

Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC

Undergraduate program

2016– 2017

Name of Institution: St. Cloud State University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Ashish Vaidya

Name of Unit: Department of Mass Communications

Name and Title of Administrator: Dale Zacher

Date of 2016 - 2017 Accrediting Visit: February 5-8, 2017

If the unit is currently accredited, please provide the following information:

Date of the previous accrediting visit: November 7-10, 2011; October 28-30, 2013 (Revisit)

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Provisional Accreditation (2011); Reaccreditation (2013)

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation (2013)

Recommendation by 2016 - 2017 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation

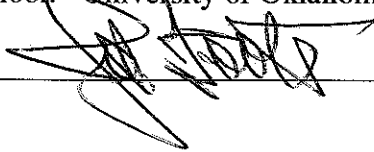
Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Joe Foote, Edward L. Gaylord Chair

Organization/School: University of Oklahoma

Signature _____

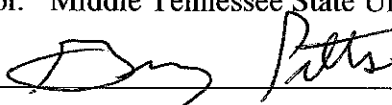


Team Members

Name and Title: Greg Pitts, Director, School of Journalism _____

Organization/School: Middle Tennessee State University

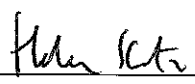
Signature _____



Name and Title: Helen Katz, Senior Vice President

Organization/School: Publicis Media

Signature _____



Name and Title:

Organization/School:

PART I: General information

Name of Institution: St. Cloud State University

Name of Unit: Department of Mass Communications

Year of Visit: 2017

1. Check regional association by which the institution now is accredited.

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges

If the unit seeking accreditation is located outside the United States, provide the name(s) of the appropriate recognition or accreditation entities: NA

2. Indicate the institution's type of control; check more than one if necessary.

- Private
- Public
- Other (specify)

3. Provide assurance that the institution has legal authorization to provide education beyond the secondary level in your state. It is not necessary to include entire authorizing documents. Public institutions may cite legislative acts; private institutions may cite charters or other authorizing documents.

The legislative act that authorizes SCSU to issue degrees is Chapter 136F of the MN Statutes; 16f.32 authorizes the conferring of degrees.

4. Has the journalism/mass communications unit been evaluated previously by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications?

- Yes
- No

If yes, give the date of the last accrediting visit: Nov. 2010

5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? 1981

6. Attach a copy of the unit’s mission statement. Statement should give date of adoption and/or last revision.

Mass Communications Mission Statement:

The mission of Saint Cloud State University’s Department of Mass Communications is to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become socially responsible, professionally successful mass media communicators. (12/2014)

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of 15 weeks

Quarters of _____ weeks

Summer sessions of: (2, six-week sessions)

Intersessions of N/A weeks

8. Check the programs offered in journalism/mass communications:

Bachelor’s degree

Master’s degree

Ph.D. degree

9. List the specific degrees being reviewed by ACEJMC. *Indicate online degrees.

Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications, with tracks of study in:

- Advertising
- Broadcasting -- emphases in Radio, TV-Journalism, or TV-Production
- News Editorial -- emphases in Print or Photo Journalism
- Public Relations

10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree: (Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.) 120 semester hour credits.

11. Give the number of credit-hours students may earn for internship experience. Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit. 6 semester hour credits.

12. List each professional journalism or mass communications sequence or specialty offered and give the name of the person in charge.

<u>Name of Sequence or Specialty</u>	<u>Person in Charge</u>
Advertising	Roger Rudolph
Broadcasting-Radio	Dale Zacher & Jim Gray
Broadcasting-TV Journalism	Mark Mills
Broadcasting-TV Production	Kahar Cainion
News Editorial-Print Journalism	Zengjun Peng
News Editorial-Photo Journalism	Zengjun Peng
Public Relations	Peter Pryztula

13. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution:

Fall 2016: 8,839 full-time equivalent undergraduates; 796 full-time equivalent graduate students

14. Number of undergraduate majors in the accredited unit, by sequence and total (if the unit has pre-major students, list them as a single total):

<u>Name of Sequence or Specialty</u>	<u>Undergraduate majors</u>
Advertising	59
Broadcasting-Radio	26
Broadcasting-TV Journalism	45
Broadcasting-TV Production	30
News Ed-Photo Journalism	5
News Editorial-Print Journalism	14
Public Relations	53
Pre-majors	122
Total	354

15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.). List enrollment by section for the term during which the visit will occur and the preceding term. Attach separate pages if necessary. Include a separate list for online skills courses, which also must meet the 20-1 ratio. (*The Council has ruled that campaigns courses are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)

See table at the end of this section.

16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2016 – 2017 academic year:

Percentage increase or decrease in three years:

Mass Comm	2015	2016	% change from 2015	2017*	% change from 2016
Non-salary	\$68,000	\$60,000	-12%	\$50,000	-17%
Student salary (not including GA-s)	\$37,500	\$34,000	-9%	\$25,000	-26%
Equipment	\$24,000	24,000	0%	\$20,000	-17%
Program-based tuition	\$164,500	\$163,310	NA	\$75,260 (fall)	NA

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries:

11 full-time faculty members Total: \$917,980 + fringe (33%) = ±\$1,220,900

17. List name and rank of all full-time faculty. (Full-time faculty refers to those defined as such by the university.) Identify those not teaching because of leaves, sabbaticals, etc.

Faculty member	Rank
Dr. Roya Akhavan	Full Professor
Mr. Kahar Cainion	Asst. Professor (TT)
Dr. Marie Dick	Full Professor
Mr. Mark Eden	Full Professor
Mr. Dan Fergus	Asst. Professor (FTNP)
Dr. Zengjun Peng	Full Professor
Dr. Peter Pryztula	Full Professor
Mr. Mark Mills*	Full Professor
Dr. Roger Rudolph**	Full Professor
Ms. Jannet Walsh	Asst. Professor (FTNP)
Dr. Dale Zacher	Assoc. Professor (TT)

*sabbatical leave Fall 2016 ** sabbatical leave Spring 2017

18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2016. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2016. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2017, please provide the updated list of faculty at time of visit.)

		Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017
Mr.	Jim Bertram*		X	
Ms.	Jo McMullen*	X	X	X
Mr.	Reg Chapman	X		
Mr.	Brad Cho (MFA)	X		
Mr.	Carleton Crutchfield (JD)	X	X	
Mr.	Chris Crutchfield (JD)	X	X	X
Mr.	Jeff Engholm	X		X
Mr.	Jim Gray	X	X	X
Mr.	Matt Hagen*		X	
Mr.	Tim Hennagir	X	X	
Ms.	Malarie Holmes			X
Dr.	Bill Huntzicker	X	X	
Mr.	Tim Johnson	X		
Ms.	Noreen Kaluza	X		
Ms.	Jane Kennedy	X		
Mr.	Mike Knaak		X	
Mr.	John Lauritsen		X	X
Mr.	Paul Middlestaedt	X		
Mr.	Mark Monn	X	X	X
Mr.	Jeff Palm			X
Mr.	Derrick Silvestri	X	X	X
Mr.	Michael Vadnie (JD)			X
Ms.	Jannet Walsh**	X		
Ms.	Panhia Yang		X	

*Teaching as part of a team-taught course or section.

