

Report of ACEJMC Evaluation

Undergraduate program
2022–2023

Name of Institution: Western Kentucky University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Timothy C. Caboni, President

Name of Unit: School of Media

Name and Title of Administrator: Ron DeMarse, Director

Date of 2022-2023 Accrediting Visit: Jan. 22-25, 2023

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Nov. 15-18, 2015

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2022-2023 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation

Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Kristin Gilger, Reynolds Professor of Business Journalism
Organization/School: Arizona State University, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Signature Kristin Gilger

Team Member

Name and Title: Matthew J. Haught, Assistant Chair & Associate Professor
Organization/School: University of Memphis, Department of Journalism and Strategic Media

Signature Matt J. Haught

Team Member

Name and Title: Mary T. Rogus, Associate Professor Emerita
Organization/School: Ohio University, E.W. Scripps School of Journalism

Signature Mary T. Rogus

Team Member

Name and Title: Kathleen A. Pavelko, CEO Emerita
Organization/School: WITF Public Media

Signature Kathleen A. Pavelko

PART I: General information

Name of Institution: Western Kentucky University

Name of Unit: School of Media

Year of Visit: 2023

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

- Higher Learning Commission
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- New England Commission on Higher Education
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- Southern Association of Colleges and School Commission on Colleges
- 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. It is not necessary to include entire authorizing documents. Public institutions may cite legislative acts; private institutions may cite charters or other authorizing documents.

In 1906, the Kentucky General Assembly enacted legislation creating the Western Kentucky State Normal School. In 1922, it became a four-year institution known as Western Kentucky State Normal School and Teachers College. The first degrees were awarded in 1922. In 1930, the General Assembly removed the words, "Normal School" from the name, shortening it to Western Kentucky State Teachers College. On June 16, 1966, the College achieved university status and the name was changed to Western Kentucky University.

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 full accrediting visit: November 15-18, 2015

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

The Department of Journalism was first accredited in 1979. The Broadcasting Program merged with the Department in 1999, creating the School of Journalism & Broadcasting, which was then accredited in 2004.

6. Insert here the unit's mission statement. Statement should give date of adoption and/or last revision.

The mission of the School of Media: To prepare students for a changing media environment by focusing on content, ethics and technology

The full Strategic Plan is provided in Appendix A; adopted April 18, 2014; last revised October 18, 2022

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Number of weeks in a semester: 16

Number of weeks in a quarter: NA

Number of weeks in summer sessions: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or 13

Number of weeks in intersessions: 2, 3 or 5

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

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

9. List the specific undergraduate degrees as well as the majors or sequences being reviewed by ACEJMC. *Indicate online degrees.

Bachelor of Arts degrees in Broadcasting, Journalism, and Photojournalism

10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree: (Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.)

120 semester-hour credits are required by the university for graduation

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

Students may earn three credits for an internship with a maximum of three total credits in the Broadcasting and Journalism majors. Journalism majors may opt to take a 1-credit internship course up to three times in lieu of the 3-credit course. That option is employed only rarely during the fall and spring semesters so students can fold it into their full-time schedules and avoid paying for summer credit hours.

Students in the Photojournalism major are encouraged to seek internships for pay rather than credit. 3 hours of internship credit may be applied to overall university credit requirements, but do not satisfy a specific requirement in the major.

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

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Person in Charge
Sequence: Broadcasting	Bradley Pfranger
Sequence: Journalism	Mac McKerral
Sequence: Photojournalism	James Kenney

13. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution: 14,729

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	Fall 2022 Undergraduate majors
Broadcasting	66
Broadcasting (pre-major)	60
Journalism	38
Journalism (pre-major)	29
Photojournalism	21
Photojournalism (pre-major)	<u>27</u>
Total	241
<i>Film (unaccredited)</i>	<u>163</u>
<i>Total, including Film</i>	404

15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (news writing, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.). List enrollment by section for the term during which the visit will occur and for the preceding term. (The Council has ruled that campaigns courses are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)

Spring 2022

<u>COURSE #</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>ENR</u>
BCOM 261	Basic Radio Production	20
BCOM 264	Basic Digital Video Production	17
BCOM 265	Basic Broadcast News	18
BCOM 266-002	Basic TV Production	15
BCOM 266-003	Basic TV Production	14
BCOM 325-001	Writing for TV & Radio	20
BCOM 325-002	Writing for TV & Radio	19
BCOM 365	News Reporting & Producing	15
BCOM 367	Field Production I	20
BCOM 380	Editing II	18
BCOM 465	Advanced Broadcast News	10
BCOM 467-001	Broadcast Workshop: News	5

BCOM 467-003	Broadcast Workshop: Sports	9
BCOM 467-004	Broadcast Workshop: Film	6
BCOM 482	TV Program Production	6
JOUR 202-004	News Writing	17
JOUR 202-005	News Writing	20
JOUR 202-006	News Writing	18
JOUR 302-001	Intermediate Reporting	12
JOUR 302-002	Intermediate Reporting	11
JOUR 323	Multiplatform News	15
JOUR 325	Feature Writing	12
JOUR 426	Advanced Reporting	14
PJ 131-001	Fundamentals of Photography	17
PJ 131-002	Fundamentals of Photography	15
PJ 261	Mobile Media Storytelling	18
PJ 331	Photojournalism	10
PJ 333	Lighting Technologies	13
PJ 431	Advanced Photojournalism	14
PJ 436	Photojournalism Projects	7
PJ 439	Advanced Lighting & Contract Photography	10
SOM 102	Media Collaboration	18
Fall 2022		
COURSE #	TITLE	ENR
BCOM 264	Basic Digital Video Production	16
BCOM 265-001	Basic Broadcast News	17
BCOM 265-700	Basic Broadcast News	14
BCOM 266-002	Basic TV Production	9
BCOM 266-003	Basic TV Production	7

