

Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC
Undergraduate program
2019-2020

Name of Institution: Jacksonville State University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Don Killingsworth, acting president

Name of Unit: Department of Communication

Name and Title of Administrator: J. Patrick McGrail, department head

Date of 2019-2020 Accrediting Visit: Dec. 1, 2019-Dec. 4, 2019

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Jan. 26-29, 2019

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2019-2020 Visiting Team: Provisional reaccreditation

Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Joel Kaplan, Associate Dean for Professional Graduate Studies
Organization/School: Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

Signature _____


Team Member

Name and Title: Greg Pitts, Director, School of Journalism and Strategic Media
Organization/School: College of Media and Entertainment, Middle Tennessee State University

Signature _____


Team Member

Name and Title: Africa Price, Director of Governmental Affairs and Public Relations
Organization/School: City of Shreveport

Signature _____


PART I: General information

Name of Institution: Jacksonville State University

Name of Unit: Department of Communication

Year of Visit: 2019

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:

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.

Jacksonville State University’s legal authority to operate as a university is provided for under *The Code of Alabama 1975, Title 16, Section 52.*

That code gives the board of trustees power to operate Jacksonville State University by appointing the faculty of the University and other personnel necessary to operate the university. It also gives it power to retain or terminate personnel, fix their salaries or compensation; and increase or reduce the same at its discretion. Furthermore, it is authorized to regulate, alter or modify the government of the University as it may deem advisable; to prescribe courses of instruction, rates of tuition and fees; to confer such academic and honorary degrees as are usually conferred by institutions of similar character; and to do whatever else it may deem best for promoting the interest of the university.

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: January 26-29, 2014

5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? May 2008

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

MISSION OF DEPARTMENT

Date of adoption: August 2003

The purpose of the Department of Communication is to provide students with a professional education, within the context of a broad liberal arts and sciences curriculum, which will enable them to compete effectively in a variety of fields of communication. The concepts of learning to read, write, speak, think critically, reason quantitatively and qualitatively, use technology, and apply theory are inherent in the BA in communication. Within this context, four major goals guide the operation of the Department of Communication: 1) to impart to students the practical skills appropriate for their communication disciplines of interest; 2) to develop in students an understanding of research and quantitative applications relevant and appropriate to journalism and mass communications; 3) to develop in students an understanding of the history and theories of mass communications and how to apply them to the journalism and mass communications profession; and 4) to imbue students with the skills that enable them to apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press and practice ethical principles in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of 16 weeks

Quarters of _____ weeks

Summer sessions of 12 weeks

Intersessions of 2, 6, & 12 weeks

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.

Major Degree: BA Communication

Concentrations: Broadcasting, Digital Journalism, Public Relations

10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree: 120 semester-hours

11. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience. (Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.) 3 semester hours required

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

Person in Charge

Sequence: Broadcasting

Dr. J. Patrick McGrail

Sequence: Digital Journalism

Dr. S. Fawad Shah

Sequence: Public Relations

Dr. Augustine Ihator

13. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution: 8,479 students, fall 2018.

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 | Undergraduate majors in |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Broadcasting | 85 |
| Digital Journalism | 44 |
| Public Relations | 85 |
| Pre-major/Undecided | N/A |
| <hr/> | |
| Total | 214 |

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. 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.)

We do not have online skills courses, but below are data for our traditional skills courses.

| Skills Course | Enrollment | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Fall 2019 | Summer 2019 | Spring 2019 |
| COM 205 Intro to Broadcast Writing | 20 | -- | 21 |
| COM 301 Intro to TV Production | 16 | 18 | 20 |
| COM 302 Intro to Audio Production | 16 | -- | 15 |
| COM 315-01 Intro to News | 18 | -- | 19 |
| COM 315-02 Intro to News | 16 | -- | 17 |
| COM 320 Video Production and Editing | 16 | -- | 13 |
| COM 325 Publication Design | 17 | 16 | 22 |
| COM 340 Public Relations Writing | 16 | -- | 13 |
| COM 375 Internet Production | 18 | 17 | 20 |
| COM 420 Advanced Reporting | -- | -- | 2 |
| COM 440 PR Campaign Management | 6 | 1 | 17 |
| COM 470 Advanced Electronic News | 7 | -- | 10 |

-- = *Course not offered*

16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2019–2020 academic year:

Give percentage increase or decrease in three years:

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

Our annual budgets for 2016-2017 = \$546,877.85; 2017-2018 = \$637,744.26; 2018-2019 = \$648,284.5; and 2019-2020 = \$675,977.26. This amounts to a budget increase of 16.6 percent in 2017-2018; an increase of 1.7 percent in 2018-19; and another increase of 4.3 percent in 2019-20.

As seen above, the budget increase of 16.6 percent during the 2017-2018 academic year is significant and unusual, and therefore bears some clarification. Prior to 2017-2018, we were short of two faculty members, but those two positions were filled in 2017-2018, which explains the 16.6 percent budget increase that year.

Our full-time faculty salaries for the 2019-2020 session are expected to be \$376,341.21.

