

Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC

Undergraduate program

2018-2019

Name of Institution: Abilene Christian University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Phil Schubert, president

Name of Unit: Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Name and Title of Administrator: Kenneth Pybus, chair

Date of 2018-2019 Accrediting Visit: Nov. 4-7, 2018

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Oct. 21-24, 2012

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Provisional reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Provisional

A revisit team in October 2014 recommended Reaccreditation and the Council concurred in May 2015.

Recommendation by 2018-2019 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation

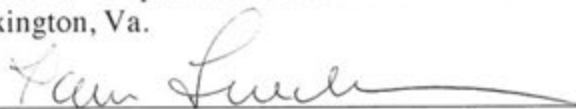
Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Pam Luecke, professor

Organization/School: Department of Journalism and Mass Communications, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.

Signature

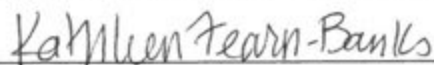


Team Members

Name and Title: Kathleen Fearn-Banks, professor

Organization/School: Department of Communication, University of Washington, Seattle

Signature



Name and Title: Thor Wasbotten, professor

Organization/School: School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Kent State University

Signature



Part I: General Information

Name of Institution: Abilene Christian University

Name of Unit: Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Year of Visit: 2018-19

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

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

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

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

- ☒ Private
- ☐ Public
- ☐ Other (specify)

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

Articles of Incorporation and a copy of Texas HB HJR 130 provided as Appendix A.

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

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, give the date of the last accrediting visit:

[October 21-24, 2012](#)

[Revisit October 20-21, 2014](#)

5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? May 2001

6. Provide the unit's mission statement. Statement should give date of adoption and/or last revision.

"Our mission is to engage students in critical and creative thinking in the classroom, in the laboratory and through mentoring relationships, leading them to become exceptional, ethical and agile communicators in a rapidly changing media environment, embracing technology, valuing global diversity and embodying Christ-centered service."

Adopted by the faculty, January 13, 2012

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of 15 weeks

Summer sessions of variable 3 to 5-and-a-half weeks

Intersessions of 1 week (The unit does not offer intersession courses)

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

☒ Bachelor's degree

☐ Master's degree

☐ Ph.D. degree

9. List the specific undergraduate degrees as well as the majors or sequences being reviewed by ACEJMC. *Indicate online degrees.

Bachelor of Science in three majors:

- Convergence Journalism
- Advertising and Public Relations
- Multimedia

Bachelor of Arts in one major:

- Convergence Journalism

The unit also collaborates with the Department of Teacher Education for a BSED in convergence journalism/multimedia with teacher certification but that degree is not submitted for review. And it collaborates with the Department of Art & Design for a degree in graphic design/advertising but that degree is not submitted for review.

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

128

11. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience.

A one-semester-hour internship is required of all JMC majors.

Effective in the 2018-19 catalog, students may repeat the internship for credit one time.

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

Name of Sequence or Specialty

Convergence Journalism

Advertising/Public Relations

Multimedia

Person in Charge

Kenneth Pybus, J.D.

Cheryl Mann Bacon, Ed.D., APR (2017-18)

Joyce Haley (2018-19)

Nathan Gibbs, MFA

13. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution: 5210

Undergraduate 3544

Graduate 1666

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

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Undergraduate majors*
Convergence Journalism	26
Advertising/Public Relations	44
Multimedia	32
Pre-majors	N/A
Total	104

**As of November 5, 2018*

In addition, the graphic design/advertising degree taught with the Department of Art & Design not submitted for review has 31 majors. The convergence journalism/multimedia with teacher certification degree offered in conjunction with the Department of Teacher Education not submitted for review has three majors.

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

	Fall 2018	Spring 2018
JMC 102.01 Creating Media Messages	15	9
JMC 102.02 Creating Media Messages	6	15
JMC 111 Announcing	N/A	15
JMC 201.01 Introduction to Visual Media	14	15
JMC 201.02 Introduction to Visual Media	N/A	13
JMC 223 Convergence Reporting I	13	N/A
JMC 233 Photography	14	15
JMC 261 Broadcast Production	12	N/A
JMC 324 Convergence Reporting II	N/A	6
JMC 342 Communication Design	10	8
JMC 351 Web Publishing	16	17
JMC 352 Advanced Web Publishing	N/A	N/A
JMC 361 Advanced Video Production	N/A	14
JMC 389 Public Relations Writing	10	13
JMC 390 Advertising Creativity and Copy Writing	19	15

JMC 405 Visual Portfolio	N/A	N/A
JMC 438 Broadcast News	8	N/A
JMC 441 Topics in Convergence Journalism	N/A	N/A
JMC 449 Opinion Writing	N/A	N/A
JMC 450 Feature Writing	N/A	N/A
JMC 465 Documentary Storytelling	N/A	N/A

16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2018–2019 academic year:

Operating budgets and salaries in JMC budget lines \$ 854,195
 Capital equipment \$ 20,000 (*studio*)
 Fee money (estimate based on three-year average) \$ 11,933 *TOTAL
 \$ 886,120

**Does not include professional development funds that may be awarded through College of Arts Sciences and Presidential Fund application during FY19.*

Give percentage increase or decrease in three years:

FY16 - FY17 + 4.4 percent
 FY17 - FY18 - 0.7 percent
 FY18 - FY19 -11.7 percent

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

2018-19 faculty salaries: \$399,751

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

- Dr. Cheryl Mann Bacon, professor, chair (2017-18), professor emeritus and senior faculty (2018-19)
- Dr. Kenneth Pybus, associate professor and chair (2018-19)
- Dr. Susan Lewis, associate professor and vice provost (Dr. Lewis did not teach during the spring of 2018 because of her administrative appointments in the Office of the Provost, but she will teach one JMC course in the fall at the Leipzig, Germany, campus.)
- Dr. Jessica Smith, associate professor, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and assistant provost (Dr. Smith will not teach during the fall of 2018 because of her administrative appointments in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Office of the Provost.)
- Dr. Douglas Mendenhall, associate professor
- Nathan Gibbs, assistant professor and director of broadcast operations
- Joyce Haley, assistant professor
- Cade White, instructor

18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2018. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2018. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2019, please provide the spring 2019 adjunct list in the updated information.)