**Walsh hired to fill a full-time temporary position for AY 2016.

19. Schools on the semester system:

For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communications.

Year	Total Graduates	Number	Percent
AY 2015-2016	91	81	89%
AY 2014-2015	100	99	99%
AY 2013-2014	127	127	100%
AY 2012-2013	106	105	99%

PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

The policies and practices of the unit ensure that it has an effectively and fairly administered working and learning environment.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a)The unit has a written mission statement and a written strategic or long-range plan that provides vision and direction for its future, identifies needs and resources for its mission and goals and is supported by university administration outside the unit.

St. Cloud State University, founded in 1869, is the second largest public university in Minnesota. Its 100-acre campus abuts the Mississippi River. The Department of Mass Communications is the second largest program within the College of Liberal Arts and one of the largest in the university. The department became accredited in 1981. While the unit has a master's program, its primary mission is to support the undergraduate program. The department has a mission statement. The faculty approved a written strategic plan in 2009 before the 2011 site visit that was approved by the president in 2012. The faculty began a planning process in 2015, but it is still in progress. There is no official document that has been ratified by the faculty or higher administration. The most recent planning effort revolves around a proposed curricular change that would consolidate its seven tracks into three, change some of the core courses, and promote stronger interrelationships among the curricular areas. As part of the planning, the unit and college conducted extensive research about perceptions of the broadcast area using questionnaires and focus groups. The new strategic plan is expected to be finished in 2017 in line with the approval of the university's plan.

b)The unit has policies and procedures for substantive faculty governance that ensure faculty oversight of educational policy and curriculum.

Many policies at St. Cloud State are governed by the faculty labor contract. Those not covered by the bargaining agreement are covered by university policy. The bargaining agreement injects a strong notion of faculty governance. For example, faculty have input in the departmental budget and must vote on it before it is implemented. In this system, much oversight of the department comes from the dean who is the first-line administrator. The chair, who is technically a coordinator among faculty and part of the bargaining unit, is elected by peer faculty. The chair serves as a conduit between the faculty and the dean. In practice, the chair is much more than a "coordinator." While the dean retains authority for the salaries budget, faculty and staff hiring, and personnel evaluations, the chair has a great deal of day-to-day responsibility and resembles a traditional administrator. Faculty meetings are held from six to 10 times a semester. Committees are operational and functional. All full-time faculty, including fixed-term faculty, are allowed to vote.

c) The unit's administration provides effective leadership within the unit and effectively represents it in dealings with university administration outside the unit and constituencies external to the university.

Both the provost and the dean speak highly of the chair and say that in just two years they have seen the positive effects of his demeanor and his administrative effectiveness. Faculty support the chair and are impressed by his collegiality, his energy, his expertise and his broad knowledge of the field. Some faculty wish the chair was a stronger advocate for the department to upper administration.

d) The institution and/or the unit defines and uses a process for selecting and evaluating its administrators.

The chair and graduate studies director are elected by the faculty for three-year terms. The chair may serve for three consecutive terms. Normally, the chair is selected from among the current faculty, but an outside chair may be hired. The current chair joined the department from another university. Outside chairs must also be approved by the faculty. Because the university does not hire someone with tenure, the current chair has had to function as an untenured faculty member among a very senior faculty. He is being considered for tenure this year.

The dean evaluates the chair annually. Administrators are evaluated using the same five standards that apply to faculty as outlined in the bargaining agreement.

e) Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.

The university has well-defined policies for airing grievances and evaluating them. Student complaints about harassment or discrimination are handled by the Office of Institutional Equity and Access. Faculty complaints about administrators or contract violations are handled by the Faculty Association either through mediation or informally within the department or college. The department strives to handle complaints informally within the department among vested parties

Summary

Under its new chair, a considerable amount of effort has been directed towards strategic planning, but that effort is still pending. Officially, the department is operating from a plan approved before the last site visit. Governance is working within the unit. Faculty are pleased with how the department is administered and are making steady but slow progress towards a new curriculum.

Compliance

PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

The unit provides curriculum and instruction, whether on site or online, that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the Council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) The unit requires that students take a minimum of 72 semester credit hours (or 104 quarter credit hours) required for a baccalaureate degree outside of journalism and mass communications and meet the liberal arts and sciences-general education requirements of the institution. ACEJMC expects at least 95 percent of the graduating classes in the two academic years preceding an accreditation visit to meet this requirement.

Students complete a minimum of 120 hours to graduate. Most advising materials indicate a maximum of 48 credits in their concentration. During the two years prior to the site team visit, 95 percent of the students completed 72 hours or more semester hours outside the Department of Mass Communication. In an examination of registrar records, the department noted a significant deviation in the 2015-2016 academic year, with only 89 percent of the 91 graduates that year completing 72 hours. The site team found that year's graduating class to be somewhat small (91 students) compared with 100 graduates the previous year (99 percent in compliance) and 127 the prior year (with 100 percent in compliance).

Thirty-four students graduated in December 2016; 28 of the 34 (82 percent) graduated after completing at least 72 hours outside the Department of Mass Communications.

b) The unit provides a balance between theoretical and conceptual courses, professional skills courses, and courses that integrate theory and skills to achieve the range of student competencies listed by the Council.

Students enrolled in the department complete a core of five classes totaling 15 credit hours. Nine of the 15 are theory or conceptual classes; two are multimedia skills development classes. (Students in the multimedia skills classes are highly encouraged to focus their projects on diverse campus groups or social justice issues). The department offers seven concentration areas, all leading to a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication: Advertising, Broadcasting/Radio, Broadcasting/TV Journalism, Broadcasting/TV Production, News Editorial/Photo Journalism, News Editorial/Print Journalism and Public Relations. Faculty have begun curriculum discussions that would reduce the concentrations to three: journalism, strategic communication, and creative media production. Student discussions with site team members supported the reduction, noting that students needed to be well-versed in multiple areas to succeed in media careers.

Classes are taught in Stewart Hall, with adequate space for classes, computer and media production labs, and supporting media organizations, including radio stations and television and video production facilities.

Curricular materials and conversations with students and faculty indicate a balance of theoretical and professional courses. Even in professional classes, students noted discussions of theory, law and ethics as complimentary to skill development.

The Advertising and Public Relations students each have five courses in the Sequence Core. Both include Comm 352 (Advertising/Public Relations), and each has their own Campaigns class.

Advertising students must also take Theory and Principles of Mass Media Advertising, Advertising Creatives, and Advertising/Public Relations Research. Students in the PR track take Ad/PR Layout Design and Editing, Theories and Principles of Public Relations, and Public Relations Writing. For either track, there is a good balance between theoretical and skills-based classes.

c) Instruction, whether on-site or online, is demanding and current, and is responsive to professional expectations of digital, technological and multimedia competencies. Achievements in teaching and learning are recognized and valued.

Inspection of courses, conversations with faculty, site review and discussions with students, led to the conclusion that the concentrations are highly engaging and offer students a balanced educational experience.

ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Students in the Advertising and Public Relations tracks do have a demanding curriculum. They expressed their appreciation for classes that make them think, with questions such as “how am I affecting my audience?” or professors who keep asking them “Why did you do that?” One Public Relations student noted that “Critical thinking skills are the foundation of all our classes”. The respective curricula cover digital, technological, and multimedia areas, such as creation of videos for PR, or inclusion (sometimes required) of social media in both Ad and PR campaigns classes. The offering of a class in Social Media last summer is a move in the right direction here. Advertising students would benefit from the inclusion of a Media Planning class, whether required or an elective.

BROADCASTING/RADIO

The Broadcasting/Radio concentration is a demanding one. It is centered around the university public radio station, KVSC, a non-commercial FM station with a coverage radius exceeding 60 miles, and a low-power FM, operated for the student audience. The university has invested in digital production audio equipment and HD Radio provides additional audio airtime for student project work. Students complete courses in broadcast newswriting, announcing and audio production. Nine credits of elective options include ethics, history, critical analysis and internship.

BROADCASTING/TV JOURNALISM

The Broadcasting/TV Journalism concentration is supported by the university’s multimillion dollar investment in digital production equipment, signal processing and studios. It has the largest enrollment of the department’s three broadcast concentrations. In addition to the department core, students take a variety of broadcast reporting and technical production classes. Students regularly participate in production of daily newscasts. Depending on enrollments, there may be as many as three newscasts per day, Monday to Friday. Equipment to support news production classes is readily available and accessible. Students report the equipment they access is as good as or better than the equipment they see when completing internships. Students must take courses in broadcast newswriting, television journalism, newscast and webcast producing and public affairs reporting. Nine credits of elective options include ethics, history, critical analysis and internship.

BROADCASTING/TV PRODUCTION

The Broadcasting/TV Production sequence is supported by the university’s multimillion dollar investment in digital production equipment, signal processing and studios. The equipment investment

includes remote production resources to enable students to cover live sports or music events. Students complete courses in broadcast newswriting, basic and advanced studio and field production and multi-camera live-event production, and advanced video editing. Through the university's UTVS (cable channel) and the university's sports connections, students participate in live sports coverage for hockey and football, along with other events. Hockey productions are distributed through FOX Sports cable channels. Students complete courses in broadcast newswriting, television journalism, newscast and webcast producing and public affairs reporting. Nine credits of elective options include ethics, history, critical analysis and internship.

NEWS EDITORIAL: PRINT AND PHOTO JOURNALISM

News Editorial and Photojournalism are the smallest academic tracks in the department (news editorial students, 16; photo students, 5). The lack of numbers keeps the sequences from being too ambitious. There are enough editorial students with help from other mass comm students to produce the *Chronicle*, the student newspaper, which is online daily and published twice a month during the fall and spring semesters. The paper recently won 11 awards at the Minnesota Press Association.

The pending review of the curriculum consolidates these two tracks with broadcast journalism to form a pan-journalism program. Faculty believe the infusion of students will revitalize the print and photo areas and bring more students into their classes. Journalism students realize that they need cross-media skills and that adding broadcast journalism will widen their skills portfolio. Several of the adjunct professors are found in journalism. The program needs a full-time, tenure-track professor who could also oversee a multimedia newsroom

d) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses; the ratio in skills and laboratory sections, whether on-site or online, should not exceed 20-1. (Campaigns classes are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)

The student-faculty ratio in the unit's skills and lab classes do not exceed 20-1. Most lab and skills classes have significantly fewer students.

(e) The unit advocates and encourages opportunities for internship and other professional experiences outside the classroom and supervises and evaluates them when it awards academic credit.

Advertising and Public Relations students are well served by the department. They recognize that one of the strengths of the program is the industry experience faculty bring to the classroom. In addition to the array of internship opportunities offered, both locally and regionally, students are gaining valuable real-world experience through their classes. In the PR campaigns class, for example, a professor created the Husky Agency, in part to provide greater cohesion and credibility for those students meeting their in-class clients, but also to give students something tangible to include on their resumes when applying for jobs after graduation. That approach is being replicated in the Advertising campaigns class. Similarly, Advertising students can gain real-world experience creating a campaign for a real client in the NSAC class (Comm 492/493). Students would like to see more Advertising or PR alumni return to campus, and to the classroom, to share their experiences with current students.

Broadcasting/Radio-Journalism-TV Production students also are appreciative of the department. Students recognize and appreciate the strengths of the program, such as access to equipment;

classwork that balances professional skills with theoretical and conceptual knowledge; and a host of professional development production opportunities that include KVSC, Husky Productions, student internships, and interaction with media professionals who serve as adjunct instructors. Students cite the opportunity for involvement, beginning with their freshman year, as a unique advantage that led them to enroll at St. Cloud State. While many complete outside internships, some note the internship is not always needed, given opportunities that are available on campus. Students noted the availability of paid media positions, through Husky Productions, that not only allow for professional development but also assist them in paying for their educations.

News Editorial and Photojournalism with help from other mass communications students to produce the *Chronicle*, the student newspaper, which is online daily and published twice a month during the fall and spring semesters. The paper recently won 11 awards at the Minnesota Press Association. The Gannett-owned newspaper, *The St. Cloud Times*, reports that student complete internships or are hired for entry positions. They have the professional skills to succeed at the newspaper.

While the program might seem to over-emphasize hands-on training, students praised the requirements for communications law, media and society and critical analysis of media for the conceptual underpinnings the classes provide. Diversity education is also prominent throughout the curriculum. Students not only complete a nine-credit university diversity requirement but also report that diversity is a regular part of news and production discussions.

Summary

Students complete a common core of five courses, including six hours of professional coursework and nine in conceptual and theoretical coursework. Coursework outside of the core includes conceptual and professional topics and instruction. Concentrations are broad but allow some flexibility in choosing electives, including internships. Substantial investment supports the broadcast news and production areas, which have won numerous awards. Of concern is the high percentage of graduates who did not take 72 hours outside the major. To address this, the department may wish to remind students not of the maximum 48 credits within the concentration but the requirement to complete 72 hours of coursework from outside the Department of Mass Communication.

Compliance

PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

The unit has an inclusive program that values domestic and global diversity, and serves and reflects society.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) The unit has a written diversity plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty and student population, and a supportive climate for working and learning and for assessing progress toward achievement of the plan. The diversity plan should focus on domestic minority groups and, where applicable, international groups. The written plan must include the unit's definition of diversity and identify the under-represented groups.

St. Cloud State narrowly received accreditation during the revisit of the site team in 2012, having been found in non-compliance in Standard 3 in the 2010 report. The absence of a written diversity plan, as well as greater proactivity in recruitment of both students and faculty of color were cited initially. The 2012 report noted that the unit was moving in the right direction, creating a Diversity 'Action Plan', as well as a diversity committee. There was also mention of creative efforts to diversify the student body and its Professional Advisory Board. However, the faculty remained lacking in diversity. The revisit team noted that this was an issue that should be remediated before the next full accreditation review.

The department does now have a written statement on its website noting its continued commitment to diversity and, as a result of the 2012 revisit, committed itself to improve in six specified areas in an action plan that covered curriculum, faculty, and students.

b) The unit's curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of domestic concerns about gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. The unit's curriculum includes instruction in issues and perspectives relating to mass communications across diverse cultures in a global society.

