

# Report of ACEJMC Evaluation

## Undergraduate program 2021–2022

Name of Institution: Winthrop University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: George W. Hynd, interim president

Name of Unit: Department of Mass Communication

Name and Title of Administrator: Guy Reel, Ph.D., chair

Date of 2021-2022 Accrediting Visit: Nov. 14-17, 2021

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Oct. 26-29, 2014

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Re-accreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Re-accreditation

Recommendation by 2021-2022 Visiting Team: Re-accreditation

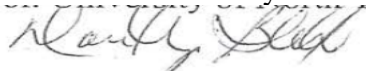
*Prepared and submitted by:*

### Team Chair

Name and Title: Dorothy Bland, Ph.D., Professor

Organization/School: University of North Texas

Signature



### Team Member

Name and Title: Paul Voakes, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Journalism

Organization/School: University of Colorado-Boulder

Signature



### Team Member

Name and Title: Maria Russell, Professor Emerita of Public Relations

Organization/School: Syracuse University

Signature



**Please indicate if team members participated on site or virtually only:**

**On site:** Dorothy Bland, Ph.D., Paul Voakes, Ph.D.

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**Virtually:** Maria Russell, M.A.

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## Part I: General Information

**Name of Institution:** Winthrop University

**Name of Unit:** Department of Mass Communication

**Year of Visit:** 2021-22 (originally scheduled 2020-21)

### 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.

Winthrop University's legal authorization to provide an education beyond a secondary school in South Carolina and to grant degrees is embodied in legislation of the South Carolina General Assembly 1985 Code § 59-125-10, § 59-125-80 and §§ 59-125-120.

Chapter 125 pertaining to Winthrop University cites references to prior codes or acts in 1982, 1974, 1972, 1962, 1952, 1932, 1922, 1920, 1912, 1902, and 1891.

### 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 26-29, 2014

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

May 1997

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

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*(Adopted October 13, 2018.. Language revised to reflect changes in mass communication curriculum, replacing earlier September 2013 version. No major content changes.)*

**"We promote an active learning environment to empower students to analyze, evaluate, synthesize and use multiple ideas, concepts, skills and viewpoints in an integrative and collaborative manner."**

By the time of graduation, mass communication majors will be able to gather, organize and process information; conduct interviews; write in a professional style to a professional level of competence; and edit and produce in printed, broadcast or digital form; all while meeting standards of media law and professional ethics.

By the time of graduation, integrated marketing communication majors will be able to gather, organize and process information and data; conduct interviews; write in a professional style to a professional level of competence; and produce marketing communication messages and materials in printed, electronic or multimedia form; all while meeting standards of media law and professional ethics.

To that end, the department's mission reflects the pursuit of the following core competencies in its programs. The department will:

- Provide professional education to prepare students to enter and succeed in the journalism, broadcasting, digital and integrated marketing communication fields.
- Instill a continuing urge for inquiry and learning through a sound liberal arts education.
- Develop skills to think critically and communicate clearly.
- Promote awareness of the theoretical, ethical and legal environments that affect mediated communication and integrated marketing communication.
- Promote understanding about the past, present and future of the discipline through exploring diversity of ideas, opinions, history, representations and actions that impact the individual, community and society in a globally interconnected world.
- Inform core competencies by using ACEJMC accreditation standards.

We added the following DEI statement in January 2019:

The Department of Mass Communication is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in order to foster a mutually respectful environment so all may thrive and succeed. Diversity in conception and creation of media content includes the accurate portrayals of racial and ethnic minorities, international

communities, women, the elderly, persons with physical or mental disabilities, sexual orientation, political thought and religious beliefs.

**7. What are the type and length of terms?**

Semesters of 16 weeks

Multiple summer sessions of varying lengths, depending on the course.

**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.**

BA in Mass Communication

·BS in Integrated Marketing Communication

**10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree:  
(Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.)**

· 120 semester hours

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

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

1-3 semester credit hours

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

<b>Name of Sequence or Specialty</b>	<b>Person in Charge</b>
<a href="#">Mass Communication</a>	Guy S. Reel
<a href="#">Integrated Marketing Communication*</a>	Guy S. Reel

\*The integrated marketing communication major is a joint B.S. degree program of the College of Arts & Sciences' Department of Mass Communication and the College of Business Administration's Department of Management and Marketing. It is administered by a joint IMC Committee. Because Winthrop requires degrees to be located in only one college, the two deans agreed that it would be housed in Arts & Sciences and the Department of Mass Communication. IMC has a coordinator within the Department of Mass Communication, Padmini Patwardhan. Mass Communication is a B.A. degree program.

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

Winthrop University's Fall 2021 enrollment was 4,961 (3,808 undergraduate, 1,153 graduate) students.

**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 <i>Fall 2021</i>
Mass Communication	94
Integrated Marketing Communication	41
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>135</b>

**15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.). 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.)**

Spring 2021

Subj	Crse	Sec	Title	Enr
IMCO	471	1	Public Relations Writing and Production (3:2:2).	7
IMCO	475	1	Senior Seminar in IMC (3:2:2).	7
MCOM	226	1	Multimedia Storytelling and Production (3:2:2).	13
MCOM	226	2	Multimedia Storytelling and Production (3:2:2).	14
MCOM	226	3	Multimedia Storytelling and Production (3:2:2).	13
MCOM	241	1	Media Writing (3:2:2).	12
MCOM	241	2	Media Writing (3:2:2).	11
MCOM	241H	3	Media Writing (3:2:2).	2
MCOM	325	1	Digital News Writing and Video Production (3:2:2).	15
MCOM	330	1	Convergent Journalism (3:2:2)	9
MCOM	346	1	Principles of Television Production (3:2:2).	15
MCOM	425	1	Advanced Broadcast Journalism (3:2:2).	12
MCOM	441	1	Multimedia Reporting of Public Issues (3:2:2).	11
MCOM	441	2	Multimedia Reporting of Public Issues (3:2:2).	12
MCOM	446	1	Advanced Television Production (3:2:2).	4

**Fall 2021**

<b>Subj</b>	<b>Crse</b>	<b>Sec</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Enr</b>
IMCO	471	1	Public Relations Writing and Production (3:2:2).	7
IMCO	475	1	Senior Seminar in IMC (3:2:2).	4
MCOM	226	1	Multimedia Storytelling and Production (3:2:2).	10
MCOM	226	2	Multimedia Storytelling and Production (3:2:2).	13
MCOM	226	3	Multimedia Storytelling and Production (3:2:2).	10
MCOM	241	1	Media Writing (3:2:2).	14
MCOM	241	2	Media Writing (3:2:2).	13
MCOM	325	1	Digital News Writing and Video Production (3:2:2).	15
MCOM	330	1	Convergent Journalism (3:2:2)	7
MCOM	346	1	Principles of Television Production (3:2:2).	10
MCOM	425	1	Advanced Broadcast Journalism (3:2:2).	4
MCOM	441	1	Multimedia Reporting of Public Issues (3).	12
MCOM	446	1	Advanced Television Production (3:2:2).	6

**Online Skills Courses Spring 2021**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Crse</b>	<b>Sec</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Enr</b>
MCOM	210	1	Introduction to Sports Production (1:1:3).	7
MCOM	211	1	Live Production I (1:1:3).	7

**Fall 2021**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Crse</b>	<b>Sec</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Enr</b>
MCOM	210	1	Introduction to Sports Production (1:1:3).	3
MCOM	212	1	Live Production II (1:1:3).	5

**16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2021–2022 academic year:**

\$622,025

**Give percentage increase or decrease in three years:**

From 2018-19 to 2020-21, about a 3% decrease.

