

-  
**2022-23**  
**Revisit Team Report**  
**for Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism**  
**and Mass Communications**

Name of Accredited Unit: **School of Journalism and Mass Media**

Name of Institution: **University of Idaho**

Name of Unit Administrator: **Robin Johnson, director**

Date of Original Site Visit: **Oct. 13-15, 2019**

Revisit Date: **Feb. 23-24, 2023**

Revisit Team Chair: **Peter Bhatia, CEO, Houston Local News Initiative**



---

Revisit Team Member: **Heidi de Laubenfels, Arcus Pace communications, Seattle**



---

Revisit Team's Recommendation: **REACCREDITATION**

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

**Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness**

Reasons cited: The school's curriculum prepares students to work in a diverse society and exposes students to diverse issues in the industry. The school's student body reflects the state and university demographics. The school outpaced the university in Hispanic or Latino student enrollment. The school is effective in reaching the Native American population but acknowledges difficulty in recruiting students of color. With five opportunities to hire faculty from 2016-19, three white women were hired with no domestic minority or international faculty receiving an offer. The school's faculty has no people of color.

On diversity, while faculty gender equity is to be applauded, the lack of any faculty of color is a glaring issue. Stronger attention to diversity is needed in syllabi and in class assignments.

**Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

Reasons cited: On assessment, a return to a vigorous and effective use of measures to collect meaningful data that informs the curriculum is needed. Mapping of curriculum to ACEJMC values and competencies must be across the board. Plans to involve the alumni and advisory boards in assessment must be carried out. A capstone for Journalism and Broadcast majors is necessary to fully implement assessment.

**2. For each standard that had been in noncompliance, provide a summary of the revisit team's findings regarding corrections.**

**Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness**

Summary of findings:

It has been an extraordinary time for the school since the original site team visited in 2019. COVID, of course, but also severe budget difficulties at the university that resulted in reductions in the size of the faculty. More on that below, but the school and its director have invested significant effort on matters related to diversity, and the director retains an outspoken commitment to it.

The school reports it developed and approved a new diversity plan in March 2021 that includes five specific diversity goals. In the school's words: The plan embraces the idea that diversity, equity and inclusion goals for student recruitment and retention; faculty, staff and administrator recruitment and retention; curriculum diversification; community outreach; and research and creative scholarly activity can be achieved through the

creation of objectives that can be measured using indicators to determine progress and goal achievement. The process allows the school to demonstrate where it is making progress and where additional efforts may be needed.

Notably, the plan ties measures of assessment to progress on diversity.

Here are the five goals:

**1. Student Recruitment and Retention**

- The school shall recruit, enroll, retain, and graduate a diversified student population; particularly, the school shall undertake to establish critical masses of underrepresented groups in its majors, thereby achieving a body of students and alumni/ae reflecting the diverse state and regional population.

**2. Faculty, Staff and Administrator Recruitment and Retention**

- The school shall equitably recruit, employ, and retain a diversified workforce, including qualified potential faculty and staff from groups that are currently underrepresented.

**3. Curriculum diversification**

- The school shall develop strategies and innovations to enhance, promote and assess multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion in its undergraduate curricula.

**4. Community Issues and Outreach**

- The school shall develop and promote programmatic responses to broader community issues in the Northwest region, in the State of Idaho and in Moscow, reaching all levels of education and including all cultural communities in its outreach activities.

**5. Research and Creative Scholarly Activity**

- The school shall welcome and promote multiculturalism and diversity in its research and creative scholarly agenda.

The plan lists objectives and responsibilities for reporting out results annually. The school started collecting data from indicators starting with the 2021-22 academic year. The first annual report was completed in September 2022.

Here’s an example of the report on curricular change (note the addition of mandatory diversity courses and assessment as part of the plan):

***Goal 3 Curriculum Diversification***

***Objective A: The School shall make curricular changes to degree requirements to emphasize diversity skills and global/international competencies and perspectives in media, ensuring all students take courses that directly engage in diversity and global media topics, concepts, theories and practices***

**Indicator 1:** Undergraduate curricular requirements for Advertising, Broadcasting & Digital Media, Journalism and Public Relations include two courses in Diversity and Global Perspectives

Diversity and Global Perspectives course requirements in curriculum beginning in AY 2021-2022.

