

Report of On-Site Evaluation
ACEJMC
Undergraduate program
2017-2018

Name of Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Michael Rao

Name of Unit: Richard T. Robertson School of Media & Culture

Name and Title of Administrator: Hong Cheng

Date of 2017-2018 Accrediting Visit: October 29-November 1, 2017

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: November 13-16, 2011

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2017-2018 Visiting Team: Provisional

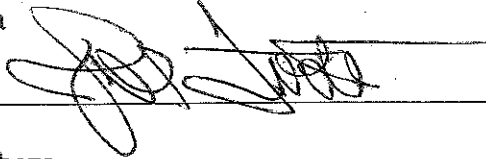
Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

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

Organization/School: Gaylord College of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Oklahoma

Signature

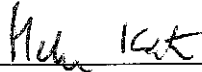


Team Members

Name and Title: Helen Katz, Senior Vice President

Organization/School: Publicis Media

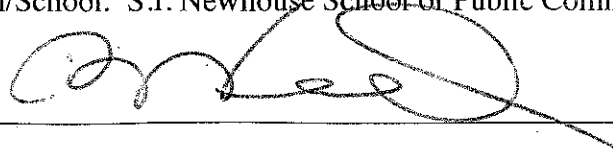
Signature



Name and Title: Rocheelle Ford, Chair/Professor of Public Relations

Organization/School: S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communication, Syracuse University

Signature



Name and Title: Judy Oskam, Director & Professor

Organization/School: School of Journalism & Mass Communication, Texas State University

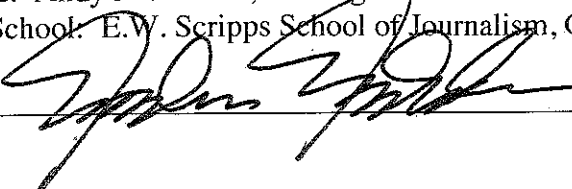
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Name and Title: Andy Alexander, Visiting Professional

Organization/School: E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, Ohio University

Signature



PART I: General information

Name of Institution: Virginia Commonwealth University

Name of Unit: Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture

Year of Visit: 2017-2018

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

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

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

Public

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.

Code of Virginia, Title 23.1, Institutions of Higher Education; Other Educational and Cultural Institutions, Virginia Commonwealth University (§§ 23.1-2300 through 23.1-2312).

According to § 23.1-2305 Powers and duties:

“A. The board shall appoint all teachers, staff members, and agents, fix their salaries, and prescribe their duties.

B. The board shall generally direct the affairs and business of the University.

C. The board may confer degrees, including honorary degrees.

D. The board may take, hold, receive, and enjoy any gift, grant, devise, or bequest to the University or its predecessors for the uses and purposes designated by the donor, or if not so designated, for the general purposes of the corporation, whether given directly or indirectly, and accept, execute, and administer any trust in which it may have an interest under the terms of the instrument creating the trust.”

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

Yes

If yes, give the date of the last accrediting visit: October 20-26, 2011

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

The then School of Mass Communications was first accredited by ACEJMC in 1976, but the School let its accreditation lapse in 2000, therefore the 2005-2006 visit was treated as an initial accreditation.

6. Provide a copy of the unit's undergraduate mission statement. Statements should give date of adoption and/or last revision.

The Robertson School inspires and empowers students to be transformative media innovators while continuing to be a thought leader in a changing communication environment.

The School accomplishes its mission through immersive teaching, quality research and professional scholarship. The School explores and engages local and global communities in advertising, journalism, public relations and other emerging communication fields.

Revised and adopted by the Robertson School Faculty Sept. 9, 2016

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters in fall and spring of 16 weeks

Summer sessions of 3, 4.5, 5, 6 and 8 weeks (11 sessions total)

Intersessions of 2 weeks (between fall and spring semesters)

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

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Ph.D. degree (interdisciplinary degree through the Media, Art and Text program, joined with the Department of English and the School of the Arts)

9. List the specific undergraduate and professional master's degrees being reviewed by ACEJMC. *Indicate online degrees.

Bachelors of Science, Mass Communications

10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree:

(Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.)

120 semester credit hours

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

Students who take internship credit can do so for 1-3 semester hours.

They can repeat the course, however. A maximum of 6 total hours may be applied toward graduation.

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

<u>Name of Sequence or Specialty</u>	<u>Person in Charge</u>
Advertising/Creative	Scott Sherman, Advertising Sequence Coordinator
Advertising/Strategic	Scott Sherman, Advertising Sequence Coordinator
Journalism/Broadcast	Bill Oglesby, Journalism Sequence Coordinator
Journalism/Print-online	Bill Oglesby, Journalism Sequence Coordinator
Public Relations	Joshua Smith, Public Relations, Sequence Coordinator

13. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution: 31,033

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

Fall semester, 2017

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Undergraduate majors
Advertising/Creative	150
Advertising/Strategic	48
Journalism/Broadcast	95
Journalism/Print-Online	67
Public Relations	179
Pre-majors ("Foundation")	466
TOTAL	1005

(As of Oct. 29, 2017)

15. Number of graduate students enrolled onsite: 15 online: 0

Fall semester, 2017

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Graduate majors
Multimedia Journalism	4
Strategic Public Relations	11
TOTAL	15

(As of Oct. 29, 2017)

16. 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.)

In Fall 2017 Robertson School full- and part-time/adjunct faculty are teaching 64 sections of lab/skills courses, while 66 sections of these courses were taught in Spring 2017. *In both semesters no courses had or will have enrollment of more than 20 students.*

Supplement: “Robertson School of Media and Culture Courses 2017-2018 VCU Bulletin”

Robertson School lab/skills courses, Fall 2017 (64 sections).

COURSE	SEC	TITLE	ENROLLMENT
MASC203	1	JOURNALISM WRITING	17
MASC203	2	JOURNALISM WRITING	15
MASC203	5	JOURNALISM WRITING	15
MASC203	6	JOURNALISM WRITING	15
MASC203	7	JOURNALISM WRITING	15
MASC203	8	JOURNALISM WRITING	14
MASC203	901	JOURNALISM WRITING	12
MASC203	902	JOURNALISM WRITING	14
MASC204	1	STORY	16
MASC204	2	STORY	15
MASC204	902	STORY	16
MASC300	1	TECHNICAL PROWESS	15
MASC300	2	TECHNICAL PROWESS	14
MASC300	5	TECHNICAL PROWESS	15
MASC301	901	GRAPHICS FOR JOURNALISM	13
MASC301	902	GRAPHICS FOR JOURNALISM	15
MASC303	1	REPORTING FOR PRINT AND WEB	15
MASC303	2	REPORTING FOR PRINT AND WEB	15
MASC303	3	REPORTING FOR PRINT AND WEB	14
MASC305	901	COPY EDITING	17
MASC317	1	VISUAL ACUTENESS	15
MASC333	1	PR WRITING & MEDIA RELATIONS	15
MASC333	4	PR WRITING & MEDIA RELATIONS	17
MASC333	902	PR WRITING & MEDIA RELATIONS	15
MASC334	1	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION I	15
MASC334	2	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION I	15
MASC334	901	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION I	10
MASC334	902	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION I	15
MASC335	2	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION II	15
MASC335	901	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION II	15
MASC335	902	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION II	14
MASC363	1	INTRO TO BROADCAST WRITING	15
MASC363	3	INTRO TO BROADCAST WRITING	15
MASC363	901	INTRO TO BROADCAST WRITING	16
MASC367	1	AUDIO & VIDEO JOURNALISM	15

MASC367	2	AUDIO & VIDEO JOURNALISM	16
MASC367	3	AUDIO & VIDEO JOURNALISM	15
MASC392	2	PERSPICUOUSNESS	15
MASC392	901	PERSPICUOUSNESS	13
MASC392	902	PERSPICUOUSNESS	13
MASC393	1	CREATIVITY FOR TELEVISION	15
MASC404	1	SPECIAL/PROJ REPT	11
MASC415	L01	ADV VIDEO JOURNALISM	14
MASC415	L02	ADV VIDEO JOURNALISM	15
MASC439	901	AGENCY	15
MASC439	902	AGENCY	15
MASC439	903	AGENCY	16
MASC450	1	STYLE	16
MASC450	2	STYLE	16
MASC450	3	STYLE	16
MASC451	1	INVENTION	14
MASC451	901	INVENTION	9
MASC451	902	INVENTION	11
MASC459	1	JUDGMENT	9
MASC459	2	JUDGMENT	14
MASC460	1	ADV TELEVISION NEWSGATHERING	16
MASC460	2	ADV TELEVISION NEWSGATHERING	13
MASC461	1	THE DOCUMENTARY	15
MASC465	1	NEWSCASTING	17
MASC466	1	TELEVISION STUDIO PRODUCTION	12
MASC481	1	COMPLETENESS	15
MASC481	2	COMPLETENESS	20
MASC481	903	COMPLETENESS	14
MASC496	1	MOBILE & SCL MEDIA JRN SRV LRN	17

Robertson School lab/skills courses, Spring 2017 (66 sections).

COURSE	SEC	TITLE	ENROLLMENT
MASC203	1	JOURNALISM WRITING	18
MASC203	2	JOURNALISM WRITING	17
MASC203	3	JOURNALISM WRITING	18
MASC203	4	JOURNALISM WRITING	18
MASC203	5	JOURNALISM WRITING	17
MASC203	901	JOURNALISM WRITING	17
MASC203	902	JOURNALISM WRITING	17
MASC204	1	STORY	16
MASC204	2	STORY	16
MASC204	3	STORY	16

MASC204	902	STORY	14
MASC300	2	TECHNICAL PROWESS	13
MASC300	3	TECHNICAL PROWESS	15
MASC300	901	TECHNICAL PROWESS	17
MASC301	901	GRAPHICS FOR JOURNALISM	9
MASC301	902	GRAPHICS FOR JOURNALISM	9
MASC303	2	REPORTING FOR PRINT AND WEB	10
MASC303	3	REPORTING FOR PRINT AND WEB	17
MASC303	901	REPORTING FOR PRINT AND WEB	16
MASC305	901	COPY EDITING	18
MASC333	3	PR WRITING & MEDIA RELATIONS	20
MASC333	902	PR WRITING & MEDIA RELATIONS	17
MASC334	1	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION I	16
MASC334	2	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION I	16
MASC334	901	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION I	14
MASC335	2	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION II	15
MASC335	3	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION II	17
MASC335	4	PR GRAPHICS & PRODUCTION II	17
MASC363	1	INTRO TO BROADCAST WRITING	19
MASC363	2	INTRO TO BROADCAST WRITING	12
MASC363	901	INTRO TO BROADCAST WRITING	11
MASC367	1	AUDIO & VIDEO JOURNALISM	15
MASC367	2	AUDIO & VIDEO JOURNALISM	16
MASC367	901	AUDIO & VIDEO JOURNALISM	11
MASC392	1	PERSPICUOUSNESS	18
MASC392	2	PERSPICUOUSNESS	17
MASC392	902	PERSPICUOUSNESS	19
MASC403	2	ADVANCED REPORTING	17
MASC415	L01	ADV VIDEO JOURNALISM	13