Fall 2018

- Dr. Cheryl Mann Bacon (as professor emeritus and senior faculty), JMC 389 Public Relations Writing
- Emerald Cassidy, JMC 347 Principles of Public Relations
- Hutton Harris, JMC 261 Broadcast Production, JMC 321.L5 Student Media Lab (ACUTV)
- Joey Roberts, JMC 102 Creating Media Messages (two sections)
- Emily Childers (facilitator*), JMC 321.L3 Student Media Lab (Morris+Mitchell)
- Meghan Eager (facilitator*), JMC 492 Ad/PR Campaigns
- Allye Foster (facilitator*), JMC 492 Ad/PR Campaigns
- Rae Ann Rindhage (facilitator*), JMC 492 Ad/PR Campaigns
- Bailey Werderich (facilitator*), JMC 321.L3 Student Media Lab (Morris+Mitchell)

Spring 2018

- Dr. Cheryl Mann Bacon (as professor emeritus and senior faculty), JMC 389 Public Relations Writing
- Hutton Harris, JMC 361 Advanced Video Production
- Sarah Hejl, JMC 367 Social Media
- Joey Roberts, JMC 102 Creating Media Messages
- Janelle Benham, JMC 324 Reporting 2

*Facilitators are included in this list because, while they work under the direction of a faculty member of record, they have been credentialed through the university.

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

Year	Total Graduates	Number	Percent
2017-18 academic year	28	28	100
2016-17 academic year	32	32	100

Most of the degrees offered by the university, including those within the unit, require 128 credit hours for graduation. The unit's limit of no more than 43 hours within the major and requirement that 85 are taken outside the department ensures this percentage is always 100.

20. Schools on the quarter system: For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 104 or more quarter hours outside of journalism and mass communications.

N/A

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.

Abilene Christian University is a private college 150 miles west of Dallas-Fort Worth, affiliated with the Churches of Christ, a denomination with members primarily in the South. The school has 3,500 undergraduate students and more than 1,600 graduate students. It recently opened its first remote campus in the United States in Dallas. (The university also has a campus in Leipzig, Germany, and leases houses in Oxford, England, and Montevideo, Uruguay.)

Although journalism has been taught at Abilene Christian for nearly a century, the department dates only to 1968 and it was first accredited in 2001. The current chair, Kenneth Pybus, is only the third. He succeeded Dr. Cheryl Mann Bacon, who held that position from 1998 to May 2018.

The department is one of 14 units within the College of Arts and Sciences. The department has a mission statement and a five-year strategic plan, both of which embrace the university's Christian heritage. The strategic plan highlights five categories: curriculum and pedagogy; co-curriculum and student services; faculty and scholarship; fundraising; and diversity. The department plans to develop a new five-year plan following its self-study and reaccreditation visit this year.

The department enjoys the support of university administrators, who view the teaching of journalism and mass communication as "an integral part of what we do."

The university has submitted its data to the ACEJMC searchable database.

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

The department is small, with only five full-time faculty members and a search in progress for a sixth. As a result, most decisions are made as a "committee of the whole." The department follows the university's Faculty Handbook for faculty governance and has oversight over its curriculum. Substantive curricular changes are subject to review and approval by academic councils at both the college and university levels.

The department is well represented in university governance. Pybus chairs the Faculty Senate, which gives him entrée to university senior leadership meetings. One other faculty member is a Senate member, as well.

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.

The current department chair has had this role for less than a year but has been part of the faculty since 2003 and had served as interim chair during Spring 2017 when Dr. Bacon was on sabbatical. His colleagues and administrators are positive about his potential to lead the department with both internal and external constituents.

His predecessor was widely admired for her leadership, vision, and connections to alumni and the profession. She continues to teach one course as an adjunct.

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

After Dr. Bacon accepted a retirement package earlier in 2018, the dean of the college spoke with every member of the department to hear their thoughts about a successor. He felt Pybus was the natural choice and appointed him to a three-year renewable term, which is the standard.

Department chairs are reviewed every three years by the dean after seeking input from the faculty; Pybus has not been in the position long enough to have been reviewed.

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

The department has a student complaint policy, which is posted on the department website and bulletin board. It is rare for complaints to reach this official level, though; they are typically resolved through conversations with faculty or the chair, who keeps an open-door policy. As the policy states, the department “abides by the biblical principle of taking the issue to the offending party before involving others.”

The department faculty also have formal means to express concerns, including via the Faculty Senate.

At the time of the site-team visit, according to the department chair, there were no formal or informal complaints.

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:

Discussions of indicators b, c and e must describe and evaluate the individual academic sequences in the unit.

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.

