

2022-23
Revisit Team Report
for Accreditation in Journalism
and Mass Communications

Name of Accredited Unit:

Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications

Name of Institution:

Hampton University

Name of Unit Administrator:

Julia A. Wilson, Dean

Date of Original Site Visit:

Jan. 26-29, 2020

Revisit Date:

Feb. 16-17, 2023

Revisit Team Chair:

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Revisit Team's Recommendation:

REACCREDITATION

Overview

In the three years since ACEJMC granted provisional status to the Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications at Hampton University, the unit has experienced substantial change and evident progress in response to accreditation deficiencies identified in 2020. Leadership changes include a new dean in 2021 and an assistant dean in 2022.

Hampton University, a private, historically Black institution that traces its origins to 1868, also named a new president in 2022. The retired lieutenant general and Hampton alumnus in quick order launched a campaign to update and renovate key areas of the campus, efforts the dean described as revitalizing for the School.

In the week before the February 2023 campus revisit, the Journalism program, first accredited in 1995 as a department, celebrated its 20th anniversary as the Scripps Howard School. Its mission statement: *The Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications aims to be recognized as a leading communications school in developing culturally literate, diverse, and internationally competitive journalists and communicators, with high standards of excellence.*

As of spring 2023, student enrollment was 204, a 38% decrease from the pre-pandemic figure in spring 2020. (University enrollment decreased 22% across the same period.) Majors may earn a bachelor's degree in either Journalism or Strategic Communication.

The 2023 revisit team evaluated the School's facilities and met with the dean and assistant dean, faculty members, students, staff and University administrators.

The report that follows addresses the three standards found noncompliant three years ago. Though ACEJMC reduced total accreditation standards from nine to eight, which is effective starting with the current cycle of site visits, this report retains standards as they were numbered at the time of the 2020 reaccreditation review.

1. List each standard found in noncompliance and the reasons as cited in the original team report.

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Reasons cited for noncompliance:

- The School had not updated its curriculum in 2019 as stipulated by a three-year cycle.
- There were no courses in social media or analytics, no advanced instruction on strategic communication campaigns, and capstone courses were not specific to each major.
- The number of prerequisites for some of the 300- and 400-level classes were deemed excessive.

- Technology upgrades were needed, including access to the Adobe suite of programs for extended hours.
- The day-to-day demands on faculty were considered excessive.

Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

Reasons cited for noncompliance:

- The School's budget was insufficient to meet ACEJMC's competency related to "applying current tools and technology."
- An insufficient budget necessitated the use of internal operational funding to purchase the equipment and software that would make students competitive in the changing media landscape.
- Travel funding, equipment and computers were inadequate to support a curriculum that is current or to enable faculty to produce and disseminate quality research, or professional and creative products.
- Urgent needs included air conditioning, a new tower and an antenna for the radio station; updated presentation technology and furniture for classrooms; computer systems with higher processor speeds and graphic cards; and television student production equipment and chroma-key cyclorama.

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Reasons cited for noncompliance:

- The plan for the post-test of grammar and AP style was not administered in courses required by both majors.
- Strategic communication students were receiving research skills that journalism students were not.
- The School had an opportunity to use internship evaluations as an assessment measure to engage professionals in the process.
- Exit survey did not adequately measure the 12 competencies.
- The lack of a good rubric to measure the competencies for the identified direct and indirect measures and the lack of professional input made it difficult to update the curriculum.

2. For each standard that had been in noncompliance, provide a summary of the revisit team's findings regarding corrections. Provide an evaluation of compliance or noncompliance.

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

The curriculum was upgraded in 2020 and a three-year cycle of curriculum review was reinstated. Further course revisions and additions were instituted after the arrival of the new dean in 2021. Courses have been added in the areas cited in 2020 as deficient: social media, data analytics, advanced strategic communication campaigns, and capstone courses specific to

each major. Also, there have been upgrades to program content in radio production by including podcast instruction in several classes.