**Indicator 2:** Undergraduate curricular requirements for Film & Television Studies include Global Film Styles and one History Culture and Theory course in under- served, non-canonical or international film, reflecting cultural diversity.

Course requirements and offerings in curriculum beginning in AY 2021-2022

**Objective B:** The School shall develop assessment measures that can be analyzed to ensure that majors can understand and apply concepts of diversity and global perspectives in media

**Indicator 1:** Common assessment tool applied to diversity and global perspectives courses; data and analysis measuring the meeting of learning outcomes

Assessment tool developed and applied to measure learning outcome starting with AY 2021-22 courses.

**Objective C:** The School shall encourage and provide incentives to faculty to include issues of diversity and inclusion in all courses

**Indicator 1:** percentage of courses that include learning activities and content related to diversity and inclusion from annual survey of JAMM courses by Strategic Planning Committee

54 percent of courses included

**Objective D:** The School shall invite guest speakers, distinguished scholars and media professionals from other institutions and organizations, and others to participate in class diversity or inclusion discussions and events

**Indicator 1:** Annual report from director with a list of guest speakers, topics and diversity information

The school and school faculty hosted 31 events in the academic year, all open to students. Events focusing on DEI issues included the film screening of *The Subject*, a new feature narrative film about race and the media. The screening included a live Q&A with the director and the screenwriter. Dr. Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua was invited by the school and fellow host the Idaho Asia Institute to deliver a public speech about Blaxploitation and Kung Fu films. Jenni Carlson was a guest speaker for the Sports Reporting course, and she discussed her career as a female sports reporter and columnist in Oklahoma.

*There were 35 speakers. Sixty percent were women. Nine percent were Black or African American, five percent were Asian and Asian American, and five percent were Hispanic or Latino.*

*Compared to the previous academic year, the percent of women guest speakers rose from 45 to 60 percent. The percent of speakers from minority ethnic groups was about the same this year as last, 19 and 20 percent, respectively.*

Students praise the diversity in the curriculum and the specific classes, especially “Media & Diversity.” “Even a class on horror films included discussions of the portrayal of race,” two students noted.

“Media & Diversity” focuses on “what we will face in the real world” and “gives us tools to talk about these topics in a meaningful way and attack them from a thoughtful place,” students said. There also was praise for discussion of diversity in ethics classes and “Women in the Media” class, part of the now required take-two-out-of-five diversity classes (which includes “Media & Diversity”). In video-production courses, instructors make sure to cover topics such as how to light diverse skin tones.

Notably, a diverse student group praised the school for being inclusive, saying students of all backgrounds and experiences felt welcome.

It nonetheless remains that the faculty does not include any persons of color, other than one temporary hire detailed below. The director recognizes this as an ongoing issue.

Since the site team visited, the school has hired:

- Two temporary faculty, one of whom was of color, and both since departed.
- Two regular faculty: a white international male and a white woman.
- More new hires are expected.

As in all hiring matters, there are complexities outside the school’s control, including shortened hiring time (crucial for recruiting).

The school’s narrative, edited for length and clarity, completes this section:

Factors including university wide budget cuts, the COVID-19 pandemic and political pressure on public universities at the state level affected the school’s faculty, resources and hiring abilities, and they need to be addressed to provide context to the actions taken to address the noncompliance in Standard 3.

From the 2019 fiscal year to the 2020 fiscal year, the school's general education funding decreased 12.6 percent in line with other academic units in the college and university. From the 2020 fiscal year to the 2021 fiscal year, the school's general education funding decreased 21.3 percent. Over the two-year period, the school’s budget was cut by almost one third. Although all academic units received budget cuts as part of the two university

wide budget cuts during those fiscal years, the school's cuts during the second year were uniquely severe for a number of factors, including early retirements that impacted some academic units and not others. Permanent full-time faculty shrank from 10.80 to 7.