The Department has made strides to foster inclusiveness in the classroom, taking a 'diversity across the curriculum' approach. It cited 13 classes that contain some element of diversity, whether concerning issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, or those of diversity in a global society. There is no evidence of any issues related to harassment or discrimination. Guest speakers are regularly invited to campus to supplement the diverse perspectives that students need to hear. These speakers covered a range of topics, relevant to all seven tracks within the program.

c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to recruit women and domestic minority faculty and professional staff and, where feasible, recruits international faculty and professional staff.

Among the 11 full-time faculty, there is one African-American professor, and three of International origin. Of the three faculty searches held in the past three years, one hire was male, a second (in summer 2016) was African-American, and the third search failed as the final pool was considered lacking in sufficient diversity. That search will be renewed in 2017. Women make up 27 percent of the full-time faculty, which remains low. There is somewhat greater diversity among the part-time/adjunct faculty in terms of race/ethnicity, with one-quarter (26 percent) who are non-White. Again, however, women represent only 21 percent of the total.

In terms of recruitment, it is encouraging to see that the two newest full-time hires have been women and minority (1).

It does appear that the unit has been trying to improve the composition of its faculty, in terms of gender and race/ethnicity; the recent failed search was halted due to the lack of those factors in the candidate pool. Although the nearest large metro area of Minneapolis-St. Paul may not be close enough to provide a plethora of diverse candidates, the department should continue to work very hard to build a more representative and balanced faculty.

d) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit and retain a student population reflecting the diversity of the population eligible to enroll in institutions of higher education in the region or population it serves, with special attention to recruiting under-represented groups.

As far as the student body is concerned, the Department of Mass Communications has a notably greater proportion of African-American and Hispanic students than the university as a whole. It is encouraging to see that the numbers have been increasing, perhaps driven in part by the lowering of the required GPA for the unit. Their recruitment efforts include the “Be the Broadcaster” event for high school students, and the department’s highlighting of opportunities for minority students, such as UTVS in Espanol and a Somali low-power FM project. It is disappointing that the Spanish newscast has been halted due to an inability to find a bilingual student with editorial skills or production experience to oversee it. The creation, in 2015, of a living-learning community was intended, in part, to offer further support to students of color although that initiative is being paused (not just for this department), as the university seeks to enhance the effectiveness of such communities for all incoming students. The proposed move to a direct-declare model is expected to provide additional support for minority students. There are also several international students in the department, and they appear to be well supported and integrated into the overall student body.

e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and all forms of discrimination, in keeping with the acceptable cultural practices of the population it serves, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity.

The climate in the unit is healthy and collaborative, with no evidence of any fear of harassment or discrimination. While it does technically service the needs of a disabled (wheelchair-bound) student, the department could make its building easier to navigate for wheelchairs, with better ramps into classrooms, for example.

Summary

The department of Mass Communications at St. Cloud State has struggled for several years (and accreditation reviews) with the Diversity standard. The challenges remain, particularly with regards to a faculty that is adequately balanced in terms of both gender and race/ethnicity. But there have been noteworthy improvements in the curriculum, as well as the make-up of the student body. We urge the department to continue to push in this area to ensure that students are prepared to enter an increasingly diverse workplace. We also recommend a continued/expanded push to balance the faculty in terms of gender.

Compliance

Table Six: Faculty Populations, Full-time and Part-time

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Academic year 2015-16 Full-time Faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African American				
American Indian/Alaskan				
Asian				
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander				
Other Race				
Two or more races				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)				
White	2	20%	5	50%
International Faculty (any race)	1	10%	2	20%

Academic year 2015-16 Part-time/Adjunct Faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African American			4	21%
American Indian/Alaskan				
Asian				
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander			1	05%
Other Race				
Two or more races				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)				
White	4	21%	10	52%
International Faculty (any race)				

PART II — Standard 4: Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty

The unit hires, supports and evaluates a capable faculty with a balance of academic and professional credentials appropriate for the unit's mission.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) The unit has written criteria for selecting and evaluating the performance of all full-time and part-time faculty and instructional staff.

The university's faculty association agreement negotiated between the faculty and the university governs the university's hiring protocol. The dean, who controls personnel budgets, is a key player in this process in consultation with the chair and the faculty. The department has a formalized faculty recruitment process that goes through a faculty search process and on to the dean. The Master Agreement requires that faculty have either a terminal degree or "other appropriate degree." Recently, the department has required a master's degree with doctoral degree preferred. This has allowed it to interview candidates without a doctoral degree, but who have significant professional experience.

The department has a healthy mix of Ph.Ds and those with more professional experience. This is a senior faculty. Seven of the 11 full-time faculty have been at SCSU for more than a decade. Four have been on the faculty for more than 20 years. There are seven professors, one associate professor, one assistant professor and two fixed-term faculty.

Advertisements for adjunct faculty are published every two years. Applicants are pooled and selected from the pool when there is a need. Adjuncts can teach no more than 10 hours in a semester and must have at least a bachelor's degree.

The tenure cycle is five years rather than six so candidates must present their dossiers at the mid-point of the fourth year. Tenure-track faculty must submit an annual professional development plan saying what they will do and a professional development report telling what they did. Associate professors submit an annual report but submit a plan every four years. Full professors submit a plan and a report every four years. The five criteria for evaluation are: Demonstrated ability to teach effectively or perform effectively in other current assignments; scholarly or creative achievement in research; evidence of continuing preparation and study; contribution to student growth and development; and service to the university and the community.

Faculty are allowed to emphasize a particular area provided it is consistent with department and university policies. The university's tenure and promotion emphasis has been on teaching, but there has been an increasing emphasis on research. Not many faculty have been through the tenure process lately, but all recent cases have been successful. The bargaining agreement allows considerable latitude for faculty to decide what contributes to their research and creative activity. A faculty member lays out his or her plan at the beginning of the fall semester and is evaluated by the dean on how well that plan is implemented. This latitude in defining appropriate work functions well for a department where creative activity runs from creative writing to television production.

b) Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for teaching, research/creative activity and service.

While there is a healthy supply of adjunct faculty in the department (13 on the roster), the full-time faculty have major responsibility for the curriculum and teaching of core courses. Adjuncts still taught 36 percent of the core and required courses during the 2015-16 academic year. The department needs to be judicious in its use of adjunct faculty. With the recruitment of new full-time faculty, the balance should improve in the future.

c) Credentials of the unit's faculty represent a balance of professional and scholarly experience and expertise kept current through faculty development opportunities, relationships with professional and scholarly associations, and appropriate supplementation of part-time and visiting faculty.

The faculty has a good balance between scholarship and professional focus, although most do not have recent professional experience. Each faculty member receives \$1,380 each academic year to attend academic and professional meetings, books, membership dues, equipment purchase or other meaningful professional activities. Faculty like the idea that they can bank the money from one year to the next. The department has received a \$250,000 grant from the Hubbard Foundation to allow faculty to have a professional externship in a media outlet to get more recent industry experience and make more contacts with professionals.

d) The unit regularly evaluates instruction, whether onsite or online, using multiple measures that include student input.