Specifically, the new courses are JAC 330: Social and Multimedia Analytics; JAC 430: Advanced Media Analytics; JAC 320: PR, Campaigns and Media Brand Marketing. Also, the senior capstone classes have been divided by majors, with one for Strategic Communication majors and one for Journalism majors.

The School is conducting a nationwide search for a full-time professor, as well as an adjunct, to further expand course offerings in data analytics. The School also plans to add courses in sports journalism, science journalism, business journalism and crisis communication by fall 2024, when four new faculty members are anticipated.

Students applaud the faculty changes. One student commented during a focus group: “I have noticed changes in the professors; not only are the students learning, but we are *wanting* to learn.” Another said, “These are great changes that will give students the ability to have exposure and insight that most Black students do not have.”

The number of prerequisites for some of the 300- and 400-level courses have been reduced to streamline curriculum navigation, addressing a concern in the 2020 site team report.

Technology upgrades have been completed in some classrooms, with the addition of new computers that accommodate Adobe access and with the extension of hours when these computers are available. More improvements are planned and funded for other classrooms and student spaces. Also significant is access to the Adobe suite for use remotely and after-hours via cloud services.

Visiting professionals are further enhancing the classroom experience. Guest speakers in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 included Dorothy Gilliam, Rodrigo Alves, Jing Tian, Nikole Hannah-Jones, and Ghanaian Ambassador Ekwow Spio-Garbrah, among others, including professionals from Disney, Bloomberg, Reuters, the Pulitzer Center, E.W. Scripps, the International Center for Journalists, and various communication agencies and media outlets.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

The School describes robust responses to the 2020 site team's report on insufficient resources. That report concluded that equipment and software were not up to date and that support for faculty travel was lacking. To the good, the previous team said, the School's overall budget was "fair and equitable" within the University and its building was likewise sufficient. But the impact of resource shortcomings on curriculum improvements, student access to suitable equipment, and faculty professional development were severe enough at the time to result in noncompliance for this standard.

By the 2023 revisit, the School was able to document an infusion of funding for equipment upgrades and new classroom furniture. It touted more convenient access to facilities for students, and more funding for scholarships. The dean said Hampton University's new president, still in his first year in the job, launched initiatives to raise the quality of technology across the campus, restore faculty lines to pre-pandemic levels and increase salaries. Fortifying Wi-Fi connectivity was a centerpiece of plans. Benefits to the School from new and ongoing resources appear significant.

- Of \$10 million in Hampton capital improvements, \$5 million has been allocated to upgrade the radio tower at the station operated by the School.
- Of \$4 million in University technology upgrades, \$500,000 has been allocated for the Scripps Howard School's TV station control room, to re-cable the building, for improved technology in the auditorium that serves as a signature meeting space, and to update radio station equipment.
- The TV studio has a new large-scale cyclorama.
- The School itemized \$321,073 in purchases since 2020.
- The operating budget for the current academic year is \$109,000, a \$25,230 (30%) increase in three years.
- The School upgraded furniture in six of eight classrooms. It plans to update the remaining two, as well as all offices. More than half of the computers are upgraded; software is current. Interactive white boards and remote conferencing capabilities were enhanced. One class is equipped for instruction in Augmented Virtual Reality.
- The 2020 report noted that students sometimes encountered trouble gaining access to a printer. The School now reserves a printer for student use. Students also use a batch of new HD cameras.
- Of 25 faculty positions the University authorized for hiring, four full-time are approved for the School, which will restore staffing to 2020 levels. Two faculty searches were under way heading into spring. All four hires are anticipated by fall 2023.
- The \$22,000 travel budget for 2022-23 is \$1,000 (4.8%) above 2020 funding. Significantly, the freeze on travel expenses around the time of the last site visit was no longer in place.

- The new dean created a Dean’s Fund for contributing to the cost of consulting, marketing, tech gear and meals for events within the School. The total at the start of spring: \$100,952.
- Scholarship donations to the School exceeded \$275,000.
- NBCUniversal provided an additional \$250,000 in support of upgrades to facilities.
- Hampton faculty, including those in the Scripps Howard School before July 2022, received a 5% raise.

