

**2016-17
Revisit Team Report
for Accreditation in Journalism
and Mass Communications**

Name of Accredited Unit: School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Name of Institution: San Jose State University

Name of Accredited Unit Administrator: Phylis West Johnson, Director

Date of Original Site Visit: Nov. 16-19, 2014

Revisit Date: Feb. 19-21, 2017

Revisit Team Chair: Christopher Callahan, Dean and Vice Provost, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University

Revisit Team Member: Jennifer Sizemore, Vice President and Editor-in-Chief, Starbucks Corp.

Revisit Team's Recommendation: Reaccreditation

1. List each standard found in noncompliance and the reasons as cited in the original team report. (Add additional pages as necessary.)

The 2014 ACEJMC site team report found two standards in noncompliance – Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction and Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Reasons cited: The 2014 site team based its noncompliance on Standard 2 on the School’s failure to adhere to the 20-student cap on skills courses. The site team found “routine and systemic oversubscriptions of skills courses in violation of the ACEJMC-mandated 20-student cap, preventing the School from adequately delivering its curriculum.”

The oversubscription problem was cited in the previous site team report, noting that six of the 40 skills classes were over the 20-student limit. But that problem “escalated dramatically” during the past accreditation cycle, the site team wrote, “to the point where over subscription of skills courses is now a matter of routine at SJMC and is an anticipated part of semester-by-semester enrollment management.” In Spring 2014, nearly half of the skills classes – 17 of 35 – exceeded the 20-student cap, with 110 more students over the maximum that semester alone. Over the six-year accreditation cycle, the 2014 site team found 146 skills classes exceeded the cap, with more than 600 students oversubscribed. The team also found that a lack of systemic data analysis to manage enrollment exacerbated the problem.

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Reasons cited: The 2014 site team found a lack of a plan designed to assess learning outcomes that used direct and indirect measures for the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies and implemented to improve curriculum.

The site team noted during the first five years of the accrediting cycle under review, the School’s assessment activities focused on graded assignments from the instructors teaching those classes. In the final year of the accreditation period (2013-14), the School developed a new strategy and process for assessment, but no assessment plan. The new assessment procedures, created to accommodate both the requirements of ACEJMC and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, failed to assess all of the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies (it focused instead on four Program Learning Objectives that encompassed some, but not all, of the ACEJMC values and competencies). Furthermore, the plan lacked clear direct measures and there were no external reviews. For example, the School requires a 240-hour internship, but there was no assessment or evaluation from the employers. An alumni survey was launched just a few months before the end of the accreditation cycle.

The site team concluded: “While faculty have spent time and energy attempting to assess learning outcomes, it is not obvious how the PLOs reflect the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies. Nor are the measures objective since they are based on the individual instructor’s grade. Assessment must consider the broad spectrum of degree seeking students and measure what they have learned across the curriculum.”

2. For each standard that had been in noncompliance, provide a summary of the team's findings regarding corrections. Provide an evaluation of compliance or noncompliance. (Present a separate narrative response for each of the standards in noncompliance. Add additional pages as necessary.)

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Summary of findings: During the five semesters since the site team visit in November 2014, the School reported that only a single skills class out of 134 sections was out of compliance with the 20-student cap (and that one only by one student). A more in-depth review by the revisit team, however, found a number of skills courses offered this semester but not reported by the School in the revisit documentation, including two skills classes that were over the 20-student cap. Furthermore a third skills class that was reported as being in compliance also was over the cap (all three were over by just one student each). Nevertheless, the revisit team found that the School is now largely adhering to the enrollment maximum on skills classes, and sections that are over the limit are now the exception rather than part of a systemic pattern.

Overall evaluation: Compliance

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Summary of findings: The semester following the November 2014 site team visit, the School began down the road of designing and implementing an assessment strategy to include direct and indirect measures of the 12 ACEJMC values and competences. The School was, in many ways, starting from scratch, and two years is an insufficient time frame to design, evaluate, implement and loop back into the curriculum a robust, multi-pronged assessment plan. Therefore, our evaluation here is based on a two-year time frame.

In early 2015, the then-Director appointed a senior faculty member as the School's assessment coordinator, and brought in a senior faculty member from another university with assessment experience to help develop the plan. There was an intentional and laudable focus from the outset on the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies. Spring 2015 was spent designing the plan and the next three semesters started the process of implementation and analysis.