BCOM 325-001	Writing for TV & Radio	19
BCOM 325-003	Writing for TV & Radio	13
BCOM 326	Radio & TV News Performance	13
BCOM 335	News Discovery & Selection	11
BCOM 361	Advanced Radio Performance	10
BCOM 366	Editing I	17
BCOM 394	Film Animation	18
BCOM 463	Field Production II	8
BCOM 467-001	Broadcast Workshop: News	5
BCOM 467-002	Broadcast Workshop: Sports	7
BCOM 467-501	Broadcast Workshop: Radio	3
JOUR 202-002	News Writing	19
JOUR 202-003	News Writing	18
JOUR 202-004	News Writing	17
JOUR 302	Intermediate Reporting	18
JOUR 323	Multiplatform News	14
JOUR 325	Feature Writing	14
PJ 131-001	Fundamentals of Photography	20
PJ 131-002	Fundamentals of Photography	19
PJ 131-003	Fundamentals of Photography	18
PJ 261	Mobile Media Storytelling	20
PJ 330	Short Form Documentary	10
PJ 336	Picture Editing	17
PJ 430	Advanced Short Documentary	12
SOM 102-002	Media Collaboration	20
SOM 102-003	Media Collaboration	17
SOM 102-004	Media Collaboration	19

SOM 102-006	Media Collaboration	20
SOM 102-007	Media Collaboration	20

Spring 2023

<u>COURSE #</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>ENR</u>
BCOM 261	Basic Radio Production	19
BCOM 264	Basic Digital Video Production	18
BCOM 265	Basic Broadcast News	20
BCOM 266-002	Basic TV Production	15
BCOM 266-003	Basic TV Production	15
BCOM 325-001	Writing for TV & Radio	16
BCOM 325-002	Writing for TV & Radio	18
BCOM 366-001	Editing I	18
BCOM 366-002	Editing I	18
BCOM 367	Field Production I	8
BCOM 368	News Videography and Editing	11
BCOM 380	Editing II	11
BCOM 465	Advanced Broadcast News	5
BCOM 467-001	Broadcast Workshop: News	6
BCOM 467-003	Broadcast Workshop: Sports	8
BCOM 482	TV Program Production	6
JOUR 202-004	News Writing	20
JOUR 202-005	News Writing	20
JOUR 202-006	News Writing	21
JOUR 302	Intermediate Reporting	13
JOUR 323	Multiplatform News	14
JOUR 325	Feature Writing	11
PJ 101	Influence of the Photograph	19
PJ 131-001	Fundamentals of Photography	20
PJ 131-002	Fundamentals of Photography	19
PJ 131-003	Fundamentals of Photography	15
PJ 261	Mobile Media Storytelling	20
PJ 331	Photojournalism	15
PJ 333	Lighting Technologies	18
PJ 436	Photojournalism Projects	12
SOM 102	Media Collaboration	20

16. Total expenditures planned by the accredited unit for the 2022–2023 academic year:

\$298,200 FY23

(Note that this includes expenditures for the Film program, which is part of the School of Media, but not accredited by ACEJMC)

Give percentage increase or decrease in three years:

\$407,100 FY20

\$298,200 FY23

-\$108,900 difference

-26.8% reduction

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$684,338 FY23

17. List name and rank of all full-time faculty in the accredited unit. (Full-time faculty refers to those defined as such by the university.) Identify those not teaching because of leaves, sabbaticals, etc.

Adams, Jonathan	Endowed Professional-in-Residence
Adams-Smith, Jeanie	Professor
Broekema, Tim	Professor
Clarke, Scott	Assistant Professor
DeMarse, Ron	Professor
Dearbone, Ryan	Assistant Professor
Elliott, Brian	Assistant Professor
Holsinger, Philip	Instructor
Kenney, James	Professor
McKerral, Gordon	Professor
Pfranger, Bradley	Associate Professor

18. 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. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2023, also provide the spring 2023 adjunct list in the updated information.)

SPRING 2022	FALL 2022	SPRING 2023
Carter, Dorinda	Clark, Chuck	Clark, Chuck
Pratt, Carrie	Oldenburg, Sam	Watson, Alana

Scott, Whitney

Pratt, Carrie

Watson, Alana

Watson, Alana

White, Stephen

19. For each of the last two academic years, please give the total number of graduates from the unit.

2021-22 academic year: 59

2020-21 academic year: 65

PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

Overview:

The School of Media is part of Western Kentucky University's Potter College of Arts & Letters, which includes 10 other academic departments and 33 undergraduate degree programs. The School is one of the largest in the College in terms of enrollment and offers four majors – Broadcast Journalism, Journalism, Photojournalism and Film. Film is the largest of those programs with 163 majors and pre-majors in spring 2023, followed by Broadcast Journalism (126), Journalism (67), and Photojournalism (48). It is the last three programs that are being evaluated for re-accreditation.

