

VU LIBRARY ASSESSMENT: ACHIEVING LEARNING OUTCOMES

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I. VU LIBRARY ASSESSMENT: Achieving Learning Outcomes

COMM 464C: Media Criticism (capstone course)

Background Scenario:

Dr. Alison English teaches the Library Instruction session each semester to the Communication Department capstone course, COMM 464C: Media Criticism students—usually the second class period of each semester. Additional interaction occurs between English and the students; this is in the form of individual contact. Each semester, English schedules approximately 50 to 60 individual research interviews with those students; some take 15 minutes; most take half an hour or longer. English discusses the rhetorical theory and the rhetorical artifact each student has chosen. In some cases, English helps clarify which theory is a better choice for the project; in other cases, she assists them in finding an appropriate artifact for the theory they have chosen. For many COMM majors, it is the first time that they are facing an in-depth research project, identifying a rhetorical methodology to study, and choosing a rhetorical artifact to evaluate in their 50-page final paper.

At the end of the semester, after the students have submitted their 50-page research paper to the communication department professor of record, Dr. Tom Carmody, English administers the Capstone Quiz for COMM 464C, which covers the aspects of research taught in the bibliographic instruction class as well as in the individual research interviews. The questions are short answer questions, rather than multiple-choice. The goal is to determine what each student can recall. A copy of the Capstone Quiz for COMM 464C is located in the Appendices.

Assessment Rubric:

A rubric of five (5) objectives was developed from the fourteen (14) questions on the Capstone Quiz for COMM 464C. This assessment rubric is based on specific outcomes listed in VU Library's 2005 Academic Program Curriculum Design, where we stated that we would use quizzes in major capstone classes. In the Library's Academic Program Curriculum Design, our design outcomes were based on the 2001 Association of College and Research Libraries' *Objectives for Information Literacy Instruction: A Model Statement for Academic Librarians*. The rubric appears in the Appendices of this document.

The 5 objectives of the assessment rubric are:

- Objective 1: To understand and describe the difference between VANPAC (VU Library's book catalog) and a database, such as PROQUEST or JSTOR.
- Objective 2: To understand and describe the characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed journal in rhetorical communication:
- (1) scholarly language and content;
 - (2) list of references/footnotes;
 - (3) rhetorical or related communication theoretical grounding;
 - (4) published by a professional organization, i.e. NCA;
 - (5) authored by or contains references to rhetorical theorists or rhetorical critics.

- Objective 3: To understand and define the difference between primary and secondary sources and cite examples of each. Primary sources are “original sources” i.e. ones that are written by a rhetorical theorist and/or it is the first time that a particular rhetorical theory is stated. Secondary sources are those that “comment on” or challenge the original theorist’s position.
- Objective 4: To understand and define the characteristics of plagiarism, such as:
(1) quoting,
(2) summarizing,
(3) inferring that someone else’s work is their own
(4) without citing the author/author’s works.
- Objective 5: To understand and describe the step-by-step process for research for their final 50-page paper for COMM 464C: Media Criticism.