There is an instruction evaluation system within the department, but each faculty member can develop his or her own student questionnaire and decide what information to submit. Junior faculty are evaluated every year while senior full professors are evaluated every four years. Faculty are evaluated on five criteria.

The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship, spirit of collaboration and the quality of education that the unit provides.

Summary

The labor agreement that governs much of administrative/faculty behavior at St. Cloud State seems to work fairly smoothly. The unionization is mature enough that both sides have a good idea of the possibilities and the functioning of policies. Faculty are moving through the tenure and promotion process smoothly and have resources for personal development. There are more adjuncts teaching than one would expect in this size program, but the permanent faculty are still dominant.

Compliance

PART II — Standard 5: Scholarship: Research, Creative and Professional Activity

With unit support, faculty members contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge and engage in scholarship (research, creative and professional activity) that contributes to their development.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity.

St. Cloud State University is a regional comprehensive university with a strong mission of quality teaching. The MnSCU/IFO *Master Agreement* further articulates that within the review criteria for faculty; teaching is a primary responsibility. But scholarly and creative activity and research are a part of faculty evaluation and critical to the success of faculty in tenure and promotion.

The institution's primary office in support of faculty and student research is the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. The Provost's Office also helps coordinate and grow the institution's research profile.

b) The unit specifies expectations for research, creative activity and/or professional activity in criteria for hiring, promotion and tenure.

The unit follows the policy as defined in the *Master Agreement*, and in consultation with the dean, faculty have broad discretion to establish their research and creative agendas. The unit permits faculty to set their own plan for research, creative activity and/or professional activity. There is input at the department and dean level during the faculty review and annual planning. A broad range of scholarly and creative activity is accepted to meet the expectation of research, creative activity and/or professional activity in criteria for hiring, promotion and tenure.

c) Evaluation criteria for promotion, tenure and merit recognition account for and acknowledge activities appropriate to faculty members' professional as well as scholarly specializations.

The examples of research, creative activity and/or professional activity reflect the nature of a regional comprehensive university with a strong mission of quality teaching, where faculty regularly teach 12 course credits per semester. Research, creative activity and/or professional activity is a normal part of a faculty member's development plan.

Evaluation, promotion and tenure (EPT) policies are governed by Articles 22 and 25 of the MnSCU/IFO *Master Agreement*. Faculty evaluation follows a two-part process that begins with the submission of a Professional Development Plan (PDP) in the fall, with a Professional Development Report (PDR) due in spring. Unit faculty, the chair, and administrators respond with comments.

At the time of promotion and tenure, a faculty member is required by Article 25 of the *Master Agreement* to submit a cumulative report on his/her accomplishments for tenure and/or promotion consideration for the relevant period under review, arranged by and addressing the five criteria found in Article 22.

Scholarship is measured in broad terms. Evidence of success in meeting this criterion may include, but is not limited to:

- *published works*

- *works in progress*
- *unpublished reports*
- *abstracts*
- *research briefs*
- *letters to the editor published in disciplinary and professional journals*
- *software and other technologically delivered academic products*
- *other scholarly works*
- *submitting and/or receiving patents*
- *delivering presentations at professional meetings*
- *applying for, writing, receiving and reporting on grants*
- *receiving and/or being nominated for scholarly awards*
- *presenting invited lectures*
- *participating in panels and symposia*
- *participating in policy analysis*
- *playing an editorial or advisory role for professional journals or publications*
- *participating on evaluation panels for research funding*
- *participating in exhibitions, juried shows, musical or theatrical performances*
- *consulting*
- *writing accreditation reports*
- *conducting research projects*
- *contributing to/assisting in the scholarly growth of students, peers and other scholars”*

d) Faculty members communicate the results of research, creative and/or professional activity to other scholars, educators and practitioners through presentations, productions, exhibitions, workshops and publications appropriate to the activity and to the mission of the unit and institution.

Faculty members participate in local, state, regional, national and international conferences and forums where they interact with other scholars and professionals for the presentation of research and creative work. Faculty members, through the MnSCU/IFO *Master Agreement*, receive \$1,380 annually in professional development funds. Unused money carries over from year-to-year. Eight tenured faculty have produced 28 refereed or juried creative works and 38 invited and non-juried submissions in the past six years.

Current institutional practice is to grant faculty with 10 years or more time since their last sabbatical priority in awarding sabbaticals. The MnSCU/IFO *Master Agreement* automatically awards a sabbatical to faculty members who apply for sabbatical in their post-tenure 6th year for sabbatical in their 7th year.

e) The unit fosters a climate that supports intellectual curiosity, critical analysis and the expression of differing points of view.

Faculty indicated during interviews and discussions the unit fosters a climate that supports individual intellectual curiosity, critical analysis and the expression of differing points of view.

Summary

The unit allows and encourages faculty to pursue a broad range of research, creative and professional development goals that contribute to promotion and tenure. Faculty receive professional development funds annually through the Master Agreement, which they use to support their research endeavors; these funds roll over from year to year. Fixed-term faculty, as well as tenured or tenure-track faculty, benefit from development funding.

Compliance

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Individuals					
	Total from Unit*	Full Professors (8)	Associate Professors 1	Assistant Professors 1	Other Faculty**	Totals
Awards and Honors	1	1				1
Grants Received; Internal	1	1				1
Grants Received; External	2	1	1			2
Scholarly Books; Sole- or Co-	2	1				1
Textbooks; Sole- or Co-authored	2	1				1
Books; Edited	0					0
Book Chapters	2	2				1
Monographs	0					0
Articles in Refereed Journals	9	9				4
Refereed Conference Papers	6	6				2
Invited Academic Papers	8	8				4
Encyclopedia	4		4			1
Book Reviews	3	1	2			2
Articles in non-refereed	2	1		1		2
Juried Creative	13	13				1
Non-juried Creative Works	45	28		17		3
Other (specified)	1	1				1

PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) Faculty and/or professional advising staff ensure that students are aware of unit and institutional requirements for graduation and receive career and academic advising.

The advising of students happens at the university's Advising Center in their first year, but then moves to the department, where faculty members take over. Pre-majors are assigned by last name, but once a student declares his or her major, the match is made based on the student's declared sequence and interests. For pre-majors, a series of group advising sessions are held before registration begins. An advising code is issued after attendance. Additionally, beginning in 2015, an online 'course' was added to the D2L platform to offer additional information for pre-majors.

Student advising is done electronically through the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS). It was intended to reduce the chance for error, since faculty advisers can access the system. However, despite this, the department did not meet the ACEJMC rule of having all its majors take 72 credits outside of the major ("the 72-credit rule"). For FY 2016, the percentage was 89 percent. It should be noted that four of the 10 students lacking in the necessary outside-major credits had come close (71 credits). The department is implementing additional 'safety catches' to prevent this from reoccurring, and both faculty and students are being reminded more overtly of the need to take sufficient credit hours outside of the major.