MASC415	L02	ADV VIDEO JOURNALISM	14
MASC439	1	PUBLIC REL CAMPAIGNS SRV LRN	17
MASC439	2	PUBLIC REL CAMPAIGNS SRV LRN	20
MASC439	903	PUBLIC REL CAMPAIGNS SRV LRN	10
MASC450	2	STYLE	17
MASC450	3	STYLE	18
MASC451	1	INVENTION	17
MASC451	2	INVENTION	17
MASC451	902	INVENTION	12
MASC459	2	JUDGMENT	10
MASC459	901	JUDGMENT	19
MASC460	2	ADV TELEVISION NEWSGATHERING	10
MASC460	3	ADV TELEVISION NEWSGATHERING	17
MASC461	1	THE DOCUMENTARY	9
MASC463	1	ADV RADIO NEWSGATHERING	5
MASC465	1	NEWSCASTING	15
MASC467	1	NONPROFIT PRJCT DVLPMNT SR LRN	8
MASC475	1	CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE SRV LRN	17
MASC475	701	HONR: CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE SL	3
MASC481	1	COMPLETENESS	17
MASC481	2	COMPLETENESS	20
MASC481	3	COMPLETENESS	9
MASC481	901	COMPLETENESS	6
MASC485	901	WEBSITE DESIGN	15

17. Total expenditures from all sources planned by the unit for the 2017 – 2018 academic year: \$3,881,693.00

Give percentage increase or decrease in three years: + 8.12%

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$3,068,928.00

18. 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.

For 2017-2018 the Robertson School has 22 full-time Teaching and Research faculty members. (TE = Tenure-eligible; note that VCU also has Administrative and Professional faculty, who at another university would typically be considered staff; A&P faculty are not listed here.)

Name	Rank, Status and Track	Sequence/concentration
Adams, James (Jay)	Asst. Prof., TE, Professional	Advertising/Creative
** Bajkiewicz, Timothy (Tim), Ph.D.	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Research	Journalism/Broadcast
Camden, Bridget	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Professional	Advertising/Creative
* Cheng, Hong, Ph.D.	Professor, Tenured, Research	Advertising/Strategic
Collins-Smith, Sean	Instructor, Term (Not TE)	Journalism/Broadcast
Guidry, Jeanine, Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Public Relations
Jennings, Marcel	Asst. Prof., TE, Professional	Advertising/Creative
Ji, Yi, Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Public Relations
Khodabandeh, Bizhan	Instructor, Term (Not TE)	Advertising/Creative
McIntyre, Karen, Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Journalism/Print-Online
Medina-Messner, Vivian	Instructor, Term (Not TE)	Journalism/Print-Online
†† Messner, Marcus, Ph.D.	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Research	Journalism/Print-Online
****Nicholson, June	Prof., Tenured, Professional	Journalism/Print-Online
† Oglesby, William (Bill), J.D.	Assoc. Prof., Term (Not TE)	Journalism/Broadcast
Perryman, Mallory, Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Journalism/Broadcast
Rose, Ashley	Asst. Prof., TE, Professional	Advertising/Strategic
Rowe, Peyton	Assoc. Prof., Term (Not TE)	Advertising/Creative
† Sherman, Scott	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Professional	Advertising/Creative
† Smith, Joshua (Josh)	Instructor, Term (Not TE)	Public Relations
Song, Baobao, Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Public Relations
*** South, Jeffrey (Jeff)	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Professional	Journalism/Print-Online
Thomas, Clarence, Ph.D.	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Research	Journalism/Broadcast

- * Director; teaches one course per year
- ** Associate Director; teaches two courses per year
- *** Director of Undergraduate Studies; teaching load reduced by one course per semester
- **** Director of Graduate Studies; teaching load reduced by one course per semester
- † Undergraduate Sequence Coordinator; teaching load reduced by one course per year
- †† Coordinator for Research and Innovation; teaching load reduced by one course per year

The following faculty members are no longer with the Robertson School as of Fall 2017, but were on faculty between Fall 2011 and Summer 2017. (Note: Rank as of leaving.)

Name	Rank, Status and Tenure Track	Sequence	Years on this faculty	Reason for leaving
Briones Winkler, Rowena, Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Public Relations	3 years; 2013-2016	Took a faculty position at another university; new spouse lives in Maryland
Byrne, Bradley (Puck)	Instructor, Term (Not TE)	Advertising/Creative	1 year; 2011-2012	Took a professional position out of the area
** Jin, Yan, Ph.D.	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Research	Public Relations	9 years; 2005-2014	Took a faculty position at another university
Martin, Ernie, Ph.D.	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Research	Public Relations	13 years; 2003-2016	Retired
Meganck, Shana, Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Public Relations	3 years; 2014-2017	Took a faculty position at another university
Park, Eunhae (Grace), Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Public Relations	1 year; 2014-2015	Medical
*** Sims, Will	Assoc. Prof., Tenured, Professional	Advertising/Creative	13 years; 2001-2014	Resigned
Spencer, Hailey	Instructor, Term (Not TE)	Public Relations	2 years; 2015-2017	Moved out of state to be with husband, a new medical doctor
Stewart, Sean	Instructor, Term (Not TE)	Public Relations	3 years; 2011-2014	Earned Ph.D. in VCU MATX program; took a faculty position at another university
* Turk, Judy, Ph.D.	Prof., Tenured, Research	Public Relations	11 years; 2002-2013	Retired (Emitera status)
Zhang, Yuan, Ph.D.	Asst. Prof., TE, Research	Journalism/Broadcast	7 years; 2009-2016	Took a faculty position at another university

* Former Director; reduced teaching load

** Former Interim Director (2011-2013); former Associate Director for Research (2013-2014); reduced teaching load

*** Former Associate Director; reduced teaching load

19. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in Spring 2017 and Fall 2017.

The Robertson School had 45 part-time/adjunct faculty in Spring 2017, and will have 46 part-time faculty in Fall 2017 (70% of whom also taught in Spring 2017). Twelve new adjuncts join the School for the Fall 2017 semester, one of whom has taught for us before.

Spring 2017 Robertson School part-time/adjunct faculty.

* = part-time/adjunct faculty who taught in both Spring and Fall 2017

Boyd, Leroy* Bryan, Emily (graduate class) Burkett, Diana* Caldwell, Jeffrey* Carey, Alexis* Carper, Howell Catrow, Ross* Closs, Rebekah* Collins, Jessica* Copeland, Vanessa* Crenshaw, Judith* Daniel, William* Daudani, Tara Davis, Alan* Davis, Elizabeth* DeVasher, William* Dick, Christina*	Dingess, Brandon* Dovi, Christopher Ellis, Brian* Ely, Meghan* Fletcher, Paul* Gannon, Kelly* Grant, Lindsay* Grier, Marjorie (graduate class) Guidry, Jeanine (completed Ph.D. Summer 2017; joining faculty full-time Fall 2017) Hancock, Janell* Harding, Jayne* Hervey, Pamela (graduate class) Hollingsworth Newby, Reba*	McPherson, Donald Moffitt, James* Murray, Mahogany* Neale, David* Owens, Mary Ann* Powell, Keat Reed, Raymond Ritter, Noel Roberts, Deborah (graduate class) Scott, Thomas* Spencer, Hawes* Stevens, Charles* Trickey, Sarah* Wade, Chester* Young, Ricardo*
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Fall 2017 Robertson School part-time/adjunct faculty.

* = part-time/adjunct faculty who taught in both Spring and Fall 2017

Bliley, Barbara Boyd, Leroy* Burkett, Diana* Caldwell, Jeffrey* Carey, Alexis* Catrow, Ross* Closs, Rebekah* Collins, Jessica* Copeland, Vanessa* Crenshaw, Judith* Daniel, William* Davis, Alan* Davis, Elizabeth* DeVasher, William* Dick, Christina* Dingess, Brandon*	Ellis, Brian* Ely, Meghan* Fletcher, Paul* Gannon, Kelly* Grant, Lindsay* Hancock, Janell* Hansen, Jeffrey Harding, Jayne* Herrinton, Tyler Hollingsworth Newby, Reba* Moffitt, James* Morrison, Joshua Mullen, Melissa Murray, Mahogany* Musick, Beth	Niblock, Jacqueline L. Owens, Mary Ann* Riddick, Thomas Saunders, Beth Scott, Thomas* Shuleeta, Brandon Smithson, Jolinda Spencer, Hawes* Staley, Corey Surber, Greg Trickey, Sarah* van Aartrijk, Noel Wade, Chester* Weatherford, Gregory Young, Ricardo*
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20. 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.

Academic Year	Total Graduates	Number 72+ hours outside mass comm	Percentage
2016-2017	290	290	100%
2015-2016	332	332	100%

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.

Virginia Commonwealth University, the product of a merger between the Richmond Professional Institute and the Medical College of Virginia in 1964, has become a thriving research-intensive university in the heart of Richmond serving a diverse student body. Journalism has been offered since VCU was founded. The program was first accredited in 1976. The School of Mass Communications began in 1978. The program was renamed the Richard T. Robertson School of Media & Culture in 2014 after receiving a gift from a prominent alumnus. The school offers sequences in advertising (creative & strategic); public relations and journalism, a small master's program and an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Media, Art & Text with the English department and the School of the Arts. The Robertson School, is the fourth largest of 21 units in the College of Humanities and Sciences. The director reports to the dean.

The school developed a comprehensive strategic plan with significant faculty input that was approved in 2016 and covers most of the areas relevant to the program. The faculty have made an effort to conform the plan to the university's strategic plan, Quest for Distinction. The administration and faculty have yet to translate that plan into a pragmatic action agenda that will strengthen their position within the College of Humanities and Sciences where their budget resides. With the university moving to a modified responsibility-centered management protocol next year, there is some urgency for the school to think more strategically. Those outside the unit see the school positioned well to become a campus leader in the university's desire to "Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact."

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

The school has a history of strong faculty governance. Committees function. The faculty meet regularly. The administration consults the faculty on major issues. The recent improvement in the administration of the school helps to perpetuate a high level of faculty governance and orient new faculty to the culture of the program. The lack of continuity in the leadership of the school over the past six years has meant that the levers of faculty governance have not always been pulled consistently, including assessment. There is currently a great need for the faculty to play a larger role in learning outcomes assessment.

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.