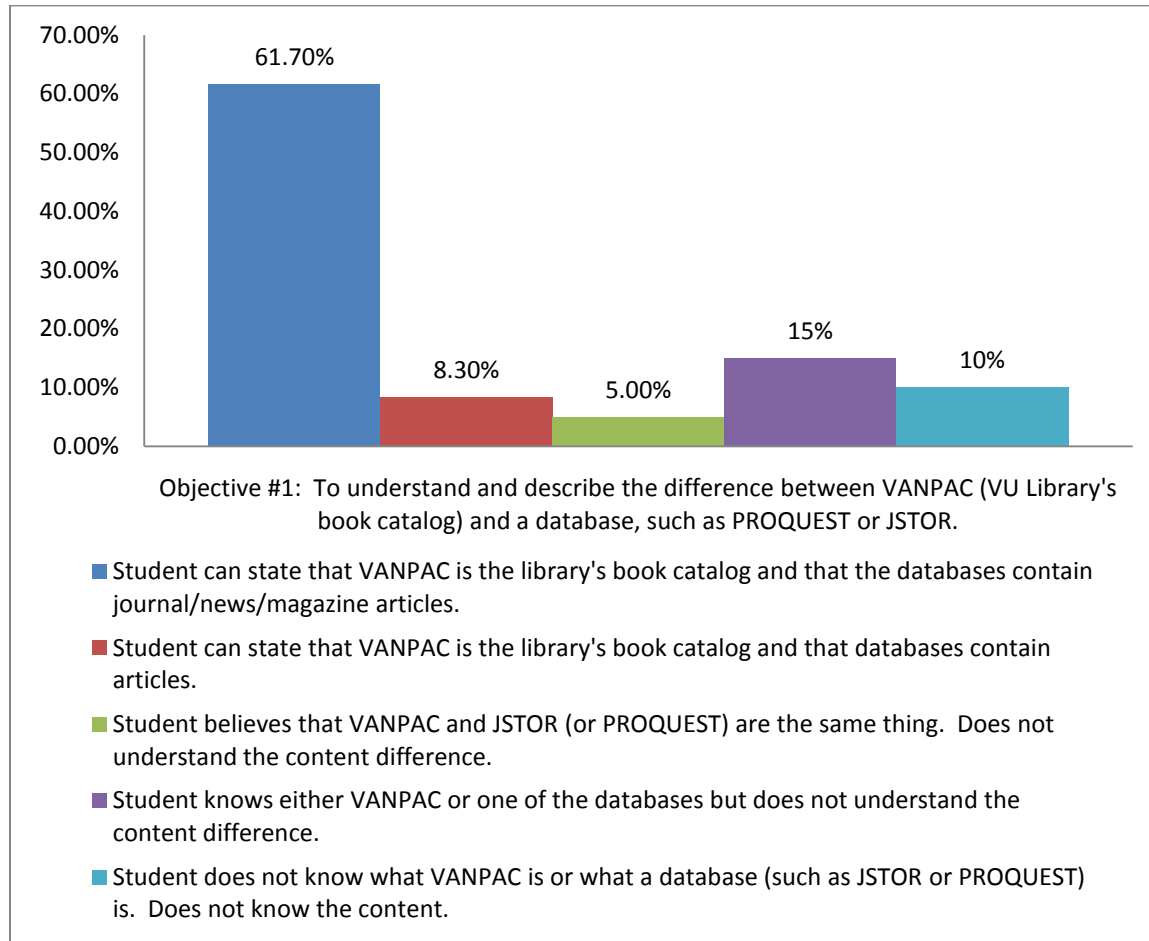
Method:

With the exception of Fall 2006, the Capstone Quiz was administered each semester from Spring 2005 through Spring 2008, thus giving data from six (6) semesters. From each of these six (6) groups of tests, ten (10) students’ tests were chosen at random, thus giving a total of sixty (60) students’ tests to be evaluated.

Each of the five (5) Objectives was assigned a maximum total of 5 points, thus if a student answered all the questions correctly, the maximum score was 25 points. Less than perfect responses were evaluated and scored by the stated definitions under each section on the rubric. Thus, students’ answers that only received partial credit, were awarded anywhere from one (1) to four (4) points according to the completeness of their responses on the test.

Total Score Available	# of Students Achieving Score
25 points	0
24	0
23	0
22	4
21	6
20	5
19	9
18	10
17	3
16	5
15	6
14	3
13	2
12	2
11	2
10	1
9	1
8 and lower	0

Findings for Objective 1: To understand and describe the difference between VANPAC (VU Library's book catalog) and a database, such as PROQUEST or JSTOR.



Explanation:

61.70% (37 out of 60 students) clearly knew the difference in content between VANPAC (VU Library's book catalog) and a database, such as PROQUEST or JSTOR.

Another 8.30% (5 out of 60 students) understood the difference, but only knew that databases contained articles.