The program began as a Department of Mass Communication in 1970 and became a stand-alone Journalism Department in 1976, offering majors in Advertising, Journalism, Photojournalism, and Public Relations. Broadcasting was added in 1999 when the department gained school status. In 2017, the Advertising and Public Relations programs were moved out of the School and into the Department of Communication. In 2020, prompted by the growth of the Film program, the School's name was changed from the School of Journalism & Broadcasting to the School of Media.

The program was first accredited by ACEJMC in 1979 and has been reaccredited every cycle since. In its last accreditation review in 2015, the School was found out of compliance on the diversity standard and in compliance on all other standards and was reaccredited.

The past seven years have been turbulent ones for the School with a long-term leadership void, budget and staffing cuts, declines in the number of student majors, and structural changes.

- **Leadership:** The School was without a permanent Director from 2017 until the fall of 2022, during which time there were two Interim Directors and four failed searches for a permanent Director. The chair of the university's History Department served as interim until 2020, when the current Director, a member of the School of Media's faculty, was named Interim Director. He was appointed permanently to the position in July 2022.
- **Budget:** The School reports a 26.8 reduction in its overall operating budget from 2020 to present, the result of reduced allocations from the College. School leadership describes the budget situation as being more acute than at any time since the 1990s. Moreover, beginning in 2022, the School lost budgetary autonomy and flexibility. Previously, the College approved an overall budget, but the School could make spending decisions within that framework. Now the School is restricted to a line-item budget approved by the College.
- **Faculty:** Overall, the number of faculty in the School fell from 22 in 2015 to 16 currently. Of the 16 remaining faculty, five teach in the Film program, leaving 11 in the programs up for review. The decline in the number of faculty was due, in part, to the decision to move Advertising and Public Relations out of the School, which resulted in the loss of five faculty members. But there also was a significant loss of faculty in the programs up for review (Broadcast, Journalism and Photojournalism). In 2015, the School had 15 faculty members in these programs. In 2022, there were 11. The losses included two full professors who left during the accreditation period and whose lines were eliminated. The School was down to one faculty member in Broadcast Journalism at one point in the review period, but that

number has rebounded to five – a loss of one line over the review period. The Journalism faculty currently has two full-time faculty members, down from five at the beginning of the review period.

- **Staffing:** The School has lost four staff positions since 2018 due to university and College budget reductions. The losses consisted of an IT specialist, an office associate, an adviser and a staff member who handled the Mountain Workshops, an annual documentary photojournalism project, as well as other duties. The school now has one staff position, an office coordinator.
- **Majors:** The number of majors in the School has declined more than 52% since 2015, again, in part, because of the loss of the Advertising and Public Relations programs. But during the same period, majors in the programs up for review (Broadcast, Journalism and Photojournalism) dropped by 51%. Photojournalism majors dropped by 60%, Broadcast by 54%, and Journalism by 30%. The number of incoming freshmen ticked up in fall 2022, with modest gains in each of the majors under review.
- **Structural changes:** In 2017, the Dean of the College moved the Advertising and Public Relations programs out of the School and into the Department of Communication, despite opposition from faculty. The move meant the School lost about one-third of its enrollment. Those departments are being moved back into the school in fall 2023 when the Department of Communication will merge with the School of Media. The move, supported by a faculty vote, also will bring Communication Studies and Corporate and Organizational Communication into the School, which will be headed by the current School of Media Director. As a result, the number of students is expected to nearly double, and the size of the faculty will more than double. Including a half-dozen expected new hires, the number of faculty is expected to grow to 39, and an Assistant Director position will be added.

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

The School's formal mission statement, included in its strategic plan, is "to prepare students for a changing media environment by focusing on content, ethics and technology."

On its website, the School further explains its mission in this way:

The School of Media at Western Kentucky University embraces the concept that a broad-based liberal arts curriculum is essential for a well-rounded understanding of society. It upholds the idea that the American press system should be free, independent and responsible. Through its course work and extracurricular activities, the school and its faculty encourage students to be critical thinkers and competent communicators, to be aware of ethical values and historical perspectives, and to gain insight into the functions and responsibilities of contemporary communications institutions. A high priority is the encouragement of students to be able to adapt, both intellectually and creatively, to the realities and challenges of an increasingly diverse and complex information society.”

The School is guided by a strategic plan adopted in 2014 and revised most recently in 2022. The plan emphasizes professional preparation of students through a hands-on curriculum that is responsive to changes in communication platforms and how audiences engage and interact with media. Specific objectives include the development of storytelling skills across platforms, ethical decision-making, the ability to work in teams and service to the community.

The plan also calls for the recruitment and retention of high-quality, diverse faculty and a School-wide culture of social awareness, collaboration, innovation and entrepreneurial thinking.

While the strategic plan lacks meaningful short-term measurements, it identifies several needs, such as upgrading facilities and equipment, more opportunities for faculty to pursue research, creative work and professional conferences, and the recruitment of faculty of color.

For the past two years, the Director of the School has dedicated the final faculty meeting each year to a referendum on the School’s strategic plan. Faculty have an opportunity to propose changes and advocate on behalf of goals and objectives for the year ahead. Faculty then indicate their priorities via secret ballot, with the results guiding the Director’s actions moving forward.

The plan is reflected in the everyday life of the school in several respects: an educational approach that emphasizes hands-on teaching by a professionally oriented faculty, a curriculum that acknowledges changes in the industry; and a clear priority on storytelling across platforms that serves diverse audiences.

(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?