Since the last site team visit, the school has experienced three changes in leadership. When the director stepped down in 2010, an interim director from another department assumed leadership. There was an unsuccessful national search. A newly-tenured Robertson faculty member then became interim director from 2011 to 2013. A 2012-2013 national search ended with the hiring of the new director in July 2013. During previous years, relationships among the faculty had frayed and gaps in the administration of the department had developed. The current director gets high marks from faculty for creating a strong climate of collegiality and implementing procedures that make the school operate efficiently and productively. It is a much more positive, energized and focused unit today. The director is respected, liked and appreciated. He has made a special effort to mentor faculty at all levels. He has also reached out to industry professionals in the Richmond area and has pushed the school toward international initiatives. Those in other areas of the university admire the director's efforts to connect the school with other parts of the community. Some within the college and university would like to see the director become more strategic in his outlook, finding innovative ways within the budget and planning structure of the university to advance the Robertson School's interests. The school's associate director, who has strong administrative skills, has been a solid complement to the director.

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

The university and the school have a defined plan for selecting a director that was exercised through a national search in 2013 for the current director. The school recruited a 13-person search committee that included school faculty, professionals, outside faculty, the school's interim director and the college dean. The school's procedures state, "No director should be appointed over the objection of the school's faculty. Faculty approval or disapproval for this appointment shall be determined by a simple majority vote." For some reason, the interim director at the time did not follow through with a vote. Because the director has been well-received by the faculty, this has not been raised as an issue.

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

The university and school have procedures for airing grievances informally and formally. The team saw no issues relating to those procedures.

Summary: The Robertson School has made substantial progress under the current leadership team. Those inside and outside the unit see great progress, especially in terms of collegiality and administrative effectiveness. The school has a quality strategic plan that the faculty needs to activate in ways that promote its interests within the college and university. The university recognizes the school's ability to promote creative

partnerships, impressive experiential learning opportunities and sustained community engagement.

Overall evaluation compliance / non-compliance: 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.

VCU requires 120 hours for graduation. The Robertson School programs are at or below 48 credits of required courses for a total of 120 credits and students must earn at least 72 credits in courses outside 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.

The School provides a balance between conceptual and professional skills courses in order to meet the requirements of ACEJMC's 12 professional values and competencies. All majors in the school complete a two course core (6 credit hours) that includes: MASC 101 – Mass Communications and MASC 408 – Communications Ethics and Law. All majors except Advertising/Creative are required to complete MASC 493 Fieldwork/Internship. According to the self-study, the two core courses and required courses in the academic programs are mapped to the ACEJMC 12 values and competencies.

All students are required to pass MATH 131 Introduction to Contemporary Math and STAT 208 Statistical Thinking (or STAT 210 Basic Practice of Statistics) before they can be admitted to a sequence in the school.

Advertising:

The Advertising sequence is an effective blend of interesting courses that builds to a student-centered professionally oriented program. Students have the option of taking either Advertising with a concentration in Creative (155) or Strategic track (49). Faculty in both the Creative and Strategic track appear to be engaged in the industry, and students appreciate their career oriented approach. Given the Advertising major's strong creative focus, the school might consider exploring the National Advertising Student Competition as a class option in the future. The site team got the strong impression that students love the faculty. One commented that "professors are pushing us to do what we want to do."

Advertising/Creative Concentration (150 students):

Students in the Advertising/Creative concentration experience a hands-on, skill-building approach that positions them well for jobs in the industry. The faculty should be commended for maintaining strong industry connections that benefit their students and their own professional development. Two seniors commented that they loved the advertising major because of their professors.

Advertising/Strategic Concentration (48 students):

Students in the Advertising/Strategic concentration take classes on Empathy and Judgment, which help them add to their portfolio of work. One student, an Advertising Strategic major, said her professors “pushed me out of my comfort zone... so now she was not scared to take risks and feels fearless.” In order to maintain and advance this sequence additional full-time faculty will be needed, especially with more students pursuing a double concentration in Creative and Strategy.

Journalism/Broadcast (95 majors)

The Journalism/Broadcast sequence includes various writing and skills classes leading to a documentary or news casting capstone experience. Faculty are interested in providing a richer capstone experience so future plans include expanding options for additional skills courses.

Journalism/Print –Online (67 majors)

The Journalism/Print-Online concentration offers students the opportunity to work in the multiplatform environment. Course content includes a balance of theory and application with a digital focus. The Print-Online concentration requires 39 credit hours but requires no elective courses in the program.

Public Relations (179 majors)

The Public Relations major has a blend of theory and professional skills courses. As a certified program by PRSA, the majority of the public relations courses are applied. However, of the 36 public relations specific credit hours, 24 credits are skills-based. The public relations skills courses are within the appropriate range of under 20 students including the agency course. PR faculty recognize, however, there are only four public relations sequence faculty members, which seems unbalanced compared to the 10 journalism faculty members who have combined (broadcast and print/online) fewer students than PR. Likewise, advertising seems understaffed for strategic and creative combined, and public relations has lost the most faculty due to their accepting positions at other universities or leaving academia. The new faculty hires all have a doctorate degree, and those with limited professional experience were given local professional mentors.

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.

The MASC 101 Mass Communication class is only offered in an online format during the long semesters. It is offered in the summer on campus. While only a handful of students attended the student sessions, a few students expressed concern about the online format of the MASC 101 class and would have preferred to attend it on campus. One student mentioned the online course varied in content depending on the instructor. Another student was interested in taking a course focusing on various careers in communication.

Advertising:

The advertising faculty state that they “teach best practices” and students benefit. There is support for trying new things and one faculty member noted that “if you have an idea, there is just a ‘yes, let’s go do it’.” The advertising sequence coordinator provides a thorough teaching guide on key classes for adjuncts and new faculty that includes learning outcomes, grading information and advice for ways to help students succeed. The Teaching Guidelines for Story (MASC 204) also encourage faculty to inspire students. Helpful tips about grading and class management are in the guides and online. However, the syllabi of three sections of MASC 204 were inconsistent with regard to the VCU Catalog language and learning outcomes.

Journalism:

The sequence coordinator and faculty mentor new adjuncts and faculty. Adjuncts also can attend a workshop and review online content to help them prepare for classes. Syllabi for MASC 203 were not consistent with regard to the name of the class and learning outcomes.

Public Relations:

The public relations curriculum matches the prescribed curriculum of PRSA’s Certification in Education in Public Relations. PRSA granted initial certification for education in public relations in 2006 and reaffirmed its certification in 2012-13 academic year. The curriculum emphasizes social media as well as business management and marketing competencies. Students perceive the curriculum as rigorous, emphasizing writing as the most important skill and introducing them to new technologies and techniques that their adjunct professors are currently using. Public relations students are exposed to graphics and multimedia storytelling using video and audio equipment.

The introductory PR course is taught online and while they are required to read the text and complete quizzes and some assignments, students stated that lack of physical interaction is a weakness and that they prefer to have that course taught on campus. The public relations curriculum had been very flat, which became problematic because the students often did not have the knowledge or skills necessary to complete higher level courses. Additionally, the lack of prerequisites led to grade inflation in many public relations courses resulting in more than 60% of the students receiving A’s in courses without demonstrating the ability to write. Therefore, the faculty has recommended curricular changes to address these issues and to require adjunct and full-time faculty to

raise the standards for grading all assignments, especially those involving writing. In the public relations student meeting, students noticed the tougher grading practices this year.

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.)

During Fall 2017, the ratio in skills and laboratory sections did not exceed 20-1 ratio. The faculty and administration should be commended for providing the appropriate student-faculty ratio so students experience the optimum learning environment.

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.

Schools may award academic credit for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but credit should not exceed six semester credits (or nine quarter credit hours).

Students may take up to three semester hours (or their equivalent) at an appropriate professional organization where the unit can show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit's faculty and professionals

All sequences in the school, except the Advertising/Creative track, must complete a 3-credit hour class of Fieldwork/Internship before graduation. Faculty report that many of the Advertising/Creative students also complete internships and field experiences even though it is not a degree requirement.

Summary: The site team was impressed with the professional focus of the Robertson School. Students appreciate the industry savvy faculty who work hard to provide rich learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

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.

The school has maintained a diversity plan since 2003 and has consistently updated and revised it with the last revision done in 2015.

The plan defines diversity as including, “but is not limited to, differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, national origin, socioeconomic class, marital status, religion, political thought and academic freedom.” It also reaffirms a school-wide approach, “All faculty, staff and administrators have responsibility for achieving these diversity goals. The school’s plan is intended to empower all of those individuals, as well as students, to redress non-compliance with the principles of diversity that are detailed in this plan. To that end, this plan places the responsibility for addressing any issues or concerns that may be raised by students, faculty or staff with the Director of the school and/or other appropriate University officials.”

The plan addresses climate, recruiting and retention of students and faculty and curricular issues. The plan also includes an annual assessment mechanism by its standing diversity committee tracking progress toward achieving the plan’s goals and implementing corresponding strategies. The committee reports annually to the school’s faculty and at regular school meetings.

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.

A major part of the school’s diversity plan relates to the curriculum. Each of the syllabi reflect the following diversity statement that is included in the diversity plan.

“It is vital that students in this course, with guidance from the instructor, broaden their journalism/mass communications experiences by including in their course work people and subjects such as ethnic, racial and religious minorities, people with disabilities, the disadvantaged, gay men and lesbians and other similar groups. This includes but is not limited to developing a sensitivity to language and images that may create an appearance

of bias. The intent is to ensure that student work reflects the diversity of the community, and that students are exposed to diverse ideas and perspectives. In this class, it is the responsibility of the instructor and students to foster an environment that supports free expression.

“The VCU Robertson School of Media and Culture is committed to diversity in all aspects of its program, including providing a climate of inclusion, as well as addressing student and faculty hiring and retention, curriculum, research and scholarship and outreach and service. Students are encouraged to review the school’s Diversity Plan, which is posted on the school’s website.”

A review of syllabi showed compliance with this school mandate.

The curriculum has courses that are intended to enhance the unit’s value and competency associated with domestic diversity. In 2016, the faculty voted to require MASC 474 Diversity in the Media for all journalism majors, although the course had been an elective for many years. Although not yet reflected in advising graduation requirements, the course “examines historical and contemporary issues associated with the presence and portrayal of selected groups in/by the media in the United States. The course will examine groups based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion and other characteristics. Issues related to diversity and diversity awareness in advertising, journalism and public relations are also explored.” Students found this course to be interesting.

Although attendance at the sequences and general student sessions was low, the advertising students gave multiple examples of inclusion in their courses as did the journalism students who described the sensitivity needed to reach diverse sources/populations for quotes. However, the public relations students did not report learning much about diversity and inclusion in their introductory, writing or research courses. One senior public relations major said the MASC 338 Professionalism in Public Relations course did address diversity more specifically.

Furthermore, the curriculum includes several examples of classes related to global diversity issues including examples of assignments that explore diversity within social media on a global scale. Notable is the VCU’s Global Education Office grant awarded to one journalism, one public relations and one advertising faculty member to teach a special topics course called MASC 491/691, Communicators Without Borders during Summer 2016, an online course that partnered with a university in South Africa to create more constructive communication regarding South African social issues. Another faculty member won a VCU Summer International Teaching Fellowship to teach a course at Fudan University in Shanghai.