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

Including the administrative salary as part of full-time faculty, the salaries should be about \$544,146.

**17. List name and rank of all full-time faculty in the accredited unit in fall 2021. (Full-time faculty refers to those defined as such by the university.) Identify those not teaching because of leaves, sabbaticals, etc.**

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1. \*Guy S. Reel, Professor
  2. Padmini Patwardhan, Professor
  3. Nathaniel Frederick II, Associate Professor
  4. William Schulte, Associate Professor
  5. Aimee Meader, Associate Professor
  6. Joseph Kasko, Assistant Professor
  7. Mark S. Nortz, Senior Instructor
  8. Bonnye Stuart, Instructor
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\* Note: This reflects an updated list of all full-time faculty.

**18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2021. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2021. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2021, please provide the spring 2021 adjunct list in the updated information.)**

<u>Spring 2020</u>	<u>Fall 2020</u>	<u>Spring 2021</u>	<u>Fall 2021</u>
None	Tom Cavanaugh	Tom Cavanaugh Josh Forte Kim Myers Kelli Boling	Tom Cavanaugh Dedrick Russell*

\*Assists with several courses.

**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
2020-2021 academic year	<u>53</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>100</u>
2019-2020 academic year	<u>45</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>100</u>
2018-2019 academic year	<u>69</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>100</u>



## 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>).**

The Department of Mass Communication is one of 14 units within the College of Arts & Sciences, and is the third largest department within the university's largest college. The first journalism classes were taught at Winthrop University in 1925, and the Journalism Department was formed in 1946 with Reid H. Montgomery as the founding chair. The Department was renamed the Department of Mass Communication in 1987 and the department was celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary during the site team's visit. Now, the department offers two bachelor's degrees. One is a B.A. in Mass Communication after students complete a converged curriculum that combines broadcast, print journalism and digital media. The other is an interdisciplinary B.S. in Integrated Marketing Communications, which includes strong collaboration with the College of Business Administration. The department also participates in a digital information design program, a collaboration with the College of Business Administration and College of Visual and Performing Arts.

The department's mission is to "promote an active learning environment to empower students to analyze, evaluate, synthesize and use multiple ideas, concepts, skills and viewpoints in an integrative and collaborative manner."

The department's strategic plan was approved Oct. 13, 2018, and states desired learning outcomes for mass communications and integrated marketing communication students. These learning outcomes are reasonably well aligned with ACEJMC standards. Long-range goals specifically focus on students, curriculum, faculty, alumni activities, professional and community relations, equipment and facilities plus accreditation. A review of the strategic plan showed there has been progress made in most areas, but the COVID-19 pandemic, university-wide enrollment declines, budget cuts, hiring freezes and furloughs have made the last two years particularly challenging.

Despite the challenges, the department maintains a good reputation within the university as a collegial and collaborative department.

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

Interviews with all full-time faculty indicate the department follows faculty governance procedures of the university. All faculty members participate in the Faculty Assembly for the college and Faculty Conference for the university. They consistently serve on college and university committees. Interviews with all full-time faculty show they are collegial and dedicated to their students, peers and the university. The faculty met monthly during the fall and spring semesters for the 2020-2021 academic year, albeit via Zoom. The faculty also met four times during the fall semester 2021. Given the small faculty size, the faculty regularly meets as a faculty of the whole. However, there are subcommittees to focus on strategic planning, assessment, facilities and equipment, diversity, global learning, curriculum and alumni outreach.

**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 unit has stable leadership and the department chair has effectively represented the unit during the study period. Interviews with faculty, alumni and industry leaders indicate the department chair is well-liked and some alumni would like to see more consistent engagement. However, the upper administration has had turnover in the presidency and is currently led by an interim president. A presidential search was underway at the time of the site visit, and the position is expected to be filled by fall 2022. There also has been substantial turnover in the university's advancement and marketing leadership during the study period, and there is no dedicated advancement or marketing officer for the College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Winthrop, and the Department of Mass Communication falls within this structure.

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

The chair is evaluated annually by the dean of Arts & Sciences. The most recent evaluation of the chair was done in 2020 with input from the faculty. Most faculty said the department chair exceeds expectations. "His professional background and experience in the classroom make it easy for us, as faculty, to do our jobs," wrote a faculty member.

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

Interviews with faculty, students, administrators, alumni and industry professionals indicate they are comfortable expressing concerns. The site team spoke with more than 40 people during the site visit, and all said they feel concerns are seen, heard and acted upon by the Department. Student policies are available in an online student handbook. Students can appeal grade decisions to the faculty member, chair, dean and ultimately the Academic Conduct Committee. Few grade complaints are filed, and two student complaints regarding faculty were resolved.

**SUMMARY:**

The department's mission has been clearly documented with stable leadership during the review period. The strategic plan, last approved by faculty in 2018, has helped guide progress in the department. Specific metrics with an annual faculty review of the plan's implementation would help strengthen the process.

Overall evaluation compliance/non-compliance: **COMPLIANCE**

## **PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**a). The unit requires that students take a minimum of 72 semester credit hours (or 104 quarter credit hours) required for a baccalaureate degree outside of journalism and mass communications and meet the liberal arts and sciences-general education requirements of the institution. ACEJMC expects at least 95 percent of the graduating classes in the two academic years preceding an accreditation visit to meet this requirement.**

In each of the previous three years, all graduating students were in compliance.

The **Mass Comm major** is explicitly limited to 40 credit hours within the unit, and most students finish with 38 hours.

The **IMC major** is also limited to 40 credit hours within the unit; it also requires 18-19 credit hours of specified courses in the College of Business Administration.

In either sequence, students are required to take at least 72 credit hours outside the unit.

**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 unit offers a bachelor of arts degree in **Mass Communication** (current enrollment 94 students) and a bachelor of science degree in **Integrated Marketing Communication** (currently 41) students. The curriculum underwent a revision in 2019, to achieve greater overall emphasis on multi-platform, digital media. A new course, Foundations of Digital Media, is in the required core of both the IMC and Mass Comm sequences.

The **Mass Comm major** includes a core curriculum of 10 courses amounting to 28 credit hours. About 40 percent of the core credit hours are in conceptual courses. The required conceptual courses are Introduction to Mass Communication; Mass Communication Theory and Research; Mass Media Law, and Ethics and Issues in Mass Communication. The required skills courses are Multimedia Storytelling & Production; Media Writing; Foundations in Digital Media; Digital Video Production; Internship or Practicum, and a 1-credit-hour Senior Portfolio class.

Beyond the core, Mass Comm students take 12 credit hours of electives in one of three areas: Journalism, Broadcast, or Digital Sports Production.

