

**2017-18  
Revisit Team Report  
for Accreditation in Journalism  
and Mass Communications**

**Name of Accredited Unit:** The School of Journalism and Strategic Media

**Name of Institution:** University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

**Name of Administrator:** Larry Foley, Chair

**Date of Original Site Visit:** January 24 – 27, 2016

**Revisit Date:** November 12-14, 2017

**Revisit Team Chair:** Timothy W. Gleason, Professor of Journalism  
School of Journalism and Communication  
University of Oregon

**Revisit Team Member:** Sonya Duhe, Director,  
School of Mass Communication  
Loyola University New Orleans

**Revisit Team's Recommendation:** Reaccreditation

**1. List each standard found in noncompliance and the reasons as cited in the original team report.**

Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

Deficiencies in Standard 3 encompass three areas. These include faculty recruitment, student recruitment and significantly increasing diversity and inclusion content in the curriculum in ways that actively engage the students. Progress must be made in each of these areas.

(1) Faculty recruitment

The site team found that though the Lemke Department of Journalism faculty included four international faculty members and good gender diversity, it had difficulty hiring domestic minority full-time faculty, in particular, African Americans and Hispanics. The site team stated that more effort was needed in recruiting domestic minority full-time faculty.

(2) Student recruitment

The site team noted that minority enrollment had increased in the department since 2010, along with overall enrollment growth. In addition, journalism minority students' graduation rate is roughly the same as the university's overall rate for minority students. However, the journalism minority enrollment, at 15 percent, was lower than that of the university overall, at 24 percent. The site team recommended the department strengthen its effort to recruit minority students.

(3) Diverse and inclusive curriculum

The site team concluded that diversity issues were not fully incorporated into the curriculum. First, team members found that most syllabi did not specifically document coverage of diversity issues. Second, they noted that, though numerous faculty stated they frequently discussed issues of racial, ethnic, cultural, economic and religious diversity, both students and faculty had difficulty explaining how they taught or learned about diversity in the classroom. Third, the team stated that diversity seemed to be taught more as a reporting tool than as a value throughout the curriculum.

The site team stated that more effort was needed to infuse diversity and inclusion throughout the curriculum.

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Deficiencies in Standard 9 encompass these areas: insufficient engagement of professionals in the assessment process, a lack of sufficient documentation of actions taken to address curricular needs, and failure to survey alumni in the assessment process during this review period. Progress must be made in each of these areas.

(1) Insufficient engagement of professionals in the assessment process

The site team found a minimal use of professionals in the assessment process, in particular in evaluating student work in capstone course projects. The Advertising/Public Relations sequence faculty used one professional to assess capstone work. The Broadcast sequence used professionals in assessing student resume reels but not in assessing the cohort. The News/Editorial sequence had no record of professional involvement.

The team stated that the department needs to improve its assessment process to involve more professionals across all sequences.

(2) Lack of sufficient documentation of actions taken to address curricular needs

The site team noted the department did not sufficiently document the actions taken to address curricular needs.

Syllabi should reflect changes made in the curriculum as a consequence of assessment. Faculty meeting minutes and reports should document discussions of assessment results, decisions about curriculum changes and their implementation. However, changes that had been made were evident in the teaching and in statements from students and faculty, documentation is necessary.

The department must compile a written record of actions discussed and implemented as a consequence of assessment in order to document curriculum improvement efforts.

(3) Failure to survey alumni in the assessment process during this review period

The site team recommended (1) that the department conduct an alumni survey before the 2018 date scheduled in the Assessment Plan, and (2) that the alumni survey be conducted annually. The team acknowledged that faculty members do maintain contact with and assist graduates, many of whom stay in the area.

**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.**

The leadership, faculty and staff of the newly renamed School of Journalism and Strategic Media responded to its provisional reaccreditation by recommitting to improving its programs and to building a "culture of diversity and of assessment." The result is marked improvement in both areas. Faculty, students and colleagues across the campus spoke highly of the school's initiatives and actions. More important, the revisit team found universal agreement on the campus that the school's performance was not the result of reacting to top-down orders or "checking a box," but rather, the actions of a faculty that saw an opportunity to get better and acted on it.

### Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

#### (1) Faculty Recruitment

The school conducted searches for five new faculty and one administrative staff member during fall 2016 and spring 2017. The five new faculty positions included two clinical assistant professors, three instructors, including the assistant director for the Center for Ethics in Journalism. Two faculty searches were in progress at the time of the winter 2016 Accreditation site visit. Those searches resulted in hiring Dr. Rob Wells (white male) and Dr. Kara Gould (white female) for fall 2016.

Following the site team visit, the school succeeded in getting university approval for a new clinical assistant professor position dedicated to diversity issues. Faculty redoubled efforts to recruit a diverse pool of applicants for all faculty searches and succeeded in hiring an African-American female for the clinical assistant professor position. She joined the faculty in fall 2017. Her responsibilities include teaching a course on minority issues and recruiting students from under-represented groups. It is noteworthy that university administrators report that it is highly unusual for departments or schools on the campus to have a faculty position with a diversity focus.

An offer for one instructor position was extended to a Hispanic male, who declined. The school instead hired an Asian-American female. A second African-American female has been hired to begin in spring 2018 as the assistant director of the Center for Ethics in Journalism. An additional search for an instructor in AD/PR remains open. It was relaunched after all of the finalists, including one minority candidate, withdrew for financial reasons.

In fall 2016 the school recruited a prominent African-American reporter for The Associated Press based in Washington, D.C. as its fall 2016 Distinguished Visiting Professor of Ethics. He recruited several high profile reporters of color to participate in the center's November 2016 Media Workshop for professionals and students on "America Post Election: Bridging the Gaps in Covering Race and Gender." At the time of the site revisit, the school's faculty profile included the following:

<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>
12 Male	2 African American
10 Female	1 Asian American
	4 International (3 U.S. citizens)
	15 Caucasian

#### (2) Student Recruitment

Students at the University of Arkansas are admitted to the university, not to its schools and colleges. As a result, the school's ability to directly recruit students is somewhat

limited. However, the school has taken significant steps to increase minority enrollment with some success to date and a commitment to continue these efforts.

Between 2015 to 2017, Journalism minority enrollment increased 4.96 percent to 21.56 percent from 16.6 percent, largely because of growth in Hispanic students (by nearly 4 percent) and in the category of “Two or more races.” Both groups surpass the university enrollment levels. During the same period, African-American enrollment decreased from 6.26 percent to 4.10, which is slightly below the university level. Overall minority enrollment in both the school and in the university is slightly more than 20 percent.

The school’s initiatives include:

- The school strengthened efforts to recruit and maintain the enrollment of minority students in journalism by creating a new clinical assistant professor position with a focus on diversity recruiting as a part of the assignment. That faculty member arrived in fall 2017. She is chairing the school’s diversity committee and is responsible for recruiting students from under-served groups in Arkansas.
- The Lemke Journalism Project (LJP), now operating for more than 16 years, is a significant tool for recruiting Hispanic high school students for journalism. Of the 17 students in the 2017 class, more than half of the 2017 students were Hispanic, five were African American and one was Asian American. Two LJP students were awarded scholarships to attend the university. In 2017, two female Hispanic LPJ graduates now in the school were selected for national internships: one was named an NBC Summer Fellow, assigned to “Dateline;” in New York. The second won an internship with the Television Academy Foundation and was based in Los Angeles, where she reported for Fox 11.
- The school recruited two graduate students, a Hispanic female and an African-American male, to be graduate assistants providing support in instruction and supervision in the broadcast labs for courses in Broadcast Reporting II, Television I and II and News Producing.
- The school’s diversity committee expanded in membership from six- to eight-members in order to expand the discussion about equity and inclusion. The new chair of the committee held a gathering with former and current minority students to hear their perceptions and the committee continues to work to create a culture of diversity in the school. One project that had its genesis in the diversity committee is “The Minority Report,” a student-produced program created for UATV Student Television. Students developed the 30-minute program in which students profile prominent minority community leaders (six in fall 2016 and two in spring 2017). Student journalists add briefer breaking news segments on transgender health care and immigration.