Additionally, the unit lists nine other courses that teach concepts related to domestic diversity. A review of syllabi found that most included related learning outcomes or readings related to diversity. Examples of assignments from the journalism and public relations course were specifically related to racial diversity; however, evidence from the creative and strategic advertising curriculum were not evident in the self-study. Students

and faculty in advertising reported that diversity is a standard part of conversation in classes and a major criterion for critique of their creative work. Journalism students articulated examples of how diversity plays a role in source selection and sensitivity in reporting. Public relations students in a graphics course attended by a site team member included diversity of people in their online advertising they created.

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.

The faculty is diverse with 10 percent being African American men, 5 percent being Hispanic/Latinos women, and 10 percent being two or more races. Females comprise 40 percent of the full-time faculty, which is lower than the gender composition of the student body; however, the part-time faculty slightly skews female with 52 percent and has 24 percent representing African American, Latino/Hispanic and two or more races.

In 2014 and 2016, the school had ten searches. Those pools included diverse candidates (between 24-49 percent female and 17-39 percent minority non-international) resulting in six female hires and four minority (non-international) hires. Of the new adjunct/part-time faculty hires, between 47-54 percent have been female and between 18-21 percent have been minority non-international.

Each new faculty member is assigned a mentor to help him or her adjust and become acclimated to campus and the school; this program aims to help retain diverse faculty. While gender and racial diversity has increased, the school lost seven female full-time faculty members, four from minority populations, for personal reasons unrelated to the climate of the school. One minority female did not achieve tenure. The dean and director attempted to retain those who left for personal reasons, but they were unsuccessful. The school was able to hire three new females to help maintain the gender balance lost with the four-female faculty departures.

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.

The student body reflects higher levels of diversity for African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos than the Richmond local population and the university overall. The retention rates among African American, Hispanic and other minority students vary. There is no specific program aimed at retaining the African American, Hispanic and other minority students; however, the university's office of multicultural affairs has programs that the school's students find supportive. The advisers in the school serve as African American, Hispanic and other minority students' first level of support, and scholarships and internships are available specifically for this population. One of the academic advisers is an African American male. The racial and ethnic minority students who participated in the general and sequence-specific meetings reported feeling supported and included saying that VCU promotes diversity and inclusion as part of its culture unlike some of the universities and colleges from which they had transferred.

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.

Evidence of the school's plan being enacted to enhance an inclusive environment is that 17 of the faculty and staff have become "Safe Zone" trained to support and serve as allies to LGBTQ students, 20 have become "Support Zone" trained to help students suffering with emotional distress in and out of the classroom, and 15 faculty and staff have become "Green Zone" trained to help support military affiliated students. These trained faculty and staff put zone affiliated logo stickers on their door so that students wanting such support can more easily find it. Faculty and staff who display these affiliated logo stickers say that students do come by and thank them for their support.

To emphasize the importance of creating a climate free of harassment and discrimination, the faculty include the "Keep Diversity Alive: Diversity Committee Update" as the first report of each faculty meeting and they track and formally report progress on their diversity plan. Additionally, the school has hosted high profile guest lectures related to race and gender as it applies to current events such as "Birth of a Nation" and President Trump's relationship with the media. Students say that they are free to express themselves and are respected for their individuality. The senior associate provost for academic affairs, the dean, and other colleagues present at the site visit luncheon praised the school for being a leader on campus for diversity, internationalization and inclusion.

Summary: The school is committed to domestic and international diversity and inclusion and is seen as a leader at the university. The student body is more diverse than the local community and the university. The full-time and part-time faculty have representation of African American, Hispanic/Latino and multi-race professors. The faculty and students alike claim the school has an inclusive environment. Domestic and global diversity is discussed in classes, and the diversity plan is being implemented, monitored and evaluated regularly.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

Table 6. Faculty Populations, Full-time and Part-time

Show numbers of female, male, minority, white and international faculty members and the percentages they represent of the unit’s total faculty. (Report international faculty the same way the university reports them.)

Note: These data are for the 2016-2017 academic year, while Part I: General Information lists faculty information for Fall 2017. Updated information will be provided to the ACEJMC site team.

Academic year: 2016 – 2017 Full-time faculty

Race/Ethnicit	Femal		Male	
	N	%	N	%
Asian	.	.	1	5
Black/African American	.	.	2	10
Hispanic/Latin	1	5	.	.
Two or More Races	2	10	1	5
White	5	25	8	40
Total	8	40	12	60

Source: VCU Office of Planning and Decision Support

Note: Each faculty is counted once based on their status (FT/PT) for the latest academic period on record.

Academic year: 2016 – 2017 Part-time/adjunct faculty

Race/Ethnicit	Femal		Male	
	N	%	N	%
Black/African	6	12	3	6
Hispanic/Latin	.	.	1	2
Two or More Races	2	4	.	.
White	19	37	21	40
Total	27	52	25	48

Source: VCU Office of Planning and Decision Support

Note: Each faculty is counted once based on their status (FT/PT) for the latest academic period on record.

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 site team reviewed written criteria covering search procedures for full-time and part-time/adjunct faculty, as well as materials covering expectations and evaluations for those employed in these positions. These included teaching guidelines. It found them comprehensive, clear, and they adequately explained expectations.

The Robertson School's self-study reported 22 full-time faculty for the Fall of 2017, which is four more than the previous accreditation visit. The school has two tenure tracks: research and professional. The self-study says this "balance helps to ensure that research faculty are in step with the professions and that professional faculty gain from the conceptual and theoretical developments that are both fundamental to the professions and that drive change."

The full-time faculty includes two tenured professors, with the remainder being a mix of associate professors (including six tenured) and assistant professors (all tenure-eligible). The majority of full-time faculty have professional experience, with roughly two-thirds having ten years or more of experience. About a third identify as from underrepresented minorities and/or as two or more races, and 40 percent are female.

The self-study says the school is "especially proud" of its part-time/adjunct faculty which, as of the Spring of 2017, numbered 45. For spring semester 2017, four part-time/adjunct faculty taught nine hours and four taught six hours. The remaining 36 taught three hours.

School leaders, faculty and students point to part-time/adjuncts as a net plus, noting that they bring "real world" experience to the classroom. For the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 academic terms, the self-study said, part-time/adjuncts averaged 18.5 years of professional experience. The site team heard repeatedly from students that they considered part-time/adjuncts to be of high quality who benefit the school because of their connections to industry. Yet some students expressed concern about part-time/adjunct professors' accessibility and desired to have more full-time instructors because of that.

But the site team was struck by the imbalance between full-time and part-time/adjunct faculty. Many full-time faculty members cited this as a problem, and the self-study acknowledged it. While adjuncts outnumber full-time faculty by roughly 2-to-1 in the Robertson School, the ratio is reversed for the university as a whole (about 2,200 full-time faculty versus 1,000 part-time/adjuncts). The self-study offered some explanation for the growth of part-time/adjuncts: “Since 2011-2012 the School has conducted, and hired candidates from, 16 successful searches for full-time faculty. During this same time, the School lost 10 full-time faculty members. Adjuncts were hired to cover these additional courses typically covered by full-time faculty.”

The consequence of not having enough full-time faculty was addressed directly in the self-study: “The School does not have, and has not had, enough full-time teaching and research faculty to consistently teach the necessary majority of core and required courses.” Even with the school’s four additional faculty in Fall 2017, the percentage of core and required classes taught by full-time faculty “is either below or hovering around 50%.”

The self-study continues: “The Robertson School and College administration are aware of the high percentage of core and required classes taught by part-time/adjunct faculty, and School administration has worked with College administration to address and decrease these percentages.”

The insufficient number of full-time faculty impacts the teacher-student ratio for classes. This is addressed specifically in the self-study: “The School needs more full-time teaching faculty lines to bring its student-faculty ratio from 47:1 in 2017-2018 down to the College of Humanities and Sciences-desired 30:1. The School is still too dependent on part-time/adjunct faculty in teaching.”

The Robertson School director has made superiors aware of the need for more full-time faculty. When the new dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences arrived at VCU in the early part of 2016, she requested that the director identify issues that he viewed as “your biggest impediments to your success.” In an April 2016 memo to the dean, the director wrote: “First, the school has desperate needs for full-time faculty members.”

“Although adjunct faculty – all media professionals from the Richmond area – make valuable contributions to the school,” he continued, the imbalance “gives rise to issues like the disparities in teaching quality, the instability for the school’s teaching faculty, and the lack of contributions to the school’s research and service.”

In a March 2017 memo to the college’s Associate Dean for Finance and Administration requesting authorization for more full-time faculty hires, the director wrote that “faculty lines is a top priority in the Robertson School’s strategic plan.”

The site team repeatedly heard – and concurred – that the lack of sufficient full-time faculty is outside the control of the director, who has continued to seek new faculty lines. “We have wonderful faculty, but we need more,” said the head of the school’s Advisery Board. The university’s Senior Vice Provost acknowledged that the Robertson School

has been “starved of faculty.” A veteran full-time Robertson faculty member observed that “we’re kind of stuck” because the school hasn’t been given sufficient funding by university leaders to hire more full-time faculty. Also, the lack of enough full-time faculty impacts the extent of full-time faculty engagement with students and student organizations. As the university moves to a new budget model that rewards credit hours taught, the Robertson School hopes to justify additional funding for new faculty lines based on its heavy teaching load.

By the next visit, the school should demonstrate enhanced oversight of its part-time/adjunct faculty to ensure quality teaching, consistency among sections of courses and assessed student learning. Furthermore, the school should create a feasible plan that aligns the school’s number of full-time faculty of various appointment types with its strategic plan. The key to improvement rests with approval of this plan by the dean and the central administration.

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.

There is evidence of full-time faculty taking advantage of development opportunities. Of special note was the Robertson School’s robust fund for faculty travel, which is typically budgeted at \$40,000/year.

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

Full-time faculty are evaluated annually. The director reviews the evaluation and a current CV before responding with his written evaluation, before meeting with the faculty member, who signs the director’s evaluation following their discussion. The dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences then reviews the evaluation. Subsequently, the director and the dean meet to discuss the evaluations and make recommendations. The annual evaluation form for Robertson School full-time faculty is the same used throughout the College of Humanities and Science.

Part-time/adjunct faculty are, according to the self-study, “informally evaluated” by the director, associate director and the relevant sequence coordinator. Students evaluate part-time/adjuncts in the same manner as used to evaluate full-time faculty.

In interviews by the site team, several full-time faculty members worried about ensuring adequate training and monitoring of part-time/adjuncts. An April 2014 “Action Plan” for the Robertson School, which outlined areas for improvement that could be addressed without additional funding, noted the need to “provide more support for and oversight of adjuncts.”

The self-study noted that the school has offered training for part-time/adjunct faculty on effective teaching. During the Fall of 2016 and the Fall of 2017, training sessions were held on three consecutive nights and part-time/adjuncts were requested to attend at least one session. The self-study stated that “about 65% of adjuncts attended.” The training sessions covered a range of topics, including effective syllabus design and grading standards.