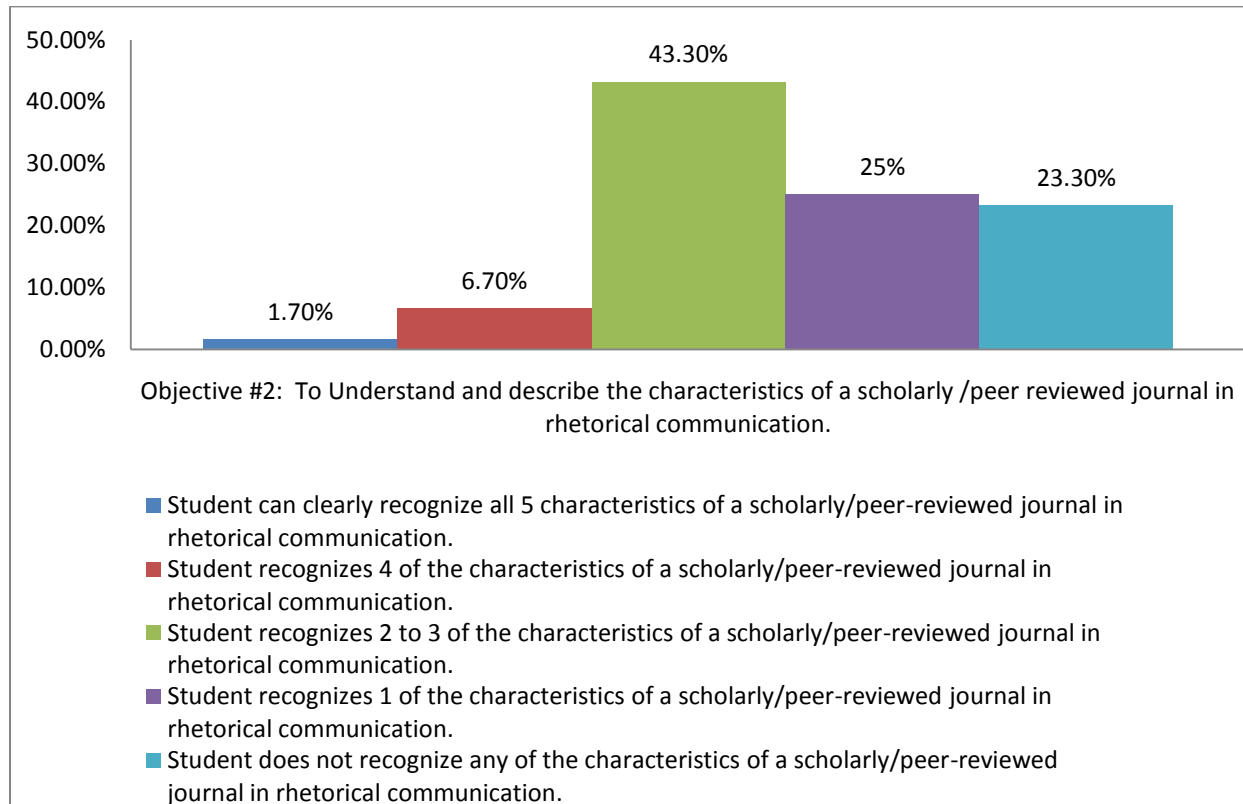
5% (3 out of 60 students) thought that VANPAC and PROQUEST/JSTOR was the same thing and did not understand the content difference.

15% (9 out of 60 students) knew about VANPAC or PROQUEST/JSTOR, but could not describe the content difference.

Somewhat troubling was 10% (6 out of 60 students) did not know either VANPAC or a database.

Findings for Objective 2: To understand and describe the characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed journal in rhetorical communication:

- (1) scholarly language and content;
- (2) list of references/footnotes;
- (3) rhetorical or related communication theoretical grounding;
- (4) published by a professional organization, i.e. NCA;
- (5) authored by or contains references to rhetorical theorists or rhetorical critics.