The department is in compliance with this rule. The academic adviser assigned to the department meets with each major at least once per semester to help the student stay on track to graduation. Of the 28 graduates in 2017-2018 and 32 graduates in 2017, 100 percent of students completed 72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communication.

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 department introduced substantial curricular changes in 2015, beginning with the JMC core and including revisions to all majors: Convergence Journalism; Advertising and Public Relations; and Multimedia.

Each student must complete 19 hours in the department core. Those courses include: Media Issues; Introduction to Visual Media; Introduction to Race and Media; Colloquy in Race and Media (taken twice); Web Publishing; Communication Design; Communication Law; and JMC Internship.

Advertising/ Public Relations

Students complete 43 hours of JMC courses and an additional 15 hours outside of JMC for a total of 58 hours for their major.

In addition to the department core, students majoring in Advertising/Public Relations must complete the following courses: Creating Media Messages; Convergence Reporting II; Student Media Lab (two semesters required; one must be with the student-run Ad/PR agency, Morris+Mitchell); Principles of Public Relations; Principles of Advertising; Public Relations Writing; Ad/PR Campaigns; and one JMC elective. Students must also choose two of the following three courses: Social Media; Advertising Creativity and Copywriting; or Ad/PR Media Planning.

Students must also complete the following courses as part of the major: Introduction to Psychology or Introduction to Sociology; Principles of Marketing; Management and Organizational Behavior;

International Business; and Social Research or Social Statistics.

Convergence Journalism

Students complete 37 hours of JMC courses and an additional three hours outside of JMC for a total of 40 hours for their major.

In addition to the department core, students majoring in Convergence Journalism must complete the following courses: Convergence Reporting I; Student Media Lab (two semesters required; one must be with the news staff, JMC Network); Convergence Reporting II; Editing and Content Management; one JMC elective; and Broadcast News or Opinion Writing or Feature Writing or Topics in Convergence Journalism. Students must also choose two of the following eight courses: Announcing; Photography; Broadcast Production; Broadcast News; Topics in Convergence Journalism; Opinion Writing; Feature Writing; or Documentary Storytelling.

Students must choose from the Political Science department either National Government or States and Federal System as part of the major.

There is a BA option in the Convergence Journalism major, which requires six hours of a foreign language and three hours of a Literature course in addition to the above.

Multimedia

Students complete 43 hours of JMC courses and an additional nine hours outside of JMC for a total of 52 hours for their major.

In addition to the department course, students majoring in Multimedia must complete the following courses: Creating Media Messages or Convergence Reporting I; Photography; Broadcast Production; Electronic Media Principles; Student Media Lab (two semesters required; one must be with student-run multimedia production agency, 99 West Media); Advanced Video Production; and one JMC elective. In addition, students must choose two of the following five courses: Convergence Reporting I; Advanced Web Publishing; Social Media; Advertising Creativity and Copy Writing; or Documentary Storytelling.

Students must also choose between Introduction to Psychology or Introduction to Sociology and two courses from the following: Two-Dimensional Design; Typography I; Introduction to Programming Using Scripting; Introduction to Mobile Application Development; Introduction to Digital Entertainment; or Digital Entertainment Technology II.

All students in the majors listed above must complete 15 hours in a support field, which could result in a minor, but a minor is not required. For example, support fields for Advertising/Public Relations majors could include art, business, English, Spanish, French, theater, political science, psychology or sociology. Students in Multimedia may choose between art, business, communication, computer science, English, Spanish, French, political science, psychology, sociology or theater. Convergence Journalism students may choose from any field except Bible.

The department offers two interdisciplinary degrees: a Bachelor of Science in Convergence Journalism/Multimedia with a Teacher Certification with the Department of Teacher Education in the College of Education and Teacher Services; and a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design and Advertising with the Department of Art.

The department offers three minors: Advertising/Public Relations; Convergence Journalism; and Multimedia.

All students complete 56 hours of university requirements toward the 128 credit hours required for graduation. This includes 15 hours of Bible courses.

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.

Based on discussions with faculty, administration and students, teaching is the priority of both the department and institution. Part of this commitment is remaining current in instruction and adaptable in the curriculum.

Two faculty members are completing work on a “20/20 Teaching Innovation Grant,” awarded by the university, to create online modules to teach technology skills to first-year students, which, when completed, may be added to the department core. These modules were being tested in classes at the time of the site visit.

The site team visited at least one course taught by each full-time faculty. When the team was able to see instruction take place, it was demanding and current. Unfortunately, a few of the courses were not set up to witness instruction. For example, students were taking a test in one class, and in another the students were speaking with a professional via video conference.

In conversations with students, they felt part of the process with curricular development. Multiple students mentioned they are regularly consulted by faculty regarding curricular issues.

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.)

Skills course enrollment ranged from six (in Creating Media Messages and Convergence Reporting II) to 19 (in Advertising Creativity and Copy Writing). No skills courses in either the fall 2018 or spring 2018 semester exceeded the 20-1 ratio.

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 two semester courses (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. Students may take up to three semester courses (or their equivalent) at a professional media outlet owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media outlet is to instruct students.

All students are required to complete one credit of internship. A full-time faculty member manages the

department's internship program.

Students are encouraged to work with the university's Career Center to build a resume and to search for potential internship locations. Once a location is chosen, the internship must be approved by the faculty member in charge. Students must complete 120 hours of internship and then compile a portfolio of their work. Finally, students discuss their internship experience with faculty in a formal presentation, typically during the fall semester.