To ensure what one full-time faculty called “quality control,” part-time/adjuncts are often paired with full-time faculty who serves as a mentor.

(e) The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship and the quality of education that the unit provides.

Robertson full-time faculty members appear to be highly regarded by students and those outside the unit. “Students love the (full-time) faculty,” said the university’s assistant director of career services. The head of the Robertson School Advisery Board said full-time faculty are “viewed as thought leaders on campus.” A journalism student said of the faculty: “You feel the passion of the professors. They’re definitely invested in us and our futures.”

SUMMARY: Full-time faculty members are well-qualified with a mix of professional experience and academic expertise. They are respected within the College of Humanities and Science, and across campus. Students praised the faculty, noting especially its eagerness to provide personalized attention. However, the imbalance between full-time and part-time/adjuncts is a problem. There are not enough full-time faculty to teach core and required classes, and the imbalance has caused a student-teacher ratio that is too high.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: NON-COMPLIANCE

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

It is evident that scholarship and creative activity are an important part of the Robertson School. During this self-study time period, Robertson School faculty produced 762 pieces of scholarship, with 387 pieces of refereed traditional or juried creative work. The number of research/creative pieces of scholarship is more than twice as many as was reported during the last self-study. Eighteen of the 25 faculty members (72%) received an award or honor, with close to half having received an internal or external grant.

Site visit team members were impressed with the faculty connections to industry and the opportunity to engage and collaborate with other faculty across campus. With faculty in both research and professional tracks, faculty are active in their own discipline which adds value to the school, college and university.

The school supports scholarship and creative activities by providing a competitive study-research leave; two faculty members have received this benefit during the self-study time period. In addition, the school has generous faculty travel funding to support scholarship and creative activities.

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

The Robertson School has a set of promotion and tenure guidelines, dated March 2014. But as noted in the 2012 accreditation site visit report, the guidelines explain the review process but do not clearly define or quantify specific expectations. More specific deliverables would be helpful so faculty have clear expectations.

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 Robertson School's Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for research faculty states "No absolute quantity of work will be specified, given the diversity of publishing opportunities that exists. The successful candidate will present a record of continuous and regular work, published or presented in selective and high quality venues." The guideline document goes on to specify "the following activities for promotion and tenure are not limited to those listed here nor are all of those activities listed here required." Books, book chapters, monographs, scholarly journal articles, refereed conference papers, grants competitively awarded that support research resulting in publication and/or publication in significant venues, etc.

The Robertson School's Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for professional faculty states "No absolute quantity of work will be specified, given the diversity of contributions that

may be made. The successful candidate will present a record of continuous and regular work, published, presented and disseminated in high quality venues.

While the guideline document is thorough with regard to explaining the various activities needed for tenure and promotion, it is unclear about the number and frequency of the deliverables needed to achieve advancement. The director has made it a priority to provide direction and mentorship for new faculty. New tenure track faculty are now coached to strive for two refereed journal articles or book chapters annually. Continued mentoring should provide faculty with a clearer path to tenure and promotion.

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.

During the accreditation time period, Robertson School faculty received 93 awards and honors, published 37 book chapters, published 98 refereed journal articles, presented 148 conference papers, and were recognized with 101 juried creative works.

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

Faculty appear to be supportive of the current promotion and tenure structure and review process. New faculty are now encouraged to produce two articles, book chapters or creative works annually.

Summary: The school's leadership has done much to create a culture that fosters both research and creative collaboration. Research and professional faculty in the school greatly value scholarship, as evidenced by their more than 760 academic and creative works over the past five years.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: COMPLIANCE

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit	Full Professors (3)	Associate Professors (10)	Assistant Professors (9)	Other Faculty• (3)	Totals (25)
Awards and Honors	93	4	48	35	6	18
Grants Received Internal	30	0	14	7	9	11
Grants Received External	30	2	25	2	1	10
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	0	0	0	0	0	0
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	2	2	0	0	0	1
Books Edited	1	1	0	0	0	1
Book Chapters	37	5	23	7	2	10
Monographs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Articles in Refereed Journals	98	4	53	38	2	15
Refereed Conference Papers	148	3	59	68	12	16
Invited Academic Papers	7	0	2	5	0	2
Encyclopedia Entries	0	0	0	0	0	0
Book Reviews	9	0	8	1	0	5
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	10	0	7	3	1	3
Juried Creative Works	101	0	6	88	7	3
Non-juried Creative Works	92	0	12	39	41	4
Other (please specify)	104	8	87	7	2	8
Total	762	35	344	300	83	107

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.

There are now three full-time academic advisers for Robertson students, as well as a full-time career adviser, all of which has significantly improved since the last accreditation period. Their physical space has also been enhanced, as part of the renovation of the Student Services Center in the Temple Building, so that they are located in a central space where students can more readily find them.

There are three key “check in” points with students. The first occurs when students declare themselves to be a Mass Communications major (typically at the end of their sophomore year, but many students transfer in throughout each school year). Those who come into the university with that major are first seen by university advising during their freshman year. These students must complete a Change of Major workshop. The second checkpoint takes place once students are enrolled in one of Robertson’s required classes (MASC 203 or 204). At this time, as the students petition to enter a sequence, the Robertson School advisers prepare an individualized graduation plan for each student that lays out all the courses they will need to take to meet the requirements of each of the school’s five concentrations. The last check point is done with seniors to ensure they are on track for graduation. It is initiated by the Coordinator of Student Services before these students can register for their last semester. All students must attend a graduation workshop. Throughout their time in Robertson, students have access to DegreeWorks, an online system that helps them stay on track with their major/minor requirements, and includes the recommendations from the advising staff on their proposed plan of study.

Students reported high levels of satisfaction with the advising process, noting that the Coordinator of Student Services, Natasha Long is “amazing”, and that Maggie McDearmon, Career Development Adviser, who is in charge of internships and career development is “so thorough.” One student commented that she had been scared to do an internship but that Maggie “made it easy.”

b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

Students reported that all of the faculty make themselves available for assistance and/or advice. They noted that faculty members help them find internships and prepare for their first jobs out of college. The school’s Handbook lists requirements for full time faculty to have posted office hours (minimum of 3 hours/week). Part time/adjunct faculty are required to be available for students, with most doing so just before or just after the classes they teach. Some students expressed concern about the availability of adjunct faculty and slow response time to email. Also, the online instruction classes provide a stumbling block to some students in getting acclimated to the school.

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

As noted above, the three required check-ins with all students include oversight of the number of hours that each student must fulfill, such as the 72-hour rule, and number of credits within and outside the major. The advising staff strongly emphasize at each check-in point, and with each interaction with students, both the 72-hour rule, and other university requirements (such as 45 hours of upper-level coursework). These are highlighted in the paper records shared with each student, as well as the online system.

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.

Within the school, the largest major-related student organizations are represented: Ad Club, PRSSA, and SPJ. Each has a faculty adviser, and meets on a regular basis, with guest speakers, workshops, and off-campus company visits. While the advertising sequence has retained its AAF membership, it is not currently actively participating in the National Student Advertising Competition due to lack of a faculty member to lead it, as well as the cost of student dues that this entails. The Ad Club has been tasked with exploring the possibility to become involved in this venture. With a larger full-time faculty, the program would seem large enough to support some of the diversity-centered student organizations, such as NABJ or AHA.

The campus media organizations are not officially part of the Robertson School, but many students do get involved in the Student Media Center, located on campus, where they are able to work on the radio station, newspaper, magazines, or sports-focused website. Advertising students work there too, selling ad space in the print and digital offerings.

The list of extracurricular opportunities provided in the self-study was extensive and wide-ranging, including trips to New York and Washington, DC, to visit companies or attend conferences; networking functions and guest speakers on campus; and portfolio reviews with practitioners for several classes. Study abroad programs have been introduced by individual faculty members, such as trips to Amsterdam, and Dublin/London.

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.

As of this year, the school is able to access all of the enrollment, retention, and graduation rate information from the university's Office of Planning & Decision Support, thanks to a technology/software upgrade to allow approved personnel to do so. The data are shared both with faculty and the school's Advisory Board. An early-fall faculty meeting includes extensive discussion of the most recent data, all of which is also published on its website. Overall, the data show that the school is on par with, or

outperforming the university in terms of its retention and graduation rates. Its enrollment has declined in recent years, which the school believes is due to a stricter enforcement of the incoming and ongoing minimum 2.5 GPA. That requirement has also helped with graduation levels.

Summary: The Robertson School has improved and expanded its student advising services since the last accreditation report, with noteworthy results. Students are well monitored by a caring and competent advising staff who work hard to ensure that they stay on track for graduation. Outside of the classroom, students have an array of extracurricular opportunities available to them. They are actively engaged in student media and clubs, although a larger full-time faculty might enable the school to expand further in this area.

Overall evaluation: Compliance/Non-Compliance: 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 school has a stable budget that it receives annually from the College of Humanities & Sciences. Its operating budget is \$168,000 per year, \$40,000 of which the school devotes to faculty travel. New equipment purchases and facilities upgrades come from a state-supported funds for equipment and a fund supported by student fees. Annual equipment and facilities allocations have ranged from \$172,059 to \$224,371 -- \$905,158 over the past five years. These funds have met several needs for the school including TV studio and computer lab upgrades, classroom improvements and remodeling the student services area. While the uncertainty of the annual allocations makes long-range planning difficult, the school has been able to meet nearly all of its needs during the past six years.

With the naming of the school, it received \$1.3 million. Half of that has been placed in an endowment that will soon be paying out around \$25,000 per year. The other half is being held for improvements if the school can secure more space, which is likely by 2020. The leadership needs to think more deliberately about how these new funds can make the greatest difference in the school's future.

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.

Despite the school receiving three new faculty lines since the last ACEJMC review, it still lacks an adequate number of full-time faculty to meet the needs of the fourth largest academic program in the College of Humanities and Sciences. Currently, there are twice as many adjuncts teaching as full-time faculty. One area where the infusion of new money has made a huge difference is academic advising. The addition of two advising positions, to three in total, has improved the quality of student services significantly.

The school has been treated fairly in the allocation of technology and facilities fees. The college recognizes the technology-intensive nature of the school and the value that technology provides for experiential learning. The funds have made a very positive difference in the operation of the school.

The adjunct issue is a much more challenging one. Although the Robertson School has nearly 25 percent of the 200 adjuncts employed in the College of Humanities and Sciences, reducing that number does not appear to be a priority issue. The site team was confused when the dean referred to the school as a "small" unit of the college, but later realized that she was referring to faculty size rather than student majors.