The school was able to secure temporary funding from the Provost's Office during the two-year period to help manage the loss of full-time permanent faculty and cover the curriculum without impacting students' ability to move through the programs and graduate. In 2020, the school hired two temporary lecturers in advertising and film and television production. However, due to the uncertainty of the budgeting process, the school was not able to start the temporary hiring process until the summer. This late start, combined with the nation-wide pandemic shut down in the spring affected the applicant pool for temporary positions. The top two candidates selected ultimately chose not to accept their offers (citing the uncertainty of the pandemic and the challenge of cross-country family moving). Second-choice candidates for both positions did accept offers. The contract for one of the temporary faculty members was extended for another year. The other temporary faculty member's contract was not extended, and adjunct faculty replacements covered courses for the second year.

The three finalists for the film and television position included two male candidates of color and a white female. The first offer was made to the female candidate, and the second offer was to an international candidate of color. The three finalists for the advertising position included an international female candidate, and two white male candidates. The first offer was made to the female candidate, and the second offer was made to a white male candidate.

The school was able to hire two permanent faculty members in 2022, an instructor of film and television production and a tenure-track assistant professor of advertising. These national searches also started later than normal (April- May 2022),

Offers to the two top choices were accepted, and the school is starting to regain some permanent funding it lost during the budget cuts for full-time faculty positions, which are now at 9.

The finalists for the tenure track assistant professor of advertising position were an international female of color, a white international female and a white international male. The offer was made to the white international male. The finalists for the film and television production instructor position were a white female and a white male. The offer was made to the white female candidate.

The initial applicant pools during the period show that the school is not receiving a diverse group of Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native applicants. It is difficult to discern what impact the lateness of the searches, the pandemic or the political climate have had on the initial applicant pools. In other areas of diversity, the school's faculty are inclusive and representative of different gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, and veteran status, according to the self-reporting survey in the diversity report. The two new faculty

also research and create documentaries that focus on important social issues including immigration and refugees. The school is committed to reviewing each hire that is made, identifying challenges and working toward solutions that will increase diversity of faculty of color.

The school is worried that decisions made by the Idaho Legislature may hurt recruiting efforts. The university and others in the state were told to cut \$2.5 million from their 2021 budgets to eliminate what legislators said were wasteful spending on diversity, equity and social justice programming (despite this being rebutted by university officials). The university's was \$500,000. The Legislature also passed a bill prohibiting the indoctrination of students in Idaho public schools or colleges with tenets ascribed to critical race theory.

## **COMPLIANCE**

### **Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

#### Summary of findings:

After the site team visit in October 2019 and its receipt of provisional re-accreditation, the school got to work right away on improving its approach to assessment. The first step was to develop and approve a new assessment plan in February 2020. The plan integrates ACEJMC's Professional Values and Competencies as learning objectives, reframing them slightly as five values and five skills. These learning objectives were visibly integrated into course syllabi reviewed by the revisit team.

The plan calls for students to demonstrate awareness of the learning objectives in early coursework and to demonstrate the ability to apply that knowledge in higher-level and capstone courses. Courses are mapped to the values and skills.

Assignments and exams provide direct measures of learning outcomes. Indirect measures include graduating senior surveys, internship reports, specialized questions on student course evaluations, awards in student media competitions, three-year post-graduation surveys, retention and graduation rates, service-learning opportunities and alumni mentoring. Faculty and administrators collect and analyze data each year, then produce assessment reports for each academic program every fall to determine how to improve teaching and learning.

Analysis of the first set of data in the plan, for the 2019-20 academic year, revealed clear gaps in the ability to assess students on diversity-related values. As a result, students now must choose two required courses from a list that includes Media & Diversity, History of Mass Media, Women in the Media, and Issues in Global Media. To close gaps in the ability to assess learning outcome skills in journalism and broadcasting & digital media, faculty added at least three required courses and capstone courses. Media professionals

now regularly evaluate student projects in the capstone courses in four majors: Journalism, Advertising, Public Relations, and Broadcasting and Digital Media. When students fell short on the ability to apply statistical concepts when measuring the effectiveness of campaigns, coursework was adjusted to focus more on analytics and measurement. Professional reviewers' feedback spurred the school to allocate more funds to PR capstone projects so students could gain experience with media buying and other tactics the school's nonprofit partners couldn't afford to fund.

"Now we have so much more specificity on what students need to learn and how our classes fit into the curriculum," one faculty member said, adding that he has seen the success of assessment in the rising quality of student work. "Capstone quality has skyrocketed," he said.