Explanation:

Only 1.70% (1 out of 60 students) could identify all five (5) characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed rhetorical journal, while 6.70% (4 out of 60 students) identified four (4) characteristics.

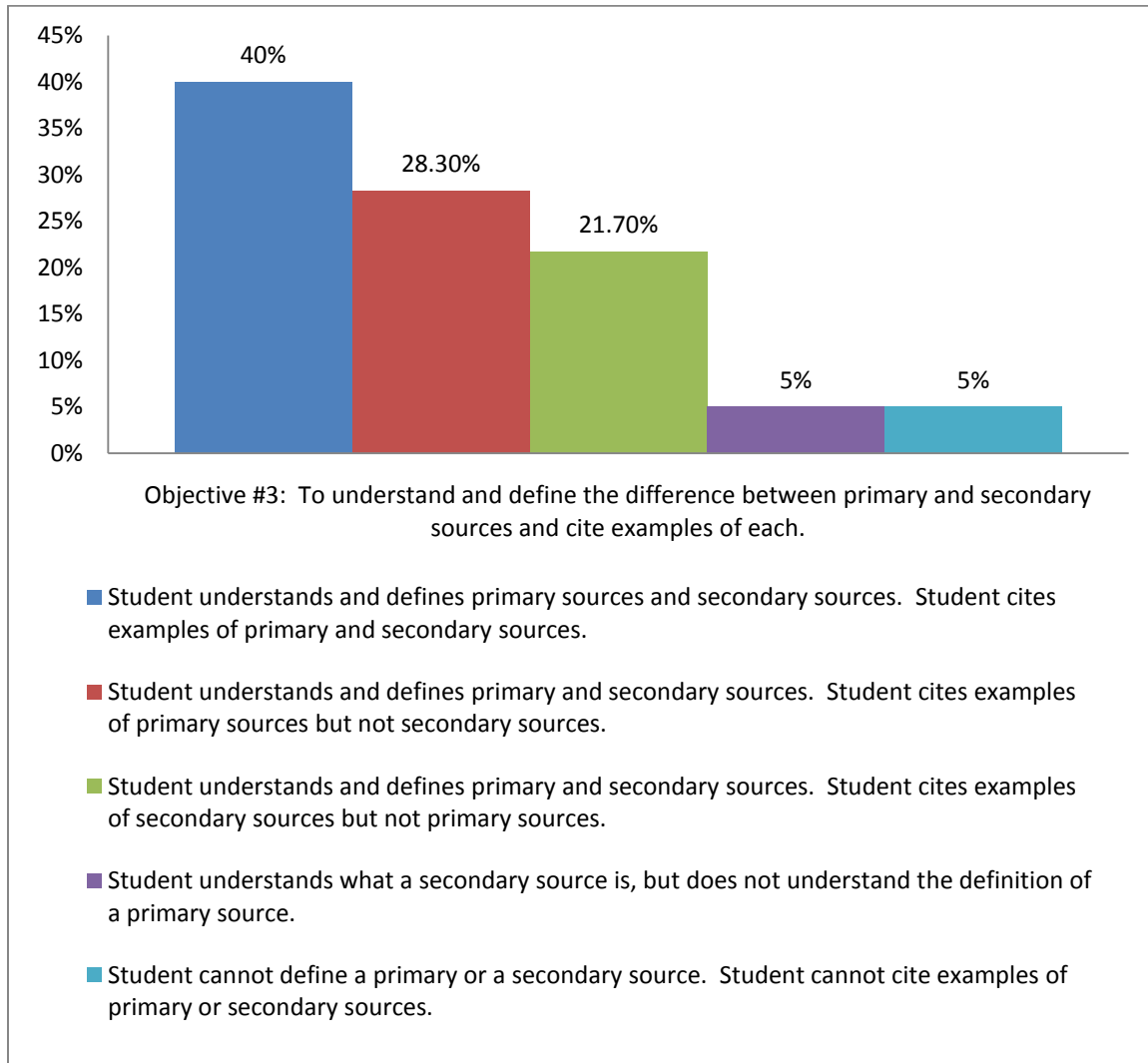
43.30% (26 out of 60 students) were able state two to three (2-3) characteristics.