No one was declaring that the Scripps Howard School is financially set for life. Additionally, while some funding expectations appear to be genuinely advancing through campus processes, those not yet fulfilled still amount to promises made. But the program documents a series of successes in aligning resources to better serve students and faculty. Key concerns as itemized in the 2020 site team visit report were addressed, in some instances substantially so.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

Standard 9: Assessment and Learning Outcomes

The 2020 site team credited the School of Journalism and Communications for constructing solid building blocks of assessment, including a written plan, curriculum map and a record of assessing. But three significant lapses were cited as the basis for noncompliance on what was then Standard 9. First, the School had insufficiently applied its Assessment Plan, creating inconsistencies across the two areas of emphasis for Scripps Howard School majors, Journalism and Strategic Communication. Second, the unit did not involve professionals in assessment as a matter of course. And third, it did not fully embed ACEJMC’s values and competencies in its direct and indirect measures.

Assessment gains summarized in the revisit self-study along with site team conversations with University officials, School administrators and faculty members indicate progress occurred on all three fronts.

1. A grammar assessment quiz, previously used in Journalism but not in Strategic Communication, is now a staple in both. Courses required for all majors house the pre-test. Capstone courses, while separate for Journalism and Strategic Communication, now both conduct the post-test.
2. The revisit self-study described outreach to professionals as an early initiative of the new dean, starting in 2021. Now, journalists, public relations practitioners and others from media are involved in reviewing students’ work. As one faculty member stated, in reference to the dean’s role in attracting professionals for assessment and other School activities: “She kind of blew us away with the kind of people she had access to.”
3. The School aligned its direct and indirect measures more consistently with ACEJMC’s

values and competencies. Details are on display in most syllabuses. The values and competencies are now thoroughly reflected in Capstone evaluation forms for Journalism and Strategic Communication, internship evaluations conducted by employers, and senior exit surveys.

The School also pointed to other fruits of assessment either in place or expected soon. Feedback from company executives on communications skills led to training on effective “elevator speeches.” Professionals signed up to review Capstone portfolios noted that the bios included in packages were often underwhelming. In response, instructors emphasized the need to craft bios with impact.

Informally, assessment also looms over at least two job searches underway at the School. The search for a data analytics instructor affirms a recognition of industry trends and a desire to arm Scripps Howard School students with relevant skills. Another search for an instructor whose expertise includes research is seen as adding balance to a faculty oriented toward the profession. The role also potentially addresses the previous site team’s concern that instruction for Strategic Communication majors at the time included research, while courses for Journalism majors generally did not.

The responsiveness to the lapses detailed in 2020 is evidence that the School paid attention to learning outcomes. Nevertheless, there is additional room for improvement to keep the machinery of assessment churning at the Scripps Howard School.

The School is assertive in listing ACEJMC values and competencies in the syllabus for most courses. In certain cases, the list is tailored to align with the subject matter and with skills naturally associated with the course. More tailoring of that kind across the curriculum is logical, compared to what may be an overly ambitious quest to emphasize all competencies in almost all courses.

Conversations with faculty and even students indicated assessment is an important part of program objectives. The handful of four-year students asked to discuss their impression of the Scripps Howard School offered high praise for their instructors and for the program overall. They also mentioned something seldom heard from students in site visits: “Assessment.” While they were critiquing the grammar quiz as too basic, at least for them as seniors now, the fact that they could reference this standard at all was a sign that assessment is a vital topic within the School.

Faculty, when asked, also cited assessment as an ongoing source of attention.

Some School reports and some instructors seemed to interpret assessment narrowly as a matter of routine course assignments and individual student achievements. This presents an opportunity for the School to establish a shared, cohesive understanding of ACEJMC expectations, anchored in programmatic assessment.

The need to continue building on assessment does not overshadow the School's record of results. The unit responded successfully to specific shortcomings articulated by the previous site team. It generated enough activity to satisfy assessment criteria, paving the way for further development of this standard.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

3. Describe any other weaknesses cited by the site team in its report and any additional concerns cited by the Council in its letter to the unit regarding provisional status.