17. List name and rank of all full-time faculty in the accredited unit in fall 2019. (Full-time faculty refers to those defined as such by the university.) Identify those not teaching because of leaves, sabbaticals, etc.

Dr. J. Patrick McGrail, Assoc. Professor & department head
 Dr. Augustine Ihator, Professor

Dr. Breann E. Murphy, Assistant Professor

Dr. S. Fawad Shah, Assistant Professor

Dr. Kingsley O. Harbor, Professor

Note: None of our faculty members is on leave or sabbatical

18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2019. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2019. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2020, please provide the spring 2020 adjunct list in the updated information.)

Mike Stedham, part-time instructor/manager of student media (taught spring and fall, 20

Pam Hill, adjunct instructor (taught spring and fall, 2019)

Dottie Rimpsey, adjunct instructor (taught spring and fall, 2019)

Billy Ramsey, adjunct instructor (taught fall, 2019)

19. Schools on the semester system:

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

72 or more semester hours
outside of journalism and mass communications

| Year | Total Graduates | Number in Compliance | Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------|
| 2018-2019 academic year | __49__ | __49__ | __100__ |
| 2017-2018 academic year | __48__ | __48__ | __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.

104 or more quarter hours
outside of journalism and mass communications

| Year | Total Graduates | Number in Compliance | Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------|
| 2018-2019 academic year | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2017-2018 academic year | _____ | _____ | _____ |

PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

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. The unit annually updates its data on the ACEJMC searchable database website (<https://lookup.acejmc.org>).

Jacksonville State University sits in the Appalachian foothills, midway between Birmingham and Atlanta. It began in 1883 as a teacher's college and now has 95 programs and concentrations with a total enrollment of approximately 9,000. The Department of Communication began in 1986 though it originally focused on broadcasting, primarily television production. In the early 1990s, the department focused on three concentrations: broadcasting; print; and new media though most of its 150 majors were in the broadcasting sequence. In 2002, a new department head eliminated the new media track and introduced a public relations sequence. The department was successfully accredited in 2008 and was reaccredited in 2014. In 2016, with no input from the communication faculty, the president of the university moved the department from the College of Education and Professional Studies to the School of Business and Industry. According to current administrators, faculty and students, the university president then forced out the department's longtime head because the president was angered by two editorial columns in the student newspaper that criticized him. The dean of the school confirmed this though mentioned that the department head's health issues also played a role.

The department has a written mission statement that was adopted in 2003 and which calls for providing students with a professional education within the context of a broad liberal arts and sciences curriculum.

The department has a written five-year strategic plan that aligns with JSU's strategic plan in terms of mission and goals.

It is difficult to determine if the department is supported by university administrators outside the unit. The department is the smallest unit in its new home at the business school and both the school's dean and associate dean acknowledged there are many details of the department of which they are unaware. For example, the associate dean questioned why there is a limit of 20 students for a skills class. The dean did say that he has tried to provide additional financial support to the department over the past two years. At the site team lunch for administrators outside the unit, only one person showed up—the chair of the business school's largest department. He said the department was looked upon favorably by other units though he also questioned why it was placed in the business school.

While the department appears to update most of its data on the ACEJMC searchable database website, there is no data for new graduate employment and the department says it does not have that information.

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

Department meetings are held approximately four times per year with all five full-time faculty members in attendance. Part-time faculty are invited to attend. The department has five standing committees including curriculum and student grievance. Faculty also serve on university-wide committees. There is a Faculty Policy Manual and Handbook that ensures oversight.

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 department appears to be in flux. Its new department head, who was the interim head last year, was named permanent department head at the beginning of this semester. The previous department head, who had been the leader for 16 years before being forced to step down as head and return to the faculty, announced his retirement from the university just prior to the site team visit. More problematic for the department was the decision by the university president to move the department from the education school to the business school. This move was done without input from the department and its integration into the business school has not been smooth. The school's current dean is supportive of the new department head, but he also has announced his retirement. The good news for the department is that the school just completed a national search for a new dean, who will start in January and who has a Ph.D. degree in communication. In addition, JSU's president, who moved the department into the business school and called for the removal of the department's former head, was removed by the university's board of trustees five weeks before the site visit.

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

The university has a well-developed procedure for selecting department heads that involves the dean and provost and a search committee. Under the policy the dean of the business school must form a search committee and appoint a chair, usually the associate dean. That procedure involves bringing three candidates to campus. However, in selecting the current head, no aspect of that procedure was followed. The dean said he decided to use emergency power to name the interim head as permanent department head because of the department's reaccreditation process.

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

Faculty grievances are generally solved by the department head as are non-grade grievances about faculty from students. Grade appeals follow a formal process that goes to the unit's Student Grievances Committee. Students also have the ability to appeal to the School's Advisory Committee.

SUMMARY: The new department head is overseeing a unit in transition. The former JSU president unilaterally moved the department to a new administrative home in a business school that was unfamiliar with the department's values. That same president later forced out the department head's predecessor because he was angry about a student editorial. In selecting the new department head, the school violated its own policies and procedures. Not all the required data for the ACEJMC website is included because the department did not collect that data.