Students are also required to work for two semesters in a student media lab or a student organization. These experiences do not earn credit. Students were highly appreciative of their experiences in these co-curricular opportunities.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

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

Accreditation site visit teams will apply this standard in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as the laws of the countries in which non-U.S. institutions are located.

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.

This standard has been a persistent challenge for JMC and ACU since the department's first accreditation. After an evaluation of non-compliance by ACEJMC site teams in 2000, 2006 and 2012, the department was given provisional accreditation. A 2014 revisit team concluded that "providing a focus on diversity and having a diverse faculty will always be a challenge at ACU, but the chair and faculty are fully committed to building on the impressive work they have done during the past two years." Full accreditation was then restored.

Progress has continued in the years following the revisit.

The department has had a diversity plan since its first accreditation in 2001; the plan was revised in 2014 after the last site team's report. The plan has eight goals:

- 1) To maintain a four-year graduation rate among diverse students that exceeds the university's rate for diverse students
- 2) To increase ethnic minority student enrollment to 35 percent
- 3) To assertively seek ethnic minority faculty and staff hires
- 4) To include more diversity in course content
- 5) To develop a new course on race and media and to make it a requirement
- 6) To seek guest speakers with diverse backgrounds
- 7) To seek staff members with diverse backgrounds for co-curricular student media labs and student organizations
- 8) To achieve 20 percent of each graduating class with a study abroad experience that exposes them to diverse cultures and ideologies

The unit's own measurements show success in some of the goals, particularly numbers 4, 5, 6 and 7; moderate success in 1, 2, and 3, but minimal progress in 8.

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.

In response to the 2012 site team's determination that the unit's curricula emphasized global diversity and not domestic diversity, a required course was developed in 2014 titled Race and Media. Each major is required to take Race and Media, a one-credit course which is offered each fall, and Colloquy on Race and Media, which is offered both fall and spring.

The colloquy must be taken twice and the student receives one credit for each. Its content varies each semester and is taught by minority guest lecturers. The course meets on a weekend -- Friday evening, all day Saturday, Sunday afternoon. An alumna made a donation to the unit making it possible to hire professionals in mass communications and bring them to Abilene. Colloquy subjects have included "Is This a Post- Racial Society?" and "Redefining Diversity in a Digital Age."

Diversity issues are discussed or otherwise included in eight other courses, one a core course and the others electives:

- Media Issues (a core course)
- Creating Media Messages
- Convergence Reporting
- Electronic Media Principles
- PR Principles
- Feature Writing
- Advertising & Copywriting
- Advertising/PR Campaigns

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.

A Latino was hired as a full-time assistant professor and general manager of the university's NPR member station in January 2014 after the conclusion of a summer 2013 search. He launched a National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) chapter. Several students have since attended the national NAHJ conference. In a second search that year, the department hired a woman.

The university's PR director is a Latina and an adjunct in the department, teaching public relations.

There were five women, minorities and international candidates in the hiring pool for a 2017-18 search for a public relations professor. An offer was made to one African-American female but she declined. JMC may have a broader base from which to choose another applicant because the provost will "make exceptions for unique hires who are experts in their fields and have mission fit."

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 department primarily depends upon the university's admission program for recruiting. Most students choose the major after matriculating at the university. The department gives individual attention to

prospective students who visit. Faculty are active in community events and speak to individuals and groups about the university and the major.

The student population in the self-study year was 43 males and 75 females for a total of 118 students.

	Area racial makeup:	Unit makeup:	University:
Black	12.6%	11.5%	14.4%
Latino	39.1	15.0	13.5
Asian	4.8	1.8	3.2
American Indian	1.0	2.7	1.5

Area gender: 50%

Blacks in unit: 7 female, 6 male

Latinos in unit: 14 female, 3 male

Asian: 1 female, 1 male

Native American: 3 female

Other: 5

White: 78

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.

Accreditation site visit teams will apply this standard in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as the laws of the countries in which non-U.S. institutions are located.

In conversations with the site team, neither students nor faculty expressed concerns about harassment or discrimination.

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.)

Academic year: 2017-18 Full-time faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African-American	0	-	0	-
White	4	57%	3	43%
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	-	0	-
Asian	0	-	0	-
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	0	-	1	14%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0	-	0	-
Two or more races	0	-	0	-
Other race	0	-	0	-
International (any race)	0	-	0	-

Academic year: 2017-18 Part-time/adjunct faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African-American	0	-	0	-
White	1	33%	2	67%
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	-	0	-
Asian	0	-	0	-
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	0	-	0	-
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0	-	0	-
Two or more races	0	-	0	-
Other race	0	-	0	-
International (any race)	0	-	0	-

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 department's criteria for hiring and evaluating faculty follow the university's Faculty Handbook.

A recent ad for a new faculty member urged professional experience as well as academic credentials, preferably a terminal degree. The application package must include a statement of how faith informs teaching, a discussion of one's spiritual journey, a CV and three references. All applicants must be professing Christians and be active faithful members of the Church of Christ, deeply committed to service in Christian higher education. The latter rule is not as hard and fast as it used to be; trustees recently cleared the way for hiring qualified applicants who are not Church of Christ members but who demonstrate "mission fit."

In Spring 2018, an applicant was approved who did not have the religious affiliation. The provost, issuing the waiver, said that exceptions for unique hires can be made but the candidate must show expertise and be "mission fit." The applicant did not accept the offer.

Once hired, there are clearly stated expectations for faculty and staff as outlined in the document "Expansion of Criteria and Examples for Tenure and Promotion." (Last revised on March 20, 2017.)

