

Report of ACEJMC Evaluation
Professional master's/Undergraduate programs
2022- 2023

Name of Institution: University of South Florida
Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Rhea Law, president
Name of Unit: Department of Journalism and Digital Communication
Name and Title of Administrator: Casey Frechette, department chair
Date of 2022-2023 Accrediting Visit: Feb. 5-8, 2023
Date of the previous accrediting visit: Jan. 31 – Feb. 3, 2016.
Recommendation of the previous site visit team:
Undergraduate program: Re-accredit
Professional master's program: Re-accredit

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council:
Undergraduate program: Re-accredit
Professional master's program: Re-accredit

Recommendation by 2022-2023 Visiting Team:

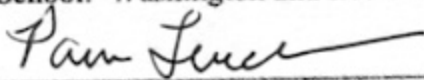
Undergraduate program recommendation: Re-accredit
Professional master's program recommendation: Re-accredit

Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Pam Luecke, Professor of Journalism Emerita
Organization/School: Washington and Lee University

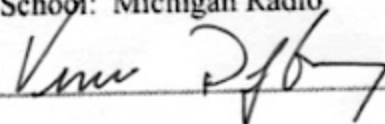
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Team Member

Name and Title: Vince Duffy, News Director
Organization/School: Michigan Radio

Signature



Team Member

Name and Title: Ford Risley, Distinguished Professor
Organization/School: Bellisario College of Communications, Pennsylvania State University

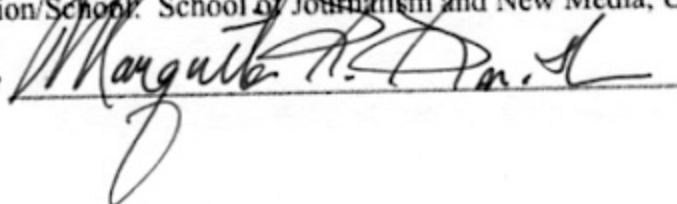
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Team Member

Name and Title: Marquita Smith, Associate Professor and Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs
Organization/School: School of Journalism and New Media, University of Mississippi

Signature



PART I: General information

Name of Institution: University of South Florida

Name of Unit: Department of Journalism & Digital Communication

Year of Visit: 2023

1. Check regional association by which the institution now is accredited.

- Higher Learning Commission
- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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.

The USF St. Petersburg campus was formally established as a regional campus of the University of South Florida (USF) in 1968.

July 1, 2001, USF St. Petersburg became a fiscally autonomous campus of USF through the Florida Education Governance Reorganization Implementation Act. As a result, USF St. Petersburg received authority to operate as a “separate organizational and budget entity of the University of South Florida.” Effective July 1, 2001, the government entity that authorizes which degrees can be awarded is the Florida Board of Education (F.S. 240.2011).

In 2018, the Florida legislature passed a law (HB 423) requiring consolidation of USF’s three separately accredited institutions, and the University began operating under a single accreditation July 1, 2020.

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. If there was a revisit, give the date of the last full visit and the date of the revisit: Our most recent accrediting visit was Jan. 31 – Feb. 3, 2016.

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

Spring 2004

6. Insert here the undergraduate mission statement and the separate mission statement for the graduate program. Statements should give the date of adoption and/or last revision.

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication strives for teaching excellence, supports faculty and student research, encourages community and professional service, and promotes understanding and inclusion across culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability and other conditions of difference. We work untiringly to graduate accomplished students who make valuable contributions to their chosen fields and engage actively in their communities. Our overall values reflect those of the University in that we endeavor to provide our students with an education rich in:

- practical experience and theory
- collaboration with one another and the campus community
- respect for others and their views
- innovative, creative expression and unfettered pursuit of truth
- deliberative dialogue and shared governance
- ethical behavior imbued with honesty, integrity, and openness
- civic awareness and service

Our specific mission is to:

- Educate journalists who can report, edit, present and interpret the news with skill, responsibility and social consciousness in an evolving media world
- Engage in research, service, creative endeavors and professional activities that contribute to the academy, the community and the profession
- Detect and explore emerging issues in journalism, mass media and society
- Question journalism's traditional methods and values and test alternatives
- Promote cultural understanding and broaden perspectives
- Develop abilities and expand imaginations of students and faculty
- Affirm the belief that journalism, at its best, encourages and protects the democratic process

Our additional mission for M.A. students is to:

- Prepare them for leadership in their professional or academic callings
- Help them explore and demonstrate understanding of historical, theoretical, legal, ethical and professional context for journalism and other media work

Our mission statement was penned at the formation of the Department, in 1991. It is reviewed regularly and was last revised in fall 2022.

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Number of weeks in a semester: 15

Number of weeks in summer sessions: six and 10 weeks

Number of weeks in intersessions: 1

8. Check the programs offered in journalism/mass communications:

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Ph.D. degree

9. List the specific undergraduate and professional master's degrees as well as the majors or sequences being reviewed by ACEJMC. *Indicate online degrees.

- Digital Communication & Multimedia Journalism B.A.
- Digital Journalism & Design M.A.*

10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree:

Degree	Semester Hours
Digital Communication & Multimedia Journalism B.A.	120
Digital Journalism & Design M.A.	33

11. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience. Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.

Students may earn 6 semester credit hours for internships. At the undergraduate level, the internship course is a variable credit (1–3 credit hours) offering. Graduate students can take a 3-credit-hour Professional Practicum. Internships (undergraduate or graduate) may either be paid or gratis.

12. List each professional journalism or mass communications sequence or specialty offered in the undergraduate program and give the name of the person in charge. Add lines as needed.

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Person in Charge
Digital Communication & Multimedia Journalism	Casey Frechette

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

In the 2021–22 academic year, USF enrolled **44,421** full-time students.

14. Number of undergraduate majors in the accredited unit, by sequence. (If the unit has pre-major students, list them as a single total). Give the semester and academic year represented. Add lines as needed.

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Semester/AY Undergraduate majors in
Digital Communication & Multimedia Journalism	184
Pre-majors	0
Total	184

15. Give the number of graduate students enrolled on-site:

Number of graduate students enrolled online: Digital Journalism & Design 41

The DJD program is an online master's degree. DJD students occasionally attend in-person sections in St. Petersburg, but most students complete the degree entirely online.

16. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.). Submit two semesters with the self-study and update the list as needed for spring 2023 visits. 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.)

Fall 2022 Semester

Course Subject & Number	Course Title	Enrollment
JOU 2100	Beginning Reporting	19
JOU 3101	Advanced Reporting	17
JOU 3101	Advanced Reporting	15
JOU 3346C	Multimedia Reporting	21
JOU 4188	Neighborhood News Bureau	20
MMC 2100	Writing for the Mass Media	20
MMC 4131	Video Storytelling	23
MMC 4936*	Food Writing	22
MMC 4936*	Data Visualization	22
MMC 4936*	Data Visualization	20
MMC 6400*	Mass Communication Theory	10
MMC 6612*	Seminar: Law and the Mass Media	16
MMC 6936*	Personal Success in the Media Workplace	11
MMC 6936*	Food Writing	5
MMC 6936	Neighborhood News Bureau	1
PGY 3610C	Photojournalism I	20

Spring 2023 Semester

Course Subject & Number	Course Title	Enrollment
JOU 2100	Beginning Reporting	19
JOU 3101	Advanced Reporting	20
JOU 3346C	Multimedia Reporting	20
JOU 3346C	Multimedia Reporting	17
JOU 4188	Neighborhood News Bureau	21
JOU 6114	Multimedia Reporting	13
MMC 2100	Writing for the Mass Media	12
MMC 3140	Web Publishing	13
MMC 4936*	Data Visualization	19
MMC 4936	Sizzling Images	16
MMC 4936	Advanced Video Storytelling	14
MMC 4936*	Data Visualization	19
MMC 6206*	Mass Communications Ethics	14
MMC 6936*	Data Visualization	5
MMC 6936*	Digital Production: Motion Graphics & Visual Effects.	8
MMC 6936	Sizzling Images	2
VIC 6007*	Visual Communication Theory & Design	11

*Online class

We have historically capped skills classes at 20 students. In spring 2023, we will begin capping skills classes at 19. We issue closed course overrides only after determining, in consultation with academic advising, that failing to do so will delay a student's graduation by one or more semesters.

17. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2022–2023 academic year: \$1,255,957.39

Give percentage increase or decrease in three years: 19% increase

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$719,084

18. List name and rank of all full-time faculty.

Name	Rank
Monica Ancu, Ph.D.	Associate Professor
Miyoung Chong, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor
Deni Elliott, Ed.D.	Professor
Casey Frechette, Ph.D.	Associate Professor
Matt Reichel, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor of Instruction
Stephen Song, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor
Mark Jerome Walters, D.V.M.	Professor
Natacha Yazbeck, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor

Dr. Elliott is presently on an administrative assignment and is not teaching. She will take research leaves in the spring and summer of 2023 before retiring.

19. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2022. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2022.

Spring 2022:

- Christopher Campbell
- Gabrielle Jarmoszko
- Brett Leuenberger
- Janet Keeler
- Eli Murray
- David Snyder
- Chip Weiner
- Elliott Wiser
- Chelsea Zukowski

Fall 2022:

- Christopher Campbell
- Janet Keeler
- Eli Murray
- David Snyder
- Elliott Wiser
- Chelsea Zukowski

Spring 2023:

- Christopher Campbell
- Eli Murray
- David Snyder
- Elliott Wiser
- Chelsea Zukowski

20. For each of the last two academic years, please give the total number of graduates.

2021-22 academic year:

Program	Number of Graduates	Percentage of Graduates
Undergraduate	50	100%
Graduate	17	100%

2020-21 academic year:

Program	Number of Graduates	Percentage of Graduates
Undergraduate	43	100%
Graduate	19	100%

PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

Before discussion of indicators, the site team will offer an opening framing narrative on the university and unit's history, place in the university today and other salient facts. This is designed to give the Committee and Council an overall sense of the unit and what is to come throughout the report.

The University of South Florida, one of three “pre-eminent” state universities in the Florida State University System, has 44,221 undergraduate students on three campuses: Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota. The university consolidated the three campuses in 2020, bringing its myriad departments under one overarching umbrella for accreditation and other purposes. Ripple effects of the consolidation are still being felt throughout the university. The Tampa campus is by far the largest of the three, with 10 times the number of students at St. Petersburg, and 20 times the number in Sarasota.

Students apply to a specific campus for admission and take most of their courses there. It is, however, possible for a student on one campus to enroll in courses at another.

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication is based on the St. Petersburg campus, which offers 31 undergraduate degrees, 14 graduate degrees and a continuing education program in Brewing Arts.

The department is part of the College of Arts and Sciences and is the College's only standalone unit based on the St. Petersburg campus. One administrator called it a “prize possession on campus.” Of the 17 undergraduate programs in the College, the department's BA has the third-highest enrollment, with 184 current undergraduate majors. The online master's program in Digital Journalism and Design has 41 majors. Of five graduate programs in the College based on the St. Petersburg campus, the MA in Digital Journalism and Design has the highest enrollment.

The campus, which overlooks Tampa Bay, is across the street from The Poynter Institute for Media Studies and within a short walk of downtown St. Petersburg.

The journalism program dates to 1993 and both the undergraduate and graduate programs received ACEJMC accreditation in 2004. USF is one of five ACEJMC accredited undergraduate programs in Florida and one of two accredited master's programs.

The department changed its name to “Journalism and Digital Communication” in 2017. It offers just one undergraduate major -- Digital Communication & Multimedia Journalism -- which the university has designated a STEM program. The department hopes to increase its focus on algorithms, data visualization, immersive graphics, artificial intelligence, virtual, mixed and augmented reality, and interactive storytelling.

The Tampa campus is the site of the Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications, which is not accredited by ACEJMC. The school includes two majors: Integrated Public Relations and Advertising, and Mass Communications, with concentrations in Broadcast News and Broadcast Program and Production. There is little interaction between the Zimmerman School and the Department of Journalism and Digital Communication.

For the past two years, Florida's governor and the legislature have been taking an active role in higher education policies and governance, which is having a chilling effect on course content and scholarship. In 2022, Florida's legislature passed the "Stop W.O.K.E. Act," which will prohibit the teaching of certain theories about race. (The act is temporarily blocked by a court injunction.) The governor's 2023 agenda includes legislation to eliminate funding of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at public universities and to give university presidents more power in hiring and firing faculty.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit has a written mission statement and a written strategic long-range plan that provides vision and direction for its future, meaningful short-term measurements, identifies needs and resources for its mission and goals and is supported by university administration outside the unit.

The department's mission statement dates to the department's founding in 1991 and is updated regularly, most recently in the fall of 2022. The department's latest strategic plan was implemented in 2021 during a period of considerable faculty turnover and contains six goals, three to fortify its current strengths and three to expand its impact:

- Continuing to teach at the leading edge of journalism and digital communication
- Maintain a model of community journalism
- Continue to commit to digital media ethics
- Create a new concentration in science reporting and communication
- Capitalize on the department's new STEM bachelor's degree
- Increase collaboration with The Poynter Institute

Administrators to whom the site team spoke fully support the department's strategic goals.

The unit posts its mission statement and strategic plan in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its website.

The mission statement and strategic plan for both the undergraduate and graduate programs are posted prominently on the department's website.

Describe in detail how the mission statement/strategic plan is implemented, plays into the daily life of the unit and its effectiveness in driving progress. Who has responsibility for keeping the plan updated? Is it revised regularly to deal with rapidly changing issues of instruction and technology?

Strategic planning is an ongoing process for the department and incorporates ideas from faculty, staff, students, alumni and professionals. The department discusses strategic matters at most faculty meetings and as part of all faculty searches. The department chair has responsibility for keeping the plan updated and does so with input from the faculty. Several updates were made to the plan in the fall of 2022 after the arrival of three new faculty.

The plan is to “fully capitalize on the Department’s new STEM bachelor’s degree,” which will ensure that the curriculum keeps pace with rapid changes in technology. Several of the department’s new hires have expertise in emerging technologies that support that goal.

(b) 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.

Characterize in depth the leadership of the unit as an agent for progress, advocate for the unit’s fields of study within the university and aggressive connector with alumni. What significant achievements can be attributed to the leader? Has the leader built partnerships within the university? Is the leader seen as a strong advocate on matters of diversity, inclusion and equity? Is faculty and student diversity improving? Do scholars and professionals work collaboratively? Is creativity in curriculum, teaching and research sought and rewarded? Is the leader driving forward the curriculum (while respecting faculty governance and required process) to keep up with a rapidly changing media world?