25% (15 out of 60 students) could state one (1) characteristic of a scholarly/peer-reviewed rhetorical journal.

Unfortunately, 23.30% (14 of 60 students) could not identify even one (1) characteristic.

Clearly, if 48.3% (29 out of 60 students) over six semesters could only name 1 or less characteristic of a scholarly journal, then this area needs to be addressed in our bibliographic instruction classes.

Findings for Objective 3: To understand and define the difference between primary and secondary sources and cite examples of each. Primary sources are “original sources” i.e. ones that are written by a rhetorical theorist and/or it is the first time that a particular rhetorical theory is stated. Secondary sources are those that “comment on” or challenge the original theorist’s position.

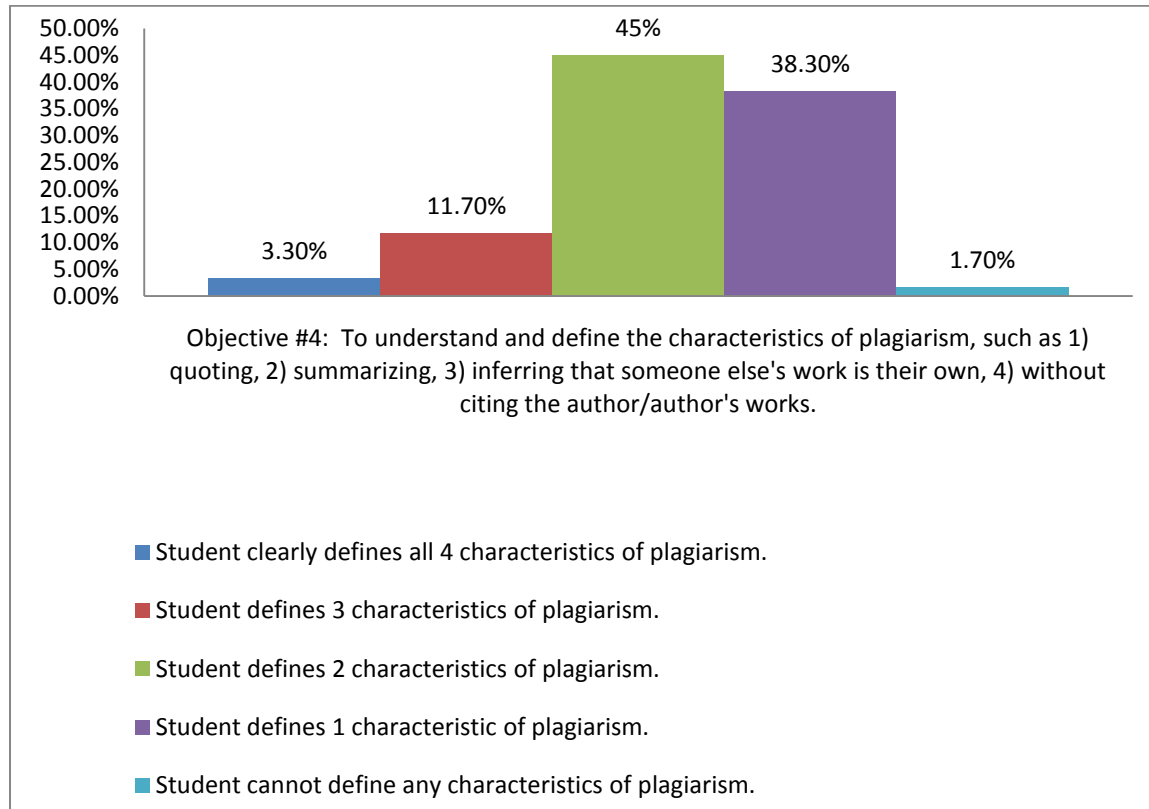


Explanation:

40% (24 out of 60 students) clearly defined primary and secondary sources and cited examples. 28.30% (17 out of 60 students) clearly defined primary and secondary sources but did not cite examples of secondary sources. 21.70% (13 out of 60 students) understood and defined primary and secondary sources, but did not cite examples. 5% (3 out of 60 students) stated the definition of a secondary source but could not define a primary source. 5% (3 out of 60 students) could not define a primary or secondary source and could not cite examples.