That being said, several students noted professors helped them map out all four years of study when they first arrived on campus. Faculty did not appear to feel over-burdened by their advising responsibilities.

b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

Faculty in the department are readily available to students. In talking with students, they noted repeatedly that all the professors are accessible and helpful, both in terms of advising and with more general career preparation and advice.

c) The unit keeps students informed about the activities, requirements and policies of the unit.

Students said advising within the department was generally good. While a few had challenges when entering from other departments on campus (in terms of the advice given on credit hours), those were all apparently resolved by the department faculty, who routinely take the time to ensure their students are on track.

The university's Career Services Office holds counseling sessions throughout the school year. Alumni are invited back to campus to advise students, although the students themselves say they wish this occurred more often. Meanwhile, the College of Liberal Arts holds an annual job fair for students each fall.

d) The unit and the institution provide students with extra-curricular activities and opportunities that are relevant to the curriculum and develop their professional as well as intellectual abilities and interests.

Students have many opportunities to get involved in extra-curricular activities relevant to their fields of study, and it is clear they do so. There is a student-run radio station, KVSC-FM, University Chronicle newspaper, UTVS-TV, Husky Productions (sports), Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), student Ad Federation, Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), and the only chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists in Minnesota. The latter was recently formed and has applied for national affiliation. Faculty act as advisers to all these organizations. Students had nothing but praise for all the ‘real world’ experiences they can gain during their time on campus, and how well it sets them up for their future careers. Several underclassmen were impressed at “how early you can get involved with things”, rather than having to wait until junior or senior year to do so.

e) The accredited unit must gather, maintain and analyze enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success. The unit annually publishes retention and graduation information on its website.

The department’s evaluation of its effectiveness of advising relies primarily on students preparing to graduate. An audit is undertaken for each student by the Registrar’s office to ensure they are all on track. The self-study noted ‘steady improvement’ in the number of students who do not ‘encounter surprises’. In meeting with students, it appeared that none had encountered issues preventing them from graduating on time.

Retention and graduation rates are all higher for mass communications students than the university overall, which is encouraging. As the self-study acknowledges, however, there is definitely room for improvement in this area, with only one-quarter of students graduating in four years (half within six years). The retention of first-year students into their second year seems to fluctuate quite widely ranging from a low of 70 percent in Fall 2010 to a high of 89 percent in Fall 2013, but this appears to be driven by students switching majors. The percentage returning to mass communications from freshman to sophomore year has remained steadier, at around 60 percent.

Summary

The Department of Mass Communications is clearly very student-focused in everything it does, and that shows. Students feel they are being “set up for success”, from both their classroom experiences and the many extra-curricular opportunities they have to learn from and practice in their chosen careers before they graduate.

Student advising appears to work effectively, overall, through both formal (online) and informal (faculty) means. The misstep on the 72-credit-hour rule is, however, something that should be a wake-up call that someone (or some program) needs to monitor student credit-hours more effectively to ensure students are not only graduating on time, but doing so with the appropriate credits completed.

Compliance

PART II: Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

The unit plans for, seeks and receives adequate resources to fulfill and sustain its mission.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.

The department receives an annual budget allocation from the dean for maintenance and operations and equipment. Faculty are allowed to vote on how to prioritize that money within set categories. During the past three years, non-salary funds have decreased around 20 percent while the student work budget has decreased by one-third. Equipment spending is down 17 percent. Fortunately, the department gets “program tuition” funds, which are hourly fees that total around \$150,000 depending on enrollment. The unit’s use of this money is credited with taking up the slack of budget cuts elsewhere.

On the positive side, the university dedicated \$5.5 million for a complete renovation and digital upgrade of the department’s broadcast facilities. This single allocation is five times more than the total budget of the department. The result is a real showpiece for the department, college and university. The unit is very proud that it has one of the largest and best equipped broadcast facilities in the region, arguably better than some professional facilities at local TV or radio stations.

b) The resources that the institution provides are adequate to achieve the unit’s mission. The resources are fair in relation to those provided other units.

The department has relied on special allocations and cost efficiencies to counteract significant cuts in its non-salary budgets. It particularly worries about a proposed decentralization of software costs and the need to make major investment in the TV operation when the original digital upgrade equipment must be replaced. With the second highest budget in the college, the department believes it has been treated fairly. The unit has also received funds for a second broadcast engineer and funding to replace two tenure-track faculty members in a year when permission was given to fill only 10 positions campus-wide. A third fixed-term position was also approved. The college and university appreciate the department’s value and have been as generous as one could expect during lean times.

c) The facilities of the unit enable and promote effective scholarship, teaching and learning.

All department activities are located in Stewart Hall, a 1980s building on the banks of the Mississippi River. Students appreciate having all facilities under one roof and like having close access to faculty who are all located in one corridor inside the departmental offices.

The facilities are as strong as they have ever been in the department, thanks mainly to the \$5.5 million digital upgrade to the television studios. This solved their electronic media studio needs for years to come and allowed the department to focus on upgrading other areas with its limited funds. The department has two computer labs plus 15 editing stations in the studio area and 10 computers for the student newspaper. Adobe Creative Suite and Microsoft Office are available on these computers. There is a well-equipped central equipment checkout facility that has generous weekday hours. Recently, the chair reallocated two spaces in Stewart Hall for common areas where students can hold co-curricular meetings, use computers, or work in groups outside of class.

The broadcast area has two studios—a main studio for news and sports and a second robotic virtual

studio that can be used by anyone in the college. The area also includes impressively equipped control rooms, editing suites and a master control. The only downside to the department's very impressive video facilities is they are located in the basement off an obscure stairway that leads only to that area.

KVSC is the university's radio station, which reports to the University Communication Office, but has close ties to the department and utilizes many students, paid and unpaid. KVSC broadcasts as many as five original digital signals during peak times. Two are student radio stations, one is a sports station and another is a Somali station programmed to serve St. Cloud's Somali community of 11,000.

KVSC's format is designed to meet needs otherwise not being met in the community and has a substantial audience. The station's facilities were part of the recent digital upgrade. The station has a full-time manager and a full-time operations director as well as two grant-funded professionals.

The next major facilities project being planned is to create a converged newsroom in which radio, television and print operations can work from the same space. The chair is looking for an appropriate space.

d) The institution and the unit provide faculty and students with equipment or access to equipment to support its curriculum and the research, creative and professional activities of the faculty.

The department has enough copies of mobile equipment to meet its needs. Purchasing decisions have followed specific needs in specific classes. Planning has been done to consider replacement needs. There is a replacement rotation for faculty computers. Faculty may also use their annual allocations for additional software or peripherals.

e) The institution and the unit provide sufficient library and information resources to support faculty and student research and professional development.

Library needs are being met through the university library. The library's extensive collection of online resources is adequate to meet both the needs of faculty and undergraduates.

Summary

St. Cloud State has struggled with its budget, but student fee funds and supplemental allocations are helping the Department of Mass Communications cope with significant cuts. The college has done its best to fill gaps in personnel. The department received a huge boost when the university allocated \$5.5 million for a complete digital upgrade and overhaul of the department's radio and television facilities. With the upgrade, the department is in its best position in many years regarding its equipment needs. The department provides adequate computer labs for students and recently has created open labs for students to work on projects outside of class.