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

The Robertson School occupies most of the first two floors (roughly 20,000 sq. feet) of the four-story T. Edward Temple Building, constructed almost 30 years ago and named after VCU's second president. The space is adequate, but cramped. The school's director and faculty members say more space is needed. Classroom and office space is scarce in the building, as it is across the university. The dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences agrees the Robertson School needs more space and told the site team that it may be able to expand into the upper floors of the Temple Building if a planned new college building is constructed in the next few years (target completion date: 2020). That would allow other units of the college to move to the new building, thus freeing space for Robertson.

Since the last site team visit, the existing Robertson School space has benefitted from university-funded upgrades. About \$66,000 was spent in 2014 on new tables and chairs. Each of the school's labs was equipped with a \$30,000 teaching station with Internet connectivity. Looking ahead, students told the site team they would like an "open lab" that they can access at any time, as well the need for collaborate works spaces throughout the building.

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 Robertson School controls three general use classrooms, which each accommodate between 20 and 30 students. There are 13 first floor offices and 24 second floor offices (including the main school office). Together, they are barely enough to house the Robertson faculty and staff.

There are numerous labs, all equipped with up-to-date hardware and software. They include three Mac graphic computer labs, three PC computer labs and a dedicated PC video edit lab. Combined, these labs have 127 student work stations.

At the time of the previous site visit, the unit operated with an aging TV studio with no "live" capability and a set that was originally built by the university's theater department. In the latter part of 2011, shortly after that visit, the school was authorized to spend \$150,000 to upgrade the TV facilities. And in mid-2015, the school received a state-of-the-art set from a local TV affiliate as it upgraded its own set.

Students and faculty say there is generally good access to equipment and that it is well-maintained. Several students said there are occasional shortages of equipment to be checked-out for assignments. The school's leadership is aware of the constant need for adequate funds to periodically upgrade computers, software and equipment.

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

VCU has an impressive main library and library services. The University Librarian reports that the facility and its services are heavily used by VCU students and faculty, including those in the Robertson School.

Summary: The Robertson School's facilities are adequate, but cramped, and more space is needed. There have been significant upgrades in recent years. Equipment, both hardware and software, is up-to-date. The school's budget is sufficient, but more funding is needed for new full-time faculty lines.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: 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.

While the school has collected some information to maintain contact with its alumni, such as the required LinkedIn profile all capstone classes enforce, it is unclear how successful that effort has been to date, given the relatively low number of alumni listed on LinkedIn (1,812) or in the social media channels (Facebook – 924 followers, Twitter – 1,593 followers, Instagram – 514 followers, and Snapchat – 55 followers).

The appointment of a full-time Assistant Director for Development and Alumni Relations would seem to be a great step in the right direction. The school has established quantitative goals for that person in terms of the number of alumni to be reached, although it is unclear when these goals were established and what timeframe they are supposed to occur within.

Regarding engagement with professionals, several classes routinely bring those people to students (or vice versa), particularly for capstone classes. Portfolio events occur each semester for advertising (Style – MASC 450, Invention – MASC 451), public relations (Agency – MASC 439) and journalism (MASC 475 - Capital News Service). Students are given opportunities to interact with professionals in classes such as MASC 338 – Professionalism in Public Relations, or MASC 403 – Advanced Reporting. Professionals are regularly brought to campus as guest speakers to student organizations such as SPJ, PRSSA, and Ad Club.

The Robertson Advisory Board, which was launched in 2007, meets twice each year on campus. It consists of 17 members (including the director), one-third of whom are alumni of VCU. They help provide professional support (internships, career development) for students, as well as look for ways to help generate additional funds for the program.

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.

The faculty are engaged in many organizations and activities related to professional practice, such as Society of Professional Journalists, One Club, Richmond Ad Club, and PRSSA. They have served as officers and on boards, participated on judging panels, spoken at local and national conferences, and worked with local nonprofits. They are seen by colleagues on campus as thought leaders in the local community.

In the area of communication issues, faculty have also been actively engaged. Programs have included a forum for the *Virginia Senate District 10 Election Town Hall*, and “Birth of a Nation, Birth of a Movement: The African American Outcry in Virginia and Nationwide.” There have been more than 40 speakers brought to campus since the last accreditation period. Faculty are well supported here by the school director.

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.

Here again, this faculty is very well supported by its director and the school to maintain a high level of engagement in academic organizations related to journalism and mass communication. These include national and international groups such as AEJMC, AAA, ICA, with nearly all of the full-time faculty participating in AEJMC. Indeed, one assistant professor who previously worked in industry noted that his colleagues had helped those coming from industry to get involved in the more academic associations, giving guidance on submitting panel proposals or papers. Faculty are well supported here with generous travel stipends for conferences.

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 Robertson School sets the bar in the university, with its diligent use of service learning within the classes it offers. There are 12 courses so designated, which means that VCU’s Division of Community Engagement is involved in assisting and monitoring their success. Students also receive an indicator on their transcript of a SVC LRN identifier. Faculty are also very committed to civic causes and projects. These include ad hoc projects for community organizations, or larger scale efforts such as the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program, which ran during the summer from 2012-2016, bringing Iraqi students to the U.S. to tour (NYC and DC) and to study at the VCU campus.

As noted above, in addition, the school has brought many guest speakers to campus to address pressing issues related to media, politics, and society. These include the Virginia Senate forum held in 2015, and a Black History Month event in 2016. Last but not least, the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame, which was launched in honor of an alumnus in 1986, is designed to recognize on an annual basis professionals from the state who have had exceptional careers in advertising, public relations, journalism or new media. The 2017 event was postponed in order to plan a larger 30th anniversary event in 2018. Nominations are being accepted now and a task force has been created, working with the Advisery Board, to make the occasion more momentous.

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

Through 2014, the Robertson School was an active participant in an annual Virginia High School Journalism Workshop. Unfortunately, that program was canceled due to a lack of funding, and since then, the unit’s activity to support scholastic journalism appears to have been fairly minimal and ad hoc, with just three citations of activities related to

judging high school student work. It does seem that this is an area of opportunity, recognized by the director, to promote all the excellent programs that the Robertson School has to offer, and build up its appeal among future generations of college students.

Summary: There are many ways that the Robertson School works to advance journalism and mass communications programs through its professional and public service activities. The faculty are engaged and active in both academic and professional organizations, and are seen as leaders on campus in terms of their community engagement and public service. There are opportunities to expand connections with alumni, and to reengage with area high schools to ensure that both past and future students of the program are as passionate and excited about the school as are current students.

Overall evaluation: Compliance/Non-Compliance: 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 the Council.

The school clearly defines its 12 professional values and competencies and those align with ACEJMC’s. Each of these 12 are mapped to specific classes in which these values and competencies are to be taught and learned.

- Who is in charge of the assessment program (e.g., administrator, sequence coordinator or faculty committee)?

The associate director of the school is the designated administrator to work with learning outcomes assessment, submitting annual reports to the university through its WEAVE online system. Leadership shifts in the school and continual fluctuations in faculty and sequence coordinators led to a failure to report and use data for decision-making. As a result of the 2013-14 VCU Academic Program Review, the school faculty voted to make the assessment report part of its strategic plan. In 2017, the school created a refined assessment plan with streamlined, easier to manage direct and indirect measures. The associate director and the undergraduate studies director also participated in the university’s assessment academy to help prepare them to lead the renewed assessment effort.

- How has the unit verified that core and required courses cover all 12 of ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies?

The school undertook an analysis of the core and required courses to ensure all of the 12 professional values and competencies were addressed in classes. The 2017 revised curriculum map provides evidence of this verification.

- How has the unit ensured that the syllabuses for these courses state learning outcomes that address the values and competencies appropriate for each course?

In 2013-14, the sequence coordinators and the undergraduate studies director were tasked with providing more support and oversight for adjuncts with the aim of improving inclusion of related outcomes. According to 2017 faculty meeting minutes, the school’s faculty recommitted to this process. The site team’s review of the Fall 2017 syllabi indicates a general inclusion of these values and competencies.

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

The school has had a written assessment plan since 2008. During the last accreditation visit, the team noted the school had “a good assessment program... There is significant evidence that the school had completed the assessment loop from collecting and analyzing data to improving its program.” However, with administrative and faculty changes since that review, the plan was not implemented as designed and it was revised multiple times in an attempt to improve it with the latest version being passed by the faculty in Spring 2017. The current and previous plans have both direct and indirect measures designed to assess learning; however, the school’s administrators found previous plans “complicated and onerous to manage.” The self-study said that its previous plans’ “measurements were insufficient to supply the appropriate data that faculty could use to implement change.” This 2017 plan is too new to demonstrate any findings that have influenced curricular and co-curricular improvements.

- What direct measures of assessment does the unit use, where in the curriculum and when?

The previous direct measures included a pre-post test that was administered in all sequences through 2013 but never analyzed and portfolio reviews in two sequences which were not tied to the 12 values and competencies during the period of review.

- What indirect measures does it use, where and when?

Multiple indirect measures were included in the school’s plans including internship supervisor evaluations/surveys, awards, exit surveys, and exit interviews. The indirect measures of internship supervisor surveys and tracking of student awards were implemented consistently during the self-study period of review. The senior exit group interview was not conducted during the review period. The exit survey did not result in a usable sample size and the instrument was not reflective of learning outcomes, values or competencies.

- Are these measures effective for assessing ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies?

No, the measures are not effective for assessing ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies. Although the site team’s review of the pre-post exams, surveys and internship forms indicated clear alignment with the values and competencies, data was not compiled and analyzed in a systematic format or reported annually to the faculty or used to improve the curriculum. However, the indirect data, particularly internship site supervisors’ evaluations of interns, did provide support that the majority of supervisors ranked interns as performing at very good or excellent for 10 of the 12 measures.

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

Between 2009-2017 sporadic collection of assessment data occurred, and little evidence was found connecting curriculum and instruction improvements to assessment findings. The direct measures of pre-post-tests in writing courses administered from 2011 to 2014 did not result in usable data to improve learning the stated values and competencies. The direct measure of portfolio review completed in 2013 and 2017 also did not result in any usable data to improve learning the stated values and competencies.

- How does the unit collect and analyze the findings and identify unsatisfactory learning of specific values and competencies?

The school is required to submit annual reports through VCU's WEAVE online assessment system demonstrating how it collects and analyzes findings and identifies meeting or not meeting target measurements. However, a review of the school's WEAVE assessment reports shows vague and incomplete reporting, a failure to specifically link data to targets for the school's standards of learning (ACEJMC's 12 values and competencies), and a failure to link the school's action plans to unsatisfactory achievements. For instance, the 2016-17 WEAVE submission included the internship supervisor surveys, only 2007 and 2010 exit interview data, and unanalyzed data from pre-post tests conducted from 2009-2013.