The current Director, who served as Interim Director for two years previously, was appointed to the position in 2022 following a unanimous faculty vote. As a tenured full professor and a member of the Broadcasting faculty since 2006, he was well-positioned to lead the program and, by all accounts, has done so successfully in his first year leading the School.

The faculty widely praise the Director for bringing stability and direction to the School. They report that he encourages collaboration and is supportive of their efforts. They said he makes an effort to seek out their opinions and listen to them. One faculty member noted the Director's help in transitioning to a tenure-track position. A long-standing faculty member said that the Director "has overseen a significant increase in faculty voice in governance, and he also has a better sense of which actions he can take without consultation."

The Dean of the College described the Director as one of the best leaders in the college and said he decided to merge the Department of Communication with the School of Media because he was confident of that leadership. He said the Director is able to find "commonality" among disparate groups and is able to understand and articulate a larger mission.

As described in the Overview above, the School had gone without a permanent Director for five years following the 2017 retirement of the previous Director, who had served for six years. For most of that five-year period, the School was led by the chair of the university's History Department, who faculty describe as being very hands-off. While some appreciated the independence, others acknowledged that the unit lost momentum. As one faculty member put it, "He let us do our thing, maintained us, though not moving us forward."

Without strong, consistent leadership, the School experienced several setbacks, notably the decision by the former Dean of the College to move two of the unit's highest-enrollment programs – Advertising and Public Relations – into another department. Faculty describe this move as a "fiat" that took place without consultation and without their support. Cuts in budgets and faculty lines led to a decision to turn over the award-winning student radio station to campus public broadcasting. IT and advising services were delegated to offices outside the School. Enrollment began a steady decline, but recruitment efforts failed to ramp up. Faculty left and were not replaced.

The current Director has made recruitment of students, reconnecting with what the self-study describes as "a long-neglected alumni base," and laying the foundation for future fund-raising efforts his priorities. While the latter two have yet to be addressed, recruitment efforts have intensified. The number of freshmen entering the program grew by about 20% in fall 2022 over the previous year, benefitting all three majors. However, the numbers remained below 2018, 2019 and 2021 levels.

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

This data was recently posted.

(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.

Data is gathered and posted on the School website and was last updated with 2021 numbers. Data for 2022 was provided to ACEJMC and is available online there.

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

Faculty bylaws call for the full involvement of faculty in the governance of the school, and a standing Curriculum Committee is charged with reviewing and approving all curriculum changes. In addition to the Curriculum Committee, there are eight other standing committees charged with oversight of scholarships, tenure and promotion, and diversity efforts, among other matters.

The full faculty met eight times in 2021-2022. Faculty report that they regularly vote on matters related to educational policy, procedures and curriculum in these meetings. However, the School does not keep minutes of faculty meetings, so this could not be independently assessed.

Faculty members are appointed to serve as sequence or program coordinators for each of the three majors under review. In this role, they are responsible for daily operations of their sequence and play important roles in development of curriculum, scheduling, maintenance and advising for their respective programs. Under the new Director, these coordinators have been given expanded autonomy over decision-making and spending for their sequences.

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

The Director of the School of Media is appointed by the Dean of the College, in consultation with the Provost, after either an internal or external search. Service terms are four years, and the number of terms is not limited by policy. If the Director wishes to be considered for reappointment, a vote is conducted among faculty with the rank of professor, but the final decision lies with the Dean and the Provost.

Internal to the School, Assistant Directors (when such positions are funded) are appointed by the Dean in consultation with the unit. Program coordinators are typically appointed by the Director, although the faculty have voted on program coordinators in the past. Their terms are three years.

The Dean of the College completes a comprehensive performance review of Directors in the fall semester of the fourth year of their appointments. The Dean then convenes the unit's faculty to review leadership qualities, professional competency, ethical behavior and working relationships.

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

Most complaints are handled internally; however, the university has a detailed process for addressing both student and faculty complaints. The most common complaints relate to academic conduct and grades. Students first try to resolve the situation with the faculty member involved, then they may appeal to the School, the College and then the university for resolution.

Faculty and staff follow a formal grievance process that allows them to seek redress beyond the school. According to the self-study, no such complaint has been elevated beyond the School for the past five years.

SUMMARY:

The School has faced significant challenges since the last site visit, with two of its largest programs being removed to another unit and enrollment in the remaining programs dropping by half. Five years of Interim Directors, including three years with a Director from outside the unit, kept the School in a holding pattern, but a new Director hired internally has restored confidence and provided momentum. A scheduled merger later this year with the Department of Communication will return the Advertising and Public Relations programs to the School and will add faculty, students, staff and resources. Faculty members are heavily involved in governance and take control of an evolving strategic plan. ACEJMC-required annual data reporting is in place.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

(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 School of Media is compliant with the institution’s requirement for liberal arts and general education courses. Students must complete 120 credit hours to receive a B.A. degree.

Although ACEJMC has lifted the 72-hour rule, the School has not added hours to its majors because, according to the self-study, it is committed “to ensure a broad liberal arts education and a balance of theoretical and technical coursework.” The Journalism major requires 42 credit hours in the School, while the Broadcasting and Photojournalism majors each require 45 credit hours. A spot check of transcripts for graduated students further indicates that while the 72-hour rule was in place the School was compliant.