Compliance

PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

The unit and its faculty advance journalism and mass communication professions and fulfill obligations to its community, alumni and the greater public.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) The unit consults and communicates regularly with its alumni and is actively engaged with alumni, professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching, whether on-site or online, current and to promote the exchange of ideas.

The largest outreach to alumni occurred as a one-time effort in May 2015, when the department undertook a large-scale effort to help with its plans for curriculum revision. This involved focus groups of alumni and others working in regional media companies, followed by a survey sent to more than 600 individuals. Nearly half of them responded, providing valuable input into what the department should do to enhance classroom offerings and to prepare students for today's job market. Alumni remain connected to the department through social media and occasional get-togethers in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

In 2014, the department established a Professional Advisory Panel, although in meeting with several of those members onsite, it was not clear that the panel meets on a regular basis or has continued input into the curriculum. Several of the panel have taught in an adjunct capacity, however, and those that met with the site team were enthusiastic about their involvement, and the high quality of the students coming out of the department.

b) The unit provides leadership in the development of high standards of professional practice through such activities as offering continuing education, promoting professional ethics, evaluating professional performance, and addressing communication issues of public consequence and concern.

In this area, faculty have been fairly active. Several serve as judges in the East Central Minnesota journalism contest, while others have organized visits by international students or faculty to campus. A couple of the faculty serve as editorial board members or reviewers of conferences or journals. The primary means of addressing issues of public concern is the annual First Amendment Forum, which is designed with this goal in mind. Speakers are brought to campus to share their thoughts on important contemporary topics, such as media coverage of public protests (2015) or the challenges faced by third party candidates (2016).

There are plans by the department to utilize the recently awarded Hubbard Foundation grant to provide faculty with externships to help keep skills and knowledge current and up to date. This sounds like an excellent initiative, but it is unclear from the self-study when it will happen.

c) The unit contributes to the improvement of journalism and mass communication as academic disciplines by supporting the faculty's involvement in academic associations and related activities.

The department is strongly supportive of faculty involvement in, and membership of academic associations or outside activities. The range is wide, from attendance at academic conferences to faculty performances and exhibitions. The department is actively involved in the annual main national competition for advertising students (NSAC), which is run as a course now (Comm 492/493), but entails students putting together a comprehensive campaign for a brand. SCSU hosted the regional stage of the competition in 2016.

d) The unit contributes to its communities through unit-based service projects and events, service learning of its students and civic engagement of its faculty.

The faculty at St. Cloud is actively involved in a number of well-established and highly respected professional and public service activities. The annual First Amendment Forum is the primary event, bringing media professional to campus. There is also a Global Social Responsibility Conference each year, co-sponsored by the department. Dr. Roger Rudolph's involvement in the National Student Advertising Competition gives students an opportunity to put together ad campaigns and compete against other students across the country.

In addition, students are given service learning opportunities through several classes that have non-profit organizations as their clients. This allows the students to gain a deeper appreciation of these organizations, such as the PR campaigns class helping to promote the Northstar Rail System, or building a campaign for the College of Liberal Arts to help it promote the value of that type of education.

Community support and engagement is evident in the activities of the student media operations. Students help produce, and volunteer in, the Radio Talking Book program on the radio station, bringing newspaper content to visually-impaired listeners. That station is also used by the local Somali community (on a low power frequency). Students involved in the campus TV station, UTVS, report on local news and public affairs on a regular basis, keeping the SCSU student body, and the local community, informed and engaged in civic matters.

e) The unit supports scholastic journalism through such activities as faculty workshops, visiting lectures and critiques of student work.

High school outreach is done primarily through the "Be the Broadcaster" event that brings students to campus to listen to a panel of speakers and tour the facilities. Field trips are also offered to students in the region who are interested in learning more about the programs offered in the department.

Summary

The department is heavily invested in both professional and public service, among both faculty and students. This permeates the department from large-scale annual events such as the First Amendment Forum, all the way down to students in campaigns classes working with non-profit clients. Faculty are active participants in academic and professional organizations, while students involved in extracurricular activities on campus keep themselves and the larger St. Cloud community aware of local, regional, or national civic matters.

The one area where the department could enhance its efforts is to make the outreach to, and connection with its alumni more consistent and regular. Students graduating from the department are clearly enthusiastic about, and grateful for the experiences they have had. It would be highly beneficial to the department to maintain more frequent contact with them after they leave campus.

Compliance

PART II — Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The unit regularly assesses student learning and applies results to improve curriculum and instruction.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

a) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the “Professional Values and Competencies” of this Council. (See Standard 2. Curriculum and Instruction.)

The department has a mission statement that stresses the importance of knowledge and skills, leading to socially responsible and professionally successful communicators.

In the 2013 revisit, the unit identified 29 Student Learning Outcomes. By the time of the current visit, these had been reduced to eight outcomes, with links to the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies.

Mass Communications Mission Statement

The mission of Saint Cloud State University’s Department of Mass Communications is to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become socially responsible and professionally successful mass media communicators. (Adopted 12/2014)

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

Department of Mass Communications graduates will be able to:

SLO 1: Demonstrate an understanding of ethical principles that guide media content. (Linked to ACEJMC value and competency # 6)

SLO 2: Apply the laws of free speech and the First Amendment in a democracy. (Linked to ACEJMC value and competency # 1)

SLO 3: Demonstrate an understanding of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society. (Linked to ACEJMC values and competencies # 2 & 4)

SLO 4: Identify and apply multimedia concepts, standards, practices, and skills to a chosen professional field. (Linked to ACEJMC value and competency #12)

SLO 5: Conduct research by methods appropriate to the communications professions, and assess and use numerical, statistical, and other information accurately. (Linked to ACEJMC values and competencies # 8, 10, 11)

SLO 6: Think critically, creatively, and independently. (Linked to ACEJMC value and competency # 7)

SLO 7: Demonstrate skills for effective written, oral, and visual communication. (Linked to ACEJMC values and competencies # 5, 9, 10)

SLO 8: Demonstrate sensitivity to ethnicity, race, and culture, and an understanding of racism and diversity of groups in a global society, and a comprehension of the importance of diversity and inclusiveness in relationship to mass communications. (Linked to ACEJMC values and competencies # 3&4)

b) The unit has a written assessment plan that uses multiple direct and indirect measures to assess student learning.

The 2013 revisit team noted the importance of focusing assessment on programmatic outcomes and not course-specific measures. In the current self-study, the department presented the *Assessment Plan of the St. Cloud State University, Department of Mass Communications. Adopted 2014, revised 2016.*

The plan specifies seven assessment measures for the program; three are direct measures and four are indirect.

Direct measures include entry/exit examination, internship evaluations and evaluation of student projects.

Indirect measures include evaluation by Professional Advisory Board, faculty/student course and curriculum review discussions, student awards, and alumni and employer surveys.

c) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction.

As reported in the self-study, the department had completed only one of the three direct assessment measures since 2010 (evaluation of student interns) and four indirect measures (employer/alumni survey, student awards, and faculty/student curriculum discussions). Evaluation of student projects shifted from media professional evaluations to a group of faculty reviewing a set of student papers. There is little evidence the department has followed the 2013 revisit recommendations that “by the next accrediting cycle [it has] a more robust set of assessment results, with clear evidence of loopback into programmatic improvement”.

