

# Assessment Activity Report



## 16-17 SA - Student Publications (Admin)

**Mission/Purpose Statement:** Mission/Purpose Statement: It is the mission of Student Publications to provide training and professional support for publication of The Shorthorn, the official UT Arlington student newspaper; and other publications. In doing so, as part of its mission, the department provides training for students planning careers in journalism and related fields.

- Core Functions:**
1. Provide training, professional and administrative support for publication of The Shorthorn, the official UT Arlington student newspaper.
  2. Provide experience and training for student preparing for careers in journalism, advertising and other fields reflected in skill sets needed for production of The Shorthorn (advertising, marketing, graphic design, photography, publications production, etc.).
  3. Provide employment and leadership opportunities for students.
  4. Student Publications will recruit and retain quality student staff.
  5. In doing the above, Student Publications provides a valuable, student-run news service to the UTA community.

### Intended Outcome: Shorthorn readership

Readership of theshorthorn.com will increase by 5 percent.

**Related Core Function:** 5. In doing the above, Student Publications provides a valuable, student-run news service to the UT Arlington community.

- Action Steps:**
- Clarify and emphasize unique identities, purpose and audience for each Shorthorn product.
  - Develop and implement strategies for delivery of news and advertising content to readers via Twitter, Facebook and other social media tools. The strategy will include guidelines about what kind of content should be sent via each tool, how many messages will be allowed for each, and which position in each area will be responsible for implementing the strategy,
  - Use results of the most recent Readership Survey to establish training for student editors The Shorthorn
  - Train editors and student staff on how to interpret and utilize readership reports produced weekly by marketing team.
  - With editors and student leaders, establish a content plan that emphasizes broad coverage of UT Arlington.
  - Empower Digital Development Team to research and produce provocative digital content working with newsroom resources.
  - During the summer, develop and implement an annual marketing plan for the coming year that emphasizes content and brand awareness.
  - Review and amend management group meetings to have a strong emphasis on planning content and the marketing of that content.
  - Renew training and emphasis on deeper reporting in the newsroom.
  - Regularly review content for variety of subject matter and style.

### Methodology and Criteria for Success

Pageview analysis conducted weekly by the marketing team (presented at the management group meeting, and summarized each semester) will show that the number of pageviews on theshorthorn.com will have increased by 5 percent over the previous academic year. (N/A)

**Responsible Person(s):** Marketing coordinator Brian Schopf

**Timeline for Implementation:** Data collection takes place weekly in all semesters of publication (complete academic year) and is conducted by marketing assistants. Marketing coordinator Brian Schopf keeps and assesses the data at the end of each regular semester, although the data is used regularly throughout the semester.

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**Mid-Cycle Update:** Pageviews on theshorthorn.com have increased 35.26% when comparing fall 2016 to fall 2015. (1,083,300 F16 to 800,873 F15).

## Results of Assessment

**Date:** 2016 - 2017

06/07/2017

**Outcome Achievement:** Outcome Fully Achieved

Page views on theshorthorn.com have increased by 22.93% over the previous academic year, based on Google analytics provided for the year to date (fall and spring academic terms). Full results will be available mid-August, as The Shorthorn publishes throughout the summer, impacting the overall results of this outcome.

Results to date show that between August 22, 2016, and May 30, 2017, theshorthorn.com netted 2,110,363 page views. For the same time period the prior year, theshorthorn.com netted 1,716,767 page views.

Other interesting finds include:

- A 4.49% increase in the number of pages viewed per session.
- A 17.64% increase in the number of sessions on the site.
- The percentage of total users who were new and returning remained evenly split from year to year, with 49.4% of users designated as new and 50.6% of users designated as returning.
- The "bounce rate" decreased by 7.82%, indicating fewer users had single-page sessions on the site.

Based on the information collected and assessed by the Student Publications director, this outcome was achieved. The results indicate a growing, solid readership for The Shorthorn via its website and will contribute to the content and advertising strategies moving forward.

## Proposed Improvement

**Proposed Improvement:** This summer, the department is reviewing content and advertising strategies for The Shorthorn and theshorthorn.com and will implement changes beginning Fall 2017.

In addition, the data provides evidence that consistent volume of readers is steady, allowing strategy to focus on user experience on the site. That is, future outcomes will include metrics on engagement on site. (06/07/2017)

## Related Items

Strategic Plan 2015-2020

**Guiding Aspiration 3** - Guiding Aspiration: Increase Visibility and Impact Through Global Engagement

**Guiding Aspiration 6** - Guiding Aspiration: Transform the Student Experience by Enhancing Access

## Intended Outcome: Staff retention

Fall-to-spring retention of Shorthorn student staff will increase.