Students take the remainder of their credits outside the School in the liberal arts. Those include 18 credit hours in College Composition, Human Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Literary Studies, and World History, plus a Writing in the Discipline course from the English Department. They also take 12 credit hours in Arts and Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Natural and Physical Sciences, and Natural Science with a Lab. Finally, students must select nine hours from a group of Connections courses that address domestic and global social and cultural systems.

All students also are required to take a course in American National Government through the Department of Political Science. Finally, all accredited majors in the School require a minor or a second major outside the School.

(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.

All School of Media students are required to take two introductory courses – Understanding Media Content, Ethics and Technology, and Media Content, Collaboration and Community. The first course explores the nature of media and media content, the role they play in society and their effects on audiences and culture in both historical and technological dimensions for both legacy and digital media.

In the second course, students work in teams to produce digital content for distribution via web, social and mobile. This course requires students to seek community interaction and create content that reflects diverse communities in and around Bowling Green, Kentucky.

In addition, all students are required to take a diversity course from among a prescribed list that includes a School of Media course and a number of other diversity-related courses offered by other departments.

They also take a media law and ethics course and complete a capstone or projects course, depending on their major, that brings together what they have learned in their programs.

While the majority of the core curriculum consists of skills courses, students get a theoretical and conceptual grounding in the first of the two introductory courses, in the Media Diversity course, and in their law and ethics course. Additionally, there are a number of theory/conceptual courses offered as electives. These include The Cultural History of Photography; Gender, Crime and Justice; Issues in Mass Communication; and American Popular Arts.

Broadcasting Major: Students majoring in Broadcast Journalism must complete 45 credit hours in the major. The core curriculum consists of the two introductory courses and four other courses: Process and Effects of Mass Communication; Basic Television Production; Mass Media Law and Ethics; and Editing 1. In addition, Broadcasting majors take a diversity elective, a writing elective and a capstone elective. They chose 18 additional credits that range from Television Directing to Introduction to Cinema. Of the 32 elective courses Broadcasting students may choose from, six are theory or conceptual courses.

The School offered three tracks in broadcasting – Broadcast News, Television Production, and Radio/TV Operations – until 2017 when the tracks were eliminated in response to declining student enrollment and loss of faculty. Students also wanted more flexibility in course selection, which the single major provides.

A review of selected syllabi shows the Broadcasting major courses are well balanced between skills and theoretical/conceptual learning and the higher-level courses provide integration of the two to help students meet the ACEJMC values and competencies.

Photojournalism Major: Students majoring in Photojournalism must complete 45 credit hours in the major. The core curriculum consists of the two introductory courses and nine other courses: Introduction to News Writing; Fundamentals of Photography; Short Form Documentary; Photojournalism; Intermediate Reporting; Lighting Technologies; Advanced Short Form Documentary; Advanced Photojournalism; and Photojournalism Projects. In addition, Photojournalism majors take a diversity elective and a law and ethics elective. They choose from among a long list of electives for six additional credits that range from News Editing to Cinematography. The core curriculum is skills-focused, but electives, in addition to the conceptual courses that are part of the core curriculum, offer several theory/conceptual courses.

A review of syllabi showed distinct areas of innovation and transferable skills. Students learn photojournalism in ways that could be applied to a variety of professional photography applications, including lighting, composition and editing. Further, the emphasis on modern video techniques broadens student skills. The Photojournalism Projects course pushes students to think independently in large-scale creative projects that resonate with their passions and interests.

Student learning does not appear to be equipment-dependent; students learn on Canon, Nikon and Sony products.

The Photojournalism major courses are well balanced between skills and theoretical/conceptual learning, and the higher-level courses provide integration of the two. Syllabi consistently reference ACEJMC professional values and competencies and are particularly well aligned with the two competencies related

to the use of tools and technology. Student photography and videography are routinely recognized as among the best in the country in the annual Hearst Journalism Awards program.

Journalism Major: Students majoring in Journalism must complete 42 credit hours in the major. The core curriculum consists of the two introductory courses required of all School of Media students and nine other courses: Intro to News Writing; Software Studio; Digital Video Production; Intro to Digital Photography; Mobile Media Storytelling; Press Law & Ethics; Intermediate Reporting; Multiplatform News; and Feature Writing. In addition, Journalism majors take a diversity elective. They have a choice of capstones that range from Advanced Reporting to a specialized Fleischaker/Green First Amendment course, a projects-based course that is donor funded and in which students do extensive reporting about a specific topic chosen for the semester.

Students also choose a three-credit elective from a list of approved courses that are taught both in the major and by other departments. These include such courses as News Videography Editing and Print Design/Production/Typography (School of Media offerings) and Creative Nonfiction and Memoir/Autobiography (English Department offerings).

A review of Journalism syllabi showed a progression of teaching, from foundational courses (media content and media collaboration) that then support courses in news writing and feature writing. Multimedia skills are developed in digital video and photography courses and the Software Studio and Mobile Media Storytelling courses. The legal and ethical dimensions of the profession are explored in the required Press Law and Ethics course.

Core and required courses expose majors to the 10 ACEJMC's professional values and competencies, which are consistently referenced in syllabi.

(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.

Instruction across all three majors appears to be both demanding and up to date. Faculty members are proficient with a wide range of tools and technologies and teach with confidence. Many also are active professionally, whether that's shooting photos and videos or writing for professional publications.

Students said they are appreciative of the expertise faculty bring to the classroom. They also described instruction as being demanding and hands-on. "They know what they're talking about," one student said. "And they push us in directions we're not familiar with."