Overall evaluation compliance/non-compliance:

NON-COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

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 unit requires a minimum of 72 hours from outside journalism and mass communications. This is noted in the catalog as well as on the advising worksheets used when students meet with faculty advisors. For both 2017 – 2018 and 2018 – 2019, all graduates were in compliance.

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 of Communication at Jacksonville State provides instruction in three concentrations: Broadcasting, Digital Journalism and Public Relations. In Fall 2018, the department had 214 majors across the three areas. Broadcasting had 85 students, Digital Journalism had 44, and Public Relations enrolled 85 students.

Students must take 120 hours to graduate, and 45 of those hours being completed in the concentration and 72 hours required from outside the concentration. Effectively, students could complete up to 48 hours from the department. A common core of 30 hours is completed by all students. This core has been revised since the 2013 visit.

COMMON CORE

COM 200 Introduction to Mass Communication

COM 301 Introduction to TV Production

COM 325 Publication Design

COM 345 Social Media and Society

COM 375 Internet Production

COM 380 Communication Law

COM 385 Multimedia Design

COM 390 Ethics and Global Journalism

COM 415 Mass Communication Research

COM 491 Internship (3 hrs.)

Broadcasting (15)

COM 205 Introduction to Broadcast Writing

COM 302 Introduction to Audio Production

COM 320 Video Production and Editing

COM 404 Media Workshop

COM 405 Media Workshop

COM 406 Media Workshop
COM 470 Advanced Electronic News
Total Hours : 15

Elective courses: None

Required outside of the accredited unit

- 1) Introduction to Information Technology
- 2) Introduction to Web Design

Digital Journalism (15)

COM 315 Introduction to News
COM 404 Media Workshop (Workshops are one credit hour)
COM 405 Media Workshop
COM 406 Media Workshop
COM 410 Media Features
COM 420 Advanced Reporting
Communication Elective : 3 hours
Total Hours: 15

Required outside of the accredited unit

- 1) Introduction to Information Technology
- 2) Introduction to Web Design

Public Relations (15)

COM 315 Introduction to News
COM 325 Publication Design
COM 330 Introduction to Public Relations
COM 340 Public Relations Writing
COM 440 Public Relations Campaign Management
Total Hours: 15

Elective courses: None

Required outside of the accredited unit

CS 201 Introduction to Information Technology (3)

All students in the program complete the 30-hour core course requirements. Five three-credit classes in the school core contribute to the bulk of the theoretical and conceptual course content. Skills courses may also contribute theoretical and conceptual content. These primary theory or conceptual courses are Introduction to Mass Communication, Social Media and Society, Communication Law, Ethics and Global Journalism and Mass Communication Research.

Broadcasting: Students take these skills courses: Introduction to Broadcast Writing, Introduction to Audio Production, Video Production and Editing, three one-hour Media Workshop credits and Advanced Electronic News.

Digital Journalism: Students are required to take a Media Features class, an Advanced Reporting Class and three one-hour Media Workshop classes run by the director of student media. Students in this sequence often fulfill that requirement by working for the weekly student newspaper, *The Chanticleer*. DJ students also must take one communication elective.

Public Relations: Students in this track complete Introduction to News, Publication Design, Introduction to Public Relations, Public Relations Writing and Public Relations Campaign Management.

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.

Jacksonville State identifies itself as a teaching institution. Effective faculty instruction is valued but faculty members who teach skills classes have very limited or dated professional experiences. Course titles suggest digital relevancy; instruction and faculty experiences do not match the class descriptions. Faculty instruction would benefit from professional learning placements. The program has a \$2 million fund to hire a professional in residence (or to support faculty professional development) but this fund has not been used to provide professional instructional enhancement since May 2013. The department head said this fund is not part of the normal communication budget and he was never informed about this fund when he took over the department.

The program requires students complete a rigid program core that includes a fixed pattern of prerequisite courses. Students note a failure of the unit to offer sufficient sections of required classes and attempts to compel students to enroll in the summer, when financial aid is not available to support their studies. Students and faculty report that students are receiving permission to take prerequisite courses as co-requisites with capstone classes. The unit head reports an increased willingness on the students to request co-requisite approval—including seeking approval from other university personnel—to ensure timely graduation. In one example, a graduating senior was taking an introductory production course while also taking a capstone production class.

Students report seeking outside experiences to supplement course instruction. The Media Workshop requirements (three 1-credit workshops) put students into contact with production or journalistic experiences, supervised by either the student media director or other on-campus professionals who expose students to professional experiences. Students report faculty are not technologically adept, for example, faculty are not comfortable with class management platforms such as Canvas. The department head said this was because Canvas was only introduced in the fall of 2019 and that three of the six faculty members have been trained on it.

Broadcasting: Though one concentration is called Broadcasting, course content does not appear to reflect broadcast practices of contemporary times. Upper-level classes do not address broadcast or media programming, streaming, or industry practices of broadcast stations or media production companies, other than teaching fundamental hands-on studio production skills. With a large, rigid core, fixed concentration requirements and limited faculty, there appears to be little opportunity to address topics that would improve the relevancy of a program called Broadcasting.