Some faculty members pointed to how well learning outcomes are now mapped not just to each class but also to individual course work. Others seemed more outside the process, however, suggesting the school could drill down in more detail on competencies by majors and skills. To further strengthen its assessment activities, the school has an opportunity to involve all faculty more deeply in closing the loop.

In the 2020-21 academic year, the university adopted a software service called Anthology to assess learning outcomes and engage in annual program review and planning. The school's director is now entering data into Anthology and plans to roll the tool out to faculty more fully in 2023-24.

The university's Institutional Assessment and Accreditation department rates each university program's assessment on a scale, from the lowest rating of "noncompliant" to "beginning," "developing" then "established," with the highest rating being "mature." The school received "mature" ratings on all its academic programs for the 2020-21 academic year.

This rating signals the school is making meaningful use of data to improve instruction and outcomes, the vice president for academic initiatives said in a meeting with the revisit team. This highest rating also means faculty are involved and the process is continuous. The vice president underscored the rigor the Assessment and Accreditation department uses in rating assessment activities, saying, "If they called it mature, it's mature." This is now a department the university can showcase for its exemplary assessment activities, she said.

## 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.**

■ University and school both suffering from declining enrollment and budget shortfall, contributing to an uncertain environment and fear of cuts.



- New director's transition into school hindered by personnel crises.
- No full professors in the faculty – same as six years ago.
- No faculty of color.
- Broadcast equipment facilities and equipment have received some attention, but further freshening is needed.

**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.**

***Weakness 1: University and school both suffering from declining enrollment and budget shortfall, contributing to an uncertain environment and fear of cuts.***

The university experienced two years of budget cuts, creating understandable angst on campus and in the school. Creative management resulted in no faculty or staff layoffs in the college that houses the school. The second round of budget cuts included voluntary separation and retirement packages. The school's budget was cut by almost one-third, with two faculty members retiring and an instructor resigning. Temporary funding helped students to move through the curriculum normally.

Despite enrollment declines during COVID, the school was able to increase its budget to hire two new permanent faculty members in 2022: a tenure track assistant professor of advertising and an instructor of film and television production.

The budget cuts reduced permanent faculty from 10.8 to 7 between 2019-2021, but the addition of the two new permanent hires raised the number this academic year to 9.

There is optimism that the recent hires and a likely two new hires in 2023-24 to staff a new graduate professional master's program and assist in undergraduate teaching will help boost enrollment. In addition, a new budget model now in place for the university that rewards enrollment growth, retention, credit-hour production and graduation rates has proven beneficial to the school, with that trend expected to continue.

The university has bounced back as well, running surpluses the past two years. Enrollment is up across campus and the university was named the best value public university in the West for two years in a row by US News and World Report. The recent murders in Moscow that attracted so much national attention have not had a negative impact on enrollment, the provost reported. The school's enrollment needs to continue to grow to reach pre-pandemic levels, and some faculty members say it's unclear where the resources are for that. The university's central communications group has primary responsibility for recruiting students, and school faculty lack capacity to do much more. Some of their activities, such as the [Fall 48 Film Challenge](#), have become effective recruiting tools, one faculty member noted.

(Interesting aside: Student media members expressed horror at the behavior of the national press covering the murders. They found it in direct conflict with what they were learning in their ethics classes at the school. Students were full of praise for the faculty and school for its outreach and empathy in the wake of the murders. Faculty checked in without being asked, students said. They asked students what they needed. And they immediately adjusted to teach in a hybrid mode so students wouldn't have to return to campus until they were comfortable. One faculty member noted with pride that during early-day coverage of the murders he looked around and noted he was surrounded by school alumni, covering the story for Northwest media outlets.)

**Weakness 2: New director's transition into school hindered by personnel crises.**

A personnel issue that had become public was at the forefront of concerns in 2019 when the site team visited. It was resolved through university process and the professor was terminated.

The budget issues have been documented above. The director was finding his footing when the site team visited and acknowledges he wasn't fully prepared. He has worked hard to address issues of communication with faculty and is now much more confident in his leadership. He receives strong support from the provost and his dean. Given the relatively small size of the department, he has tackled the issues raised by the site team sequentially. Assessment first and then diversity. The progress on both is notable.