Casey Frechette became department chair in the fall of 2019 and has just begun his second, three-year term. He is evaluated annually by the department and his supervisors.

In conversations with faculty, team members heard nothing but praise for the chair’s listening skills and leadership during a turbulent time.

The chair has faced enormous challenges in the past few years, which have made it difficult to make progress on many long-range goals. On top of the disruptions of Covid and USF consolidation, the department lost four of its eight faculty members in the past two years and a fifth, long-serving faculty member assumed an administrative assignment with the St. Petersburg campus leadership team. The reasons for departing varied, including a retirement, other job opportunities, and concerns about the implications of consolidation. The site team detected no common theme related to the department’s leadership. The remaining faculty have had to spend considerable time and energy on faculty searches. With four of the searches now completed, the department hopes to have more bandwidth to pursue strategic objectives.

(c) The unit annually updates its data on the ACEJMC searchable database website (<https://lookup.acejmc.org>).

It does.

(d) The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention and graduation data and posts them annually in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its websites.

The department’s retention and graduation data for both its undergraduate and graduate programs are posted under “Programs” on the department’s website. Retention and graduation data are factors in the state funding formula, so they are closely monitored and analyzed by the department.

On indicators (e), (f) and (g) the site team should make sure the unit operates within accepted academic norms and need only report in detail on extraordinary situations, cases or variances from policy.

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

The department's operations are governed by university policies, a collective bargaining agreement and the department's governance document. The department operates as a committee of the whole with all full-time faculty having a vote. Part-time faculty, staff and graduate assistants are welcome to attend meetings as well, though only to express their voice in deliberations. The department has seven standing committees and creates ad hoc committees as needed.

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

The department chair is traditionally chosen by the department faculty and approved by the dean. The chair is evaluated each year by the department's evaluation committee, the College dean, the campus dean and the St. Petersburg regional chancellor.

In his most recent evaluation, the department committee called the chair a "model leader, academic and teacher." He "has been outstanding on all fronts during a time of unprecedented challenge with consolidation and the pandemic. His patience, strategic thinking and consensus-building have led to a more focused and stronger department than ever. He is revered by students and respected by faculty."

His supervisor also rated him "outstanding" in research, teaching and service.

(g) Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.

Students, staff and faculty have several avenues for expressing concerns. Serious faculty grievances may be handled by a process in the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The department has never had a formal faculty grievance; conflicts have been resolved by discussions among the parties involved.

Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(h) The unit has a separate written mission statement and a written strategic 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 graduate program has a separate mission statement that encapsulates the undergraduate program mission statement and two other goals: to prepare students for "leadership in their professional or academic callings" and help them "explore and demonstrate understanding of historical, theoretical,

legal, ethical and professional context for journalism and other media work.” The graduate program has a strategic plan that centers on four goals with action steps. It was updated in November 2022.

(i) The unit has designated administrative oversight of the professional graduate program as well as policies and procedures that ensure faculty oversight of educational policy and curriculum in the professional graduate program.

The department has a graduate program coordinator who reports to the chair. The coordinator, who has served in the role since its inception, is responsible for recruitment, admission and oversight of the program. Graduate faculty in the office assist with admissions, serve on thesis and advanced research project committees and help with curricular matters. The graduate program falls under the guidance of the University of South Florida Graduate Studies Office.

SUMMARY (Undergraduate):

The department has a clear mission and strategic direction and a department head who is well regarded by the faculty and administration. Appropriate attention is paid to policies and retention data. The department's eight full-time faculty operate as a committee of the whole.

SUMMARY (Professional Master's):

The graduate program has a separate mission statement and a strategic plan that centers on four goals. The department has a graduate program coordinator who reports to the chair and is responsible for recruitment, admission and oversight of the program with help from the graduate faculty.

Overall evaluation (Undergraduate program): COMPLIANCE

Overall evaluation (Professional master's program): COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

Discussions of indicators b, c and f should describe and evaluate individual academic sequences in the unit.

(a) Students in the unit complete academic requirements for a baccalaureate degree that meet the liberal arts and sciences/general education requirements of the institution. Programs may identify classes within the unit that contribute to a liberal arts and social sciences perspective for graduates from the unit.

The department offers a single major: a B.A. in Digital Communication and Multimedia Journalism. Students are required to complete 72 credit hours outside the major. All students in the major met that requirement during the review period.

VIC 3100 (Visual Literacy) is both a required course in the major and part of the university's General Education curriculum. It fulfills the Information & Data Literacy requirement of the curriculum, which requires that "students will identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share information for the problems at hand."

(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 values and competencies listed by the Council.

The core curriculum is balanced between five skills and five conceptual courses.

The five skills courses are:

- MMC 2100 Writing for the Mass Media
- JOU 2100 Beginning Reporting
- JOU 3101 Advanced Reporting
- JOU 3346 Multimedia Reporting
- JOU 4188 Neighborhood News Bureau

The five conceptual courses are:

- MMC 3602 Mass Communication and Society
- VIC 3001 Visual Literacy
- MMC 4200 History & Principles of Communication Law
- MMC 4203 Communication Ethics
- JOU 4905 Senior Seminar

The Neighborhood News Bureau serves as a capstone course. However, students are required to complete only one long-form story.

The department offers a limited number of electives. They lean heavily toward skills courses, but include some conceptual courses. The curriculum has no tracks or sequences.

(c) Instruction, whether on-site or online, synchronous or asynchronous, is demanding and current, and is responsive to professional expectations of digital and technological media competencies.

The department offers a mix of in-person, online and hybrid courses. Courses in the curriculum are demanding and current. Many focus on the tools and technologies at what the department describes as “the forefront of the digital frontier.” While some courses have a pronounced digital focus, all incorporate various digital skills, philosophies and values.

Students appreciate the emphasis on writing and storytelling across platforms. They also like the program’s emphasis on digital technology. They said they would like to see a greater variety of classes offered.

(d) The unit demonstrates efforts to connect faculty and administrators to the professions they represent, with a specific understanding of the changing skills needed to be successful in the workplace.

Recent hires include faculty with international reporting experience and faculty whose research is in the areas of social media, digital technology and artificial intelligence. The department recruits adjunct faculty from the professions to teach in their area of expertise. Several adjuncts have taught for many years.

(e) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses. Except for campaigns courses, the ratio in skills and laboratory sections, whether on-site or online, should not exceed 20-1.

Student-faculty ratios in the department’s skills classes generally are 20-1, and lower, in many cases. In five cases, course enrollment was 21 or 22 students because a student needed the course to graduate.

Students like the small, close-knit nature of the program and how the faculty get to know them well. They also appreciate how faculty want to work with them closely and see them succeed.

(f) 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. Units may award academic credit for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but credit should not exceed six semester credits (or nine quarter hours).

When students take courses for internship credit at appropriate professional organizations, the unit must show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit’s faculty and professionals.

Students may take up to nine semester credits (or their equivalent) at professional media outlets owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media outlet is to instruct students.

Internships are not required for the major and less than half the students complete them. A senior faculty member serves as the internship coordinator. Students are required to turn in a weekly journal from their internship and submit their work. The internship coordinator provides a written evaluation of the student's work. Students are graded pass/fail.

Students receive three credits for completing an internship and may complete up to two internships for credit. Students said they would like to see the opportunities for internships more widely publicized, especially before they are seniors. The internship coordinator said the department is not happy with the email system for alerting students to internships and a new system is being developed.

Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(g) At least half of the required credit hours are in either professional skills courses or integrate theory and skills appropriate to professional communication careers.

The Digital Journalism and Design M.A. curriculum is devoted to professional skills courses or conceptual courses that heavily emphasize professional skills. The four core courses are:

- JOU 6114 Multimedia Reporting
- MMC 6206 Mass Communication Ethics
- MMC 6400 Mass Communication Theory
- MMC 6612 Law and the Mass Media

The remaining courses in the graduate curriculum heavily emphasize skills. They include MMC 5146 Web Publishing, JOU 6107 News Coverage of Public Life, and JOU 6135 Video Storytelling. Students can also take a Professional Practicum internship.

The Digital Journalism and Design degree requires 33 credits: 12 credits in the required core and 15-18 elective credits, depending on whether the student does a 3-credit applied research project or a 6-credit thesis.

(h) Instruction and curricular requirements for professional graduate students are more advanced and rigorous than for undergraduate students, including courses open to both undergraduate and graduate students.

The Digital Journalism and Design M.A. is an online degree. Students occasionally take in-person classes, but most students complete the degree entirely online. The graduate courses are more advanced and rigorous than undergraduate courses. Some courses are dual listed as undergraduate and graduate courses. Graduate students in the courses must complete more advanced work than the undergraduate students.

SUMMARY (Undergraduate):

The undergraduate curriculum is nicely balanced between skills and five conceptual courses. The courses are rigorous and up-to-date. Internships are not required for the major and less than half the students complete them.

SUMMARY (Professional master's):

The 33-credit master's degree is an online degree. The graduate curriculum emphasizes professional skills courses. The graduate courses are more advanced and rigorous than undergraduate courses. Students must complete an applied research project or a thesis.

Overall evaluation (Undergraduate program): COMPLIANCE

Overall evaluation (Professional master's program): COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 3: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit has a written assessment plan that has been implemented, is up to date and addresses contemporary curricular issues, including instruction related to the rapidly changing digital media world.

The department has a written plan that is regularly updated to reflect the changing media world.

The unit posts its assessment plan in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its website.

A link to the plan can be found under the “About” tab on the department’s website.

(b) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the professional Values and Competencies” of the Council. (See Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction.)

The department lists 13 learning goals for its students, which incorporate ACEJMC’s 10 values and competencies and offer two distinct additions: Business and Entrepreneurship, and Visual Literacy. (USF continues to have separate domestic and international diversity competencies, while ACEJMC has combined them.)

The competencies are mapped to courses, with two competencies per course highlighted for closer examination.

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

The core of the department’s assessment plan are course-embedded assessments. These include major exams, collections of weekly discussion posts, and final projects. Both full- and part-time faculty input assessments in the department’s specially designed assessment tracking program. Faculty then address what they would change about the course to enhance learning, based on overall student performance of that particular competency.

In addition to these direct measures, the department relies on feedback from students’ internship supervisors to assess two competencies in particular: Critical Thinking Skills and Business and Entrepreneurship.

Other indirect measures include periodic student and alumni surveys; student performance in local, regional and national contests; and student publications in local and regional media.

(d) At least one direct and/or indirect measure should include journalism and mass communication professionals engaged in assessment data collection.

Professionals are engaged in assessment measures via feedback from internship supervisors and alums. The previous site team criticized the department for failing to take full advantage of professionals at the

nearby Poynter Institute in its assessment program. The department says it has “additional work to do in this arena” and has included in its current strategic plan the goal of deepening its Poynter connections.

(e) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction. There is substantial, concrete evidence of “closing the loop,” generally and specifically. Multiple examples of “closing the loop” are evident.

At the end of each semester, the faculty meet and discuss assessment results. The self-study lists several pages of “planned changes” that have arisen from these discussions. Changes – and the evaluation of their success – are carried out informally through staff meetings and conversations.

In conversation, the department chair cited several specific examples of curricular changes that arose from assessment feedback, from shifting the sequence of modules in a Video Storytelling class to adding a new course in response to expressed student interest and exhibited competency.

Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:

The unit's professional master's program has a written assessment plan, posted to its website; collects and reports data from its assessment activities; and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction.

The graduate program has a written assessment plan. It uses the 10 ACEJMC values and competencies and two additions – Business and Entrepreneurship, and Visual Literacy – to measure how well it achieves its academic mission. The values and competencies are mapped to courses.

The program primarily uses course-embedded assessment. The program has established an 80% threshold for mastery of course materials. At the end of each semester, the faculty meet to discuss assessment results and plan how courses can be improved.

SUMMARY (Undergraduate):

The department has a comprehensive system for assessing courses and does so regularly. It could strengthen its use of professionals in the assessment measures and document in writing how it is closing the loop.

SUMMARY (Professional master's):

The graduate program has a systematic plan for assessing courses and discusses how to use the results to improve instruction. It is not always clear what changes have been made in instruction.

Overall evaluation (Undergraduate program): COMPLIANCE

Overall evaluation (Professional master's program): COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 4: Diversity and Inclusiveness

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit has a written diversity plan that has been implemented and discussed annually, for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse, culturally proficient faculty, staff 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, identify under-represented groups and articulate key performance indicators upon which the unit intends to focus and improve.

The department has a thorough diversity plan that dates to when it was first accredited in 2004; the plan was last revised in November 2022. The plan has five overarching goals and detailed actions steps for each. The department views progress toward the goals annually. The plan defines diversity in this way:

Dimensions of diversity can include, but are not limited to, sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith and non-faith perspectives, socio-economic status, political ideology, education, primary language, family status, military experience, cognitive style, and communication style.

The unit posts its diversity plan in a prominent, easy-to-find place on its website.

A link to the plan can be found under the “About” tab on the department’s website. Several syllabi also contain a link to the plan or quote from it.

(b) The unit’s curriculum creates culturally proficient communicators capable of learning with, working on and advancing the value of diverse teams. The unit’s curriculum includes instruction on issues and perspectives relating to mass communications across diverse cultures in a global society.

The department’s curriculum addresses diversity in several ways. According to the self-study, six of the core courses address diversity through specific assignments, and several electives focus on diverse topics. Not all syllabi describe the specific assignments that enhance students’ understanding of diversity, but “incorporating meaningful experiences with diversity in every required and elective class” is a goal of the diversity plan.

Among the diversity-themed electives are Race, Gender and Class in the Media, and Global Media. Neither course has been taught in recent years, though, because of a lack of available faculty.

According to the self-study, the “bedrock” of its efforts in curricular diversity is a core course called The Neighborhood News Bureau. NNB is described as a student-led newsroom, focusing on the Midtown neighborhood of St. Petersburg, which is “historically segregated, economically deprived and frequently misrepresented in news coverage.”

Articles that have been published on the dedicated NNB website include projects such as “150 years of Black History in St. Petersburg” and “Black Pioneers of the Sunshine City,” as well as shorter features on the topics of faith, food and youth.

Until recently, the bureau had a physical location in Midtown, but after the disruption of Covid and a change in faculty, the bureau has closed and NNB now operates out of the department’s campus facilities. The course’s focus has changed dramatically as well, yet it is still committed to the students’ acquisition of cultural literacy. Class activities include two events or tours in the Midtown community and one issue-oriented story. Student work from the course is no longer published on the NNB website but students may seek to have a story published by professional news organizations.