**Related Core Function:** Student Publications will recruit and retain quality student staff.

- Action Steps:**
- Review and, where possible, increase student wages in critical areas
  - Promote, with the journalism faculty, the practicum credit available to students
  - Review and update competency grids in newsroom and advertising areas of Student Publications
  - Review and update competency grids for digital development team, advertising designers and marketing teams
  - Incorporate discussion of competency expectations during orientation and 1:1 coaching sessions with staff
  - Tie training objectives to competency grids each week
  - Regularly recognize achievements related to skills development, as opposed to baseline expectations
  - Continue and/or enhance morale program
  - Conduct staff satisfaction surveys at end of each fall and spring semester
  - Use existing staff surveys to develop a strong plan to retain qualified staff
  - Establish regular checkpoints with students who indicate their interest in leaving
  - Conduct exit interviews with staff who leave their positions early; use information to identify areas for improvement

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## Methodology and Criteria for Success

Student employees within the Department of Student Publications are hired one semester at a time, with the opportunity to apply for rehire at the end of the semester of their employment. Using the department's staff roster and rehire applications from the fall semester's staff, we will determine the percentage of staff who wish to return for spring. The outcome will be successful if at least 75 percent of the number who wish to return are eligible to return; that is, they meet the requirements to move to the position they have applied for. (N/A)

**Responsible Person(s):** Director Beth Francesco

**Timeline for Implementation:** Data collection and analysis will take place in January of each spring semester.

**Mid-Cycle Update:** 87% of students eligible to return as employees applied and were rehired.

## Results of Assessment

**Date:** 2016 - 2017

06/14/2017

**Outcome Achievement:** Outcome Fully Achieved

Retention of eligible student staff from the fall to spring semesters has been a challenge in most areas of the department for several years. Efforts to encourage retention and, in turn, student success, were successful this academic year, with 87 percent of fall student employees who met eligibility requirements being rehired for the spring semester. Those who did not either failed to maintain enrollment requirements or found off-campus internships or employment. All but four of those who did return, data shows, completed their employment with Student Publications through the end of the spring semester.

## Proposed Improvement

**Proposed Improvement:** Retention of student staff remains a high priority for the department, for purposes of skills/career development and their persistence within the UTA community. The department is using summer 2017 to develop additional tactics to continue the results in this area. (06/14/2017)

## Related Items

Strategic Plan 2015-2020

**Guiding Aspiration 6 -** Guiding Aspiration: Transform the Student Experience by Enhancing Access

## Intended Outcome: Digital revenue

Digital advertising revenue will increase.

**Related Core Function:** Provide training, professional and administrative support for publication of The Shorthorn, the official UT Arlington student newspaper.

**Action Steps:** • Review and increase cost of digital advertisements based on market and demand.

- Review usage and need for digital-print bundles that better suit current advertiser needs.
- Set specific targets for individual digital ad elements: social media, online, e-newsletter, etc.
- Provide sales incentives for customers and for student ad sales representatives.
- With marketing team, build a strong plan to build audience engagement that drives advertising sales.

## Methodology and Criteria for Success

Business manager will calculate the percentage of overall ad revenue that digital advertising makes up using monthly sales reports. The outcome will be successful if digital advertising for the fiscal year makes up at least 1 percent more of the overall ad revenue the fiscal year prior. (N/A)

**Responsible Person(s):** Business manager Lori Duskocil and Advertising Director Tammy Skrehart

**Timeline for Implementation:** Data collection will take place at the end of the fall, spring and summer semesters, after publication for that semester ceases. Assessment will take place by the end of the month the data is collected.

**Mid-Cycle Update:** At mid-cycle, the digital ad sales made up 16.1 percent of the total revenue.

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## *Results of Assessment*

**Date:** 2016 - 2017

06/14/2017

**Outcome Achievement:** Outcome Fully Achieved

To date this fiscal year, digital advertising sales made up 25 percent of the department's total Shorthorn advertising sales, an 8.9-percent increase over the last fiscal year's total of 16.1 percent.

This is the direct result of creating clear, consistent digital advertising packaging for customers; adding digital services; and retraining the advertising sales team to focus on customer needs first. All efforts will be continued as we continue to grow this area of our revenue.

## *Related Items*

Strategic Plan 2015-2020

**Guiding Aspiration 4** - Guiding Aspiration: Lead in Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Creativity

**Guiding Aspiration 6** - Guiding Aspiration: Transform the Student Experience by Enhancing Access