Weaknesses cited were:

- Limited resources.
- Outdated technology.
- Day-to-day demands on faculty.
- Outdated curriculum.
- Bureaucracy stymied progress at the school.

4. For EACH of the other weaknesses cited by the site team or concerns cited by the Council, provide a summary of the revisit team's findings regarding corrections.

• *Limited resources*: The School is benefitting from University initiatives that increase funding for academic programs, and from the enterprising activities of a new dean. ... *More details are covered above in Section 2/Standard 7.*

• *Outdated technology*: Most classrooms are now stocked with new computers and updated software. Student access to facilities appears greatly improved, compared to scenarios described three years ago. Major repairs and upgrades are in the works for broadcast facilities. ... *More details are covered above in Section 2/Standard 7.*

• *Day-to-day demands on faculty*: This remains an issue, although the administration has taken a few concrete steps to alleviate the pressure on faculty and make professional development opportunities more accessible to them. These steps include monthly faculty meetings to air concerns, limiting faculty appointments to University committees to no more than one per person, balancing classes to prevent faculty overloads, and a new policy that one out-of-town trip will be funded for each faculty member each year.

• *Outdated curriculum*: The curriculum has been updated to include courses essential to career prep today. A three-year curriculum revision cycle has been reinstated. The number of prerequisites, deemed excessive in 2020, has been reduced. ... *More details are covered above in Section 2/Standard 2.*

• *Bureaucracy stymied progress at the School*: A new dean and a new University president were aligned in the mission to correct the weaknesses cited in the 2020 site team report and

ensure that the ACEJMC professional values and competencies are advanced throughout the School's programs. They also are aligned around the dean's vision of instituting an ambitious international focus at the School, with the intent of creating a Global Media Center. The strained atmosphere that was sensed by the site team in 2020 has been replaced by an environment that seems more conducive to nurturing innovation and aspiration. Faculty members interviewed by the site revisit team all expressed their sense that recent changes at the School are, as one professor put it, "happy additions that have made a big difference."

5. Summary conclusion and recommendation:

The School experienced setbacks during the onset of COVID-19 that stymied efforts to address the areas that had been cited as deficient by the 2020 accreditation site team. This makes the progress that has occurred since the arrival of a new dean in 2021 and a new president in July 2022 even more remarkable.

The new dean's credentials are impressive, and the impact of her leadership is being felt in several areas, most significantly those related to the three standards that were deemed noncompliant in 2020. When she arrived in fall 2021, she immediately took steps to address the issues noted in the site team report. At the same time, she articulated her vision of a new global focus, while committing to enhance the School's academic foundation and experiential opportunities. She seems to have the enthusiastic support of the new president, whose focus is on "providing a supportive environment and academic excellence," and it appears that the Scripps Howard School is benefitting in substantive ways. Meaningful investments are being made and, while the hill to be climbed remains steep, the School appears to be making steady and meaningful progress.

The School's revisit report asserts that both the dean and the president are focused on "graduating students with knowledge, skills and competencies that are in alignment with the ACEJMC 11 professional values and competencies." This is backed up by enhancements to curriculum, investments in infrastructure, and a more robust program for academic assessment.

While the addition of four new faculty members will restore the positions that were lost during the pandemic and does not constitute a net gain, the professors hired or to be hired are expected to bring more contemporary knowledge and help the School address areas that were deemed inadequate in 2020, while adding courses in new topic areas that are in high demand.

Investment in the School has increased significantly. It is notable that half of the University's total budget for capital Improvements has been allocated to the School's radio tower, strengthening the reach of a key venue for experiential learning. Another \$500,000 has been committed to other capital improvements at the School.

An assessment program that was developing when the new dean and assistant dean arrived has now evolved to comply with the fundamental expectations of ACEJMC and, in the case of grammar, exceeded what is typically seen at peer programs.

Revisit recommendation: REACCREDITATION