

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

Name of Accredited Unit: Department of Communication and Journalism

Name of Institution: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Name of Administrator: Jan Larson

Date of Original Site Visit: November 16-19, 2014

Revisit Date: November 30-December 2, 2016

Revisit Team Chair: Jan Slater, Professor
College of Media, University of Illinois

Revisit Team Member: Kenton Bird, Associate Professor
School of Journalism and Mass Media, University of Idaho

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.)

Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

Reasons cited:

The 2014-15 site team “recommended the unit revise its diversity plan and systematically focus on execution strategies to achieve the desired results.” As a weakness, the site team identified that the plan was only approved in the fall of 2014, just before the site visit. This provided no opportunity for the team to assess its effectiveness, and the team cited the plan as being “unrealistic”. The plan in place previously (approved in 2008) was cited by the team as being “unsuccessful in meeting any of its goals.”

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Reasons cited:

The team recommended that the unit revise the system it uses for identifying courses that fit with ACEJMC’s 12 core competencies and values, using a matrix that would make it easier to see which courses are focused on which aspects of the core competencies and values. It did so, but now the unit needs to be certain courses identified as focusing on *awareness* (for example) include among the objectives and/or assignments within the syllabi of those courses activities that increase awareness. In addition, the unit needs to take steps to analyze the results of its assessment program and make adjustments to its curriculum based on those results, closing the loop.

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 3: Diversity

Summary of findings:

Diversity is a strategic priority at UWEC. The University’s Diversity Statement reads: “We believe in the importance of acknowledging and engaging with differences – those of race, ethnicity, gender sexual orientation, social and economic class, ability/disability, age, religion, and more – within our campus community and academic work.” The faculty senate has approved the Chancellor’s EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness) goals and actions. These include recruitment of students, faculty and staff of color; campus wide professional developments programs, and include EDI contributions in annual evaluations as well as promotion and tenure. Each campus unit has been asked to determine how they will contribute to these goals and actions. The Department of Communication/Journalism has aligned its goals with those of campus.

The Dean stated that the Communication/Journalism (CJ) faculty are deeply committed to the EDI Initiative and he considers them a model for others on campus because they are far ahead of many units in incorporating these goals and actions into their own plan.

Indeed, the CJ department has a solid diversity plan that not only incorporates the EDI criteria but pays close attention to objectives and strategies that particularly focus on curriculum, faculty and student diversity. They are attentive to the goals and tactics of the plan, and have included tracking and assessment measures of curricular efforts, student responses to diversity activities and success in recruitment of faculty and staff. Students, as well as administrators, give them high marks for their efforts on diversity.

The diversity plan outlines three major areas of focus:

Curriculum

- The department has made a concerted effort to include conversations and assignments around diversity in their courses. These efforts were integrated in course syllabi and reflected in the student comments as to how they have encountered diversity issues in the classroom and the recurring themes throughout their coursework.
- Several students mentioned specific courses that are offered by the department (Intercultural Communication, Diversity and Communication, and Gender, Race, Class and Communication) that are taken as electives.
- The students were confident in their understanding of the issues facing journalism and strategic communications regarding diversity – mentioning social media strategies and

access, implicit bias in reporting, multicultural audiences, and the need to seek out opinions, etc. from diverse groups.

- The department offers several intensive domestic opportunities that allow students to immerse themselves in issues of diversity. The department has students participate in the university's Civil Rights Pilgrimage --in its 8th year – through an immersion course that takes students during winter and spring break to explore the Deep South and be immersed in the history of the Civil Rights Movement. Students produce stories, blogs, and video from the trip for publication on campus and in local media. Another recent Intercultural Immersion trip took students to San Francisco to work on a documentary about the LGBT community. While these trips are optional, the students who participate come back with such enthusiasm it raises awareness of the issue among the students who did not participate and encourages them to take advantage of the opportunity in the future. Civil Conversations is a student/faculty project emerging from the Civil Rights Pilgrimage – with interviews and information attained during the trip – students (many of those who were not on the trip) are working on stories, websites and a museum display regarding the stories of those they interviewed about the Civil Rights Movement.