Students report pursuing a minor in Film and Entertainment Technology to supplement field production class experiences not available through COM Department classes.

Students note the department has only six video cameras available for check-out by introductory or advanced students and for only 24-hour periods of use. Some reported using equipment held by the library or through the Drama Department. A new 20 station PC lab, although installed with the Adobe Creative Suite, was reported as less than acceptable for student video editing. Students either provided their own devices or accessed one of four Mac video editing labs. A television studio lab is analog equipped; student class projects are recorded to a MiniDV format and must be transferred to a digital file.

Digital Journalism: The director of student media, who has a long and distinguished professional career, is the primary faculty member for students in this sequence and students have thrived under his leadership. Though there are only 44 students in this sequence, half the number of the other two tracks, students appear to receive the necessary instruction to meet ACEJMC competencies. The site team was a bit thwarted in its efforts to determine how demanding and current the courses taught by faculty other than the director of student media because it was unable to contact recent alumni and only two DJ students attended the student meeting. Those two students did say they believe the department has done its best to prepare them for future journalism careers though they wish the faculty was more updated on the digital revolution

Public Relations: Students complete a traditional series of PR courses, from introduction to cases to campaigns. Instruction seems to be appropriate and demanding, though faculty have dated or little professional experience.

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.)

Classes generally adhere to the 20-1 ratio. The team reviewed enrollments from Fall 2017 – Fall 2019 and found one class with more than 20 in Fall 2017, three classes in Spring 2018 and two classes in Spring 2019 with more than 20 students. The team noted many senior-level required conceptual classes enrolled between 18 – 22 students, providing a richer learning experience.

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.

An external internship, COM 491, is required of all students and is part of the unit core. The unit also encourages opportunities through Media Workshops, required of Broadcasting and Digital Journalism concentrations. Public Relations students complete an internship through the core. Campaigns classes appear to identify local non-profit organizations as the client for the capstone course.

The Media Workshops put students in internal practicum experiences with JSU Sports, university communications or a digital services unit. Other students complete an internal experience through the student newspaper, *The Chanticleer* or WLJS-FM (campus radio station). Students understand the importance of internships. They noted the challenges of completing non-paying internships while also acknowledging that internships may lead to entry jobs.

SUMMARY:

The program includes a rigid core of courses that creates enrollment problems, necessitating enrollment over 20 or co-requisite enrollment, when the curriculum calls for prerequisites. Faculty professional and technological skills are limited or dated. Equipment resources are not adequate. Students have little opportunity to complete internal electives, although a few options exist.

Overall evaluation, compliance, non-compliance:

NON-COMPLIANCE.

PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

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 Department of Communication has a written plan for diversity that was established in 2002 and most recently updated in 2019. The plan includes both domestic and global diversity and is prominent in the department's five values that weave throughout its seven competencies. Since the inception of the document, the department has gone on to improve its diverse representation of faculty, moving from zero in 2002 to a nice showing with full-time faculty in 2019. Of the full-time faculty, 40 percent are Black/African-American; 20 percent white; and 20 percent Asian. The past head of the department was a minority. He is tenured and will retire this month. The department seeks opportunity to diversify its staff with adjunct professors. There is currently one female minority working as an adjunct. In the past six years, the department has retained all except one of its minority faculty. Of the three minority, full-time faculty, two are tenured and the third is working toward tenure.

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

The unit curriculum proudly touts global and domestic diversity as a core value, yet assessment shows that students in two sequences – broadcast and digital – perform below average in these areas. This is an opportunity to re-evaluate the curriculum execution concerning diversity to ensure greater comprehension on behalf of the students. Course work presents students with case studies that involve diversity and multicultural issues. The students are well versed in diversity of thought and approaching problems from various viewpoints. The student publications show a range of news coverage of all groups on campus, including alternative sexual orientation. However, there could be more introduction and involvement for students in the way of student professional organizations, like National Association of Black Journalists or National Association of Hispanic Journalists. Many of the students had not heard of such organizations. They were mostly familiar with the Public Relations Student Society of America.

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 unit has shown that it is cognizant of the importance of recruiting minority faculty and staff. Its full-time faculty is diverse with international faculty, two from Nigeria and one from Pakistan. There is also an African-American female professional who serves as an adjunct in the department. There is a list of potential minority candidates kept on file to readily access should a position become open in the department.

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 unit has a diverse student population that is eager to learn about the world of communication. Many of the students have transferred into the department from other majors. The unit has in the past reached out to high school students with a workshop hoping to spark an interest in communication. That connection has not happened in the past year and needs to be rekindled. Faculty noted that they do use graduates to help with recruitment of minority students.

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.

The unit shows support for all aspects of diversity and inclusiveness. They show great appreciation for diversity of disabilities as the students and faculty affectionately embrace a few members of the student body who have physical disabilities. A blind student is very active in the program with great support from faculty and students. The department has a disability accommodation statement and the university has installed equipment and facilities to accommodate persons with physical disabilities.