Part-time faculty or adjuncts must meet the same requirements for professional, scholarly and experiential preparation as full-time faculty. There were four part-time faculty members in Fall 2018 and five scheduled for Spring 2019.

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

Full-time faculty taught 16 of 18 courses during the 2017-2018 school year, 13 of 16 courses in the 2016-2017 year, and 21 of 22 in 2015-2016. All summer courses were taught by full-time tenure-track or fixed-term faculty.

Full-time faculty teach a 4-4 load. There are course reductions for faculty members who take on advising or other administrative duties. Faculty are encouraged to have a second area of interest – sports communication, social media, film, and others. Faculty are also encouraged to join and be active in professional organizations. The unit offers some financial assistance in those areas.

The department, in an effort to hire a tenure-track faculty member specializing in public relations, in 2017-18 purchased ads in *Inside Higher Ed* and *Christian Chronicle*. Several applications were received. Some were eliminated because the applicants did not have a terminal degree. Two were

submitted to the faculty and one was deemed superior to the other. The candidate had several interviews, meetings, lunches with important groups and key persons, including a local real estate agent. The candidate was offered the position but she declined.

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

The department is primarily a teaching institution but it values scholarly as well as creative work, and professional experiences. There are five full-time faculty members and one vacant position. In the matter of race/ethnicity, one is Latino. In gender, one is female. Two women left the full-time faculty for administrative positions, one in 2012 and the other in 2016. Each is an associate professor. Another woman who was a full professor retired in 2018.

Among the five remaining, one has a Ph.D. and was promoted to associate professor in 2018. Another associate professor has a J.D. and is close to completing the dissertation for the Ph.D. One has an M.F.A. and is a tenure-track assistant professor. Two have an M.S.; one is an assistant professor with tenure and the other is an instructor. There are no full professors.

All faculty have some professional experience. Some have served in editorial positions (copy editor, design editor, columnists, managing editor and editor) on local publications and also publications out of state. Other past positions include account executives at ad agencies, marketing analysts, videographer, radio producer, webmasters, web project coordinators, digital media experts, and consultants.

In addition, they all indicate professional service, such as membership in Society of Professional Journalists and other professional organizations, judging community contests and student competitions, and other activities.

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

Instructors are evaluated by student input, alumni input, and by a visiting committee made up of professionals, some alums. An annual review is based on the faculty member's own goals. These goals are submitted on June 1 of each year and are the criteria on which the review is based. The faculty member and chair agree on the goals. In March, the faculty member does a self-evaluation determining whether the goals were met and reports the finding to the chair who evaluates in writing the faculty member. Then, the faculty member uses that evaluation to set goals for the following year, again due on June 1.

This continues each year even for post-tenure reviews. At ACU, tenure implies "a goodness of fit" and is measured by the tenure-seeker's commitment to the mission of the university. This includes faith expectations as well as teaching, scholarly work, service, and collegiality. Promotion is granted according to positive annual reviews and achievement.

Tenure and tenure track faculty are also expected to provide service to the university, surrounding community and church congregation. This service is usually through committees and boards.

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

The Provost and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences speak highly of the faculty, as do administrators from other departments and professionals in the Abilene area.

COMPLIANCE

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

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

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

While ACU is primarily a teaching institution, it does value research, creative works, and professional accomplishment. The university supports this goal in several ways.

The department's goal is to emphasize scholarly work to a greater degree without compromising its longstanding stellar record in teaching.

The following is from the university's Faculty Handbook:

Sabbaticals (called Faculty Renewal Leaves) are available to non-tenured faculty to aid them in the pursuit of graduate studies. Tuition expenses in the form of compensation and reimbursement are possible. These faculty members may be absent from campus for one or two semesters (one at full salary and the second at half-salary). Reduced teaching loads are possible if the faculty member is employed and not on sabbatical. These arrangements are approved by the department chair and the dean.

Tenured faculty may take Faculty Renewal Leaves to work toward scholarship or higher quality teaching. These leaves are granted according to merit. They are decided by the Provost with a recommendation from the Faculty Renewal Leave Committee. The faculty member may also request leaves without salary.

Two faculty members have completed these leaves – one in 2014 and one in 2017.

There is also the Presidential Fund for Professional Development that supplements travel budgets so that faculty members can attend and present at key conferences. Summer stipends at the equivalent of two summer classes may be granted to tenure-track faculty each summer. The Cullen Grant, generated by an endowment, supports research projects by providing time for the faculty member to make progress in scholarship during summer.

Funds are available from the Adams Center for Teaching and Learning to help faculty design and revise academic programs. A resident instructional designer helps.

In the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), a faculty member may receive a scholarship award of three hours of reassigned time for scholarly activity and \$500 for travel and supplies.

At the department level, seven faculty members have taken advantage of these benefits during the last six years. All seven have gone to one or more conferences; one person has gone to seven. Two used the funds for doctoral work.

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

Full-time faculty determine the relative importance of teaching, research, and service in their goal statements in annual reviews. Of the seven full-time faculty in Spring 2018, three chose the following: 50% teaching, 25% research, 25% service. One full professor who subsequently retired had 50% teaching, 15% research, 35% service. Two had a three-hour course reduction for advising student media and agencies and both had 75% teaching, 0 research, 25% service.