- An online resource has been provided for faculty that provides a database regarding all diversity activity of faculty – in and out of the classroom. Faculty explain that this has raised the bar on activities because everyone is accountable.

- The Department has been successful at bringing guest speakers and professionals of diverse backgrounds to campus to speak to students in and outside the classroom. Just during the revisit, the site team noted multiple fliers that promoted a variety of speakers and topics on diversity issues.

Student Body

- The student meeting during the revisit was representative of the 13 percent student diversity within the Communication/Journalism department. The Department outperforms the University in this area, with the University only reporting 10 percent of students from domestic minorities.

- The University has made recruitment of students of color a priority. Neither the Department nor the College has its own recruiting staff. Therefore, they are dependent on the University admissions staff for student recruitment.

- The Department has regularly participated in the University's Blugold Beginnings program that includes a summer camp specifically designed to educate and inspire students, especially underrepresented, low income or first generation students to seek education at UWEC. The camps are topical, including art, language, journalism and media, STEM, etc.

- The Department is developing outreach programs with a nearby tribal community. This will include high school programs for the Ho-Chunk Nation in Black River Falls,

Wisconsin. The Department has previously worked with the Nation's newspaper in providing interns.

- Wisconsin has the third-largest population of Hmong Americans, who fled Vietnam, Thailand and Laos during times of civil unrest. The Department is working on developing high school programs for this audience as well.

Faculty

- At the time of the 2014-15 site visit, the accredited divisions (Journalism and Integrated Strategic Communication) faculty totaled 9, 4 females, 5 males, three from a non-majority background. At the time of the revisit, 6 full-time faculty teach in the accredited divisions, 4 female and 2 males. Two thirds of the faculty are female and half are from a non-majority background - Hispanic, Asian American, and International.
- In 2013 a search was conducted for two hires. There were a significant number of candidates from diverse backgrounds (11 minorities within the pool of 24). From this diverse pool, offers were made to a white male and an international female. The female declined the offer and the white male accepted, but has since left the department.

Searches were cancelled in 2014 and 2015 due to budget cuts. Currently, there is a search underway for an ISC faculty member. The chair did extensive recruiting to provide a diverse pool, including: recruiting at AEJMC; contacts with special interest divisions with NCA, AEJMC, NAAJ; contacts with historically black institutions, and advertised nationally with AEJMC, Chronicle of Higher Education, CRTNET (Communication Research and Theory Network) and Academic Careers Online and Academic Diversity Search The current finalist pool is all women, one of whom is international. The Department anticipates a hiring decision before the end of the semester.

The Communications/Journalism Department has a strong, actionable diversity plan that is aligned with the campus EDI Initiative. The faculty have been conscientious about teaching diversity in courses, providing activities outside the classroom, and managing intensive discussions and forums both in and outside of class. They have not been given much opportunity to diversify faculty but are committed to doing what it takes to recruit a more diverse pool when possible.

Overall evaluation: Compliance

Standard 9: Assessment

Summary of findings:

The Department's Assessment Plan was approved in 2010. It was revised in 2014 to reflect the changes in the university policy concerning assessment and again in 2015 to clarify language and policies per the ACEJMC site team report.

This is a well-developed and managed plan that is aligned with the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies. Direct and indirect measures are included, annual reports are produced with assessment outcomes from each academic year and provided to faculty in the fall semester for discussion at the fall faculty workday.

All faculty members and academic staff are responsible for the identification and review of departmental learning goals and program learning outcomes. In addition, they are responsible for determining where outcomes are to be taught and assessed. The department does have a three-person assessment committee. The chair of this committee is well versed on assessment, and has helped faculty manage measurement instruments, collect and report data, and provide reports to the department chair.