Thus, the positive results were that 90% or fifty-four (54) students out of sixty (60) could define secondary and primary sources. The need is to assist the 60% (41 out of 60 students) to make the connection between the definitions and specific examples of primary and secondary sources.

Findings for Objective 4: To understand and define the characteristics of plagiarism, such as:
(1) quoting,
(2) summarizing,
(3) inferring that someone else's work is their own
(4) without citing the author/author's works.



Explanation:

3.30% (2 out of 60 students) could define all four (4) characteristics of plagiarism.

11.70% (7 out of 60 students) could define three (3) characteristics.

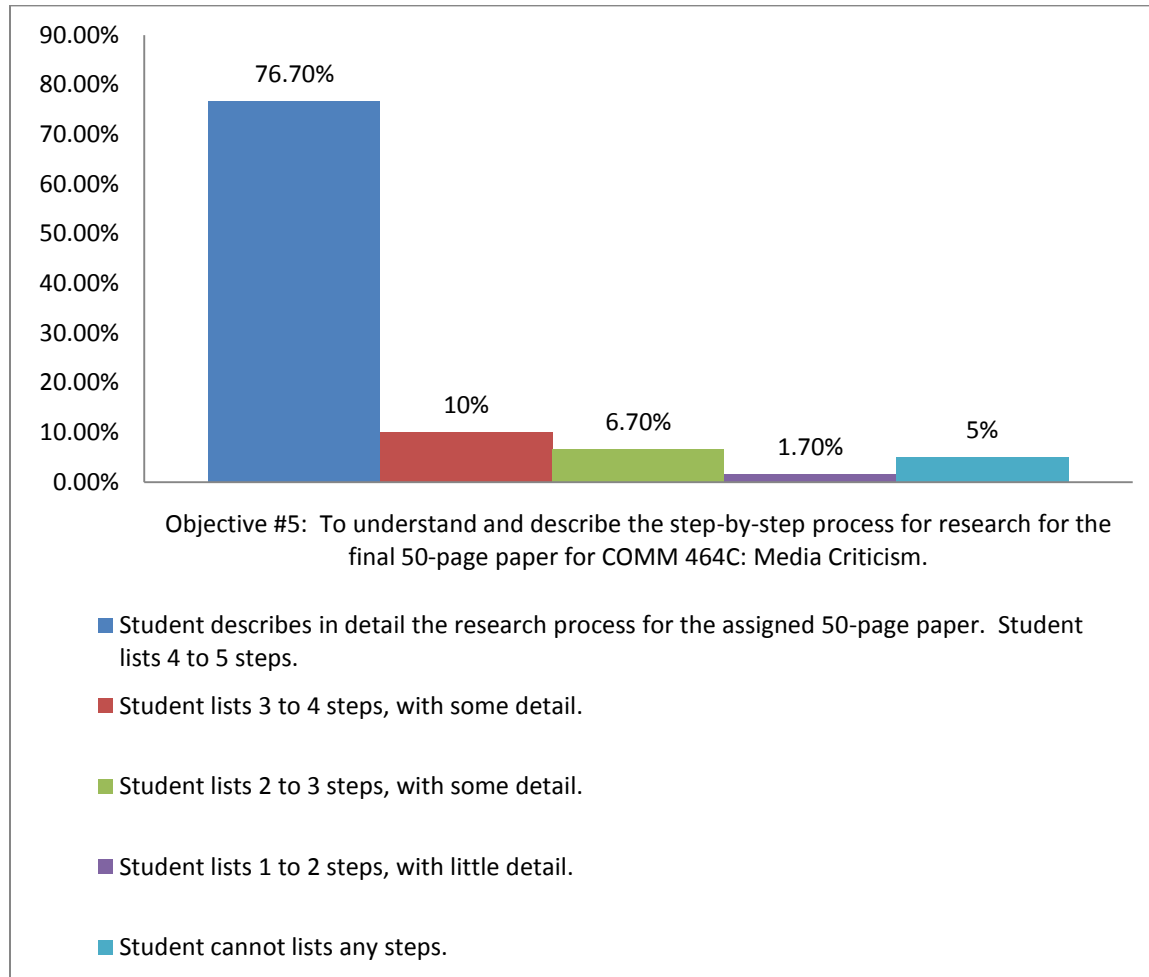
45% (27 out of 60 students) could define two (2) characteristics of plagiarism.