(c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to enhance all faculty members’ understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and ability to develop culturally proficient communicators capable of learning with, working on and advancing the value of diverse teams. The unit also demonstrates intentional efforts to recruit and retain faculty and professional staff who are from demographics that are historically, domestically marginalized.

In the self-study the department highlights the importance of diverse faculty members and their role in promoting diverse perspectives and inclusive environments to enhance the student university experience. Among the department’s four recent hires:

- Two are Asian
- Two are female
- One identifies as Arab American

Several of the new hires have published articles focused on issues of representation, culture and diversity in digital spaces. While the department is enthusiastic about its progress in hiring, it acknowledges the need for improvement. Among its eight full-time faculty, it has no Hispanic or Black members; 87% of its adjuncts identify as white and 13% identify as Black.

The department is currently seeking the next Eleanor Poynter Jamison Chair in Media Ethics and expressed hope that this search might result in the hiring of a Black or Hispanic faculty member.

The department acknowledges the importance of creating culturally competent faculty, students and staff, but there is no dedicated plan or resources allocated to enhance faculty and staff understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion at the department level. Opportunities to improve cultural proficiency are provided at the University level for faculty and staff.

(d) In alignment with the institution's mission, the unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit, retain and graduate a student population reflecting the diversity of the population the institution aims to serve.

The diversity of the department’s students has stayed essentially the same since the last site visit.

The University of South Florida’s St. Petersburg campus primarily serves Pinellas County, Florida, which is 11.1% Black, 10.6% Hispanic, 3.7% Asian, and 2.4% two or more races; 73.3% of the county’s residents are white.

Overall, the department's undergraduate population is more diverse than that of the county, with 63.6% of its students white, but its percentage of Black students (5.4%) is less than half the number in the county.

The department is significantly less diverse than the university, 46.5% of whose students are white and 8.9% of whom are Black. Nearly 19% of the department's students are Hispanic (vs. 20.2% at the university), and 4.3% are Asian (vs. 7.1%). Only 1.9% of the department's students are international vs. 9.3% for the institution.

The self-study acknowledges that Black students are underrepresented in both its undergraduate and graduate programs and it outlines three efforts to improve that: participating in university open houses, interacting with the community via its NNB reporting, and faculty participation in Florida Scholastic Press Association events.

The department mentions several other new activities that it hopes to employ to attract more diverse students, including: visiting K-12 journalism programs, hosting at least one scholastic journalism event, and marketing the undergraduate program on social media platforms used by high school students.

One challenge to increasing student diversity is the 2020 university consolidation, which heightened admission standards and removed the department's ability to accept promising students who didn't quite meet the standards. The result, according to the self-study, "is that we are less able to reflect the demographics of our community."

Once enrolled, students from diverse backgrounds have strong retention rates. The department's small size means that at-risk students are recognized early and can receive appropriate university support.

(e) The unit demonstrates that it has an inclusive climate, 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.

The department is committed to maintaining a welcoming and inclusive environment but acknowledges that it could do better at measuring that. A recent alumni survey – with only 13 respondents – showed that 93% of respondents felt the department fostered an environment that welcomes diverse ideas, people and perspectives extremely or very well.

In May 2022, an adjunct professor was put on leave after allegations that she violated Title IX, the federal civil rights law that prohibits sexual discrimination and harassment. The case is unresolved.

Students who met with the site team praised the department's family-like feel and said they found the department welcoming. The department's facilities are accessible. Both classrooms are on the first floor; faculty offices on the second floor may be reached by elevator.

Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:

Provide a brief discussion of Indicators (a) through (d) as they apply to the professional master's program.

The graduate program offers several courses that foster an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. They include Public Affairs Reporting, the Neighborhood News Bureau and Race, Gender and Class in the Media. (The Race, Gender and Class in the Media course has not been offered for several years.) Other courses in the curriculum also address issues related to cultural diversity.

The ethnic diversity of students in the graduate program exceeded the undergraduate program in each year of the review period. Among the students who graduated in 2021 – the last year for which data was available – 53% of students identified as white, 42% as Hispanic and 5% as Black.

The graduate program fosters an inclusive environment and is free of harassment. It also values the contributions of various forms of diversity.

SUMMARY (Undergraduate):

The department has a solid diversity plan and acknowledges a need to make more progress in attracting diverse students and faculty. Syllabi could be more consistent in mentioning how diversity is taught in the course and which assignments will reflect those learning objectives.

SUMMARY (Professional master's):

The graduate curriculum provides instruction on issues and perspectives relating to cultural diversity. The ethnic diversity of students in the graduate program exceeded the undergraduate program in each year of the review period. The graduate program fosters an inclusive environment.

Overall evaluation (Undergraduate program): COMPLIANCE

Overall evaluation (Professional master's program): COMPLIANCE

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.

Table 6. Faculty Populations, Full-time and Part-time

Academic year: 2021–2022 Full-time faculty

Group	Female	% of Total faculty	Male	% of Total faculty
Black/African American	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
White	2	33.33%	2	33.33%
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Asian	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	0	0.00%	1	16.67%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Two or more races	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Other race	1	16.67%	0	0.00%
International (any race)	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

Academic year: 2021–2022 Part-time/adjunct faculty

Group	Female	% of Total faculty	Male	% of Total faculty
Black/African American	0	0%	1	10%
White	4	40%	5	50%
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	0%	0	0%
Asian	0	0%	0	0%
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	0	0%	0	0%
Native Hawaiian/other 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%	0	0%

PART II — Standard 5: Faculty

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for curricula, oversight of courses, research/creative activity and service.

The Department of Journalism & Digital Communication Governance Document and the Collective Bargaining Agreement help guide the work of the department. The relevant documents are:

- College of Arts & Sciences Tenure & Promotion Guidelines
- Department of Journalism & Digital Communication Tenure & Promotion Guidelines
- USF Tenure & Promotion Guidelines

Generally, full-time faculty in the department have primary responsibility for shaping curricula and the oversight of courses. The number of core and required courses taught by full-time faculty dropped to 33% in the 2021–22 academic year, following three resignations and a faculty retirement in the preceding academic year. During this period, it appears that part-time or adjunct faculty also provided significant oversight of courses. Still, the full-time faculty demonstrated primary responsibility for research/creative activity and service. For example, the faculty advising and mentoring model was listed as a service priority and expressed throughout conversations with faculty.

After the hiring of several full-time faculty, the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty rebounded to 64% in fall 2022.

(b) The unit's faculty (full- and part-time) are highly qualified and keep their expertise current through professional development opportunities and maintain relationships with professional and scholarly associations.

Faculty are qualified and active in their fields of study and expertise. Several have participated in conference presentations that highlight their creative scholarship and research abilities.

(c) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity. Expectations for promotion and tenure are clear.

The expectations for promotion and tenure are clear and expressed at both the university and department level. Presented in the self-study and departmental documents, the faculty annual evaluation process is also detailed. To support scholarship and creativity, the department receives a travel allotment per full-time faculty member, and the travel support has increased from \$750 in 2015 to \$1,200 in 2022. The travel funding recently was expanded to cover professional and academic association memberships as well as direct travel costs.

As of 2021, new tenure-track assistant professors have received a startup fund of \$50,000 each to support their scholarship. National and international travel can be covered with these funds. Eight faculty members were granted more than \$15,000 in travel funding during the review period.

(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.