The **IMC major** includes a core curriculum of 12 courses amounting to 34 credit hours. About 44 percent of the core credit hours are in conceptual courses. The required conceptual courses are Introduction to Integrated Marketing Communication; Mass Media Law; Advertising Principles; Public Relations Principles, and Senior Seminar in Integrated Marketing Communication. The required skills courses are Multimedia Storytelling and Production; Media Writing; Foundations in Digital Media; Public Relations Writing and Production; Advertising Copy and Layout; Internship, and a 1-credit-hour Senior Portfolio class.

Beyond the core, IMC majors must take six credit hours of electives in the department.

The self-study presented charts indicating where the ACEJMC competencies are introduced, reinforced or applied. The department's students receive instruction in all ACEJMC competencies and values, but some are addressed more thoroughly than others. A few examples:

*Diversity:* There is no dedicated course in the core addressing U.S. or global diversity; however, African Americans in Media and Culture, International Communication, and Intercultural Communication are offered as electives. Faculty members said they systematically incorporate considerations of diversity and equity into the syllabi of both skills and conceptual courses in the two cores.

*History:* There is no dedicated course addressing Mass Communication history, although each of the lower-division survey courses (Mass Comm and IMC) contain substantive sections on their fields' history.

*Research:* While the **IMC** core lacks courses specifically focusing on mass communication research or ethics, the conceptual courses in the IMC core address those areas in substantive ways. Marketing Research, MKTG 385, is among the required business courses in the IMC core.

*Visual Communication:* For the competency related to visual communication, the core curricula provide ample instruction. Both sequences require Multimedia Storytelling and Production as well as Foundations of Digital Media. The **Mass Comm** core requires Digital Video Production, and the **IMC** core requires a visual communication course outside the department as well as Advertising Copy and Layout – all of which involve intensive visual communication skill-building. Numerous electives within the unit also address visual aspects of journalism, public relations and advertising.

*Writing and Critical Thinking:* These are cornerstones of the university's instructional philosophy: All majors must take three lower-division courses in writing and critical thinking *outside the department*, and both sequence cores include writing-intensive courses. In addition, the upper-division skills courses in both tracks involve a good deal of work in which students are tasked with team work and critical evaluation of their peers.

*Numeracy:* The competency of numeracy is addressed in the degree requirements: **IMC** students must take a course in quantitative skills and a course in business statistics; **Mass Comm** students must take one math course and one statistics course, both from the mathematics department. Quantitative reasoning and data analysis are applied regularly in reporting, advertising, and public relations courses within the unit.

**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.**

From the reports from students (in the team's meetings with them) and in visits to nine class sessions, the instruction seemed (with minor exception) to be engaging, energetic and current. The students heaped praise on their professors for the currency of the subject matter in their courses, for their "real-world" career experience, and for their caring attitudes toward students. They characterized more than a

few as “tough” in their expectations of student excellence. The style of teaching seems mainly interactive. In nearly all classrooms, the student desks are on wheels or otherwise situated to enable small-group discussions.

Virtually every skills course in both core curricula experienced substantive upgrades in 2019-2020, to reflect changes in media technologies and delivery systems. For example, at a retreat in 2019, the faculty produced a wealth of new ideas, especially creative new assignments, that apply digital concepts and new technologies, in every core course. During the team visit, each classroom was equipped with a “smart” projector, and nearly all the classes the team visited incorporated video or slide decks into class discussions.

Before the pandemic, the unit offered very few online courses, reflecting the university’s tradition of small class sizes and highly personal instruction. Online courses now have a slightly greater presence than before the pandemic. Mass Communication Theory, International Communication, and Introduction to IMC were offered online (essentially asynchronous) in Fall 2021, and the department plans to offer a small number of online courses again, in Spring 2022. In addition, the new area of interest for **Mass Comm** majors, Digital Sports Production, has begun its courses in the online-only mode. In meetings, students said they prefer in-person instruction but that the fall’s online offerings were still challenging, and offered great scheduling flexibility to busy students.

At Winthrop, it goes without saying that achievements in teaching and learning are highly valued. The self-study provided numerous examples of the faculty’s pursuit of teaching excellence and its recognition for such. These include one professor’s receipt of the Outstanding Advisor award from the College of Arts & Sciences; another’s receipt of AEJMC’s Advertising Division’s Distinguished Teaching Award, another’s receipt of an AEJMC/Scripps grant as a visiting professor in Social Media, and another’s receipt of the Kinard Award, the university’s top award for excellence in teaching.

**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.)**

In the two semesters prior to the site visit, the largest enrollment in any in-person skills/lab class was 15. Online, the courses tend to be conceptual. The two online Sports Production courses, offered in Spring and Fall of 2021, never exceeded seven students.

**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.**

The department actively encourages students to pursue internships and other professional experiences, and it is the “other professional experiences” that make Winthrop’s system unusual. **IMC** majors must complete an internship, but **Mass Comm** majors are given the option to take a practicum in lieu of an internship.

The practicum differs from an internship in that it undertakes a short-term communication project, usually a promotional campaign, for an office, department or group on the Winthrop campus, under the supervision of a Mass Communication faculty member. It resembles a “professional experience” by putting the student in the role of a communications specialist meeting a client’s needs. The practicum

with the highest profile is the PR/advertising service called “The Agency,” supervised by two departmental faculty members, with ambitions to serve off-campus as well as on-campus clients. IMC students are also allowed to undertake practicums, but they must complete an internship as well. Before the pandemic, in AY 2018-19, 43 students completed internships while 31 did practicums. In student meetings with the team, students sang the praises of practicums, as the flexibility of the work hours fits busy schedules, the practicum does not require personal transportation to a work site, its duration is usually much shorter than a semester internship’s 16 weeks, and practicums lack the course prerequisites that internships sometimes demand. Whether an internship or practicum, the vast majority of the experiences earn one credit hour.

The faculty internship coordinator receives a one-course release for this duty. She carefully screens potential employers and organizes meetings each semester where prospective interns can meet prospective employers. She evaluates the students’ weekly reports during their internships, and she sees that supervisors fill out a midterm evaluation and a final evaluation of each intern.

Every student doing a practicum must also file a weekly report, with the faculty supervisor for that project.

The faculty also encourages students to engage in extracurricular media experiences on campus such as the weekly *Johnsonian* newspaper, the monthly *Roddey McMillan Record*, or the student radio station, Eagle Air.

#### **SUMMARY:**

The department offers two rigorous and comprehensive core curricula that provide a good balance of skills and conceptual courses. Classes are small, and students have high praise for the quality of instruction. Faculty members work hard to update their course content regularly. The department has responded well to changes in the news industry and in student vocational interests by offering practicums alongside internships.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: **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.**

About 90.2% of Winthrop University's students are from South Carolina, about 38% of Winthrop students are first generation college students, and about 41% of Winthrop students are minority students. Within the primary service area of South Carolina, whites represent 63.7% of the population, Blacks/African Americans 27%, Hispanic/Latino (any race) 6%, Two or more races 2%, Asian 1.8%, American Indian/Alaska native 0.5%, and native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander 0.1% in the primary service area of the state. The undergraduate population at Winthrop is more diverse than the service area's population in that Blacks/African Americans represent 29.9%, Whites 56.5%, Hispanics 6.2%, and the remainder of undergraduate students are spread among the other categories identified above. The department is far more diverse than the overall undergraduate population, with Blacks representing 43.1% of students, Whites representing 49.4%, Hispanics 3.8% and the remainder of students in the department spread among the other categories identified earlier. While females represent 51.6% of the population in the primary service area, female students outnumber male students in the program nearly 3 to 1.