SUMMARY:

Overall the department understands the importance of diversity and what is needed to ensure that students are successful in the communications field. There are additional steps that can be taken to enhance a diverse experience for the students through organizations and curriculum.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:

COMPLIANCE

Academic year: 2018 – 2019 Full-time faculty

| Group | Female | % of total faculty | Male | % of total faculty |
|--|---------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Black/African-American | 0 | 0 | 2 | 40 |
| White | 1 | 20 | 1 | 20 |
| American Indian/Alaskan native | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian | 0 | 0 | 1 | 20 |
| Hispanic/Latino (any race) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Two or more races | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other race | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| International (any race) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Academic year: 2018 – 2019 Part-time/adjunct faculty

| Group | Female | % of total faculty | Male | % of total faculty |
|--|---------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Black/African-American | 1 | 12.5 | 0 | 0 |
| White | 1 | 12.5 | 1 | 12.5 |
| American Indian/Alaskan native | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hispanic/Latino (any race) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Two or more races | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other race | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| International (any race) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

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 unit has five full-time faculty members. It follows the employment policies and guidelines established by the university and conducts a national search for all full-time openings. The search committee is composed of all full-time faculty, a part-time faculty member who manages student media and one student. For part-time faculty the department head recommends hiring to the provost.

Until the fall of 2016, faculty in the unit were evaluated by the standards of the College of Education and Professional Studies. Even after the unit moved to the School of Business and Industry, the new dean chose to continue the same process for evaluating teaching, research and professional activity as part of its Live Text software process. The same evaluation is used for tenure and promotion. However, that year the university announced it was going to overhaul its evaluation instrument so the unit has not conducted any evaluations of faculty for the past three years other than student evaluations.

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

With a 4-3 load, the five full-time faculty members teach 70 percent of the core and required courses. There is also an expectation for full-time faculty research that includes publications, conference presentations and grant activities.

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.

All five full-time faculty members have Ph.Ds. The faculty's professional experience varies with some having very little experience in the profession. This is balanced somewhat by professional adjuncts and the director of student media.

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

The unit has no online courses. All faculty members are subjected to student evaluations for each course they teach. In addition, the department head evaluates all faculty members on an annual basis after they provide a portfolio that includes quality of syllabi, use of technology and pedagogical innovations.

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

It is unclear whether the faculty has respect on campus. Besides the dean and associate dean of the school, the site team only met with one other outside faculty member. All three were from one

department in the business school.

SUMMARY:

The department's full-time faculty teach the bulk of the departmental courses and have a strong academic background. Their lack of professional experience is balanced by adjuncts and the full-time director of student media.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:

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.

Jacksonville State University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award bachelor's, master's, educational specialist, and doctoral degrees. The Department of Communication was part of the College of Education and Professional Studies through Spring 2016; with the arrival of a new university president, the unit (and campus) was reorganized. Communication was moved to the newly created School of Business and Industry. Research, creative and/or professional activity remains a required component of promotion and tenure. The department's five full-time faculty all have a terminal degree.

The department supports faculty presentation at professional conferences; the operating budget's travel line is \$5,000. Other funds may be available on campus. The official faculty teaching load is 7 courses over the academic year, as either a 3 – 4 or 4 – 3 load. The department also reports that it pays a faculty members' annual (professional organization) membership dues for one organization.

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

Faculty must supply evidence of sustained excellence in scholarly/creative, or professional activities as defined by discipline. An annual performance review of all full-time tenured and non-tenured faculty is required to be completed by the department head or dean/director. (The review has not taken place for the last three years due to a reporting software change.) A Faculty Activity Report (FAR) provides documentation for tenure, promotion, or reappointment, and provides feedback to faculty members.

The move of the unit to the School of Business and Industry does not appear to have changed the expectations. A new dean of the School of Business and Industry, with a Ph.D. in Communication and a background in integrated marketing communication, will join the university in January 2020.

Two non-tenured faculty members said promotion and tenure expectations were clearly outlined.

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

Faculty members in the small department of five have terminal degrees (Ph.D.). The department and university's definition of scholarship is broad and includes both the scholarship of discovery (traditional research), scholarship of integration (making connections within and between the disciplines) and the scholarship of application (expected of those with professional experience.)

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.

Since the previous accreditation visit, faculty in the unit have produced eight book chapters, 10

monographs, 15 refereed journal articles and 34 conference papers. Research productivity across the unit has been uneven, with one associate professor producing the bulk of the conference papers and a tenure-track assistant professor as a co-author contributor to one-half of the journal articles.

Research does not appear to inform teaching. An eclectic mix of journals and conferences, from outside the traditional mass communication/media areas, are represented in faculty works including education journals co-authored with a spouse at another university, or health professionals at other universities.

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

The department has a funded Ayers Lecture Series to support an annual program to bring professionals and intellectuals to campus, but that fund has not been used in recent years. (There are “Me Too” issues associated with the donor, though the lectureship is named after the donor’s parents.) A required Mass Communication Research class has been identified by students as expanding their horizons by making them aware of research methods and stimulating their understanding and exploration of media topics. Faculty report a highly collegial and supportive atmosphere for both research and program interaction.