However, in the self-study, the school did report making some enhancements to its internship program based on feedback from the participants and to its approach to coaching students on awards based on its award and competition tracking data. Other curricular changes reported in the self-study were loosely based on the portfolio reviews and the exit surveys. For example, the journalism faculty voted to make MASC 474 Diversity in the Media a required course for all journalism students and reordered its MASC 361 History and Development of Journalism to MASC 261 because students had uneven foundational understanding of diversity and press freedoms as foundational knowledge. In 2016 the advertising sequence faculty created a new course, MASC 317 Visual Acuteness, because students needed higher-level skills in "the use and presentation of images and information." Yet no data was presented to the site team from any specific assessment finding to link these curricular improvements. While these are concrete examples of changes, the new plan should make it easier to demonstrate and link curricular changes to assessment data, findings and analysis.

- What specific values and competencies had graduating classes not mastered satisfactorily?

No evidence was found to demonstrate mastery or lack of mastery of the 12 values and competencies by the graduating class because not all students participate in the direct measures (including completing internships or participating in a formal portfolio review) during the period under review and no reports were generated where such a finding could be determined.

- How does the unit decide how to address these areas of concern and what actions did it take to do so?

There was no clear description of how determinations of what areas of concern need to be addressed included in the self-study for the period under review. Moving forward, the Assessment and Accreditation Task Force will take the lead and annual reports to the sequences and faculty will happen. Additionally, the associate provost for academic affairs noted that a new university system is going to be adopted that will make linking standards of learning, measures, data/findings, analysis and program changes easier.

- How does the unit evaluate whether its actions overcame the weaknesses in student learning and what were the results?

Although the WEAVE system requires progress on implementing action plans, the school did not report on any progress toward achieving plans dating back to 2004 or even 2012 which still appeared in the 2016-17 report.

- Was the program of data analysis and action effective for identifying and overcoming unsatisfactory student learning?

No, the self-study, the faculty and school administrators indicate the previous assessment data analysis was ineffective and led to their inability to clearly identify, report and create plans related to unsatisfactory student learning.

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

Alumni are included in informal assessment and provide feedback on curriculum and instruction via the advisory board and meetings held by faculty with alumni. Students across sequences and the dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, of which the school is a part, said that the school could do more to strengthen alumni engagement.

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

The faculty has consistently engaged professionals in its portfolio assessment. Internship supervisors have been regular contributors to assessment. Industry award and scholarship committees provide evidence of professional involvement in assessment.

In May 2017, the public relations sequence coordinator, with the support of the school's director, established a PR Summer Task Force with area public relations professionals. This group met to discuss course development and changes. Using key discussion guides based on previous public relations faculty feedback on student performance in their classes as foundational assessment data input for decision-making, curricular changes were recommended and then vetted by the sequence coordinator and the three new public relations faculty members in August 2017. In the meeting minutes and on the curriculum proposal forms, each of the recommendations was clearly drawn from the assessment data. For example, recognizing that students' writing across the board was not strong could be tied to lack of sequencing of public relations courses and a failure of English

courses to teach or reinforce writing; therefore, the sequence proposed requiring an Advanced English Writing course, emphasizing business writing, which the English Department is supportive of offering. Furthermore, recommendations on how to improve assessment were made.

Summary: While the school was commended for its “good assessment program” during its last accreditation visit, the changes in administration and faculty led to the plan not being implemented and reported properly. The school’s current faculty and administrators found the previous plan to be “complicated and onerous to manage,” resulting in the school’s inability to produce meaningful results to improve curriculum and instruction in recent years. Therefore, during this site visit, no reporting was available that demonstrated data analysis of values and competencies measures and interpretation of data, and very few curricular or instructional changes based on the assessment activities to date were made during the period under review. Recognizing this problem, a new assessment plan has been adopted that should make future assessment more meaningful and helpful in making continuous improvements.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: NON-COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths

- Commitment to serving a diverse urban community and an eagerness to collaborate within and outside the university.
- A balanced faculty who are truly dedicated to student success.
- Respected leader who has rebuilt collegiality in the school and has improved its administration.
- A steadfast commitment to diversity and an expanding interest in global initiatives.
- A new system for faculty mentoring to nurture a sizable group of new faculty.
- An ability to meet many student and curricular needs with a limited faculty.
- An expanded advising team that has improved greatly the quality of undergraduate advising.

Weaknesses

- An imbalance of full-time and adjunct faculty.
- Insufficient oversight of adjunct faculty.
- Lack of full-time faculty lines to handle a growing workload.
- Lack of reporting of assessment data to improve curricula and lack of effective direct measures.
- An underdeveloped alumni engagement strategy.
- Lack of student collaborative work space and non-classroom laboratory space.

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

Standard 4 – Full-time & Part-time Faculty

Standard 9 – Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

By the next reaccreditation visit, the school should implement the 2017 assessment plan. Implementing the plan means (1) clearly indicating how each value and competency was measured, (2) when the data was collected, (3) what was found specifically related to the individual values and competencies, (4) what can be done to improve teaching and learning related to unsatisfactory findings from indirect and direct measures tied to those values and competencies and (5) when those recommended improvements will be reviewed to see if they worked well. The unit should document annually in a written report their assessment activities, findings and plans for improvement and discuss the activities, findings, and plans for improvement with the faculty.

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

Standard 4 – Imbalance between full-time and part-time/adjunct faculty.

Standard 9 – Insufficient collection and reporting on assessment.

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.

This was a competently written self-study with a consistent voice and adequate information. An advertising professor's design input made the self-study attractive and easy to read.



VCU

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January 8, 2018

Professor Susanne Shaw, Executive Director
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in Journalism and Mass Communications
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Dear Professor Shaw:

Thank you for your letter of December 7, 2017, and the accompanying copy of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications' site team report based on its October 29 - November 1, 2017 visit to the Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The faculty, staff and students of the Robertson School are very grateful to the site team (Dr. Joe Foote/Chair, Mr. Andy Alexander, Dr. Rochelle Ford, Dr. Helen Katz and Dr. Judy Oskam) for their hard work and strong dedication during the accreditation process. We were pleased to see that the School was judged in compliance on seven standards. The compliance includes Standard 7, Resources, Facilities and Equipment, for which the School was found out of compliance during the previous accreditation visit in October 2011.

In the most recent visit, the site team recommended provisional accreditation based on the Robertson School being found in non-compliance on Standard 4, Full-time and Part-time Faculty and Standard 9, Assessment of Learning Outcomes. Since the site visit, the School has worked closely with the campus administration to improve its full-time/part-time faculty balance. As such, the School has obtained six new full-time faculty positions, which will significantly increase the percentage of core and required courses taught by full-time faculty. Meanwhile, we have successfully implemented our substantially revised Assessment Plan by collecting data from fall 2017 capstone courses (in addition to other measures).

Response to non-compliance on Standard 4, Full-time and Part-time Faculty

As of November 15, two weeks after the site visit, VCU administration authorized six new full-time teaching and research or teaching-only faculty positions for the Robertson School, which consisted of two tenure-eligible assistant professor positions and four non-tenure-eligible, teaching-only instructor positions. The School's faculty and administration chose to allocate these

positions as follows, with their starting dates determined by the University's budget planning for the positions:

- **Beginning on August 16, 2018:** Two tenure-eligible positions (one in advertising and the other in public relations; searches completed in November 2017), one term position in public relations (search completed in December 2017) and one term position in journalism (search launched in November 2017 and to be completed by early March 2018)
- **Beginning on August 16, 2019:** Two term positions (one in advertising and the other in journalism; searches to be launched and completed in fall 2018)

With these six new full-time faculty positions, in addition to three replacement hires (two tenure-eligible positions to start in August 2018 and one term position to start in January 2018), the percentage of full-time faculty and the percentage of core and required courses taught by full-time faculty in the Robertson School are projected to increase by the start of fall 2018 as follows:

Academic Year	Number of Full-time Faculty	Increase of Full-time Faculty from 2016-2017 (%)	Core/Required Courses Taught by Full-time Faculty (%)
2016 - 2017	20	/	42.9
2017 - 2018	22	10.0	44.2
2018 - 2019	28 ¹	40.0	65.0 ²
2019 - 2020	30	50.0	71.4 ³

Response to non-compliance on Standard 9, Assessment of Learning Outcomes

During the self-study year of 2016-2017, the Robertson School Accreditation and Assessment Committee reviewed and revised the School's Assessment Plan, which was approved by the faculty in spring 2017.

The revised plan reworked and streamlined previously complicated and onerous measures. For example, the previous plan's primary direct measure was a pre- and post-test administered to all students at the beginning and end of the program, respectively. With students in five distinct undergraduate academic programs (advertising/creative, advertising/strategic, journalism/broadcast, journalism/digital and public relations) taking as many as 10 or more capstone course sections each semester, test administration was difficult and was not providing the appropriate data to measure learning objectives to facilitate curricular improvements.

The revised plan includes two direct measures that collect data from 1) capstone portfolios/projects reviewed by professionals and 2) evaluations from internship providers, as well as seven indirect measures, which gather data regarding 1) student retention and graduation rates; 2) internship completion rates; 3) final internship reports; 4) award competitions; 5) student employment data; 6) an exit survey of graduates and 7) the National Survey of Student Engagement.

When the site team visited in late October, the revised Assessment Plan was already underway. At the end of fall 2017, data collection was completed for capstone portfolio/project reviews and

¹ The seven incoming faculty members in 2018 include one replacement for a current faculty member, who

² Projected based on 2017-2018 class schedules.

³ Projected based on 2017-2018 class schedules.

internship provider evaluations. These two direct measures include surveys with scaled questions asking how the student work demonstrated ACEJMC's 12 professional values and competencies. Regarding the indirect measures, data analyses were also completed at the end of fall 2017 for three: 1) student retention and graduation rates; 2) the spring 2017 exit survey of graduates and 3) the National Survey of Student Engagement.

In spring 2018, the faculty Accreditation and Assessment Committee will analyze data collected through direct measures in fall 2017, as well as the remaining four indirect measures (internship completion rates, award competitions, employment data and student internship reports). By the end of spring 2018, the committee will have also analyzed the Assessment Plan's implementation during 2017-2018, reported its findings to the faculty and made suggestions for improvement and sustainability. Faculty will discuss the committee's findings and recommendations, and action will be taken in fall 2018 for related curricular improvements. Such assessment data analyses and reports, as well as responding curricular improvements, will be carried out annually in the future.

ACEJMC accreditation is extremely important to the Robertson School and all its stakeholders. I sincerely and respectfully hope that in deliberations regarding the recommendation for provisional accreditation, the Accrediting Committee will take under consideration the School's immediate action and the VCU administration's immediate support to address the full-time/part-time faculty imbalance directly after the site visit, as evidenced by the School's six new full-time faculty hires: three successful hires in fall 2017, one ongoing search to be completed by early March 2018 and two scheduled remaining searches in fall 2018.

Enclosed in this letter is a statement from Dr. Montserrat Fuentes, Dean of the VCU College of Humanities and Sciences (in which the Robertson School resides), on the value of the Robertson School to the College and the University and on their commitment to supporting the School, especially as demonstrated by the six approved new full-time faculty lines.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to respond to the site team report. I look forward to seeing you at the Accrediting Committee meeting in Chicago on March 24, 2018.