38.30% (23 out of 60 students) could define one (1) characteristic of plagiarism.

Only 1.70% (1 out of 60 students) could not identify any characteristics of plagiarism.

Thus, the need for this objective to be realized is for the definitions to be stated more clearly, and for specific examples to be used in bibliographic instruction classes.

Findings for Objective 5: To understand and describe the step-by-step process for research for their final 50-page paper for COMM 464C: Media Criticism.



Explanation:

76.70% (46 out of 60 students) described four to five (4-5) steps in the research process for the final paper for COMM 464C: Media Criticism.

10% (6 out of 60 students) listed three to four (3-4) steps.

6.70% (4 out of 60 students) listed two to three (2-3) steps.

1.70% (1 out of 60 students) listed one to two (1-2) steps.

5% (3 out of 60 students) could not list any steps in the research process.

Thus, a large majority of these sixty (60) students over a six-semester time period did understand the research process.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, student learning is occurring, but there are some items that need to be addressed. For example, some of the concepts taught in the initial bibliographic instruction class need to be emphasized.

Plagiarism needs to be defined more specifically and examples given.

Characteristics of scholarly/peer-reviewed journals need to be emphasized. Primary and secondary sources were understood by the majority—but specific examples should be highlighted in the bibliographic instruction class. The need is to assist students in making the connection between the definitions and specific examples of primary and secondary sources.

A bright spot was the fact that 76.70% understand the specific steps of the research process extremely well, and another 10% understand the research process very well.

Rubric Adjustments:

Since this was the initial use of the Assessment Rubric for COMM 464C, some adjustments need to occur:

Objective #3 under column 3:

Remove: Student cites examples of secondary sources but not primary sources.

Replace with: Student cannot cite examples.

Objective #3 under column 4:

Remove: Student understands what a secondary source is, but does not understand the definition of a primary source.

Replace with: Student understands either a primary or a secondary source, but does not understand both.

Teaching Adjustments:

Dr. Alison English has discussed the findings with Dr. Tom Carmody, the professor of record for COMM 464C: Media Criticism. Both Dr. Carmody and Dr. English will address plagiarism, the characteristics of scholarly/peer-reviewed journals, and the differences between primary and secondary sources.

In the classroom, Dr. Carmody will emphasize the differences between primary sources and secondary sources, as well as focusing on the four aspects of plagiarism. Each semester in the 50 to 60 research interviews with individual students from COMM 464C, Dr. English will emphasize the difference between primary and secondary sources—showing specific source type examples—as she assists the each student in their research for the final 50-page paper. She will also specifically address plagiarism in both the individual research interviews as well as in the library instruction class, which occurs during the first week of each semester.