The School should be applauded for its transparency and self-reflection on the process. The revisit self-study reads, in part: "We have learned something from each assessment, although sometimes what we have learned is that we need to employ a more effective assessment tool. Some of the assessments have gone very well and led to substantial improvement in curriculum. More importantly, faculty are gradually getting into the assessment habit." The report characterizes the School's assessment efforts into three categories: Move On (useful results were found that led to curricular changes); Refine (the assessment yielded some valuable information but needs to be improved); and Re Do (the assessment tool needs to be redesigned). The unit

concluded that 11 of the assessment tools were in the Move On category, while six others were characterized as Refines and two as Re Dos.

The School points to information revealed by the assessment process, including the need for more coordination and standardization among some multi-section courses and the need to place heavier emphasis on certain skills within the curriculum, such as visual concepts and skills. But most of the assessment-driven findings, according to the School's revisit report, were about how to improve specific assessment measures, not the curriculum itself.

Furthermore, there remain fundamental problems with the School's assessment. First, there is still no written plan, but instead an ad hoc collection of assessment measures implemented at different times with different frequencies. The lack of a clear plan seems to impede the effectiveness of comprehensive assessment of learning outcomes.

There seem to be two direct measures deployed by the School – an externally reviewed portfolio analysis conducted by professionals in the industry and a survey completed by internship employers.

The portfolio reviews show great promise, but are quite limited in both frequency and the number of ACEJMC values and competencies they measure. In journalism, a team of five editors from the San Jose Mercury News conducted a portfolio review of seven students last year in JOUR135: Reporting, Editing and Management. The reviewers were given a rubric to measure only ACEJMC Values/Competencies No. 7, 8 and 12, and the next portfolio review for that class is not scheduled for another three years – Fall 2019. For the public relations major, a portfolio evaluation was designed for PR199: Campaign Planning and Management, using a rubric designed to measure No. 8. That review was conducted for the first time last semester – two years after the site team visited. It, however, is scheduled again for this semester. For advertising majors, a professional portfolio review was designed for ADV129: Campaigns Management, with a rubric to measure Values/Competencies No. 7 and 8. Four external assessors evaluated a single team project in Spring 2016. The next portfolio review is scheduled for Fall 2017.

The other direct measure with great promise tries to take advantage of the 240-hour internship requirement of all majors by implementing both employer and student feedback. The employer feedback, however, has been almost exclusively qualitative and measures only two of the ACEJMC values/competencies – Nos. 5 and 11. Traditionally, intern supervisors have written a letter about the student at the end of the semester, and the School then reads these letters looking for patterns or useful quotations. After the site visit in 2014, for the first time a tool was created for the supervisors to rank their interns on the ACEJMC competencies. Unfortunately, it was deployed just once, and the data was never retrieved or analyzed. The qualitative letter-writing and reading continued. After Fall 2016 semester, as the revisit team was preparing to come to campus for the site review, another tool for intern supervisors to evaluate their interns was created. It has only been used for the winter break internship class of four students. The plan is to send the new tool to supervisors for the Spring 2017 interns. Therefore, there is now a tool in place that could be used as a direct measure, but no such data or measurement currently exists.

The School also plans on a comprehensive pre-test / post-test. The pre-test, which was implemented last semester to new students, seems to measure a limited number of ACEJMC values and competencies. The School is planning on delivering a post-test this semester to another set of students who are finishing the program.

In the written materials and during conversations with the ACEJMC team during the revisit, it appears the School still struggles with differentiating objective, direct assessment measures from class tests and grades. Much of the assessments still consist of instructors evaluating their own classes, and without the benefit of pre- and post-tests. Tests and class assignments designed and graded by the instructor for her/his own classes are not objective assessment measures. For the majority of the ACEJMC values and competencies (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10), there is only one measure for each, and that evaluation is a class assignment or test designed, administered and evaluated by the class instructor. For example, ACEJMC Value/Competency No. 1 is measured by a libel exam and an analysis of Supreme Court opinions. The tests are designed, implemented and graded by the course's instructor. The measures for No. 2 and 3 are questions in the course final exam, graded by the courses' instructors. The majority of the listings of assessment measures for the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies fall into this category. (It is worth noting that last semester several journalism professors teaching JOUR61: Writing for Print, Electronic and Online Media as a group assessed Values/Competencies 9 and 10 together across sections using a common rubric).