Students begin creating digital content in their first semester, using still and motion pictures and text to tell multimedia stories, and they continue creating content throughout their time at the School.

All three majors have adjusted teaching and curricula to be more multi-platform and multimedia in approach, recognizing that students need these skills to be successful in an increasingly converged media environment.

In a meeting with internship employers and portfolio reviewers, several spoke to the students' ability to write well. One director of photography at a major newspaper said "I always know a WKU intern because they can write. Their captions are excellent and thorough, and the short stories written by photographers are well done, too."

Broadcasting Major: Several Broadcasting students reported that multiple assignments took them out of their comfort zones. In classes observed during the second week of the semester, students were already producing television content and learning all the production positions, even though very few had ever walked into a studio before.

A review of syllabi in the Broadcasting major indicates rigorous courses with high expectations. Students are expected to achieve digital and video technical competencies using current software and hardware for audio, video and digital production.

Photojournalism Major: The curriculum in Photojournalism includes the teaching of key skills in lighting, editing, reporting, storytelling, video production, documentary and general creativity. Although the school is currently up to date in its technology and curriculum, alumni described the program as a bit slow to adapt its approach to broader photography, including commercial photography applications, rather than strictly traditional photojournalism. The skills-based instruction was and remains noteworthy, but the mindset of how those skills can be applied, such as in freelancing, in advertising, in public relations, in marketing, etc. has lagged a bit, they said.

Journalism Major: The Journalism curriculum includes expected reporting and writing courses – Intro to News Writing, Intermediate Reporting, and Feature Writing -- but it also includes a number of courses that teach multimedia skills. These include Digital Video Production, Mobile Media Storytelling, and Multiplatform News as well as a Software Studio course. A number of elective courses also teach digital skills.

Alumni told the site team that they felt exceptionally well prepared for the current news environment, emerging from the program with writing, visual and digital skills necessary for professional success.

(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.

Each of the majors has its own Professional Advisory Council made up of alumni and local and regional professionals who advise faculty on industry trends and changes and how the School might respond. The councils have not been consistently active, however, in part due to the interruption of the pandemic, but they are in the process of being revived.

Faculty members are themselves active professionally. Among their pursuits are reporting on projects in Haiti and Nashville, freelancing news and sports reporting for Spectrum News; producing videos for the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and creating podcasts.

In Photojournalism, the School's renowned Mountain Workshops provide a strong link to industry professionals. Each year, the workshops draw about 50 professional photojournalists from around the country who work with and serve as mentors to students.

Faculty effectively use their networks of industry connections to place students in internships and steer them to jobs at news outlets. And they are active in professional organizations, seminars and workshops.

(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.

All courses except one in Spring and Fall 2022 fell at or below the 20-student threshold. and some were as small as five students. The majority of courses had between 10 and 15 students. The single exception was a news writing course in Spring 2023 that had an enrollment of 21 students.

(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).

Internships are not required of students, although they are encouraged, and many students complete at least one internship. The School provides grant money for students doing unpaid internships for academic credit during the summer term.

Credit granted for internships varies by major. Broadcast students can take one internship (3 credits) to meet a capstone elective requirement. Many intern at local television stations and production companies across Kentucky and nearby states.

Journalism majors can take a 3-credit internship as an elective, or they may opt to do 1-credit internships up to three times. They complete internships at regional and local news outlets, such as the Bowling Green Daily News, Lexington Herald-Leader and the Louisville Courier Journal as well as at organizations such as General Motors, Louisville Public Media, and the Student Press Law Center.

In Photojournalism, internships do not satisfy a specific requirement of the major. However, Photojournalism faculty encourage paid internships, and many students do them, competing successfully for internships, including some higher-profile ones at The Washington Post, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

While they don't get internship credit through their major, Photojournalism students may apply for internship credit through the university's Cooperative Education program. Students in the other two majors also can apply to this program to earn another three hours of internship credit in addition to the

credit granted by their departments. However, students cannot count more than six hours of internship credit toward their graduation.

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.

Internships are managed and supervised by program coordinators for each of the majors. Students are required to complete 240 hours for a 3-credit internship and 80 hours for a 1-credit internship.

All internships are arranged in concert with the university's Advising and Career Development Center. Students submit a written contract, negotiated with the off-site internship manager, which outlines learning objectives. The contract is approved by both the advising center and the unit coordinator.

During the internships, students keep daily journals of their activities and learning experiences. Upon completion of their internships, students are rated by their internship supervisors using a standardized form. That form, along with the daily journal, are submitted to the unit coordinator for review and grading.

Internship employers evaluate students on a number of measures, including punctuality, motivation, ability to accept constructive criticism, ability to make deadlines, and the quality of their writing, reporting and editing. They also provide narrative descriptions of the students' strengths and weaknesses and offer a graded evaluation of the students' skill levels at the start of the internship and at the end of the internship. While the School does not compile data for internships evaluations, a review of a half-dozen evaluations for each year of the review period showed consistently positive results.

In addition, nine internship supervisors contacted by the site team indicated positive experiences with their students.

"We have had a couple interns from WKU that we have or are considering hiring before they even graduate," said one internship employer from a large television station in Kentucky. "I wish every school offered a weekly newscast (like News Channel 12) for their journalism students."