II. APPENDICES

Fall _____ Spring _____ Year _____

**Vanguard University Library
COMM 464—Media Criticism
Capstone Quiz**

1. Name one (1) professional organization/association related to your academic discipline.
2. What is the difference between VANPAC and a database, such as PROQUEST or JSTOR?
3. What is a call number?
4. What criteria would you use to evaluate information found on a website or in a database?
5. Name three writing/citation styles. Which one is required for this course?
6. Name five (5) professional journals associated with your academic discipline.
7. Describe the characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed journal article, i.e. what tells you that the article is scholarly?
8. What is the definition of a seminal or foundational journal article?
9. What is the definition of a primary source? Give an example.
10. What is the definition of a secondary source? Give an example.
11. What is an abstract?
12. What is plagiarism?
13. (A) Describe the step-by-step process of how you would research a topic for a final paper in this course.

(B) When do you make a decision to abandon a research topic?

14. I have received library instruction in the following courses (Circle all that apply):

Cornerstone, ENGL 220, COMM 201, COMM 464, Other _____
Another college/university _____.

VU LIBRARY ASSESSMENT RUBRIC of COMM 464C: Media Criticism (capstone class)

Dr. Alison English/Professor Mary Wilson 9/15/2008

Objectives	5	4	3	2	1
#1 To understand and describe the difference between VANPAC (VU Library's book catalog) and a database, such as PROQUEST or JSTOR.	Student can clearly state that VANPAC is the library's book catalog and that the databases contain journal/news/magazine articles.	Student can state that VANPAC is the library's book catalog and that databases contain articles.	Student believes that VANPAC and JSTOR (or PROQUEST) are the same thing. Does not understand the content difference.	Student knows either VANPAC or one of the databases but does not understand the content difference.	Student does not know what VANPAC is or what a database (such as JSTOR or PROQUEST) is. Does not know the content.
#2 To understand and describe the characteristics of a scholarly /peer-reviewed journal in rhetorical communication: 1) scholarly language and content; 2) list of references/footnotes; 3) rhetorical or related communication theoretical grounding; 4) published by a professional organization, i.e. NCA; 5) authored by or contains references to rhetorical theorists or rhetorical critics.	Student can clearly recognize all 5 characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed journal in rhetorical communication.	Student recognizes 4 of the characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed journal in rhetorical communication.	Student recognizes 2 to 3 of the characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed journal in rhetorical communication.	Student recognizes 1 of the characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed journal in rhetorical communication.	Student does not recognize any of the characteristics of a scholarly/peer-reviewed journal in rhetorical communication.
#3 To understand and define the difference between primary and secondary sources and cite examples of each. Primary sources are "original sources", i.e. ones that are written by a rhetorical theorist and/or it is the first time that a particular rhetorical theory is stated. Secondary sources are those that "comment on" or challenge the original theorist's position.	Student understands and defines primary sources and secondary sources. Student cites examples of primary and secondary sources.	Student understands and defines primary and secondary sources. Student cites examples of primary sources but not secondary sources.	Student understands and defines primary and secondary sources. Student cites examples of secondary sources but not primary sources.	Student understands what a secondary source is, but does not understand the definition of a primary source. Student cannot cite examples of either a secondary or a primary source.	Student cannot define a primary or a secondary source. Student cannot cite examples of primary or secondary sources.
#4 To understand and define the characteristics of plagiarism, such as: 1) quoting, 2) summarizing, or 3) inferring that someone else's work is their own, 4) without citing the author/author's works.	Student clearly defines all 4 characteristics of plagiarism.	Student defines 3 characteristics of plagiarism.	Student defines 2 characteristics of plagiarism.	Student defines 1 characteristic of plagiarism.	Student cannot define any characteristics of plagiarism.
#5 To understand and describe the step-by-step process for the research for the final 50-page paper for COMM 464C: Media Criticism.	Student describes in detail the research process for the assigned 50-page paper. Students lists 4-5 steps	Student lists 3 to 4 steps, with some detail.	Student lists 2 to 3 steps, with some detail.	Student lists 1 to 2 steps, with little detail.	Student cannot list any steps.
Maximum Score	25	20	15	10	5
Student's Score					