The department's diversity plan was revised and adopted in 2018, and syllabi consistently include a diversity, equity and inclusion statement. The department defines diversity as creating a "climate that involves and empowers diverse student populations of faculty, staff and student body with varying characteristics, including racial and ethnic minorities, international communities, women, the elderly, persons with physical and mental disabilities, sexual orientations or identifications, political thought and religious beliefs."

The diversity plan documents a variety of action steps that have been implemented, including an alumni survey as well as student participation in a variety of cultural events and student organizations. Students are required to participate in 18 cultural events prior to graduation. Examples include the Native American Film Festival in 2017 and the Hispanic Heritage Program in October 2021, which was covered by student media. The Media Literacy series in 2018-19 featured diverse speakers including Mary Curtis, whose work has appeared in national news outlets such as *The Washington Post*.

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

A review of syllabi, interviews with faculty and students provided ample evidence the curriculum is inclusive with regards to gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ability issues across the physical and mental health spectrum as well as global diversity. For example, DEI statements are consistently included in syllabi. Examples of diversity assignments were documented in at least eight different classes, including the Media Writing class, where students generate a story about diversity issues; the

Digital News Writing and Video production class, where students analyze coverage of racial injustice protests; the Advertising Principles class, where students develop strategies to target minority audiences in advertising; and the Senior Seminar Integrated Marketing Communication class, where students focus on multicultural issues.

In addition to being a full-time Mass Comm faculty member, one faculty member also has served as head of the African American Studies Department and created a popular course about African Americans in Media. Students spoke favorably about faculty assisting with ADA issues in the classroom as well as in internships. While the pandemic brought international travel to a halt the last two years, students in the IMC program praised the value of having French exchange students in classes prior to the pandemic. A group of 12 French students is expected to enroll in the department in person in Spring 2022.

A 2019-2020 senior exit survey showed 89% of Mass Comm survey respondents and 88.8% of ICM majors agreed or strongly agreed that the major introduced them to diverse audiences, ideas and viewpoints. Also, 95% of Mass Comm majors and 100% of IMC majors agreed or strongly agreed that their majors expanded their global knowledge of media and audiences.

**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.**

Of the eight full-time faculty, three are female and five are male. The full-time faculty includes one Asian female who is a full professor and an African-American male who has been promoted to associate professor since the last site team visit.

During a 2018 Mass Communication faculty search, the pool included Skype interviews with six candidates -- three Asians and three Caucasians. An Asian candidate was offered the position but declined it, and a white male accepted the position. In an IMC faculty search that same year, the five finalists included four females (three international and one U.S. citizen) and one African male. The African male accepted the position. However, he failed to complete his dissertation, and another international female faculty member left for another university. Those positions have not been replaced. Unfortunately, the university experienced furloughs during the 2020-21 academic year related to budget cuts and is currently in the midst of a hiring freeze. The faculty has one white male adjunct faculty member and visiting professional, a Black male, who appears often as a guest speaker.

While the Department has made reasonable efforts to diversify faculty, there is still a racial and gender equity gap in that the faculty is not as representative of its student population. About 62.5% of the full-time faculty are white males. The student population is more than 70% female and more than 40% students of color.

**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 has struggled with student recruitment and declining enrollment over the study period; the decline was noted in the last accreditation report and has become exacerbated. According to a brochure from the current department chair, the department had about 236 majors (146 Mass Comm and



93 IMC), but as of fall 2021, there are only 135 majors (94 Mass Comm majors and 41 IMC) in the Department. That's a decline of about 104 students in the Department or a 43.5% drop, which is a steeper percentage drop than in overall undergraduate enrollment decline for undergraduate enrollment at Winthrop. According to university data, Winthrop's undergraduate enrollment was 5,091 in Fall 2016 and was 3,808 in the Fall 2021, which is an undergraduate enrollment decline of 1,283 students or down 25.2%.

However, it is important to note that students of color were nearly equal to the white student population (47.6% minority vs. 48.2% white) in Spring 2020. International students have come largely from a degree completion program known as ISCOM, a communication institute in Montpelier, France. However, no students from France were attending face-to-face classes in the Fall 2021 due to the pandemic.

Faculty members have served as McNair Scholar mentors and the TRio Achievers program. Students are encouraged to pursue scholarship opportunities, and at least three have earned scholarships from the Charlotte Association of Black Journalists and the Winthrop ABJ chapter earned NABJ's national Student Chapter of the Year Award in 2019.

Prior to the pandemic, the department hosted an annual high school media workshop and it attracted more than 150 students during the 2019-2020 academic year. Winthrop University was named one of the 2021-2022 First-gen Forward Institutions for its commitment to diversity issues.

**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 department has completed Title IX training and students said they found facilities ADA accessible.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Interviews with students, faculty, alumni and industry professionals provided ample evidence that diversity is embraced in learning, teaching and extracurricular activities. Current vacancies offer opportunities to increase diversity among faculty when hiring resumes.

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

<b>TABLE 6: FULL-TIME/PART TIME FACULTY ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020</b>				
<i>Group</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>% of total faculty</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>% of total faculty</i>
Black/African American	0	0	1	11.11
White	2	22.22	4	44.44
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	0	0	0
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	0	0	0	0
Asian	1	11.11	0	0
Native Hawaiian/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	1	11.11
<b>Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty</b>				
White	0	0	1	100

## **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 Department of Mass Communication follows a rigorous selection process. With input from the faculty, the department chair prepares the position announcement and chairs the search committee. The search committee is made up of department faculty, one or two members of an outside department (usually in the College of Arts & Science or the College of Business Administration). Since 2016, search committees have included a representative from the college's Diversity Committee. The position description and proposed ads go through an approval process by the university's Office of Human Resources, the dean of the College, and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs to ensure that University policies and procedures are followed and that there is an overall consistency among position announcements. Ads are placed widely, including at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the National Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. Applicants must file forms to qualify as candidates; required references are followed up by members of the search committee. Virtual conference calls are conducted with the top candidates; two, sometimes three, finalists are invited to campus for final interviews.

While very few part-time faculty have been engaged in recent years due to budgetary restrictions, candidates can be found on the college's database of position opportunities and through the faculty activity reporting website, "Faculty 180."

The department's expectations are the same as outlined in the Winthrop Faculty Manual for all faculty. Evaluations are based on the standards for Student Intellectual Development (teaching), Scholarly Activity, and Professional Stewardship and Academic Responsibility (service). It is clear that teaching is the most important standard, though many of the department's faculty engage in significant scholarly endeavors. The involvement and leadership of the department's faculty in service is extensive in all levels: the department, the college, the university, the community, and academic associations. (See Standard 8 for a fuller report of external service.) In discussing (with the team) the leadership contributions of the department's faculty, college and university administrators were highly complimentary.