Another internship employer at a large television station in Tennessee said, "I do find (WKU) interns and graduates to be prepared and ready to learn. I have a great impression of the (School of Media) at WKU. We (are) impressed with the hands-on experience the students were receiving. The faculty was also very welcoming and super helpful in connecting us with the students."

Newspaper editors also praised the School.

"I'd say that the best journalism students from WKU are as good as any I have come across," said one newspaper editor. "They provide a solid journalism education for students, who are prepared for the profession upon graduation."

One nonprofit organization that employs photojournalism student interns also offered high praise.

“Kids from WKU are ready to go with our processes right at the jump,” the employer said. “That’s the skill set we want.”

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.

The School does not offer credit for experiences at professional media outlets owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty members are in charge. However, Broadcast students can earn up to three practicum credits for completing 1-credit experiential courses at News Channel 12, overseen by faculty. In addition, Broadcasting students can earn internship credit at WKU Public Media, which is licensed to the university but is not part of the School of Media.

SUMMARY:

The curricula for the three majors under review in the School of Media emphasize multimedia skills across media platforms, with a particular strength in visual journalism. Skills classes are balanced with theory/conceptual courses offered both within the School and via the larger liberal arts curriculum. Class sizes meet ACEJMC requirements with one exception. ACEJMC values and competencies are clearly reflected in both syllabi and teaching of courses. Internships, while not required, are robust and students have many other opportunities to practice their crafts.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 3: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

The unit has a written assessment plan that was approved in October 2022. It is posted on the School's website on the About Us page, alongside a strategic plan and diversity plan.

The plan lists eight goals that represent the 10 ACEJMC professional values and competencies. The plan identifies two to three learning outcomes for each goal and ties six to 13 courses to each outcome. A separate spreadsheet shows the courses laid out with their learning outcomes in an appendix to the self-study. The plan also lists and explains three direct measures and seven indirect measures.

The plan does not specify how its assessment serves the institution's overall mission or its purposes for assessment. It also lacks information about the timeline for implementation, oversight of assessment and how information obtained from assessment is used.

Ultimately, the plan offers no details about the implementation, execution, evaluation or use of assessment data in curricular revisions to address contemporary curricular issues, including instruction related to the rapidly changing digital media world.

(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 plan identifies eight goals: 1. First Amendment: Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press; 2. Media History: Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communication; 3. Diversity: Demonstrate communication techniques that empower those traditionally disenfranchised in society across communication and media platforms; 4. Technology and Presentation: Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies; apply those tools and technologies suitably and ethically for industry professions; 5. Written Communication: Write clearly and effectively within the formats and styles of modern media professions; critically evaluate writing for accuracy, fairness, clarity, and grammar; 6. Professionalism and Ethics: Demonstrate an appreciation of professional ethical principles in pursuit of truth, accuracy, and fairness; 7. Analytical and Critical Thinking: Apply critical thinking skills in professional conduct, information evaluation, and research; and 8. Data Interpretation: Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

These goals align with ACEJMC's professional values and competencies but combine tools and technology with the presentation of images into one goal, as well as combining writing clearly with critically evaluating writing for accuracy, fairness, clarity and grammar.

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

The School lists three direct and seven indirect measures to assess student learning.

Direct Measures: First is a pre-test/post-test of student knowledge related to the eight stated learning goals, with particular focus on writing and language arts. The pre-test is given in Understanding Media, the introductory course required of all majors; the post-test is given in capstone courses, typically taken in the student's final year.

Second is Professional Assessment, which calls for media professionals to evaluate a random selection of student portfolios from each major using rubrics created by the individual programs. These portfolios include cover letters, résumés, and representative samples of student work within the major. The assessments occur in a variety of classes, but most notably and consistently in First Amendment Studies, Advanced Reporting, Photojournalism Projects, Advanced Broadcast Newswriting, and Television Program Production.

Third is Performance Evaluations, in which external reviewers evaluate student work for competency, style, and adherence to the eight learning goals. Performance Evaluations occur in Advanced Broadcast News, Advanced Photojournalism, and Advanced Reporting.

Indirect Measures: The assessment plan lists the following indirect measures used in assessment: Retention rates, graduation rates, employment rates and patterns, contest and competition performance, exit surveys, post-graduate surveys, and internship/coop evaluations. It offers no further detail about these measures.

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

Journalism and mass communication professionals are engaged in assessment through two direct measures: Professional Assessment of student portfolios and Performance Evaluations of student work.

The Professional Assessment of student portfolio occurs in several classes, but the plan specifically mentions five courses: First Amendment Studies, Advanced Reporting, Photojournalism Projects, Advanced Broadcast Newswriting, and Television Program Production. Professionals working in the media industry, including alumni, evaluate student work using a rubric specific to the student's program.

For Performance Evaluations, external reviewers evaluate student work in three courses. Work in Advanced Broadcast News is evaluated by external reviewers, whose qualifications are not specified. In Advanced Photojournalism, assigned mentors, who generally are photojournalism professionals, evaluate student work. News sources themselves evaluate the work of students in Advanced Reporting. A rubric is being developed for these reviews that address ACEJMC's professional values and competencies.

(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.

The School collects data from assessment activities, but it is not consistent across programs. Faculty in the Photojournalism major are most consistent in collecting assessments of student work and student portfolios, particularly through professional review by its PAC. However, the other two majors lag behind. Journalism has made some efforts with Performance Evaluations, particularly in recent years, but in some years produced no assessment data at all. Assessment within the Broadcasting major has been informal and rarely has been documented.