The School also lists a series of indirect assessment measures. Graduation rates, retention rates and alumni employment all were listed as current indirect measures, but data on the measures were not provided to the revisit team and the School could not easily provide the data during the revisit. The School also listed student awards as an indirect measure, but had not been measuring that information until asked by the site team during the visit.

The School conducted two alumni surveys in recent years. In 2014, right before the November 2014 site team arrived on campus, a large-scale online survey was sent to all known former students; 188 responded. In Fall 2016, before the arrival of the revisit team, a follow-up survey was sent to recent graduates; 72 responded. The second survey was more comprehensive and included open-ended questions. While the two surveys had different audiences and took different forms, the findings were similar, with minor shifts in some categories. The categories mapped roughly to the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies. JMC alumni felt positive about their education in writing clearly and accurately, appreciating free speech and press, valuing truth, accuracy and fairness and applying ethical ways of thinking. Skills that need more development included understanding and using technology, applying numbers and statistics, using imagery appropriately and conducting research. There is little evidence that there has been effort put into "closing the loop" on the alumni survey findings. The school reports that most requests/critiques surfaced in the open-ended survey answers are "already occurring" (perhaps since some of the respondents graduated). One action based on a 2016 survey recommendation is to implement career-fair opportunities; this is planned for Spring 2017. There is not yet a plan for further alumni surveys going forward.

Shortly before the revisit team arrived on campus, the School also conducted its first exit survey for graduating seniors in more than a decade. The survey, designed to measure student

perception of the JMC education, included rankings for the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies. Only 11 students responded, limiting the data's usefulness. The School is considering again using this survey for Spring 2017 graduates.

Overall evaluation: Noncompliance

3 Describe any other weaknesses cited by the site team in its report and any additional concerns cited by the Council in its letter to the unit regarding provisional status.

The 2014 site team also cited the School's lack of ethnic and gender diversity of both full-time and part-time faculty. Of the 11 full-time faculty in 2014, two were African American. The rest, 82 percent, were white. In comparison, more than half of the students were members of minority groups, including 27 percent Latino and 21 percent Asian American. Among part-time faculty, 84 percent were white.

The site team also noted a dramatic decrease in undergraduate enrollment, a 41 percent decline during the accreditation cycle (from 719 undergraduate majors to 425).

4. For EACH of the other weaknesses cited by the site team or concerns cited by the Council, provide a summary of the team's findings regarding corrections.

Since the last site team visit, one full-time faculty member has left and two more were hired – an Asian woman specializing in public relations and the new director, who is a white woman. The School still lacks a Latino faculty member (two years ago, Latinos represent 27 percent of the student population). For part-time faculty, instructors of color increased to 25 percent, up from 16 percent two years ago.

During the site revisit, School leaders provided data that indicated undergraduate enrollment continues to fall, although the numbers do not match the original self-study data. According to the new information provided during the revisit, enrollment continued to spiral down, losing nearly 6 percent of the overall population from Fall 2014 to Fall 2016. Additionally, the School's leaders expressed concern that a university-wide policy eliminating spring admissions for transfer students about four years ago will continue to adversely impact the School's enrollment.

5. Summary conclusion

At the 2014 site visit, the School was found out of compliance for Standard 2 - Curriculum and Standard 9 - Assessment.

Two-plus years later, the revisit team found a program that had taken the feedback to heart and put real work into bringing the program into compliance.

Standard 2 was out of compliance for a systemic problem with the 20-student cap for skills classes. Within one semester after the 2014 site visit, the issue had been addressed and largely eliminated. Now, there is an occasional skills class that breaches the limit by one student, but by far the norm is for skills courses to have 20 and often fewer students.

Standard 9 was out of compliance because there was not an assessment plan, strategy or system. Two years is a short amount of time to remedy that, yet in that time the School took a semester to decide on a number of tactics, and then began to implement them over the past three semesters. While there has been much effort around both direct and indirect measures, there is still no overarching plan and confusion remains about what qualifies as assessment versus regular educational activities, like instructor-implemented and evaluated exams. There is no shortage of activity, but the implementation has been fragmented and lacks strategy and close-the-loop follow-through. The School will need to be more intentional and consistent to build an effective assessment program.

The revisit team recommends reaccreditation. This is a solid program. With a finding of compliance on Standard 2, the SJSU program is out of compliance only on Standard 9. There is time before the next site visit to remedy the issues and continue to evolve the program based on the findings from effective and strategic assessment activities.