Faculty engaged in appropriate research activities aligned with the department and university's overall scholarship mission. (The university's 2020 consolidation shifted the department's emphasis from a teaching division to a research unit.) During the review period, faculty published 19 book chapters, 18 refereed conference papers, and 13 articles in refereed journals. The self-study included the table, below, which highlights the number of presentations, panel participation and other communication of creative and professional activity.

(e) The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship, the quality of education and the scholarly contributions the unit provides.

The department faculty are competitive in terms of teaching evaluations and contributions in the academic and larger community. Although the University of South Florida has recently experienced consolidation of academic programs, Journalism and Digital Communication is the only department on the St. Petersburg campus to maintain its structure and identity. Peers outside of the department described the independence as a point of pride for the campus community. Within the St. Petersburg campus community and the College of Arts and Sciences, faculty are well respected.

Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(f) Faculty members teaching in the graduate program meet the criteria for graduate instruction at that university.

The graduate faculty members of the program all meet the criteria for graduate instruction. Six graduate faculty members have earned a Ph.D.; two faculty members hold an Ed.D.; one member holds a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine.; one holds a J.D.; and two hold master's degrees with considerable professional experience.

(g) Graduate faculty oversee the curricula and course quality for professional master's courses.

Graduate faculty oversee the majority of the curricula and course quality for the professional master's program. However, the percentages of core graduate courses taught by full-time faculty dipped from spring 2021 to summer 2022, when the department lost more than half of its full-time faculty. Since that time, those faculty positions have been filled, with one full-time faculty member beginning in fall 2021 and three full-time faculty members beginning in fall 2022. According to the self-study, all new faculty members are qualified to be graduate faculty.

SUMMARY (Undergraduate):

The faculty are meeting expectations in teaching, research and service. The faculty teaching evaluations are rated above average for the College of Arts and Sciences. Faculty are active researchers and instructors for the undergraduate program. They also engage with undergraduate students in an advising/mentoring role. Students expressed great appreciation for faculty advising.

SUMMARY (Professional master's):

Members of the graduate faculty include all full-time faculty members, who oversee students' applied projects and academic research projects as part of their workload. Despite a recent decline in the program's enrollment, graduate faculty are enthusiastic and committed to expanding the online degree. The hiring of four full-time faculty in the past 18 months decreased the number of professional master's courses taught by adjunct faculty.

Overall evaluation (Undergraduate program): COMPLIANCE

Overall evaluation (Professional master's program): COMPLIANCE

The grid below reflects all scholarship produced within the Department during the review period. Faculty who have since left the Department are listed under the ranks they held when they departed. All active faculty are listed, even if they have not yet produced scholarship since joining the Department.

Scholarship, Research, Creative & Professional Activities	Total from Unit	Full Professors (3)	Associate Professors (2)	Assistant Professors (5)	Other Faculty (2)	Totals (12)
Awards & Honors	7	6			1	7
Grants Received Internal			2			
Grants Received External	5	3	1	2		6
Scholarly Books, Sole-or Co-authored	6	5	1			6
Books Edited	1	1				1
Book Chapters	19	9	6	1	3	19
Monographs	1			1		1
Articles in Refereed Journals	13	3	4	5	1	13
Refereed Conference Papers	18	5	7	5	1	18
Invited Academic Papers	1			1		1
Encyclopedia Entries	3	3				3
Book Entries						
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	14	5	3	5	1	14
Juried Creative Works						
Non-juried Creative Works	39		3	11	25	39
Other (please specify)	7			6*	1^	7

- * 3 non-refereed research presentations & 3 public scholarship presentations
- ^ An Ed.D. dissertation

PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(a) The unit and institution ensure that students are aware of graduation requirements.

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication keeps students informed of graduation requirements in several ways, including the undergraduate catalog, the department's website, fliers available throughout the building with course and sequence recommendations, and an active advising program.

The requirements displayed online and in department brochures provide clear graphics that illustrate the core courses and the appropriate sequence for the courses. A detailed list of recommended electives, sorted by major, is also included.

(b) Professional advisers, and faculty where appropriate, provide students with academic and career advice.

The USF St. Petersburg campus Office of Academic Advising assigns two advisers to serve department majors. These campus advisors work with students to ensure they are meeting university requirements and stay on track towards graduation in four years. The office uses the DegreeWorks advising system to track all advising contacts and maintain common notes for each student.

One is a long-time adviser within the College, who is very familiar with the requirements of the undergraduate degree program and the department curriculum.

When students declare a major in the department, they are paired with a faculty advisor to assist them in course selection and career advice based upon the student's interests. Adviser assignments are publicly displayed at the entrance of the department, on the doors of faculty offices, and published on the departmental website.

It is the student's responsibility to request an advising appointment, but faculty encourage all students to participate in academic advising. There are also fliers posted around the building and in some offices that say "Keep Calm and Talk to Your Adviser" in an effort to remind students of the importance of the advising process.

The faculty are provided Undergraduate Student Advising & Mentoring Guidelines that outline their responsibilities in the advising process, provide topic and question prompts for the adviser, and a list of resources where faculty can find answers to questions students may ask during an advising session.

The university maintains a Career Services Center where students can seek counseling on job placement.

At the department level, undergraduate students are required to take a Senior Seminar, which prioritizes job readiness and is focused on resume and cover letter writing, and job interview skills. The students

also create a personal career action plan as part of the seminar, detailing where they see themselves in 10 years, their desired industry and companies they plan to research.

(c) The unit keeps students informed about its policies, activities and requirements.

Communication with students is done through emails, Canvas software, and department events. The department is small and information is also shared via word of mouth and department bulletin boards.

The department's in-house production studio, VideoWorks, is beta-testing a custom texting service to provide information to students that also allows students to ask questions.

(d) The unit and institution provide extra-curricular activities and opportunities relevant to the curriculum and that help develop the students' professional and intellectual abilities and interests.

The department provides a pair of student media extra-curricular activities and some other related opportunities. Student media include:

The Crow's Nest – an independent student newspaper funded by student government. It is printed biweekly and published online. It has its own office in the department building, but at the time of the site team visit (four weeks into the semester), four paid editor positions, including the editor in chief position, remain vacant.

Bullcast student webcast – In the fall of 2022, the department launched Bullcast, a student-run webcast live-streamed biweekly from the VideoWorks digital production studio and available on Youtube. The studio is a converted classroom that contains both the set and the control room in the same space and uses consumer grade mirrorless cameras for a three camera set-up.

Student clubs include:

Ethics Bowl - Students enrolled in MMC4203 Media Ethics can argue controversial cases at the Southeast Regional Ethics Bowl in most fall semesters as an extension of the class.

Online News Association – There is a student chapter of the Online News Association and students in the chapter work on collaborative multimedia projects, including the Bullcast described above.

(e) The unit uses retention and graduation data to improve student services, such as advising, and to reduce barriers to student success.

Student retention and graduation data are available on the department website. Quality advising and a clear course sequence allows most students to graduate in four years.

In the undergraduate program, retention tends to hover around college and university averages. There was a sharp decline in 2020–21, but that is reflective more of the pandemic influence on the small number of students calculated in that cohort than of a broader trend.

Professional master's program / Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(f) The unit has appropriate admissions and retention policies for the professional master's program.

Graduate students generally must have a 3.0 undergraduate GPA to be admitted to the program, although the requirement may be waived for students with substantial professional experience. The GRE is not required for admission.

Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to remain in the graduate program. Students must complete 33 credits to graduate. They must take the four required courses and complete either an applied research project or a thesis.

During the review period, on average, students took slightly less than two years to graduate. The number of students graduating from the program during the review period was steady, averaging 18.4 each year.

SUMMARY (Undergraduate):

The department partners well with the university to provide institutional and personal advising. Career advice is embedded in the curriculum and students report being well informed about department events and policies. Opportunities to participate in student media are available, and the students are very proud of the work they produce.

SUMMARY (Professional master's):

Admission and retention policies for the graduate program are in place and followed. Enrollment is steady and most students are graduating in two years.

Overall evaluation (Undergraduate program): COMPLIANCE

Overall evaluation (Professional master's program): 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 falls under the College of Arts & Sciences' centralized budgeting model, in which the College funds the needs of all its units. The College considers basic requirements (day-to-day operational supplies, for example) and direct requests for other needs related to allocation for instruction, technology and faculty.

Under this model, the department has discretionary control over a limited amount of money tied to its USF Foundation account, however other spending decisions are made at the college level.

The department has a long-term plan for budget allocation that aligns with the strategic goals and initiatives. Overall, the budget dropped from \$878,850 to \$598,550 from 2019 until Spring 2022, a 32% reduction. The self study says that drop reflects the loss of four full-time faculty in the 2020–21 academic year.

With four new recent hires, the department budget now totals \$1.2 million. The hires are directly aligned with the needs identified in the most recent strategic plan.

(b) Resources provided by the institution are adequate to achieve the unit's mission and are fair in relation to those provided to other units.

While the budget model leaves the department mostly dependent on funding from the College of Arts and Sciences, the department leadership appears comfortable with the amount of allocated resources for faculty, research and travel.

Beyond the funding from the College, the department has additional revenue from lab fees and distance learning fees.

As a standalone unit in the College of Arts and Sciences and the only such unit on the St. Petersburg campus, the department's resources are generally comparable to similarly sized departments based on the Tampa campus.

In some respects, department resources exceed those of similar units on the St. Petersburg campus. Its full-time instructor salary, for example, is above the College average.

(c) The unit's facilities and information resources enable and promote effective scholarship, teaching and learning.

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication has a suite of faculty offices, an adjunct office, a classroom, a lab, a conference room and studio facilities in the Peter Rudy Wallace Florida Center for Teachers on the USF St. Petersburg campus. The building also has an office used by both the student newspaper and the Neighborhood News Bureau.

The building is modern and well maintained, and features an atrium and courtyard, both of which serve as gathering places for students and faculty. The lab and classroom border the courtyard.

Both the lab and classroom contain audio-visual projection capability, adequate wi-fi, and the lab is equipped with 19 iMac Lab stations for students, containing Creative Cloud production software.

The facilities are small, but the lab and classroom provide enough space for all core courses to be taught in the building. The department also makes use of classroom space elsewhere on campus when needed. Since 40% of the undergraduate courses are taught online, more classroom space is not a need for the department.

The site team did note there is no signage or indication anywhere on the outside of the building that a journalism department is housed within.

(d) The institution and the unit provide faculty and students with equipment, or access to equipment, and technical assistance needed to support student learning, curriculum and the research, creative and professional activities of the faculty.

The department has exclusive use of its Mac Lab. All the computers were upgraded in 2018 and contain Creative Cloud production software. Students have access to this software on their personal computers through the university.

Students involved in the two video production courses have kits available to them for the entire semester. The kits include a mirrorless camera for photography and video, a Zoom audio recorder, a lav mic, a shotgun mic, and headphones. Students report easy access to the equipment and that they receive instruction on its use.

Bullcast (a biweekly live-streamed videocast) is produced by students in the department's Videoworks studio. This studio is a renovated classroom that contains both the performance space and the control room in the same room. Mirrorless cameras are placed on stationary tripods connected to a four-channel switcher. While the department and students are enthusiastic about the space and adequate instruction is taking place, it is neither optimal nor professional in its design or equipment.

SUMMARY (Undergraduate):

The Peter Rudy Wallace Florida Center for Teachers building space dedicated to the department is small but adequate. Students feel at home in the space and have access to modern production software and equipment for coursework. The production studio is located in a converted classroom.

SUMMARY (Professional master's):

The graduate courses are all taught online and students do not report any complications with access or software.

Overall evaluation (Undergraduate program): COMPLIANCE

Overall evaluation (Professional master's program): 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 actively engages with them, other professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching current and to promote the exchange of ideas.

The unit makes significant use of alumni employed as professionals in the Tampa market as adjuncts, which serves to keep the curriculum and teaching current. Many of the adjuncts have significant industry experience and include a Pulitzer Prize winner; the founding director of a regional cable news network; a media lawyer with decades of experience; and freelance writers and photographers.

Alumni are also frequent guests in courses.

Communication with alumni is taking place, but can be sporadic and decentralized. A recent survey was emailed to alumni asking about their experience at USF, their current employment status, and their desire to become more involved with the department. While the responses were supportive and positive, only 13 alumni responded.

The department holds an end of semester gathering to share the work of graduate students, and alumni are invited to the event.

The department notes in its strategic plan a desire to increase collaboration with the nearby Poynter Institute. This remains a missed opportunity for the department, and one that was cited in the previous site team's evaluation as well.

(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 issues of public consequence and concern.

A longtime adjunct professor in the department with significant professional experience is very active in the promotion and discussion of journalism ethics and provides leadership in that area.

Faculty during the self-study period served as reviewers for scholarly journals, presented at conferences and workshops, and served on various community boards and nonprofits.

(c) The unit contributes to its communities through unit-based service projects and events, service learning of its students and civic engagement of its faculty.

Before the pandemic, the department hosted regular events and international guest speakers on journalism and journalism-related topics. The events were open to the university community.

The department's Neighborhood News Bureau was also designed to be an important part of outreach to marginalized communities in the St. Petersburg area.

(d) The unit supports scholastic journalism.

The department supports scholastic journalism through involvement with innovative magnet public schools in Pinellas County, a large school district with about 96,000 students. Since 1999, a representative from the department has served on boards associated with the promotion of scholastic journalism locally.

Department faculty are actively involved in the Journeys in Journalism program which is composed of professional journalists, public school teachers and administrators, and community partners, since its inception in 2001. It is designed to give elementary, middle and high school students age appropriate experiences in journalistic endeavors.

The Journeys in Journalism program began in November 2001 as a program at Melrose Elementary School. It later expanded to incorporate John Hopkins Middle School and Lakewood High School, all located in or near an area of St. Petersburg known as Midtown.

Over the years, the board has promoted the integration of journalism into the overall curriculum of the County's public schools as a long-range goal, and has successfully developed a journalism magnet program that allows Pinellas students to stay in the program as they move from Melrose to John Hopkins to Lakewood.

The department has offered to host Lakewood juniors and seniors in some classes to provide a sample of academic study at the collegiate level.

SUMMARY (Undergraduate and Professional Master's):

The number of full-time department faculty was greatly reduced for a time during the review period, at the same time the department faced pandemic-related challenges. Nevertheless, the department demonstrated a commitment to professional and public service as possible during the period under review.