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

All faculty members, full-time and part-time, have done some professional work in their careers. Some have been editors or columnists in local newspapers (also in other states), webmasters for local businesses, consultants, marketing analysts. Some have had non-teaching positions at ACU. Some had full-time positions before joining the faculty and others seems to have done professional work for a few months while on the faculty. They list "professional service," which consists of judging competitions, speaking at local events, and membership in professional organizations, etc.

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.

All full-time faculty are credited with some of the following: conference papers, presentations video, film, articles, keynote speeches for local nonprofits, radio shows, and participation in classes taught by others, including in the Race and Media Colloquy.

Publications in the past six years of the total full-time faculty include the following:

- 1 edited book
- 2 book chapters
- 7 articles in refereed journals
- 10 refereed conference papers
- 3 invited papers
- 318 non-juried works
- 11 other projects

Faculty receiving summer stipends must make a presentation to the faculty based on scholarly work.

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

The department's collegiality assures discussion among the faculty members, and each of the faculty members extend themselves not only to students but to external organizations, conference, panels, etc.

COMPLIANCE

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit	Individuals				
		Full Professors (1)	Associate Professors (3)	Assistant Professors (2)	Instructor (1)	Totals (7)
Awards and Honors	5		3	1	1	5
Grants Received External						
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored						
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored						
Books Edited	1	1				1
Book Chapters	2	2				2
Monographs						
Articles in Refereed Journals	6		6	1		7
Refereed Conference Papers	9		9	1		10
Invited Academic Papers	3		3			3
Encyclopedia Entries						
Book Reviews						
Articles in Non-refereed Publications						
Juried Creative Works						
Non-juried Creative Works	318*		312*	1	5	318*
Other (Please specify)	11		6	5		11
Invited national conference presentation	7		6	1		7

Regional conference presentation	1			1		1
Invited professional webinar	1			1		1
Consulting	1			1		1
Invited professional presentation	1			1		1

*Includes weekly newspaper column in *The Abilene (Texas) Reporter-News*

PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

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

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The university moved to a centralized advising system in 2016 but has kept a dedicated professional academic adviser assigned to the department. This adviser, who has worked with the department since 2011, spends one day per week in the department and has received a high level of satisfaction (91 percent) from students (most recent student survey to measure satisfaction was 2017). When the site team met with students, one student said that the adviser was “the angel of the department.” The other 20-plus students agreed. All JMC majors meet with the adviser at least once per semester and use both SSC Campus and DegreeWorks software to keep students on a four-year plan of study. The department utilizes “advising agreements” to keep a record of adviser and student progress. Students must sign the agreement.

Formal career counseling occurs at the university’s Career Center, although faculty also provide informal advice when necessary.

b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

The small enrollment and size of the faculty help create a friendly and open-door culture between faculty and students. Faculty post office hours on syllabi and are generally available for students to help with informal advising for courses, internships and careers and more formal advising in one of the student media labs.

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

The department uses email, posters and other methods to inform students about activities, requirements and policies of the department. The department utilizes two software programs (SSC Campus and DegreeWorks) to help facilitate the advising process.

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.

All majors are required to participate in the student media lab or a student organization for two semesters but do not earn academic credit. The options for students are many and are a strength of the program. 99 West Media provides students, primarily those majoring in Multimedia, to produce video content for commercial clients. ACUTV provides video production services for the ACU campus, including live events. KACU-FM is Abilene’s NPR station. Students serve in on-air positions for the station, which is managed by a full-time faculty member. Morris + Mitchell is a student-run ad/PR agency lab that works with a wide variety of clients. The JMC Network comprises *The Optimist*, a news

website that includes video, and multiple video productions such as a newscast and sports shows. Students can also participate in the Ad/PR Association, Broadcast Education Association, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Society of Professional Journalists, PRSSA and others.

In 2017, the university was granted full Division I athletic status. The department created a partnership with ACU Athletics to produce coverage of sporting events, which resulted in a new production control room and studio as well as opportunities for about 25 students to work on the broadcast for each football game on ESPN+.

Students report that the experience they gain in the student media labs or student organizations is a valuable part of their campus education.

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.

Annual enrollment, retention and graduation rates are part of official university records and maintained by the university's Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The department annually publishes retention and graduation rates on its website.

The department reports that 70 to 75 percent of its graduates in 2015, 2016 and 2017 were employed in a JMC field.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The department's budget declined 11.7 percent in 2018-19, part of a university-wide effort to grapple with declining undergraduate enrollment. Twelve years ago, according to the self-study, university enrollment was about 4,000, compared to 3,500 today, about a 12 percent decline.

According to the self-study, a similar decline is occurring at many of the 20 colleges affiliated with the Churches of Christ. Similarly, the percentage of ACU students who say they are affiliated with the denomination has dropped from more than half 10 years ago to 28 percent today.

JMC enrollment in 2006 was 250; in 2012 it was 160 and in fall 2018 it was 104.

The department's enrollment decline was termed an "alarming drop" by the department's 2016 Visiting Committee, an outside group of professionals that conducts periodic program reviews. Its report urged creation of "an immediate and effective means to reverse it."

The year of the self-study year (2017-2018), the department's budget was flat. The department is fortunate to have other funding sources, such as course fees, lab fees, a technology endowment and alumni gifts. The department's budget is augmented by travel and capital equipment dollars from the College, and university dollars for faculty development and lab equipment support.

The department has been resourceful in partnering with other units at the university to achieve strategic goals. An example is the collaboration between JMC and the Athletic Department to refurbish the television control room and studio.

The budget does not allow for much discretionary spending but its other sources of income are deployed in a strategic way. Part of an alumna's recent gift, for example, has bolstered the department's diversity initiatives.

