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 work are you most proud of this semester?
- In what ways have your leadership skills improved?
- In what ways have your leadership skills improved?
- What went right? What do you feel you've learned or improved upon this semester?
- What were your concerns and challenges throughout the semester?
- 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 work are you most proud of this semester?
- In what ways have your leadership skills improved?

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 upon immediately.

WHO PARTICIPATED?
All eight editors of The Prospector participated in this assessment.

- Editor-in-Chief: Graduating Senior
- Web Editor: Graduating Senior
- Multimedia Editor: Graduate Student
- Sports Editor: Sophomore
- Entertainment Editor: 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 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

WHAT WERE THE LEAST ACCOMPLISHED?
- Lack of consistent feedback during the semester.
- Not providing enough hands-on training to the new editors.
- Lack of ongoing support for student editors.

WHAT COULD THE DEPARTMENT HAVE DONE BETTER?
- More hands-on training for all editors.
- Providing consistent feedback and support throughout the semester.
- More consistent meetings with editors to discuss their progress.

WHAT WERE THE GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS?
- Editors felt well-supported by the department.
- Editors were able to complete challenging assignments.
- Editors were able to manage their time effectively.

WHAT WOULD YOU WANT TO IMPROVE ON?
- More consistent feedback during the semester.
- More hands-on training for all editors.
- More consistent meetings with editors to discuss their progress.

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LEARNING GOAL
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.

ASSESSING EDITOR’S LEVEL OF SKILLS FOR THE NEWSROOM

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.

“Journalism takes more steps and teamwork than I thought. Journalism is a lot of problem solving and being flexible.”
– Ashley Johnson, Multimedia Editor

“Training, updating the employee handbook, recruitment, and defining workflow procedures will be top priorities during the summer months.”
– Tracy R. Roy, Assistant Director

UTEP EDGE ADVANTAGES
- 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.

BREAKING NEWS:

“A different student took over this position in February.

WHO PARTICIPATED?
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PROGRESS REPORT
(Steps taken after pre-assessment)
- Set up summer meetings, including one-on-one sessions with the next 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.

FAST FORWARD TO SUMMER SEMESTER

TO SUMMER SEMESTER

- 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.