in Standard 2, Curriculum and Instruction.

• This paper makes no conclusive determination in that regard but does identify lack of correlation here as area of possible concern.

• Properly worded surveys are essential if curricula are to be informed by the internship experience.

• ACEJMC advocates for surveys that go beyond measuring such on-the-job concerns as “dependability, punctuality, ability to work independently.”
General Recommendations

• Include **ACEJMC values and competencies** in surveys.

• Use **a web-based survey instrument** to encourage supervisor comments and improve faculty oversight and advising.

• Administer surveys **at midterm and end of semester** to inform faculty advisers for job-specific advising and possible intervention.

• Require a minimum of hours (in this case, 400) so that **trend lines can be spotted** over time and addressed.

• Compare **student perceptions** (indirect) with **supervisor appraisals** (direct) to inform curriculum committees for course enhancement.

• **Parse data for various majors** (in this case, advertising, journalism, public relations) as assessment measure for degree-specific courses.
Determine if there is a correlation between non-compliances and …

- programs that *do not require internships*.
- internships with *no faculty supervision*.
- *no or poor surveying of internship supervisors*, missing opportunities for direct measures.
- *lack of questions on survey* pertaining to ACEJMC standards, values and competencies.
- *no mention of internships* in assessment plans.
- *low or no required minimum hours* for internships to spot trend lines that might inform curricular issues.
References

- Reinardy, Cynthia Ann. “ACEJMC STANDARDS: PROGRAM REVIEWS / Non-compliances in 9 Standards.” Email attachment 02/10/2017 2:45 p.m.
“Making the Connection”:
Aggregate Internship Data as Direct and Indirect Measure Informing Curricula and Assessment

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