

Accrediting Council

On Education in Journalism and Mass Communications

Patricia Thompson
Executive Director

October 18, 2022

William C. Dudley, President
Washington and Lee University
204 W. Washington St.
Lexington, VA 24450

Dear President Dudley:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications met April 26 in Chicago and voted 13-3, with 1 abstention, that the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications at Washington and Lee University receive reaccreditation. Toni Locy, head of the department, attended the meeting.

The Council concurred with the recommendations for reaccreditation made by the Accrediting Committee and the site team. The school was found in noncompliance on one of the nine standards, Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness. Diversity at the university and in the school was the subject of considerable discussion at all three levels of our process—during the site visit, during the discussion by our Accrediting Committee and finally during the discussion by our Accrediting Council. Much of the conversation concerned student diversity, adjunct-faculty diversity and, to some degree, the over-all climate at the university. Here is the site team's summary:

The unit has created a curriculum that prepares its students to work in a multi-cultural society and has been effective at exposing its students to diversity. The team found a climate within the unit free of harassment or discrimination. Nevertheless, the unit's student body falls short of reflecting the population which it serves. In its own words, diversification efforts have been "disappointing." Meanwhile, with five opportunities to hire faculty, four white candidates and one Hispanic candidate were hired; no African-Americans. Six adjuncts have been hired since 2015; none are minorities.

About the overall climate at the university, the team said:

Diversity is said to have been a university priority for many years. Results, however, have been, in the unit's own words, "disappointing." University and unit administration note that the university's very name may make progress more difficult. Robert E. Lee is buried on campus beneath Lee Chapel, which is a gathering space for many significant campus events with students.

We mention all of this because the school's next site team, in six years, will be told to consider whether the shortcomings found in this year's report have been corrected. We understand that this is not a simple issue but wanted you to know that diversity will be revisited in the next accrediting cycle—and because we think it is such a critical issue for communicators to understand.

The next visit for the School of Journalism will be during the 2024-2025 academic year.

Please accept my congratulations and best wishes for continued success for the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications at Washington and Lee University, its students, faculty and the professional media constituencies it serves.

Sincerely,



Peter Bhatia
ACEJMC President

cc: Toni Locy, head, Department of Journalism and Mass Communications
Jennifer Sizemore, site team chair
Chris Callahan, chair, Accrediting Committee
Patricia Thompson, executive director, ACEJMC