### (3) Diverse and inclusive curriculum

The 2016 site team found that students did not seem to have a clear understanding of the importance of diversity beyond using it as a reporting tool and that while the faculty could cite numerous examples of diversity material in their classes this content was not reflected in syllabi. The revisit team had a different experience.

At least 20 students attended the student meeting late on a Monday afternoon. A diverse group of students representing all of the school's majors engaged in a lively discussion about diversity in the school and university. They demonstrated knowledge of the complexity of the topic and an appreciation for the culture and climate in the school, where, they said, students feel safe and are encouraged to express their views on any and all subjects. The students reported a wide variety of course assignments and discussions that focused on topics and issues related to equity and inclusion.

A review of course syllabi found that many courses in the school have readings and/or assignments with a clear diversity focus and many syllabi include a school-recommended diversity policy statement that reinforced its commitment to equity and inclusion and to freedom of speech and civil discourse. However, few course syllabi included diversity as an explicit objective or learning outcome. In many instances, the diversity policy statement was buried deep into the boilerplate of multi-page documents.

In addition to formal coursework, the school offers a rich mix of visitors and speakers who bring different perspectives to the campus. For example, in 2016 Ramon Escobar, vice president of diversity and inclusion for CNN Worldwide and vice president of talent recruitment and development, visited to meet with students and to participate in a panel discussion. The Center for Ethics in Journalism holds media workshops that bring diverse speakers to the school. In 2016, two panels on election coverage and on covering race and gender brought a range of journalism professionals to campus. In November 2017, a panel on "Fake News" led by Alisa Shepard, distinguished visiting professor of journalism ethics, included Paul Farhi, Washington Post; Indira Lakshmanan, Poynter Institute; and Steven Holmes, CNN.

**Overall evaluation:** Compliance

#### Standard 9: Assessment

(1) Insufficient engagement of professionals in the assessment process

The faculty are well connected with the professional community at the local, state and national levels. Professionals often speak to classes, student organizations engage in larger panel discussions and following the last site visit, greater efforts were made to more formally organize and document professional involvement in assessment.

In response to insufficient engagement of professionals in the assessment process, the faculty rewrote the assessment plan for each sequence to include more professionals in the capstone performance review. According to meeting minutes and faculty conversations, in advertising and public relations, faculty recruit six professionals from different firms or agencies to assess students' midpoint and capstone assignments—three to assess the midpoint assignments and three for capstone assignments. The professionals are to represent a "diversity of people who have a range of job functions."

In Broadcast, faculty recruit three professionals to assess student work in the capstone course also using a variety of professionals possibly including a reporter, producer and news director. In the news editorial capstone, faculty engaged four Arkansas newspaper professionals to assess student performance in the capstone course.

According to the 2016-2020 Assessment Plan, the News/Ed faculty will conduct a midpoint assessment in 2017-2018 (Year 2); the next midpoint assessment for Ad/PR and Broadcast will be in 2018-2019 (Year 3). The next capstone assessment will be in 2019-2020 (Year 4). In addition to the assessments over time, faculty in each sequence are engaging professionals in reviewing student work on an annual basis.

(2) Lack of sufficient documentation of actions taken to address curricular needs

The school creates and maintains digital and hard copy files of all documents relating to assessment produced by faculty committees and sequences. These include minutes from every meeting of faculty sequences and committees in which assessment is discussed, reports from sequences on assessment activities and assessment committee reports on data gathered in each year of the plan. In addition to the midpoint and capstone evaluations, assessment committee reports address the grammar test, assessment survey and first writing assignment. Digital and hard copy files are maintained for all actions addressing assessment, such as minutes of sequence and committee meetings and reports.

The school provided an exhaustive list from sequence and committee meeting minutes of how faculty progressed in their discussions of assessment results over a two-year period. Minutes reveal discussion of the data, proposed ideas for addressing problems and proposals for solutions. The implementation of changes and closing the loop plans were also documented.

