



ABSTRACT

To measure The Prospector editors' overall preparedness and confidence level with their position, Assistant Director Tracy Roy asked a series of questions to each of them during one-on-one meetings. This included a pre- and post- assessment session for each editor. The questions aimed to discover what challenges the student staff are currently facing, what they wish to learn, what they are most excited about and what kind of support they believe they need during employment at The Prospector, particularly this semester (spring 2019). This assessment had a two-fold purpose. The goal of the assessment activity was to learn what needs to be taught in order to support an efficient workflow and overall success of student editors, while at the same time giving a brand new assistant director the opportunity to get to know the editorial staff and build a trusting working relationship.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

Through individual one-on-one sessions at the beginning of the semester and mirroring the same process at the end of the semester these were some key questions in the post-assessment:

April 2019

- Has your understanding of journalism changed or expanded this semester? In what way?
- At the beginning of the semester I asked what your strengths were and you said _____. Are those still accurate?
- How have your strengths assisted you in your work throughout the semester?
- Did you feel supported during the semester? How or why not?
- What could the department have done better for you?
- What were your concerns and challenges throughout the semester? What did not go well?
- What went right? What do you feel you've learned or improved upon this semester?
- What work are you most proud of this semester?
- In what ways have your leadership skills improved?

“ There’s always room for improvement, even though I feel my writing is good. I’d like to learn how to ask better questions. ”

- Brianna Chavez, Copy Editor

ASSAYER OF STUDENT OPINION

THE PROSPECTOR

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO SINCE 1915

**BREAKING NEWS:
ASSESSING EDITOR’S LEVEL OF SKILLS FOR THE NEWSROOM**



LEARNING OUTCOME

By working at The Prospector, editors will gain the skills and have the support needed as student journalists to successfully fulfill their job duties with confidence.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Individual sessions in a conversational interview style were held with each editor. The assistant director asked the questions and the editor would answer with no time limitation. Each session lasted approximately one hour. This type of assessment takes more time, but we were able to conduct it due to the small group size and it allowed us to collect rich qualitative data that we were able to build on immediately.

WHO PARTICIPATED ?

All eight editors of The Prospector participated in this assessment. Six out of the eight students were being promoted to a new leadership position at the beginning of the semester.

- Editor-in-Chief: Graduating Senior
 - Web Editor: Graduating Senior
 - Multimedia Editor: Graduate Student
 - Sports Editor: Sophomore
 - Entertainment Editor: Graduating Senior
 - Photo Editor: Senior (Pre-assessment) / Junior (Post-assessment)*
 - Layout Editor: Senior
 - Copy Editor: Graduating Senior
- *A different student took over this position in February

KEY FINDINGS

- 100% of the editors felt their strengths assisted them in their work and reported learning specific skills and tasks related to their work, and improving upon them.
- 100% of the editors said they felt well-supported by the department.
- Specific areas they felt they improved upon: Editing others, editing themselves, learning to manage reporters and contributors, being respectful in the workplace, confidence in covering large events, prioritizing and time management, writing skills, AP style
- Specific challenge areas they felt needed improvement: Sports and entertainment coverage, contributors’ experience and skill levels, enforcing deadlines, dealing with colleagues’ personal issues, time management, more sports writers, communication among staff, writing skills

UTEP EDGE ADVANTAGES



INNOVATION

This is a completely student-centered approach to assessing skill development and it was 100% driven by what our eight editors shared. This allowed for a tailored follow-up plan of training and development for the semester to fulfill the editors’ needs.

**PROGRESS REPORT
(STEPS TAKEN
AFTER
PRE-ASSESSMENT)**



- Workshops in AP style and newswriting; journalism ethics; photojournalism were offered
- Improve communication: Editors were encouraged and asked to provide feedback to the writers, and reported doing more of this as the semester progressed. The editorial advisor observed an uptick in this process during editing and production periods.
- Prepare for the future: Editors are currently training new editors as the semester comes to a close.

“ Journalism takes more steps and teamwork than I thought. Journalism is a lot of problem solving and being flexible. ”

– Ashley Johnson, Multimedia Editor

**FAST FORWARD
TO SUMMER SEMESTER**

- Set up summer meetings, including one-on-one sessions with the new editor to define expectations and fill positions
- Train new editor staff over the summer. Each editor should get at least two hours of one-on-one, hands-on training with assistant director
- Update student employee handbook to reflect specific duties, tasks and expectations of each position, and detail a workflow best practices as a foundation of structure for incoming students
- Continue providing feedback and training throughout the summer and fall semester
- Put a strong focus on recruiting student journalists to have a bigger pool of candidates to be promoted to leadership positions as well as having sufficient reporters to balance the newsroom workload.

“ Training, updating the employee handbook, recruitment, and defining workflow procedures will be top priorities during the summer months. ”

– Tracy R. Roy, Assistant Director