SUMMARY:

Faculty are required to pursue research, creative activity and/or professional activity. Output has been dominated by two individuals but a newly hired Ph.D. faculty member holds promise as a contributor. Research does not appear to inform teaching. An eclectic mix of journals and conferences are represented in the research output.

Overall evaluation, compliance, non-compliance:

COMPLIANCE

| Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities | Total from Unit* | Individuals | | | | Totals (5) |
|---|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| | | Full Professors (2) | Associate Professors (1) | Assistant Professors (2) | Other Faculty* (XX) | |
| Awards and Honors | 5 | | 2 | 0+3 | | 2 |
| Grants Received Internal | 5 | | 4 | 1+0 | | 2 |
| Grants Received External | 2 | 2+0 | | | | 1 |
| Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored | | | | | | |
| Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored | | | | | | |
| Books Edited | | | | | | |
| Book Chapters | 8 | | 8 | | | 1 |
| Monographs | 10 | | 10 | | | 1 |
| Articles in Refereed Journals | 15 | 1+0 | 5 | 7+2 | | 4 |
| Refereed Conference Papers | 34 | 1+0 | 23 | 7+3 | | 4 |
| Invited Academic Papers | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Encyclopedia Entries | | | | | | |
| Book Reviews | 2 | | 2 | | | 1 |
| Articles in Non-refereed Publications | | | | | | |
| Juried Creative Works | | | | | | |
| Non-juried Creative Works | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Other (please specify) | 1 | | 1-Invited talk | | | 1 |

PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

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.

Advisement is an area of concern for this unit where faculty and students both expressed frustration with the process. The process is more ad hoc, with no one person on staff designated for these duties. Faculty take on the task, sometimes giving mixed messages to students. The department head noted that some students will go over his head to seek approval for taking prerequisites out of sequence. Students expressed difficulty in getting to see advisors outside of the designated week at the end of each semester to set schedules. Students also indicated that as graduation approaches many seem to face advisement concerns. Efforts to reach out to alumni to gather feedback on their experiences with advisement were unsuccessful. The only method to reach graduates appears to be through the school email address they maintain as students, but apparently do not access as graduates. The department should consider creating a database for alumni rather than depend on the university arm for such contact information.

b). Faculty are available and accessible to students.

When it comes to course work, students appreciate the approachable nature of the faculty. They say professors will allow them to approach them in the hallways with minor questions concerning assignments. The department requires faculty members to keep regular office hours, at least 10 hours each week during the fall and spring semesters and five hours each week during the university's short term. Faculty members have an "open door" policy for students during office hours and students also can make appointments. Students were observed dropping in on faculty without appointments and they were welcomed and attended to by the professors.

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

The unit works to keep students informed through social media, classroom announcements and bulletin boards around the building. Annual department meetings are also held for students. Course requirement information is available in the university's online catalog along with a handbook. The department also maintains information on a website.

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.

The unit provides students with numerous opportunities that develop their professional skills. Students have the opportunity to hone their skills at the school's 24-hour radio station that is proudly affiliated with NPR; the campus weekly newspaper and the supporting local non-profit organization with public relations material. WEAC-TV, located in Oxford which used to be housed in the unit, provides broadcast students an opportunity to work in a real-world environment. Broadcast students also use their skills to create promotional and recruitment videos for the department. Professional opportunities are supported and enriched by student membership in two key organizations like Public Relations Student Society of America and Zeta Phi Eta

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.

Retention rate is calculated for all first-time/full-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduate students who entered JSU during the fall semester and attended the next consecutive fall term as of census reporting date.

SUMMARY:

Overall, students appreciate the support they receive from the faculty. The environment is conducive to learning and preparing the next generation of JSU communication professionals.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:

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 has a detailed but complex annual budget in that it receives funding from several sources. While it receives its operating budget from the school as part of its general budget, it also receives separate funding for units under the umbrella of the department including the school's newspaper, its radio station and for an annual lecture series. That funding comes through a separate foundation. The unit is concerned that while the funding has been adequate for its previous operations, as it seeks to expand under its strategic plan, it will require additional funding. This is particularly true if it seeks to add a master's program in media to its portfolio.

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.

JSU underwent a reorganization in 2016 that resulted in the unit moving to the School of Business and Industry. As a result, the other three departments in the school are Applied Engineering and two business units. While the other units in the school have a far different function than the department, resource allocation appears to be equitable. The retiring dean of the school acknowledges that the department can use more resources and said he has tried to provide additional funding for the unit over the past two years including redirecting a \$50 per student fee toward the department. One major asset that the department has, but which has not been used in more than six years, is the Ayers journalism chair designed to bring a professional in residence. The department head said he was told there is not enough money in the fund to do that and he had no knowledge about how much money is available. The executive director of the foundation that provides the funding said there is \$2 million in that endowed fund and that money is designated for the department, though the endowment payout is unlikely to fully support a visiting faculty member.