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

The department believes its resources are adequate to support its mission and fair in relation to other units.

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

The department lists as a primary goal the "training (of) students in digital, technological and multimedia competencies current in the industry." The department is primarily housed in a portion of the Don Morris Center, which is close to the center of campus. This facility includes three Mac-based

teaching labs, a large lecture classroom, a reading room, JMC Network Student Media News Lab, space for various student organizations and offices for faculty and staff. With rare exceptions, all of the instruction takes place on-site, so students have access to consistently upgraded hardware and software in the classrooms as well as the co-curricular offices. Equipment is upgraded on a 3-year or 4-year rotation depending on the university's financial situation, and software in the labs and in the co-curricular offices is updated at the end of each semester, including free access to Adobe Creative Cloud for students.

The department maintains a 2,088-square-foot broadcast facility that includes the ACUTV television production studio, a video control room and an audio control room. The studio has four Panasonic AK-UC3000 4K cameras, and the control room is connected through fiber-optics to several facilities throughout campus. Student-run multimedia agency 99 West Media has access to a wide array of high-end equipment to perform client work and creative activities. Ad/PR agency Morris+Mitchell, while less hardware-based than other co-curricular units, gains significant experience in using social media tools to serve its clients. KACU-FM maintains a high-end studio with two fully equipped sound booths, and *The Optimist* and student media operations have multiple computers for writing, reporting, video and photo editing.

Facilities are impressive for a department this size. This shows a dedication by the institution to focus on the student learning environment.

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.

A JMC Equipment Checkout Room contains a selection of equipment for students to use for coursework. This room is managed by a faculty member and staffed by student workers and is open 90 minutes each day. Students did not complain about access.

The department maintains a collection of up-to-date audio, video and photo equipment available for student use in several classes in the department. The university's Learning Studio, located nearby in the Brown Library, also offers similar equipment for checkout.

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

The Margaret and Herman Brown Library is located close to the Don Morris Center and is the university's main library. From an internal report in 2012, the Brown Library contains more than 1,000 books on journalism subjects and close to 3,500 books on topics in mass media. Online access to journals and other publications increases the support from the Brown Library.

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.

Indicators:

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The department reports that it “maintains significant ties with alumni, professionals and professional associations locally, nationally and internationally, using those connections to improve teaching and the unit-wide curriculum.” All alumni of the department with known addresses receive the university-produced magazine, *ACU Today*, which is edited by an alumnus of the department. Another alumna produces content for the university’s website, which has included content that is related to the department.

The department itself distributes a periodic online newsletter that reports on current initiatives within the department, and it hosts an annual open house for returning alumni during Homecoming weekend.

One of the most unique connections with alumni and professionals is the Visiting Committee initiative. This committee, which reports directly to the administration, is convened every two years (with few exceptions) to critique and evaluate the department’s curriculum, programs and operations. Each department on campus undergoes this type of review.

The department has an active social media presence on Facebook (more than 900 people follow its page) with a less active presence on popular channels like Instagram and Twitter.

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.

A review of faculty vita shows a commitment to engaging in their community and within the industry through judging competitions, serving on community organizations and public speaking. There are multiple committees with professional members who provide guidance and feedback to various components in the department, including student media and organizations.

The department manages KACU-FM, the university’s regional NPR station. One full-time faculty member serves as general manager of the station, which provides both national NPR programming and coverage of local and regional issues produced primarily by students.

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

The faculty are active in professional and academic organizations, including at the national level. For

example, Dr. Cheryl Mann Bacon served on the Executive Committee of ASJMC for two years (2015 – 2017), and Dr. Jessica Smith served as AEJMC Communication Technology Division Head in 2017 – 2018. Dr. Doug Mendenhall is newsletter editor for the AEJMC Small Programs Interest Group. There are multiple examples of faculty serving the discipline through judging national awards.

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 department, through various channels, engages and impacts its communities. For example, the Ad/PR students complete an Ad/PR Campaigns Senior Capstone Course where the focus is on working with actual clients in their community to solve a problem. Faculty drive these relationships.

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

The department focuses on two main areas regarding scholastic journalism: (1) Judging for journalism contests involving public and private high school students; and (2) A weeklong summer program offered through the ACU Honors College, which includes a filmmaking tract that focuses on film production skills. This summer program has been taught by a faculty member in the department with facilities managed by the department.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

The Accrediting Committee and Council seek site-team reports on assessment that are appropriately detailed for a judgment on compliance that is informed, fair and consistent from one team to another. Please respond to each of these questions in your report on indicators (a), (b) and (c):

a) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the “Professional Values and Competencies” of the Council.

The department has had an assessment plan in place for more than a dozen years and updated its plan in fall 2015 to make it less cumbersome. The plan serves both the university’s and the department’s assessment needs and is divided into three parts: University-wide outcomes, social science outcomes, and unit-specific outcomes. The ACEJMC competencies – and other department-specific outcomes – are clustered into three groups within the unit-specific section:

- Outcome One: First Amendment/law; history; ethics; critical thinking
- Outcome Two: Domestic diversity; global diversity
- Outcome Three: Images; research; writing; evaluate; math; technology

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

For most of the period covered by this review, Dr. Jessica Smith, an associate professor in the department, had been in charge of assessment. However, Dr. Smith moved to the dean’s office in 2016 and to the provost’s office in July 2018, and the assessment baton has been passed to a veteran JMC faculty member.