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

According to the university's course listings, these are the percentage of core and required courses taught by full-time faculty:

2020-21: 91.8%;

2019-20: 100%;

2018-19: 97.7%;

2017-2018: 90.7%.

Similarly, part-time faculty contribute negligible service or research to the department or university.

**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.**

At the time of the site team's visit, there were eight full-time faculty members: six with doctorates and two with master's degrees. (The eight full-time faculty include the department chair.) Two are professors, three are associate professors, one is an assistant professor, and two are instructors. Only one of the eight has no professional media experience; the others range from four to 21 years in media work that spans advertising, public relations, graphic design, broadcast news and production, newspapers, photojournalism, social media, and marketing.

The faculty actively pursue career development opportunities, and the departmental leadership supports them to the greatest extent possible. This development begins on campus. By necessity in 2020, all faculty became certified to teach online from the Winthrop Online Teaching Certification unit. Winthrop also operates the Center for Professional Excellence, which continually offers workshops in pedagogical strategies. Similarly, many attend the annual Winthrop Teaching and Learning Conference, which has presented best practices in such areas as the "flipped classroom" and the "guided lecture." Many attend panels and workshops at the annual conference of AEJMC. A few have attended Teachapalooza, a teaching conference at the Poynter Institute. One faculty member shadowed journalists at the *Charlotte Observer* one summer, to learn techniques for online storytelling. Another received a fellowship in media entrepreneurship hosted by Arizona State's Cronkite School (and returned to Winthrop to create the course Culture of Media Startups). These are but a few examples.

During the study period, the department has employed only a handful of adjunct or visiting faculty. In 2021-22, the department employs a broadcast journalist in Charlotte as a "visiting professional" who delivers guest lectures to several different classes. Also, all the courses thus far in the Mass Comm sequence's new interest area, Digital Sports Production, have been taught by one adjunct instructor.

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

The process is extensive. The department chair is responsible for evaluating faculty based on several factors, including student evaluations; occasional class visits to observe faculty as they are teaching, and a review of syllabi every semester. But the most important instrument is the faculty report, required annually of all full- and part-time faculty members, reporting on their scholarly activities, service, and teaching. Faculty must analyze each course in detail, discuss changes from previous semesters, assess what went well, what did not, and discuss changes, if needed. They must address major areas of concern on student evaluations. This instrument is used to consider merit raises, and for tenure and promotion. Using these reports, the chair writes an evaluation and meets with the faculty members before forwarding the reports to the college dean.

To evaluate part-time faculty, the tools used are the annual reports, student evaluations, class visits by the chair, and discussions with the instructor.

Peer review is used for pre-tenure, tenure and promotion, and post-tenure reviews.

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

In the meeting with administrators, faculty and staff across campus, the team heard high praise for the collaborative spirit and hard work of the Mass Communication faculty. Colleagues from Marketing, Design, English, African American Studies, and Political Science were unanimous in characterizing Mass Communication faculty as excellent collaborators, whether on committees, curricular partnerships or special events. Several knew of the department's new program of recruiting alumni to mentor current students -- and claimed they wanted to copy it for their own programs. In repeatedly observing that Mass Communication students are smart, hard-working and good writers, they were in effect praising the quality of the education the department provides.

**SUMMARY:**

This small faculty makes an outsized contribution to the university's overall quality of education, and members continue to work hard to improve their teaching skills. They bring a wealth of professional work to their media education, and they teach an ambitious two-sequence curriculum with almost no help from part-time instructors. They seem satisfied with the processes of evaluating for annual increases and promotions.

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.**

The unit follows the policies and procedures of the College of Arts & Sciences regarding scholarship, that is, to place more value generally in teaching than in service or research. Winthrop prides itself in its commitment to excellence in teaching, and the department adheres to that ethos. The standard teaching load is 12 contact hours per semester, which leaves little time for scholarly activity during the academic year. That being said, the unit still requires and rewards faculty research and creative/professional activity.

While the university and college have operated recently under severe budgetary constraints, faculty still receive modest support for research-related travel, and modest internal grants are available. Travel funding was reduced recently from \$1,100 to \$700 per year. On occasion, the unit has supplemented the amount provided by the college. Grant support is also available from the Winthrop Research Council, and the unit's faculty won a handful of these grants during the review period. All faculty members availed themselves of the travel grants.

Associate or full professors may apply for a sabbatical leave of a full year at half pay or one semester at full pay. During the review period, one professor took a sabbatical; an associate professor has been approved for a sabbatical in Spring 2022.

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

The College of Arts & Sciences publishes clear and specific expectations for research activity. It classifies scholarly activity into three groups: Priority 1, Priority 2, and Priority 3. Priority 1 includes journal articles, scholarly books (written or edited), book chapters, production of documentary films, presentations of refereed papers at national conferences and the like. Priority 2 includes such activities as paper presentations at regional conferences, academic book reviews, presentations on invited panels, or reviews of manuscripts for publishers. Priority 3 includes guest op-eds in newspapers, Friday presentations to prospective Winthrop students, or reviews of papers submitted to conferences. During the review period, three members of the department's faculty underwent the tenure and promotion process, and all three succeeded. They each presented about six Priority 1 achievements and several more under priorities 2 and 3. Faculty members told the site team that an average of one Priority 1 project per year is considered a successful pace of research.

The department, and Winthrop as a whole, are unusual in their commitment to guiding undergraduate research, which can be considered, at the candidate's discretion, Priority 3 research. This often takes the form of an independent study, an honors thesis, or less formally as the guided extension of a research paper a student completed in a course and would like to expand for public presentation. Mass Communication students won the university's Caskey Award for undergraduate research in 2019-20 and 2020-21 under Mass Communication faculty supervision. Also, during the summer, some Mass Communication faculty serve as mentors for the Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement

Program. Their mentorship continues into the following academic year as they supervise the student's research.

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

While its rubrics attend mostly to traditional research activities for the arts and sciences, current and former members of the college's tenure/promotion committee told the team that they have experienced no difficulty or tension in valuing professional media activities as important parts of tenure and promotion portfolios from Mass Communication. A documentary, and certainly one with a demonstrated public impact, is certainly given Priority 1 status. The three successful tenure/promotion cases during the study period, however, involved only traditional scholarly activities.

**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.**

The Mass Communication faculty were active scholars, in the context of Winthrop's research expectations, during the study period. During the study period, the eight full-time faculty (plus three colleagues who retired or left Winthrop during the study period) wrote or produced one scholarly book, two popular books, one edited book, 11 book chapters, 20 refereed journal articles, 28 papers for refereed conferences, 17 invited papers, six book reviews, and 16 documentaries or creative works. They received 11 internal grants and eight external grants, and they supervised 11 student research presentations.

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

The faculty's overall collegiality extends to its shared interest in media research (and shared lament that they don't have sufficient time or funding to do more research). The clearest example of the research climate is the chair's inclusion of two departmental colleagues in the preparation of the third edition of his book, in 2021. As with most Mass Communication units, this department's research interests cover a wide swath of theories and topics, and faculty members told the team that they enjoy learning about their colleagues' research projects.