Direct measures include embedded exam questions and essays, reviewing student projects, papers and published stories, and evaluations by internship supervisors. Indirect measures include surveys of graduating students, alumni surveys and retention and graduation rates. All of the direct measures have been employed, as has the retention and graduation rates. The department is finalizing the survey instruments and timing for the recent graduate and alumni survey.

The revisit report included curriculum rubrics and benchmarks. Annual assessment reports were included from 2014-15 and 2015-16. It is clear that faculty use the assessment results to refine learning objectives, measurable assignments, and rubrics. Rubrics are being revised for the capstone courses to be less cumbersome, provide more clarity and include additional outcomes that will help clients and the advisory boards use the rubrics for evaluative purposes.

The accredited divisions use the core curriculum (Multimedia Communication, Research Methods, Media Law & Ethics) for assessment, as well as the introductory and capstone classes within each division. Journalism conducts assessment measures in Beginning Journalism and the capstone Digital Newsroom. Previously, the advisory board has done the assessment in the capstone course. This is being reviewed, and new rubrics are being developed to insure clarity and consistency. The board will get some training on assessment and the use of the rubrics.

In fall 2015, the advertising and public relations majors merged into an Integrated Strategic Communication major, in which students choose advertising or public relations as an emphasis. Assessment is being used to determine if the curriculum is balanced between advertising and public relations. Both are assessing the Introduction to Integrated Strategic Communication course and the Integrated Strategic Communication

Management capstone. This year will be the first time to use the capstone clients for assessment. Assessment is also done in the Writing for Public Relations course, however advertising does not have a similar course. The faculty will look closely at the assessment data this year to determine if there is enough assessment being done in the advertising courses.

The internship coordinator has produced an extensive internship packet for students and supervisors. Supervisors evaluate the student twice – mid-term and final. The coordinator is revising the supervisor rubric to align more with the ACEJMC values and competencies. Internships are not required. However, approximately 20-25 students do internships each year for credit that are assessed and results are reported back to faculty. Half of students taking internships for credit are in the accredited sequences. Students also must submit a portfolio of the work done at the internship and there is some discussion about using these portfolios as an assessment measure as well.

It is clear that the department is assessing learning outcomes appropriately and is closing the loop in reporting and using the data for improvement. As the next accreditation cycle approaches, it will be important for the department to keep its momentum and commitment to assessment.

Overall evaluation: Compliance

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.

Weaknesses from 2014 report

Note: Non-compliant weaknesses listed in the report (Diversity and Assessment) are addressed earlier in this report and will not be repeated here.

- 1) A strategic plan: The unit does not have a strong strategic plan. A half-page description of activities and tactics cannot be viewed as a visionary plan for the future, particularly when there is no mention of ACEJMC's 12 professional values and competencies within the plan. Such an inclusion would help the unit stay focused on what is needed for an accredited program to be successful.
- 2) Social and digital media are not as fully integrated into the curriculum as they should be.
- 3) Ways to address the challenging budget issues facing the unit and the university.

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.

1. A strategic plan: "The unit does not have a strong strategic plan. A half-page description of activities and tactics cannot be viewed as a visionary plan for the future, particularly when there is no mention of ACEJMC's 12 professional values and competencies with the plan. Such an inclusion would help the unit stay focused on what is needed for an accredited program to be successful."

Response: The unit has updated its strategic plan to include statements of mission, vision and values, followed by strategic objectives dealing primarily with student preparedness for communication and journalism careers. The opening page refers to ACEJMC accreditation and contains a link to the standards, values and competencies.

The strategic plan also includes the results of a SWOT analysis, which identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – most of which were apparent to the revisit team. It also identifies potential competitive advantages that will be useful in recruiting students and faculty.

In addition, the unit provided reports showing progress in achieving goals during 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. It was clear to the revisit team that the strategic plan has guided the faculty's activities during the past two years.

2. “Social and digital media are not as fully integrated into the curriculum as they should be.”