(3) Failure to survey alumni in the assessment process during this review period

The school conducted an alumni survey in spring 2016 immediately following the site team visit and revised the 2016-2020 Assessment Plan to include an annual alumni survey beginning in spring 2018. The spring alumni survey was conducted three weeks after the 2016 site team visit. In addition, the Assessment Committee adjusted the Assessment Plan to continue the practice each year.

Documents provided included the alumni assessment survey, which reflected questions reflecting ACEJMC's 12 values and competencies. An analysis of the survey results and recommendations based upon results were also documented. For example, while 60% of alumni found internships "very valuable," a significant minority (22%) found their internship experience to be somewhat or not valuable. Since the survey, changes have been made to the internship program including the assignment of an internship coordinator to bring more energy and focus to the program by interviewing employers and students for a more formal evaluation process in hopes of improving the program thus using data to close the loop.

Summary of findings:

The school has made tremendous progress in closing the loop addressing the engagement of professionals, surveying alumni and documenting changes to the curriculum based upon assessment measure.

**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.**

1. Resources have not kept up with the increase in enrollment over the past several years.
2. The curriculum does not stress digital technologies sufficiently in introductory courses.
3. Declining participation in the department's internship program.

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

Resources have not kept up with the increase in enrollment over the past several years. As described above, the school has made new hires since the accreditation visit and it has an additional search underway. With the retirement of a senior faculty member at the end of this academic year, it hopes to receive approval to search for a tenure-track replacement. There have been no new tenure-track hires in the college for several years and the dean was not certain when funds for new tenure-track faculty may be available.

Significant renovation began on the first floor of Kimpel Hall, the school's home, in summer 2017 with the first phase completed and occupied at the time of the site-team revisit. In addition, construction is underway on the second level of the building of a new Student Media Center with a large studio window overlooking the campus. Both projects will modernize the facilities and give the school higher visibility across campus. Construction is scheduled for completion in summer 2018 of the new media center, which will bring all student publications, television and possibly radio together in a converged newsroom. Radio will be included if discussions with a potential donor are successful.

The curriculum does not stress digital technologies sufficiently in introductory courses. The school created a new instructor position with a focus on digital technologies and a mandate to create courses that could serve students across the curriculum, such as writing, photographing and producing digital content. The new faculty member joined the department in fall 2017.

Additional steps taken to strengthen the teaching of digital technologies include:



- Several new courses, such as Data Journalism and Digital Content Strategy and Production, have been designed and taught or are scheduled to be taught in the current academic year.
- The News/Editorial faculty reconfigured the Lemke Newsroom, an elective series of courses (offered to about 15 students each year, with about 30 eligible to apply) for fall 2017 to strengthen the emphasis on digital technologies; the program was renamed the Digital Media Lab to reflect this new focus.
- Faculty have incorporated social media into the Fundamentals of Journalism course, and placed greater emphasis on digital technologies in introductory reporting courses.

While progress has been made and students report that they are getting instruction in digital technology, students in the news/editorial major expressed the desire to have more video training.

#### Declining participation in the department's internship program.

The school appointed a Journalism instructor as internship director in fall 2016. During the 2016-2017 academic year, the director took a number of actions to build up the internship program including reaching out to students using both traditional strategies such as class visits and informational coffees, and an increased use of social media. Efforts were increased to bring employers to campus for individual recruiting and the recruiter started to attend job fairs and community events.

Internship participation in summer and fall 2017 appears to have stabilized, although the large number of students who do not seek credit for internships and therefore are not tracked makes it difficult to have firm numbers. The internship coordinator believes the efforts to date and going forward will result in increased internship participation.

#### **5. Summary conclusion**

The school is in compliance on both standards under review in this revisit and it has made significant progress in addressing other weaknesses identified by the last site team. The elevation from a department to a school in the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences and the building renovation and construction of the new student media center are indicative of the unit's upward trajectory and its potential.