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

A tornado swept through Jacksonville in spring 2018 doing considerable damage to many campus buildings including Self Hall, which primarily houses the department's classrooms and offices as well as the facilities for the student newspaper and the radio station. During the site team visit, the building's entire inside space had been repaired and remodeled, though parts of the exterior of the building were still undergoing reconstruction.

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 unit says it needs more HD cameras for field production and desperately needs upgrades to the lighting system in the main studio. Students say the equipment is adequate.

e). The institution and the unit provide sufficient library and information resources to support

faculty and student research and professional development.

There is a media library housed within Self Hall that houses resources of interest to students.

SUMMARY:

The department does a good job of using its limited budget to provide a good learning environment for its students. The dean of the business school has tried to make sure the department has adequate resources to accomplish its mission. However, the department should take advantage of its \$2 million endowed Ayres fund.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

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 unit maintains a Facebook page that was created in 2010 and students are encouraged to join the page while in school and to maintain a relationship after graduation. Page updates were limited; six posts were added in the last 30 days. Group membership must be approved. Membership was listed at 325 at the time of the team visit. The last post was dated Nov. 11, 2019, and provided news from the student newspaper about JSU's new acting president.

The department hosts an annual Communication Week each spring to bring a program alum to campus from each of the three concentration areas. The event was held in 2019, not held in 2018 due to a tornado damaging the campus, but it was held in 2017. The week culminates with a Communication Awards Banquet to recognize student achievements. Students report that campus job fairs seldom include communication professionals, much less professionals who are program alumni.

Examples of past efforts to host an Alumni Reunion were cited, but evidence of recent events could not be provided. The self-study appendix included references to a reunion from 2011. A draft of an alumni survey was presented but there is no evidence the survey was administered nor were there other examples of recent graduate engagement by the unit. Team members used email addresses provided by the unit in an attempt to measure alumni contact prior to the team visit. Of the 60 recent graduates emailed for unit feedback, no one responded. The unit does retain files of recent graduates.

The department has a Communication Advisory Board of eight members with seven of the eight living about an hour's distance from campus, yet none of the board members were present at the hosted luncheon for the accreditation team. (The sole guest was a department chair from JSU.)

Campus media are a separate unit from the department and do appear to maintain some contact with graduates. This does not appear to be shared with the department, but there was no indication the department ever asked that the information be shared.

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.

Faculty members have limited or dated professional experience. They do not appear to maintain memberships or active involvement in professional organizations. While acknowledging this is a small faculty and they cannot do everything, selecting examples of professional organizations or activities in which they believe involvement is professionally appropriate would support their unit. The department head blames budgetary constraints for not allowing faculty to belong to multiple professional or academic organizations.

Student media are supported by the unit as a parallel entity through which some classes (such as an advanced reporting class) may be taught and where student media provide experiential learning opportunities for students. There is evidence of a former department head resisting administrative

pressure to interfere with the operation of the student newspaper, though he lost his job as department head as a result.

The unit is an ACEJMC accredited unit but fails to support a high level of professional transparency through its own self-study. Faculty report not receiving the self-study prior to the site team visit and having at best limited knowledge of its contents.

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 unit reports that it will pay for faculty membership in one academic organization. Faculty members participate in a number of academic organizations including AEJMC, IAMCR and NCA. A faculty member is active in PRSSA/PRSA.

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.

JSU is located in Jacksonville, Alabama, a town with about 10,000 permanent residents. Nearby Anniston has a population of 22,000. The university is an important economic and social contributor to the communities. Faculty report that students in their courses engage regularly through communication projects and assignments that impact individuals and groups in the area. These include PR campaign assignments, student video or audio production, and radio or newspaper stories. One example cited was the creation of an informational video for a communication organization providing services to the visually impaired.

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

In the self-study, the unit touts its annual Summer Journalism Institute for high school students, as an example of diversity outreach and support for scholastic journalism, but later acknowledges that the event was last held in 2015 because of budgetary issues. Involvement with a high school project called *The Teen Scene* is cited, but this project was completed and reported in a previous self-study and is not relevant for the current reaccreditation period.

The self-study reports membership in the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) but there is no faculty or staff advisor. The chapter has not been active for the past five years.

SUMMARY: The unit presented little evidence of recent, active engagement with their graduates. Faculty are involved with academic organizations but as noted elsewhere have limited professional experience and little professional engagement locally or nationally.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:

NON-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.

Ultimately, the unit head is in charge of the assessment, with faculty who oversee the department’s three sequences doing the course embedded assessment and exit exams. The unit defined 12 values and competencies. The JSU 5+7 is the centerpiece of the department’s 2019-2020 outcomes assessment plan, which was designed to implement/promote and assess The JSU 5+7. The assessment plan uses five direct measures — exit exam, capstone project, course-embedded assessment, outside exam, and internship — and two indirect measures — senior exit survey and alumni survey — to assess student learning.

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

The unit’s assessment program includes communication professionals. Of the seven assessment methods (direct and indirect) the department uses, four involve professionals. The capstone project involves multiple reviewers, and one must be a professional. In course-embedded assessment, professionals are used when it is feasible; otherwise two instructors with expertise in the area are used. Internships involve a faculty member and a professional who is usually the employer; and/or a graduate. Of the employers spoken to by site team members, all were pleased with the quality of students they received from the unit.