Overall evaluation (Undergraduate program): COMPLIANCE

Overall evaluation (Professional master's program): COMPLIANCE

**PART III: Summary by site visit team
of the undergraduate program**

(A separate summary is required of the professional master's program)

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:

- Collegial departmental climate that students find welcoming
- Ample equipment for students to use for classroom assignments
- Impressive proprietary software tailored to ACEJMC assessment
- Engaged new faculty with ambitious research agendas
- Recognition as a distinctive program on the St. Petersburg campus
- A hard-working department head who is respected by faculty, students and administrators
- A promising STEM designation for its major, which is informing curricular innovations
- Effective use of area professionals as adjuncts and program advocates

Weaknesses:

- Lack of department-wide public service activities
- Limited use of professionals in assessment and little formal documentation of closing the loop
- Missed opportunity to collaborate with the nearby Poynter Institute
- Little progress in student diversity and absence of full-time professors who are Black or Hispanic
- A need to review Neighborhood News Bureau's role as the program's capstone course
- Uncertain state political climate that is having a chilling effect on teaching, scholarship and faculty recruitment
- Uneven department efforts to help students locate internships

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

NA

3) In the case of a recommendation for accreditation or reaccreditation, with standard(s) not in compliance, list the deficiencies that need to be addressed before the next site team evaluation.

NA

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

NA

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

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.

The department was found in compliance on all nine standards in 2016, but the site team expressed concern about falling enrollment, lack of a rigorous diversity plan and failing to take full advantage of professionals in assessment and other activities.

The department's enrollment and student credit hours have increased in recent years, thanks in part to more use of online offerings and courses that serve other majors.

The department now has an excellent diversity plan, although other diversity issues remain.

The department still fails to take full advantage of professionals in assessment and other activities.

7) The self-study is the heart of the accrediting process, and often the quality of that document determines the degree of success of the accrediting visit. Summarize the team members' judgment of the self-study.

The department developed a website for the self-study that was easy to navigate. The narrative omitted some key information but the department provided it promptly.

**PART III: Summary by site visit team
of the professional master's program**

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:

- Innovative curriculum that emphasizes professional courses
- Stable and thoughtful leadership
- Ethnically diverse student body

Weaknesses:

- Little documentation of instructional changes made as a result of assessment

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

NA

3) In the case of a recommendation for accreditation or reaccreditation, with standard(s) not in compliance, list the deficiencies that need to be addressed before the next site team evaluation.

NA

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

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

6) If the unit's professional master's program was previously accredited, summarize the significant deficiencies noted in the previous report and the actions taken to correct them. If the master's program 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.

7) The self-study is the heart of the accrediting process, and often the quality of that document determines the degree of success of the accrediting visit. Summarize the team members' judgment of the self-study.

(See above)

April 10, 2023

Dear Members of the Council,

The Department of Journalism and Digital Communication at the University of South Florida has been continuously accredited since 2004. We take pride in being one of five accredited journalism units in Florida and the only accredited unit in the region. Following our two most recent site team visits, in 2016 and 2023, we were found in compliance with all ACEJMC standards.

We have navigated an array of challenges in recent years, including the system-wide University of South Florida consolidation, the pandemic and the departure of half of our full-time faculty. However, we have maintained a steadfast commitment to our students, university and community.

We were pleased that our 2023 site team, composed of experienced reviewers, were in unanimous agreement that our undergraduate and master's programs should remain fully accredited. We were heartened by the ACEJMC Committee's votes in support of reaccreditation for both of our programs.

We also take seriously the weaknesses identified by the site team and noted by the Committee, particularly regarding Standard 3, Assessment of Learning Outcomes, and Standard 4, Diversity and Inclusiveness.

While we have room to grow further in these and other aspects of our work, a review of our actions and achievements over the past seven years reveals how we have maintained—or improved upon—our performance since our 2016 site visit.

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM & DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

University of South Florida St. Petersburg campus | 140 7th Ave. S. | St. Petersburg, Florida 33701
727-873-4850 | www.usf.edu/journalism

Regarding the Diversity and Inclusiveness Standard:

- Following a recent faculty resignation, we are seeking approval to recruit a professor of practice and a coordinator of community partnerships to lead the Neighborhood News Bureau, our flagship community journalism project based in Midtown, St. Petersburg, located five miles from campus. We are committed to these new colleagues reflecting Midtown, an historically underserved Black community, or to bringing lived experience from a culturally similar community.
- During the review period, we surpassed the University and campus on key measures of global and domestic diversity among students and faculty.
- In the 2020–21 academic year, the portion of Asian and Hispanic students in our undergraduate program exceeded the numbers for our service area.
- In the 2020–21 academic year, the portion of Hispanic students in our graduate program exceeded the numbers for both the University and our service area.
- In the past three years, 13% of adjunct faculty hired have identified as Black, a percentage that exceeds our service area.
- A full-time Hispanic faculty member worked with the Department from 2015–2020.
- Among our four new hires since 2021, two identify as Asian, one identifies as Arab American, two identify as women, and all possess significant international and multicultural experience.
- Two newly hired faculty routinely explore themes of diversity and representation in their scholarship.
- In the 2020–21 academic year, the Department recruited a Black scholar via a targeted hire. Although the hire did not ultimately transpire, Departmental support was unanimous.
- For all recent searches, in addition to including a standard Equal Employment Opportunity statement, faculty voted to list diversity explicitly as a preferred qualification on advertised job postings.

- Positions for recent hires have been advertised in venues designed to attract diverse applicants, including The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education and Diverse Jobs.
- For an active search for a Professor / Eleanor Poynter Jamison Chair in Media Ethics and Press Policy, advertising has included direct outreach to deans and directors at HBCUs; the faculty member who has long held the Poynter Jamison Chair is a person with a disability.
- In 2020, USF's Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity recognized the Department with an Inclusive Excellence Award.

Regarding the Assessment of Learning Outcomes Standard:

- Beginning in fall 2023, we will again count supervision of internships as part of the instructional load, ensuring dedicated faculty time to cultivate this program, which serves as an important venue for professional involvement in the assessment process.
- In fall 2023, we will launch a partnership with the Tampa Bay Times to place Journalism and Digital Communication students in year-long internships.
- We have begun conversations with two local media organizations to co-produce podcast series, creating additional pathways for professional feedback on student work.
- In spring 2023, we will launch an internship and job dashboard focused on opportunities in digital communication and journalism.
- Our assessment tools and processes, centered around embedded course assessments, have been in place since 2012; we regularly review and revise the system to make incremental improvements.
- Across the review period, our process entailed reviewing thousands of student scores and gathering hundreds of notes from faculty on student learning and resulting changes to instruction. Adjunct faculty, many of whom are working

- professionals, also submit data, making the system a key avenue for professional feedback.
- Twice a year, we dedicate a faculty meeting to close the loop; these conversations revolve around both retrospective and prospective changes to curricula based on learning outcomes.
 - USF's Office of Decision Support has explored with us how to adapt our data collection and analysis tools for other academic units.
 - We see a strong connection between the number of students in internships and opportunities for professional input on student learning; faculty will vote this fall on whether internships should be required.

In summary, our efforts on these and other standards continue. Many changes will soon be adopted or have already been implemented, and the accreditation process has been integral to our progress to date.

Opportunities for reflection, feedback and candid evaluations have demonstrably improved our programs. Like all units, we have room to improve, and we value the insights afforded by the self-study, the site team visit and the Committee review.

We look forward to continuous improvement, and to the Council's decision.

Sincerely,



Casey Frechette
Department Chair