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

The department uses multiple measures to assess ACEJMC’s 12 values and competencies and its plan outlines where each should be covered in core courses.

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

Some, but not all, syllabi include the ACEJMC competencies that will be covered in the course.

Syllabi for all new courses are submitted to the Adams Center for Teaching and Learning for compliance with university standards. The previous department chair reviewed syllabi if there were changes, to ensure that they covered what the department had agreed upon. The new chair plans to continue that practice.

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

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

The written plan includes six direct measures and three indirect measures. Direct measures include:

- Essays in JMC 100 (Media Issues)
- A research paper in JMC 488 (Communication Law)
- Questions on the final exam in JMC 100
- A pre-test and post-test for majors, taken during JMC 100 and again within two weeks of graduation. These cover 11 of the 12 competencies.
- Course-embedded assessments of writing and visual proficiency. The assessments cover seven of the 12 competencies and are conducted in every JMC course over a two-year period.
- Internship supervisor reports, submitted after the student has completed the required internship course. These cover 10 of the 12 competencies.

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

Indirect measures include student awards; a 38-question student survey; and a 24-question alumni survey. The surveys are conducted every three years. The awards are monitored each year.

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

The measures appear to be effective, although some are more reliable than others. For example, the pre-test and post-test were not administered in 2017-2018 because of a faculty member's oversight. The department chair assured the team this was an aberration and the practice will resume.

The department regularly evaluates its assessment measures and modifies them as needed to improve their effectiveness.

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

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

The department prepares an annual assessment report for the university and for department faculty. The reports contain candid observations about each competency and recommendations for remedies.

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

The self-study described three competencies of specific concern based on recent assessment:

- writing correctly and clearly
- applying current tools and technologies, and
- conducting research and evaluating information

In addition, the department is reviewing how history is covered throughout the curriculum, since there is no dedicated history course.

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

When performance falls short of benchmarks, those areas are flagged for monitoring or for addressing in curricular changes. Specific faculty members are assigned to each area requiring attention.

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

Through annual monitoring of its measures and data, the department determines whether its benchmarks have been achieved. If they have not been, additional remedies are implemented.

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

The self-study and annual assessment reports identify several instances when assessment efforts have had the desired effect. In the 2015-16 report, for example, the post-test and embedded measures revealed deficiencies in grammar and punctuation. Faculty for two introductory level courses added additional instruction in both and instructors of upper level courses were asked to underscore those topics. In the report for 2016-17, 89 percent of rated student work samples on grammar and punctuation were rated satisfactory or better. And in 2018, student essays submitted to the university's Writing Across the Curriculum committee showed that JMC students had the highest average score of all departments that were evaluated.

Another example of data analysis leading to improved student learning is math proficiency. When post-test data showed weaknesses in numeracy, math modules were added to two courses: Creating Media Messages and Convergence Reporting I. Subsequent assessment reports have shown improvement.

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

The department has several advisory boards on which alumni serve and keeps in contact with other alums via social media and "old fashioned" networking. Graduates come back often to speak in classes or attend other university events; some are now in professional positions and host current students as interns. These regular contacts afford ample opportunities for the faculty to hear suggestions for improving curriculum and instruction.

In addition, the department surveys a random sample of alumni every three years to gauge satisfaction with their education. The most recent survey, in 2015, had a 50.5 percent response rate and nearly three-quarters said their JMC classes prepared them well or very well for their careers.

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

Professionals participate in assessment primarily through the intern evaluations, which address 10 of the Council's 12 competencies and values. All students are required to complete at least one internship.

Professionals are informally involved in evaluating student work through on-campus events such as the annual Gutenberg Award ceremony, which was once a formal dinner but is now a networking occasion for current students and alums.

In addition, all ACU departments have periodic evaluations from Visiting Committees, which are made up of alumni and others in professionals. Committee members visit classes and talk with faculty and students, and offer the department curricular advice.

COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:

- An impressive array of co-curricular activities for students in all majors
- Hard-working and collegial faculty who actively explore ways to keep the curriculum current
- A promising new colloquy model for incorporating diverse speakers and topics into the curriculum
- Progress in hiring diverse full-time and part-time faculty
- Loyal alumni who return to campus to speak, offer positions to students, and give generously to the program
- A savvy partnership with the athletic department which has led to a dazzling new television studio and control room

Weaknesses:

- An unbalanced faculty. There are no full professors, only one female professor and only one full-time professor for the Ad/PR major
- Flat or declining enrollment figures

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

NA

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

NA

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

NA

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

NA

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.

The department was found out of compliance on Standard 3 in 2001, 2007, and 2013. After the third time, the program was given provisional accreditation and urged to “more vigorously embrace” factors within its control to improve performance on this standard. A revisit team in fall 2014 determined that the department had done just that and found the department in compliance with Standard 3. The department’s full accreditation was restored in 2015. The 2018 site team found that the department had maintained its momentum on diversity and inclusiveness, adding a required Race and Media course and

colloquies that bring in diverse outside professionals. The full-time faculty now includes a Hispanic male, who has started a chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. The part-time faculty now includes a Hispanic woman. The department also received a waiver in 2018 to offer a full-time position to an African-American woman who is not a member of the Churches of Christ. Although she declined, the search will resume this year and the possibility of a waiver remains.

The 2013 report also noted “a stretched full-time faculty” of only five members. The department still has just five members and is searching for a sixth. They are still stretched.

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

The self-study was clearly written and presented in an organized way. In some places, it would have been helpful if material in the appendices had been included in the report itself.