**SUMMARY:**

Winthrop is a teaching-centered institution, and the department's faculty are easily meeting the university's expectations in terms of scholarly activity. Considering the paucity of financial support -- and time -- for research, the faculty are still managing to achieve research identities by virtue of their productivity.

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

Report of evaluation of undergraduate programs for 2021-2022 Visits

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				
		Full Professors (2)	Associate Professors (2)	Assistant Professors (2)	Other Faculty** (3)	Totals (9)
Awards and Honors	7	4	4		1	9
Grants Received Internal	10	5	1	1	4	11
Grants Received External	7	5	2		1	8
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	1		1			1
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored						
Books Edited	1	1				1
Book Chapters	8	1	4	1	2	9
Monographs						
Articles in Refereed Journals	15	9	5	3		17
Refereed Conference Papers	12	5	9	5		19
Invited Academic Papers	13	2	7	2	6	17
Encyclopedia Entries						
Book Reviews	6	5	1			6
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	3	2	1			3
Juried Creative Works	1				1	1
Non-juried Creative Works (videos, documentaries, popular works, e.g.)	15			7	8	15
Other (Conference proceedings and newsletter articles)	3	3				3
Total	100					118

\*Co-authored work should be counted as a single publication in the unit totals. However, if, for example, two members of the faculty are co-authors on the same journal article, it would be reported as a publication for both authors. \*\*Includes all full-time faculty who do not hold listed ranks, such as instructors. Many faculty in this category may hold teaching appointments without significant scholarship, research or creative requirements.



<b>DEPARTMENT RESEARCH ACTIVITY: 2014-2020 (faculty who retired/resigned during six year period)</b>				
<i>Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities</i>	<b>By Unit</b>	<b>Full Professors (2)*</b>	<b>Instructor (1)**</b>	<b>Totals (3)</b>
Awards and Honors				
Books Edited				
Book Chapters	2	1	1	2
Articles in Refereed Journals	3		3	3
Refereed Conference Papers	9	1	8	9
Articles in Non-refereed Publications				
Non-juried Creative Works ( <i>videos, documentaries, popular works, e.g.</i> )	1		1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>			<b>15</b>

\*Retired 2015 and 2016. \*\*Resigned 2018

## 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.**

According to the self-study, the department has a strategic approach to advising, including a software program (Degree Works) to keep track of students' academic progress, degree checks, and advisor training for new faculty. Each faculty member has 25 to 35 assigned advisees. The Office of Student Services in the College of Arts & Sciences is available to answer questions about transfer credits, general education requirements, etc. A highly lauded supplementary program is a relatively new Alumni Mentorship Program created at the suggestion of alumni.

#### **b). Faculty are available and accessible to students.**

While anecdotal, conversations with alumni and current students reveal inconsistencies in this accessibility. Many of the faculty, especially the department chair, were praised for their "open door policy" and thoughtful approach in helping students chart their academic and professional paths. In some cases, students said they felt that they did not get accurate, complete, or far-reaching insights. Some students were disappointed that their advisors were from the business college's Marketing Department. While the Marketing Department partners with the IMC program, students said some Marketing Department advisors were unfamiliar with the Mass Communication requirements. Students referred to other campus departments where peer advisors are available could be beneficial.

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

All entering students have two days of orientation that includes academic advising. During that time there are mandatory meetings with academic leaders and informational meetings. There is a highly promoted two-week open advising period each semester; students make appointments to meet with their advisors; registration follows. Students have access to their unofficial transcripts via Degree Works.

#### **d). The unit and the institution provide students with extracurricular activities and opportunities that are relevant to the curriculum and develop their professional as well as intellectual abilities and interests.**

Students in the department have many opportunities, both within the department and the university. These include guest speakers in a wide variety of career specializations; student media (e.g., the weekly *Johnsonian*, student newspaper; the *Roddy-McMillan Record*, a monthly multicultural newspaper; Eagle Air (*WINR*), the online radio station; and *Winthrop CloseUp*, a student-produced video magazine TV show). Campus chapters of professional organizations include the Association for Women in Communications, the Society of Professional Journalists, the Radio Television Digital News Association of the Carolinas, the National Association of Black Journalists, the Video Production Club, and The American Marketing Association. Students can gain leadership experience through such organizations as the Mass Communication Student Advisory Board, the DiGiorgio Student Union, and Winthrop Ambassadors.

**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.**

The university's Department of Accreditation and Assessment, and Academic Services (AAAS) is responsible for providing institutional data and findings from research and assessment to support institutional evidence-based planning, decision making, and accountability services. Enrollment, retention, and graduation rates are routine calculations for AAAS, providing them to the state of South Carolina and the federal government. These data are also shared with internal constituencies to assist in the work of various offices that support student success.

The Department of Mass Communication's retention rates are comparable and exceed the rate for the university as a whole. Retention after two years for students who entered 2014-16 ranges from 92-100% for IMC students, and 77-89% for Mass Comm students. The retention rate for the university in 2014 was 76%, with a small, but continual decrease from 2016 to 2019 of six percentage points.

The university's graduation rate within four years was 46.5 percent for the 2014 first-year cohort. For IMC first-years in 2014, the rate was 100% (three students). The four-year rate for Mass Comm first-years in 2014 was 40% (14 students).

#### **SUMMARY:**

While anecdotal in nature, the site team was concerned with the comments from students and alumni, showing an unevenness in advising. While the department has a good plan, we are concerned that the problem may be a result of the heavy teaching and service loads assigned to faculty and insufficient staffing in the offices that deliver student support. Overall, however, we recognize the dedication of the department's faculty members to their students.

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's budget is a reflection of the university's health, and the last two years have been extremely challenging with the pandemic and enrollment declines discussed earlier. "We do a lot with a little," was a common refrain from faculty members. The faculty expressed concern about furloughs in 2020-2021 and some said it amounted to as much as a 10% pay cut. For the 2021-22 academic year, about a 2% average salary increase is expected from the state, according to faculty.

Faculty also expressed concern about the hiring freeze during Fall 2021 as well as faculty and staff lines that have not been filled in two years. Faculty expressed concern that continuing to operate in an "already stretched thin environment" may further impact faculty morale plus lead to more faculty turnover and student enrollment declines. Even staff funding is problematic. The previous program coordinator, the only support staff member for the department, retired July 31, 2021, and the position has not been filled. (However, she helped with the ACEJMC site team visit preparation on a temporary basis.) The absence of any administrative support is a concern for the department going forward.

As part of the annual budget process, the chair develops the budget request with input from faculty, and it is reviewed with the dean and ultimately negotiated with the provost. Building maintenance, IT issues and most student scholarships are under central administration's control and not under the department.

#### **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.**

Interviews with faculty, administrators and colleagues in other units indicate the department has been fairly treated by the university. The current provost, a former dean, was praised for supporting the purchase of equipment to upgrade the TV studio and podcast studio. In addition to a new set, the TV station equipment now includes Inception news producing software and teleprompter, a Black Magic Video switcher, audio mixer, three iMac computers, three Black Magic studio cameras and switchers plus a Tricaster.