Sincerely,



Hong Cheng, Ph.D.
Professor and Director
Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture
College of Humanities and Sciences
Virginia Commonwealth University
Telephone: (804) 827-9983
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Enclosure (1):

Statement from Dr. Montserrat Fuentes, Dean, VCU College of Humanities and Sciences



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College of Humanities
and Sciences

College of Humanities and Sciences

Office of the Dean

Blanton House, Room 104
828 W. Franklin St.
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January 8, 2018

Professor Susanne Shaw, Executive Director
Accrediting Council on Education
in Journalism and Mass Communications
Stauffer-Flint Hall, Room 109
School of Journalism
University of Kansas
1435 Jayhawk Boulevard
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7575

Dear Professor Shaw:

On behalf of Virginia Commonwealth University and its College of Humanities Sciences, I hope to convey and reassure the ACEJMC Accrediting Committee our complete support of the Robertson School's reaccreditation endeavors, and sincerely and respectfully urge the Committee to consider granting the Robertson School fully reaccredited status effective for 2018.

A center of excellence for this campus, the Robertson School is highly valued at VCU and in the College of Humanities and Sciences. To the Robertson School, being accredited is a hallmark of strong quality, a differentiator from many similar programs, and an assurance to the School's stakeholders about its commitment to excellence. It is also an invaluable — and deserved, in my view — recognition and award for its talented and diligent faculty, staff, and students as well as for its relatively new leadership team, which has done an excellent job on the whole.

The campus and the College provided six new full-time faculty lines to the Robertson School immediately following its site visit, as detailed in Director Hong Cheng's response to the ACEJMC site team report. Additionally, the Robertson School implemented a substantially improved, ACEJMC site team-endorsed assessment plan at the end of fall 2017 and will continue to implement it during the spring semester and in the future.



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As you consider Director Cheng's request for granting the Robertson School full reaccreditation in spring 2018, know that the University and the College are committed to fully supporting the School. We will do everything within our power to ensure its success and its compliance with the standards set forth by ACEJMC. Thank you for your consideration of our request. If you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mfuentes@vcu.edu> or telephone (804-828-2660). I look forward to seeing you and the ACEJMC Accrediting Committee in Chicago on March 24, 2018.

Sincerely,

Montserrat Fuentes, Ph.D., Dean
College of Humanities and Sciences
Virginia Commonwealth University



VCU

**Richard T. Robertson School
of Media and Culture
College of Humanities and Sciences**

April 5, 2018

Professor Susanne Shaw, Executive Director
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in Journalism and Mass Communications
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Dear Professor Shaw:

Thank you for sharing a copy of the ACEJMC Accrediting Committee's decision letter for the Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture at Virginia Commonwealth University with me and the opportunity to respond to the Committee's action.

The Robertson School faculty, staff and students are very grateful to the site team (Dr. Joe Foote/Chair, Mr. Andy Alexander, Dr. Rochelle Ford, Dr. Helen Katz and Dr. Judy Oskam) for their hard work and strong dedication during the accreditation process. We were pleased to see that the School was judged in compliance on seven standards. The compliance includes Standard 7, Resources, Facilities and Equipment, for which the School was found out of compliance during the previous accreditation visit in October 2011.

In the most recent visit, the site team recommended provisional accreditation based on the Robertson School being found in non-compliance on Standard 4, Full-time and Part-time Faculty and Standard 9, Assessment of Learning Outcomes. Since the site visit, the School has worked proactively with the campus administration to improve its full-time/part-time faculty balance. As such, the School has obtained six new full-time faculty positions, which will significantly increase the percentage of core and required courses taught by full-time faculty. Four of these six new hires have been already completed, and the remaining two searches will be conducted in fall 2018 as planned. Meanwhile, we have successfully implemented our substantially revised Assessment Plan by collecting data from fall 2017 capstone courses (in addition to other measures). While highlighting in this response letter our efforts and accomplishments in addressing these two non-compliances between November 1, 2017 when the site team completed its visit to the Robertson School and January 8, 2018 when the Robertson School responded to the site team's report, I hope to report to the Accrediting Council now our continued endeavors and new accomplishments since January 8.

Response to non-compliance on Standard 4, Full-time and Part-time Faculty

On November 15, two weeks after the site visit, VCU administration authorized six new full-time teaching and research or teaching-only faculty positions for the Robertson School, which consisted of two tenure-eligible assistant professor positions and four non-tenure-eligible, teaching-only instructor positions. The School's faculty and administration chose to allocate these

positions as follows, with their starting dates determined by the University's budget planning for the positions (including the four already hired, which will start in August 2018).

- Beginning on August 16, 2018: Two tenure-eligible positions (one in advertising and the other in public relations; searches completed in November 2017), one term position in public relations (search completed in December 2017) and one term position in journalism (search completed in February 2018)
- Beginning on August 16, 2019: Two term positions (one in advertising and the other in journalism; searches to be launched and completed in fall 2018)

With these six new full-time faculty positions, in addition to three replacement hires (one term position started in January 2018 and two tenure-eligible positions to start in August 2018), the percentage of full-time faculty and the percentage of core and required courses taught by full-time faculty in the Robertson School are projected to increase by the start of fall 2018 as follows. Meanwhile, the full-time teaching faculty versus student ratio is projected to decrease by the start of fall 2018.

Academic Year	Number of Full-time Faculty	Increase of Full-time Faculty from 2016-2017 (%)	Core/Required Courses Taught by Full-time Faculty (%)	Faculty-to-Student Ratio
2016 - 2017	20	/	42.9	1:55 ¹
2017 - 2018	22	10.0	44.2	1:50 ¹
2018 - 2019	28 ²	40.0	65.0 ³	1:39 ¹
2019 - 2020	30	50.0	71.4 ³	1:37 ¹

Response to non-compliance on Standard 9, Assessment of Learning Outcomes

During the self-study year of 2016-2017, the Robertson School Accreditation and Assessment Committee reviewed and revised the School's Assessment Plan, which was approved by the faculty in spring 2017.

The revised plan reworked and streamlined previously complicated and onerous measures. For example, the previous plan's primary direct measure was a pre- and post-test administered to all students at the beginning and end of the program, respectively. With students in five distinct undergraduate academic programs (advertising/creative, advertising/strategic, journalism/broadcast, journalism/digital and public relations) taking as many as 10 or more capstone course sections each semester, test administration was difficult and was not providing the appropriate data to measure learning objectives to facilitate curriculum improvements.

The revised plan includes two direct measures that collect data from 1) seven capstone portfolios/projects reviewed by professionals and 2) evaluations from internship providers, as well as seven indirect measures, which gather data regarding 1) student retention and graduation rates; 2) internship completion rates; 3) final internship reports; 4) award competitions; 5) student employment data; 6) an exit survey of graduates and 7) the National Survey of Student Engagement.

When the site team visited in late October, the revised Assessment Plan was already underway. At the end of fall 2017, data collection was completed for the seven capstone portfolio/project reviews and

¹ Based on the 2016-2017 enrollment of 1,101 students (most recently available). A question on the impact of these six new lines on the faculty-student ratio was raised at the ACEJMC Accrediting Committee meeting on March 24, 2018.

² The seven incoming faculty members in 2018 include one replacement for a current faculty member, who plans to leave the Robertson School in summer 2018.

³ Projected based on 2017-2018 class schedules.

asking how the student work demonstrated ACEJMC's 12 professional values and competencies. Regarding the indirect measures, data analyses were also completed at the end of fall 2017 for three: 1) student retention and graduation rates; 2) the spring 2017 exit survey of graduates and 3) the National Survey of Student Engagement.

In spring 2018, the faculty Accreditation and Assessment Committee analyzed the data collected through direct measures in fall 2017, as well as the remaining four indirect measures (internship completion rates, award competitions, employment data and student internship reports). The Committee will report its findings to the faculty on April 20. Right after that, the School's faculty Undergraduate Studies Committee will review the Accreditation and Assessment Committee's report and make recommendations at the May faculty meeting. After faculty's discussion of the AAC's findings and the UGSC's recommendations, action, if any, will be taken in fall 2018 for curriculum improvements. Such assessment data analyses and reports, as well as responding curriculum improvements, will be carried out annually in the future.

ACEJMC accreditation is extremely important to the Robertson School and all its stakeholders. I sincerely and respectfully hope that the Accrediting Council will grant the School fully accredited status effective for 2018 by awarding the School for its positive attitude, immediate action, and evident accomplishments, as well as the VCU administration for its immediate support to address the full-time/part-time faculty imbalance directly right after the site visit. An immediate full accreditation status will not only help the Robertson School maintain its stakeholders' morale, but also enable it to focus on its priority projects for the next two years while continuing to implement its new assessment plan faithfully, instead of having to spend a large part of its energy and time on a revisit from the site team.

Enclosed in this letter is a statement from Dr. Montserrat Fuentes, Dean of the VCU College of Humanities and Sciences (in which the Robertson School resides), on the value of the Robertson School to the College and the University and on their commitment to supporting the School, especially as demonstrated by the six immediately approved new full-time faculty lines.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to respond to the Accrediting Committee's action. I look forward to seeing you at the Accrediting Council meeting in Chicago on April 27, 2018.

Sincerely,



Hong Cheng, Ph.D.
Professor and Director
Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture
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April 5, 2018

Professor Susanne Shaw, Executive Director
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A center of excellence for this campus, the Robertson School is highly valued at VCU and in the College of Humanities and Sciences. To the Robertson School, being accredited is a hallmark of strong quality, a differentiator from many similar programs, and an assurance to the School's stakeholders about its commitment to excellence. It is also an invaluable — and deserved, in my view — recognition and award for its talented and diligent faculty, staff, and students as well as for its relatively new leadership team, which has done an excellent job on the whole.

The campus and the College provided six new full-time faculty lines to the Robertson School immediately following its site visit, as detailed in Director Hong Cheng's response to the ACEJMC Accrediting Committee's action. Additionally, the Robertson School implemented a substantially improved, ACEJMC site team-endorsed assessment plan at the end of fall 2017 and will continue to implement it during the spring semester and in the future.

As you consider Director Cheng's request for granting the Robertson School full reaccreditation in spring 2018, know that the University and the College are committed to fully supporting the School. We will do everything within our power to ensure its success and its compliance with the standards set forth by ACEJMC. I fully agree



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with Director Cheng that “an immediate full accreditation status will not only help the Robertson School maintain its stakeholders’ morale but also enable it to focus on its priority projects for the next two years while continuing to implement its new assessment plan faithfully, instead of having to spend a large part of its energy and time on a revisit from the site team.”

Thank you for your consideration of our request. If you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mfuentes@vcu.edu> or telephone (804-828-2660). I look forward to seeing you and the ACEJMC Accrediting Council in Chicago on April 27, 2018.

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Montserrat Fuentes, Ph.D., Dean
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