Response:

As the unit has continued to update its curriculum, completely merging broadcast and print journalism sequences into Journalism and redesigning its Mass Communication major with advertising and public relations emphasis as Integrated Strategic Communication, faculty have worked to fully integrate digital and social media.

The revisit team examined syllabi and met with instructors for the introductory course required of all majors, Multimedia Communication (CJ 184). This course has strong social and digital media components, through audio, still photography and video assignments. Building upon this course, faculty in subsequent courses teach content and provide learning experiences that result in hands-on opportunities to use digital platforms and social media to construct and deliver media messages.

One faculty member is teaching a special-topics course this term dealing exclusively with social media. In the meeting with the revisit team, students expressed familiarity with a variety of social media and their applicability to their fields of study. In response to a question, all indicated they felt prepared for work in journalism or communication after graduation.

Catalog descriptions throughout the accredited sequence emphasize the focus on digital and social media.

3. *Ways to address the challenging budget issues facing the unit and the university.*

Response:

The University has been under severe budget constraints since the 2014 visit; the Dean indicated that the best-case scenario for 2017 is a flat budget. The SWOT analysis noted budgetary and staffing concerns. However, the department was given permission to conduct a search this semester for a tenure-track position, replacing a faculty member who left after the 2015-2016 academic year. Positions are held centrally after a resignation or retirement, and the department was able to justify the search through a ranking system at the college level.

Neither the college nor the department has its own development officer, limiting opportunities to seek external support. Nonetheless, the Department has undertaken several successful fund-raising ventures through the UWEC Foundation. Among them is an endowment to support the Ann Devroy lecture on campus and a fellowship for a student at *The Washington Post*. In addition, the acting chair hopes to seek contributions from alumni to support the student newspaper, *The Spectator*.

Departmental faculty have built strategic partnerships across campus and have successfully sought funding for a variety of research activities, diversity initiatives and program enhancements.

While the unit has limited ability to influence the overarching state of the university's budget, it has been creative in extending their resources.

- Faculty volunteer to teach courses during winter and summer sessions that result in a percentage of funding coming back to the unit for use in two categories, services and supplies and no-intent-to-renew faculty lines.
- Faculty have redesigned and merged courses to respond to both difficult budget climates and to respond to changing industry practices.
- Faculty have applied for and gained funding from internal and external grant sources to update and add to equipment and technology available for student learning.
- Faculty have applied for and gained funding to support immersion experiences that assist in meeting ACEJMC accrediting standards and professional values and competencies.
- Faculty have collaborated with other units on campus, such as Blugold Beginnings, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Dean of Students Office, the Women's and LGBTQ Resource Center and others to provide students with greater access to diverse perspectives while limiting costs.

Summary conclusion

The Department of Communication/Journalism has made progress on both the diversity and assessment standards. It became clear that the faculty was committed to both during the previous site visit, but there was some confusion in how benchmarks were set, data was collected and used, and how activities were reported. Clearly, the Department is working diligently on measuring learning outcomes appropriately and the annual reports being produced are extensive and insightful. The faculty is devoted to diversity in its curriculum, and among its faculty and students. While they do not have much control over the opportunities to hire faculty and recruit students, they are steadfast in their attempts to have strong diverse pools of faculty candidates, build partnerships with domestic minority high school students, and provide an array of classroom and extra-curricular activities focused on diversity for their current students.

Our meeting with 24 students revealed enthusiasm for the department. Students praised the faculty as caring, accommodating and setting high expectations. Students were motivated, passionate about the education they were receiving, and felt prepared for internships and full-time employment. They credited faculty, their coursework and student organizations (including student media) for providing real world experiences that set them on a path for success.

In turn, faculty could not be more enthusiastic about their students, their willingness to work hard, take advantage of student organizations and out-of-classroom opportunities.

Faculty are dedicated to teaching (4/4 loads), involve undergraduate students in their research projects, and advise students on academic matters as well as professional opportunities. The department is collegial and admired by colleagues and administration.