The department completed a student assessment through internship evaluations by intern supervisors. The self-study includes assessment measure submissions for 68 students over a two-year period. The eight questions on the assessment measured internship supervisor perceptions of the interns’ understanding of ethical principles, ability to assess information for accuracy, basic writing skills, message presentation, methodologies for gathering information, technology relevance and the interdisciplinary nature of modern mass media. While the self-study reports that the majority of students complete an internship, conversations with students suggest otherwise.

The entry/exit exam was last administered in Spring 2010. The department identified the exam as occurring on a two-or three-year cycle. The revisit team in 2013 suggested tying the entry/exit examination to specific programmatic learning outcomes. Though it was not scheduled to be administered again until 2015, a review of the exam by the new unit chair with faculty input found the questions wanting. The self-study indicated a 2016-2017 revision of the exam and additional delay in administering the entry/exit exam until 2017. At the time of the site team visit, the department was unable to present a revised entry/exit examination instrument. Thus, no data from this direct measure was presented in the self-study.

In the 2013 revisit, the department identified professional evaluation of student capstone projects as a direct measure. By the time of the self-study, this measure had been refocused to the evaluation of student papers from a single mass communication class (COM 420 Mass Media and Society). The assessment was linked to a single outcome, SLO 6, critical and creative thinking. A group of three faculty members, one from Communication Studies and two from Mass Communications (who do not teach COMM 420) assessed a sample of student papers. Because the evaluation was based on a single competency, was only administered once, and provided no impetus for change, the value seems limited.

The department did utilize four indirect assessment measures:

Employer focus groups and an alumni survey: With the help of the college and university administrators, the department held two focus groups and a larger survey in 2015 to help inform the direction of future curriculum revision. The self-study provided no details of the focus groups process; the site team was unable to verify the depth of the focus group discussions. The alumni portion of the survey generated responses from about 275 people (out of 600 distributed surveys), an impressive response.

Student awards results: St. Cloud students compete successfully in award competitions. Broadcast student awards dominate the list, winning several prestigious national awards. News editorial and photojournalism students are less represented, but do have some success.

Faculty/student course and curriculum review discussions: The department used curriculum discussion to add a senior-level class, COMM 404, Media Convergence and Web Design, to the required core in 2015. Faculty note continuing discussions focused on reducing the concentrations from seven to three, but seem unable to take definitive action on the matter. Though the measure is identified as faculty/student discussions, it is unclear where or how student contributions occurred. In on-site meetings with students, they did support combining the seven concentrations into three areas but there was no indication this came from systematic discussions by faculty with students.

There is little evidence these indirect measures have led to any closing of the loop with regard to curriculum updates.

The department did identify a committee investigation into the state and condition of the television production facilities. The committee recommendation led the university to invest about \$5.5 million in high definition, digital television production facilities, including studios and remote production equipment. This led to a significant update of the facilities and dramatically improved upon a curricular need—but it is not identified as a curriculum assessment approach.

d) The unit maintains contact with its alumni to assess their experiences in the professions and to provide suggestions for improving curriculum and instruction.

The department held a "meet up" with alumni in the Twin Cities in October 2015 to introduce the new department chair and discuss the program. As noted above, an alumni survey conducted in 2015 received a good response (nearly 50 percent). About one-third were no longer in the mass communication field and about one-third had graduated more than 20 years ago.

A Facebook page for SCSU Mass Communication graduates exists as a closed group. The department does not control the group but has asked Facebook to provide control.

[\(https://www.facebook.com/groups/31309956777/\)](https://www.facebook.com/groups/31309956777/)

The department has an advisory board but the board has not held a meeting since 2013.

The department maintains a closed LinkedIn group with more than 1,000 members.

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2935822/profile>

Current students commented that they would like a greater or more regular alumni presence on campus so that they could hear more of those individuals' experiences and career pathways after leaving the university, as well as make more connection to potential future employers.

e) The unit includes members of journalism and mass communication professions in its assessment process.

As part of curriculum review, the department conducted two focus groups with professionals, one with seven attendees in the Twin Cities area and another group of 10 attendees in St. Cloud. Seven phone

interviews with professionals also provided suggestions for curriculum improvements. These meetings occurred in May 2015.

Summary

After being found in non-compliance in the 2010 accreditation review, and then regaining compliance following the 2013 revisit, the department reduced the number of Student Learning Outcomes, from 29 to eight. The department adopted an assessment plan in 2014 and revised the plan in 2016, but it has not fully implemented several of the key elements. The plan identifies three direct assessment measures and four indirect measures. By the time of the self-study, the department had completed one direct assessment measure, evaluation of student interns. Though the results for that one measure are encouraging for the program, only a limited number of students had internships. Indirect measures included employer/alumni feedback, student competition awards, and faculty/student curriculum discussions. There is insufficient evidence that the department has used these indirect measures to change or enhance the curriculum. Faculty members describe curriculum discussions as ongoing. Thus the unit has failed to obtain a significant body of direct assessment measures and has failed to close the loop with the limited information it has been able to collect.

Non-Compliance

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths

- Outstanding broadcast technology and abundant student media activities.
- Accessible faculty dedicated to student learning and success.
- University financial support during tough budgetary times.
- A student body confident of their pathway to professional success.
- A collegial faculty that respects both professional and conceptual perspectives.
- A student-oriented chair who has won the respect of faculty and who transcends his official role as “coordinator.”

Weaknesses

- An assessment effort that remains incomplete and offers minimal evidence of an effective feedback loop
- A stalled curricular initiative that impedes multimedia progress and continuous improvement.
- Lack of effective monitoring of the 72 hour outside-credit requirement.
- Continued gender imbalance in the faculty.
- Sentiment that some faculty may not be as current in multimedia and social media skills as students and alumni expect.

2) List the standards with which the unit is not in compliance.

Standard 9: Assessment

3) Summarize the problems or deficiencies that should be addressed before the next evaluation (i.e., related to non-compliance with standards).

- Assessment measures should be implemented fully and be accompanied by a robust feedback loop for each measure.
- The department must develop an effective mechanism for monitoring the 72-hour rule to insure 100 percent compliance.
- The new curriculum, which the faculty are considering, should be fully implemented.
- Gender balance should show improvement.

4) In the case of a recommendation for provisional accreditation, list the deficiencies that should be addressed before the provisional status can be removed.

5) In the case of a recommendation for denial of accreditation, clearly and fully explain the reasons that led to the recommendation.

6) If the unit was previously accredited, summarize the significant deficiencies noted in the previous report and the actions taken to correct them. If the unit was in noncompliance in the same standard(s) on the previous two visits, identify the standard(s) and the problems noted. Explain actions taken to correct the problems.

7) The self-study is the heart of the accrediting process. Often the quality of that document determines the degree of success of the site visit. Summarize the team members' judgment of the self-study.

The self-study was succinct, but provided contradictory and out-of-date information in some places. In the electronic version, appendices were cumbersome to match with a particular standard. The assessment section provided scant evidence for compliance.