

Accrediting Council

On Education in Journalism and Mass Communications

Susanne Shaw
Executive Director

May 8, 2018

Michael Rao
President
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA 23284-2034

Dear President Rao:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications voted 14-2, with five members abstaining, at its April 27-28 meeting in Chicago that provisional reaccreditation be given to the undergraduate program in the Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture at Virginia Commonwealth University. Hong Cheng, director of the School of Media and Culture, attended the meeting.

The Council discussed the site visit team's and the Committee's recommendations for provisional reaccreditation. The Council discussed the school's non-compliance with two standards:

Standard 4: Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty
Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The Council also considered Prof. Cheng's Jan. 8 response to the team report, the Jan. 8 statement from Montserrat Fuentes, dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, and the April 5 responses to the Committee's decision from Prof. Cheng and Dean Fuentes.

The Council's procedures say: "A unit may receive provisional accreditation or reaccreditation when the Council has found weaknesses that can be corrected within two years." Schools have the option to schedule a revisit in one or two years.

If you wish to have a revisit in the 2018-19 academic year, you must submit a request no later than July 1, 2018, and the revisit must occur no later than Feb. 1, 2019. For a revisit during the 2019-20 academic year, a request must be made no later than July 1, 2019, and the revisit must occur no later than Feb. 1, 2020.

Please send your formal request before the stated deadline along with sufficient documentation that all identified weaknesses in the summary section at the end of the site team report have been corrected. The letter and accompanying material should be sent to Susanne Shaw, executive director. Two people will revisit the undergraduate program in the School of Media and Culture. The revisit will focus on Standard 4: Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty and Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes.

The team chair will make a recommendation to the Accrediting Committee and the Committee's recommendation will be forwarded to the Accrediting Council.

The expenses of the revisit to Virginia Commonwealth University and the team chair's expenses to the Committee meeting to present the revisit report must be paid by the School of Media and Culture before the Council meeting. If you or Prof. Cheng have questions about what should be addressed, please contact Susanne Shaw.

Council procedures require that I tell you of your right to appeal this decision. I have enclosed a copy of the appeals procedures, which specifies that you must notify me within 30 days of receipt of this letter if you wish to make an appeal.

Grounds for appeal of a decision to award provisional accreditation must be based on one or more of the following: 1) evidence that the Council failed to adhere to applicable adopted procedures; 2) evidence that, based upon the record before the Council, the decision was arbitrary and capricious or not supported by substantial evidence. Appeals must be made in writing and must be based on concrete evidence that was in the record before the Council at the time of the original decision.

If the School of Media and Culture chooses to appeal this decision, the Council will consider that appeal at its Aug. 24 meeting in Chicago. While an appeal is pending and before a decision on the appeal is made by the Council, there will be no change in the accredited status of the School of Media and Culture.

All expenses of the appeal, including travel, shall be paid by the institution initiating the appeal. Eighty percent of the estimated costs of the appeal hearing must be sent to the ACEJMC office two weeks before the date of the scheduled Appeals Board meeting.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate with your faculty and administration in the assessment of your program. The goal of the Accrediting Council is to improve the quality of education offered to students served by a program through that assessment.

Sincerely,



Peter Bhatia
President

cc: Hong Cheng, director, Richard T. Robertson School of Media
and Culture
Montserrat Fuentes, dean, College of Humanities and Sciences
Joe Foote, chair, site team
Marie Hardin, vice chair, Accrediting Committee
Chris Callahan, chair, Accrediting Committee
Susanne Shaw, executive director, ACEJMC