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

Most of the department operates in Johnson Hall, a stately 1920s building originally funded by John D. Rockefeller. Johnson Hall is shared with the Department of Theatre and Dance. The building is showing its age but has stood the test of time. The Mac computers in the labs and classrooms were operational and loaded with Microsoft Office, Adobe Creative Suite and Adobe Premiere. Computer equipment upgrades are on about a three-year upgrade schedule, according to the department chair. Students were generally pleased with the use of access to equipment.

In addition to a new set in the 974 square-foot TV studio and a 386 square-foot TV control room, TV station equipment now includes Inception news producing software and teleprompter, a Black Magic Video switcher, audio mixer, 3 iMac computers and 3 Black Magic studio cameras and switchers plus a

Tricaster. The radio station space, which includes a radio control and equipment room, covers about 461 sq. ft.

Across the street from Johnson Hall is the Parker Building, which covers 1,309 sq. ft. with a lab, lobby and anteroom for multimedia instruction. Student instruction space covers about 6,169 square feet, between the two buildings, and does not include individual faculty office space. All full-time faculty have offices with Mac or PCs, depending on their preferences.

**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.**

Students were excited to share the upgrades and are using the equipment for shows such as *Winthrop CloseUp*, and there is more potential with sports and other programming options. In addition to the equipment listed above, students have access to 15 Canon X10 camcorders and 12 Panasonic AVCHD camcorders with support equipment (shotgun microphones, handheld microphones, Lavalier microphones, lights and tripods).

Students in a multimedia storytelling class also shared work that was done on their mobile phones.

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

Students increasingly use the Internet and online resources for research. The department has a small resource room with a conference table, chairs and four video screens. There were no concerns expressed regarding the Ida Jane Dacus Library.

**SUMMARY:**

While concerns were raised about human resources, overall the facilities and equipment are adequate. The TV and podcast studios have been upgraded in the last year to meet the department's mission. Still, it will be important to be mindful of how quickly tech trends can and do change.

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 department reaches out to its alumni in all their specializations in several ways: a newsletter; invitations to speak to classes; formal programs like Mass Communication Week; dinners and events. The relatively new Alumni Mentorship Program is a highlight for students. Alumni are involved in advising the department on such topics as curriculum, specialized programs for students, and strategic planning. Students benefit from visiting professionals who meet with them in the Senior Portfolio course to examine portfolios and provide insights on hiring and interviewing.

Faculty members maintain strong industry ties by actively participating in their specialization organizations such as the Society of Professional Journalists, Radio Television Digital News Association, Broadcast Education Association, and Public Relations Society of America.

**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.**

Indicators are evidenced by faculty involvement in *Leadership York County Media Day*, which brings community and business leaders to campus to learn about the media and effective media relations; hosting many South Carolina Press Association events, including an annual meeting for the South Carolina collegiate press and an awards program. Faculty advocate for high professional practices through their roles as advisors to the two student newspapers on campus, *Winthrop Close Up*, the video magazine and *WINR/Eagle Air*, the online radio station.

**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.**

With funding from the department and/or the college, faculty members have attended training and contributed to programs by such national and regional organizations as AEJMC and its many divisions; the Teaching Professor Conference; the Poynter Institute's "Teachapalooza"; the American Journalism Historians Association; the National Association of Media Literacy Education; the American Academy of Advertising Research; the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations; and the National Communication Association.

**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 has a strong tradition of creating opportunities for faculty and students for the public good, including such activities as workshop organizer for an elementary school media workshop; creating documentaries for schools and not-for-profit organizations; volunteering for the National Urban League local chapter; participating in the local Juneteenth observance; serving as a panelist for a local program on the future of news; and many others.

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

The department hosts an annual High School Media, Theatre and Dance Workshop, attracting students and teachers from schools in South Carolina. Sessions have included photography, podcasting, radio, media literacy, visual design, and writing for digital platforms. Also invited are local high schools with a high percentage of minority students. Outreach activities have included visits to the local Rock Hill South Pointe High School to work with a media class. A relationship with a teacher from that high school led to student interns working with her for the Power of Progeny Foundation, a diversity, equity, and inclusion service. The department participates in Winthrop's Dual Enrollment Program, which enrolls academically strong high school students to take college courses for credit. Faculty has taught the Introduction to Mass Communication class for these students. The visiting guest lecture series has been mentioned elsewhere, but another to note here is the "News Literacy and the Future of Journalism." This 11-event, eight-month series is part of a national initiative on "Democracy and the Informed Citizen," administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and funded by The Mellon Foundation.

**SUMMARY:**

The Department of Mass Communication and its faculty have done commendable work in the areas of professional and public service.

Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance: **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.**

During the study period, the university hired an assessment coordinator to raise the level of its assessment practices overall and to standardize procedures across campus. As a result, the unit has created an intricate, comprehensive assessment plan that attempts to align with ACEJMC competencies assessment practices while also adhering to university protocols. For the most part the effort succeeds.

The plan includes the university’s four “University Level Competencies:”

- 1) Winthrop graduates think critically and solve problems.
- 2) Winthrop graduates are personally and socially responsible.
- 3) Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and time in which they live.
- 4) Winthrop graduates communicate effectively.

Winthrop competencies #1 and #4 track well with ACEJMC’s values and competencies.

Closer to the ACEJMC list, the plan also enumerates a set of learning objectives for each sequence within the unit.

#### **Mass Communication Sequence:**

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of legal frameworks and issues that affect the profession.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of historical milestones, figures, and trends in the discipline.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of mass communication concepts, theories, and processes.
4. Students will demonstrate ability to conduct research and evaluate data/information by methods appropriate to the communication profession.
5. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understandings of ethical contexts in which the communication professions operate.
6. Students will demonstrate responsibility and engagement with the community/profession through undertaking and satisfactorily completing a professional experience/practicum.
7. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understanding of the global interconnectedness of mass media and audiences.
8. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understanding of diversity issues in domestic society and their relation to mass communication.
9. Students will write correctly and clearly demonstrating use of forms and styles appropriate for the communication professions and the audiences that they serve.
10. Students will demonstrate the ability to produce integrated media news stories.
11. Students will apply tools and technologies appropriate to the communication professions in which they work.



Thus most, but not all, ACEJMC competencies are addressed in the plan. Missing are the ACEJMC competencies regarding numeracy, editing and visual communication.

### **Integrated Marketing Communication Sequence:**

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of legal frameworks and issues that affect the profession.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of historical milestones, figures, and trends in the discipline
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of IMC concepts, theories, and processes.
4. Students will demonstrate ability to conduct, evaluate and use research/evidence and propose well-reasoned solutions to IMC problems.
5. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understanding of ethical contexts in which IMC operates.
6. Students will demonstrate responsibility and engagement with the community/profession through undertaking and satisfactorily completing an IMC internship.
7. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understanding of the global interconnectedness of audiences in IMC.
8. Students will demonstrate informed, reflective understanding of diversity issues in domestic society and their relation to IMC.
9. Students will create integrated materials through effective use of technology, forms and styles appropriate to the development of marketing communication campaigns.
10. Students will demonstrate ability to make effective oral presentations

Missing are the ACEJMC competencies regarding numeracy, editing, writing, and visual communication.