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

The unit uses assessment methods which include multiple reviewers, instructors and practitioners. Sometimes two instructors with related expertise are used for the assessment. Rubrics are used in the evaluation of the work’s assessment. The three concentrations in the department utilized rubrics in assessing capstone projects, course-embedded assessments, and internships. To assess student learning, the plan includes four direct measures, the aforementioned three along with an exit exam, and two indirect measures (senior exit survey and alumni survey). The department uses the assessment data to make necessary changes based on the results of outcomes.

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 unit does a poor job of keeping in touch with alumni. Of the 60 alumni given to the site team, no one responded to numerous efforts at outreach. Unless this data is collected in an exit interview, it seems the site team’s experience would be a strong indication that it would be difficult for faculty to connect with alumni for this information to help improve curriculum.

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

The unit does a good job of including active professionals on its staff as adjunct faculty. Two work in TV media, while another works with a local radio group. These professors bring current real-world expertise to their students each week.

SUMMARY:

Assessment is done by the unit and used to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. Recent assessments have prompted the department to develop methods to improve diversity comprehension among the student population.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:

COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:

- A cohesive, collegial and supportive faculty
- A diverse student body
- A strong focus on global diversity
- Partnerships with local organizations
- Collects a multitude of data for assessment purposes

Weaknesses:

- Full-time faculty with limited professional experience
- No systematic way of tracking alumni nor providing the necessary data for the ACEJMC website
- Over enrollments in some skills courses as well as students not taking required prerequisites before advanced or capstone classes
- Not enough emphasis on racial, gender and ethnic diversity
- Eclectic research interests that don't mesh with professional outcomes
- Failure to take advantage of a \$2 million endowed fund to hire a professional in residence

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

Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

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

- Failure to adhere to the unit's own rules on the search/selection for a new department head
- Failure to update all of the appropriate data on the ACEJMC website; specifically, all data dealing with new graduate employment
- Failure to adhere to the 20-1 student-faculty classroom ratio for skills courses
- Failure to enforce pre-requisites for advanced and capstone courses
- Failure to have any formal vehicle for alumni engagement, including a contact list for recent graduates
- Failure to use their resources to host public service and outreach events that were present in the past

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

- Evidence that the unit is complying with the 20-1 faculty-student ratio for all skills courses
- Update in a timely matter the appropriate data on the ACEJMC website
- Come up with a formal way to track recent grads of the unit, including a database of contact information that is accessible to the unit

- Formalize an advising structure that provides for accurate advice to current students and ensures prerequisites are followed before registration of advanced or capstone courses
- Place a renewed emphasis on professional development, outreach and engagement
- Revisit the curriculum, including scheduling, class sizes and prerequisites

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.

- **Previous weakness:** Minimum research by some faculty members
- **Action taken:** Minimal research remains but two new faculty members were hired; one who is highly active in research and one who holds promise

- **Previous weakness:** Empty Ayers chair
- **Action taken:** None; department head not even aware of the amount of funding available

- **Previous weakness:** Absence of PRSSA affiliation
- **Action taken:** Achieved

- **Previous weakness:** Limitations of Self Hall layout and design
- **Action taken:** Current team doesn't see those limitations

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.

Overall the team was disappointed in the self-study, which was written by the long-time department head who was relieved of his position and then given release time to focus on the self-study. One of the problems was that some of the descriptions in the report came from previous self-studies and had not been updated or clarified. For example, the self-study notes that the department supports the Society of Professional Journalists as an extracurricular activity that also sponsors professionals to visit campus. But the student SPJ chapter has been dormant for five years. Some relevant changes at the university in terms of policies and procedures were not noted nor were the general information pages updated upon the team's arrival. Another problem was that most of the small faculty was not involved in its production, had not received a copy, or were aware of what was in it.



Patricia Thompson
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January 22, 2020

Dear Patricia,

Please allow me to submit a brief response to the ACEJMC report concerning the Communication Department at Jacksonville State University.

I was appointed Dean of the School of Business and Industry at JSU on January 9, 2020, so I was not here prior to the team visit, nor was I able to help write the report, or prepare for the report. Generally, I agree with the team's assessment concerning the deficiencies in the program. I believe that the assessment on standards 1, 2, and 8 are weak areas of the program as it is today.

I have already taken steps to correct these problems. The Department Chair, Patrick McGrail, and the faculty, have been tasked with several jobs including identifying alumni and industry professionals to form an Advisory Board for the department. They have also been asked to update the curriculum and look at courses that would take a more business-oriented approach. We are also considering adding Advertising to the curriculum.

Upon my appointment, I was informed that there is money available to update facilities and I am working with the university to release those funds. We are also in the process of filling two vacancies, an Instructor and a tenure track position, to help us add new courses and establish more electives.

Given the timing of my arrival, and the content of the report, I ask that JSU be given two years to work on these issues and correct them. I will also be happy to consult with the site visit team to learn more about how to address these issues.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of this request.

All the best,

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