Faculty say the school is in a stable place, and they believe even more communication effort is needed by the director. They applaud him for making the effort to drop in and talk more often. They credit him with running the department well (one faculty member called him a "great administrator"), but seek more information. "Just bring us in the loop," one faculty member said. A more active role from the advisory board was suggested by one professor. One suggests using visiting professors or professionals in residence as a way to tackle the faculty diversity question, at least short-term.

The dean expressed high confidence in the director, calling him a "highly valued member of the team," a "trusted steward of resources" and "the hardest working of the hard working."

"He is one of the most available, responsive and conscientious of any of the colleagues I work with," the dean said. The director has shown a lot of courage and achieved several wins for the school, he said, noting he is a highly effective advocate who is clear and persuasive.

***Weakness 3: No faculty of color.***

This is detailed above.

***Weakness 4: No full professors in the faculty – same as six years ago.***

There have been two promotions to full professor. One, who started as an assistant professor in 2010 and was promoted to associate professor with tenure in 2017, was promoted to full professor in 2021. The second, who started as an assistant professor in 1999 and was promoted to associate professor with tenure in 2005, was promoted to full professor in 2022. Additionally, an assistant professor was promoted to associate professor with tenure in 2022.

***Weakness 5: Broadcast equipment facilities and equipment have received some attention, but further freshening is needed.***

The school received three rounds of annual equipment and infrastructure improvement funds from the college in fiscal years 2020-2022.

- In 2020, \$20,000 was used to renovate the student media equipment checkout space. There are now three rooms in the Radio-TV building dedicated to media equipment checkout, up from one in 2019. Additional media equipment purchases were made, including three new Blackmagic 4K cinema kits and lenses.
- In 2021, the school received \$50,000 for further equipment and studio upgrades. A professional broadcast desk was purchased, additional green screen walls were built, and new studio lights were installed. The four editing rooms have new computers, monitors and chairs.
- In 2022, the school received \$50,000 for further renovations. Planned improvements include a professional Red 6K cinema camera for the school's Film and Television program, improvements to the studio control room and renovation of the studio floor.

The broadcast facilities are notably improved from the original site team visit. Students commented on the top-of-the-line tools available to them. One faculty member said students used to have access to 170 items in the equipment room, and that number recently exceeded 1,000. The school has invested in cameras and lighting, but also in extensive support gear and tools such as suction cups, c-stands, tripods and drones.

**5. Summary conclusion and recommendation:**

The School of Journalism and Mass Media at the University of Idaho has made considerable progress since the original site team visited. Strong diversity courses are now a powerful and required part of the curriculum (students especially mentioned Media & Diversity) across all five of its majors, a new diversity plan includes specific measurements and an annual report on progress. Students mention an atmosphere of inclusion that touches all. But, as noted, there remain no people of color on the faculty. Hiring during the provisional process was tortured, to put it mildly, but the school now has opportunities to recruit on a regular timetable. Quick temporary hires during the lockdown period of the pandemic were not successful. Two new regular hires were

conducted on a truncated schedule, making recruitment more difficult. There is at least one retirement expected soon from the journalism faculty, and when the site team visited in 2019, the president promised lines from retiring faculty would remain. Depending on how one calculates it, it could be argued the university owes the school another hire, potentially creating four new hires in the next couple of academic years. Two are planned as part of a new professional master's program.

While the revisit team, of course, only evaluates looking back, not forward, the school has done outstanding work in getting principles of diversity in front of its students through curriculum (its requirement that students take two of a five-course diversity cohort is a major and extraordinary commitment) and assessment. This, in our judgment, warrants a finding of COMPLIANCE. And we say without hesitation that progress must be made on faculty numbers (especially as student populations are becoming more diverse) when Idaho comes up again in three years. To answer the inevitable question: Yes, we did consider a finding of NONCOMPLIANCE on diversity and an overall recommendation of REACCREDITATION, but the progress on curriculum and the diversity plan is quite remarkable and earned this report.

The school took the findings on assessment seriously and has rebuilt an effective program that has earned the university's highest assessment ranking, that of a "mature" program. That's a long distance traveled very quickly. While there is some difference of opinion among faculty about how well the program is "closing the loop" and having an impact on curriculum, the fact remains the program follows ACEJMC's requirements of a plan, mapping to learning outcomes, direct and indirect measures and closing the loop.

**Recommendation: REACCREDITATION**