An associate professor is in charge of the assessment program; he receives a stipend for this work. Each year he gathers and organizes assessment data and works to ensure that the assessment plan's annual objectives are met.

The unit's syllabi are inconsistent in their inclusion of ACEJMC values and competencies. More than half of the syllabi state which ACEJMC competencies the course addresses, but about one-fourth of the syllabi address the four University Level Competencies only, and the remaining syllabi do not address competencies at all. In our meetings with students, there seemed to be some awareness of the university's four competencies, but little to no awareness of the ACEJMC-related assessment process.

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

The unit, in concert with the university's assessment system, has a complex matrix of goals and procedures for assessment that includes multiple direct and indirect measures.

#### **Direct Measures:**

- The unit requires a one-credit-hour senior course that involves the development of a professional portfolio. The portfolio is evaluated by a faculty member who is not the course's instructor of record. In the vast majority of cases, the instructor involves external professionals in the portfolio evaluations. The portfolio evaluation seeks feedback on two of the ACEJMC competencies (writing and tools/technologies).
- The unit has a detailed evaluation form for internship supervisors, which seeks feedback on six ACEJMC competencies.

- The assessment plan calls for the use of course tests and assignments as direct measures of all sequence competencies. The assessment coordinator explained that sometimes -- but not always -- a faculty colleague who is not the instructor of record evaluates the students' work on the course-embedded assessment exercise or assignment. These assessments occur in a staggered four-year rotation.

Indirect measures:

- The unit conducts a Senior Exit Survey every semester. Embedded in the exit survey is a direct measure: a set of questions known as the Global Citizenship Survey, to test seniors' accumulated knowledge about global media, issues and cultures.
- The unit conducts an Alumni Survey every three or four years (the last was conducted in 2019).
- The unit hosts a Professional Panel every few years in which area media professionals, many of them alumni of the program, offer advice for updating curriculum and instruction.
- The unit keeps meticulous records of student awards for media work.

Together, these measures are generally effective in measuring ACEJMC competencies. But because a few ACEJMC competencies are omitted from the assessment plans of each sequence, there is no formal mechanism for measuring those.

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

The unit "closes the loop" of assessment with a process entitled "Continuous Improvement." The assessment coordinator leads parts of two faculty meetings each year to analyze and discuss assessment data from the previous spring. In the Fall meeting, the coordinator presents the assessment findings, and the faculty agree on which remedial changes will be made in response to the data. In the Spring meeting, the faculty report their progress in implementing those remediations.

With this process the department learned, during the review period, that students were learning well in most areas. Some conclusions centered on needs for greater diversity awareness, both global and domestic, on writing skills, and on ethical problem-solving. The remediations enacted during the review period are too many to list in this report, but here are a few examples:

- The unit has launched a course in 2020-21 entitled Foundations of Digital Media.
- IMC students are now required to take Multimedia Storytelling and Production, to improve their ability to create marketing content.
- The Public Relations Principles course now has an additional module on ethics.
- The Media Writing course has renewed its focus on writing leads and nut graphs.
- Advanced Mass Communication courses now include more content on global awareness.
- The Media Writing course now provides greater context on the importance of diversity awareness in reporting and writing.
- Internship supervisors' dissatisfaction with students' grammar skills resulted in a renewed emphasis on grammar in the Media Writing course.

In addition, the department cites several improvements resulting from assessment that are not directly related to course instruction or curriculum. For example, the data analysis resulted in the creation of a

faculty-advised, student-run marketing communications agency; a partnership with the Athletics department to provide production services and promotions; conversion of the portfolio presentation to all-digital, and the catalog redesignation of IMC courses (now “IMCO”) to distinguish them from Mass Comm courses.

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

For purposes of assessment, the department’s primary vehicles for involving alumni are the professional panel and the Alumni Survey, each which provide feedback and advice on curriculum every few years. There is no formally constituted alumni board that would meet regularly; the chair explained that he convenes groups of alumni on an *ad hoc* basis, but not explicitly for purposes of assessment.

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

In addition to professionals’ participation in the evaluation of seniors’ portfolios and internship supervisors’ feedback, area professionals have participated as judges for student awards and writing competitions. They also provide advice at the meetings of professional panels.

#### **SUMMARY:**

In many ways, the unit provides a model for embracing the spirit of assessment – the use of data to improve curriculum and instruction – and a great deal of faculty energy is applied to meeting the university’s and ACEJMC’s guidelines. expectations on assessment. The unit “closed the loop” on dozens of issues during the study period. However, the specific application of ACEJMC rubrics is still a bit rough at the edges. The plan includes most, but not all, of the ACEJMC competencies. The use of professionals in portfolio evaluation has fallen off in recent years. The department relies heavily on course work for direct measures. The presence of ACEJMC competencies in syllabi is inconsistent.

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

### PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

- Positive, engaged and energetic students.
- Dedicated and engaged faculty.
- New facilities that include a new TV studio and podcasting booth.
- Supportive alumni, including mentoring program.
- Department chair who inspires confidence and respect among faculty, students and other units.

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

N/A

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

- Lack of budget, particularly with open faculty and staff lines unfilled due to a hiring freeze.
- Only 1.5 faculty lines allocated to IMC although IMC students represent nearly 30% of enrollment.
- Advising system is heavily reliant on the small number of full-time faculty members.
- Assessment is not tightly aligned with ACEJMC principles and practices.

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

N/A

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

N/A

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.

Three significant deficiencies cited in the last site team report from October 2014 are summarized below with updates based on the 2021 self-study and site team visit.

#### **Enrollment declines and dwindling state support create uncertainties about filling future faculty vacancies.**

Enrollment declines and dwindling state support remain concerns for the department as well as the overall university. Given the hiring freeze and uncertainty of future faculty staffing, it is important that enrollment declines be reversed and aggressive recruitment, retention campaigns be launched.

#### **Lack of new sources of revenue to fund needed equipment purchases.**

This remains an issue. However, new TV, radio and podcasting equipment have been installed as noted earlier with the support provided by the College of Arts & Sciences and the university. During the site visit, the team learned that an additional \$20,000 will be allocated for equipment this academic year.

**Absence of an organized and formalized approach to alumni relations.**

Alumni survey was completed and a spreadsheet for alumni has been developed to improve communication. The Outlet (produced by students in PR Writing and Production class) is now being sent, and students created the 75th anniversary multimedia campaign to celebrate the department's history. The challenge will be sustaining momentum and tapping into social media channels. The chair is encouraged to formalize the Advisory Council and work with the dean, president, provost and university advancement team to prioritize fundraising. A scholarship fund has been established to honor longtime chair, Dr. William Click.

**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 voluminous and could benefit from tighter editing. Based on the review, the team recommends the following actions be taken:

- Formalize relationships and calendar with the department's Advisory Council to enlist fundraising and assessment help.
- Address diversity gaps in faculty and address shortages in IMC faculty as well as administrative support staff.
- Explore alternative faculty strategies such as hiring adjuncts to assist with teaching loads.
- Align assessment with ACEJMC best practices.