The School has used assessment information to improve its curriculum and instruction, and provides several examples of how it has closed the loop. However, there is no detailed compilation or analysis of results and thus actions tend to be driven by impressions and intuition rather than hard data.

The current assessment plan is on its first cycle of implementation, having been approved in October 2022. Assessments prior to that were inconsistent, and when they did take place, data are either missing or still in raw form, with no synthesis or summary of findings, as well as no continuity or comparison year over year. They were not included with the self-study and had to be solicited by the site team chair.

The direct measures of portfolio and performance reviews are conducted by the Professional Advisory Committees. Both of these bring students and professionals together one-on-one for a review of resumes and portfolio pieces. These reviews offer rich, substantive feedback to students about their work, and faculty receive this feedback alongside the students. However, this data is not consistently captured in tangible reports that faculty can reference when developing curriculum.

Faculty members referred to several direct changes made to the curriculum as the result of comments made in professional reviews of student work, and the self-study lists five curricular changes derived from assessment. These changes include the reactivation of a mothballed course in Broadcasting, the addition of writing skills in a first-year course, the addition of a design class in Journalism, greater flexibility in the Broadcasting major, and revisions to photojournalism courses. Additionally, two process changes were listed, including performing an earlier version of portfolio assessments in Photojournalism and the establishment of a School writing center.

However, the evidence for these changes is not always present in the assessment data shared.

The unit has a clear appreciation for assessment and values its ability to shape curriculum. However, the summary data are difficult to discern and difficult to connect to curricular revisions.

SUMMARY:

A recently adopted assessment plan seeks to organize assessment into a regular process for all majors in the School. However, the plan is short on details regarding implementation, oversight, timelines, and the use of data; it also fails to explain its indirect measures. The use of the unit's Professional Advisory Committees brings rich feedback to students and faculty, but that data is not consistently formalized in a report for all majors. The clearest failure here is inconsistency in assessment activities and reporting. Ultimately, the lack of clear assessment data reporting stymies the unit's ability to effectively show it is closing the loop, although anecdotal evidence indicates the process does happen.

Overall evaluation: NON-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 School of Media has a written diversity plan adopted in 2015 and updated twice during the review period, most recently in October 2022. The plan includes DEI goals and implementation strategies in the areas of faculty staffing, student enrollment, curriculum and working/learning environment.

The diversity plan defines diversity as “a variety of perspectives from different racial, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds collaborating in a common space.” The plan defines equity and inclusion as “the commitment to ensuring diverse communities receive support to achieve equal footing in order to succeed and are not excluded for reasons relating to their diversity.”

The School has a standing Diversity Committee which meets at least once a semester to review the plan for possible revisions and monitor progress toward goals.

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

A link to the School’s diversity plan is prominently displayed in the About Us section of the School’s website.

(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 School’s curriculum begins with two freshmen courses – Understanding Media Content and Media Content, Collaboration, and Community – taken by all pre-majors. Students must earn at least a C to be admitted to a major. Syllabi for these courses clearly include diversity and inclusion learning outcomes that are achieved through class discussions and assignments.

In 2016, following a noncompliance finding on the ACEJMC diversity standard, the School created a Media Diversity course required of all students in its majors. That course also meets a university general education requirement on diversity. Students may select an alternative course from an approved list of related courses offered across the College.

The School’s Diversity Committee developed four Cultural Communications Proficiencies (CCPs) as a way to analyze diversity learning outcomes and class content. The CCPs are: 1-Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race-ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in

domestic society; 2-Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts; 3-Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications; 4-Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

Diversity Committee members then conducted an audit of School syllabi and had discussions with faculty members about content that met the CCPs in their classes. In an Appendix, the results of that audit indicate that 18 School courses meet at least three of the four Cultural Communications Proficiencies. The 18 include all of the School-required courses and many of the required courses for each major.

A site team review of syllabi from required courses across the three majors found eight out of 10 included a diversity statement that reads in part: “My intent in this course is that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served in this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity students bring to class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit.”

Nearly all syllabi reviewed listed all the ACEJMC professional values and competencies, and six in 10 listed the diversity competency as one of the learning outcomes of the course, achieved through topics raised in the course, grading rubrics, readings and assignments.

Students told the site team that two assignments were particularly eye-opening: a Journalism writing assignment in which they critically analyzed stories with racial aspects looking for conscious and unconscious bias; and a Photography class project that randomly assigned each student a minority photographer and required the student to analyze the photographer’s style and create a photo imitating that style. The self-study also noted multiple assignments involving immigrant populations that come to Bowling Green because of its status as a designated refugee resettlement city. During the self-study years, the predominant immigrant groups came from Bosnia and Afghanistan.

In discussions with students many, including students of color, said open and frank conversations about media coverage and the role of the media in racial conflict are common in classes. They said that while these discussions have sometimes been uncomfortable, they have helped them recognize bias in news stories and other content as well as their own unconscious biases.

In a site team meeting with stakeholders, participants said they have been impressed by students’ willingness and ability to take on difficult topics in sensitive and nuanced ways. One production director at a public media station described the work of several broadcasting students on a sensitive documentary about a lynching. He described the students as professional and nuanced in their interactions with interviewees, fearless about tackling the project and innovative in suggesting additional perspectives.

Another stakeholder described photo students working for him as proactive in seeking out diverse people in their photos and knowing where to find subjects who can broaden the perspectives of their visual storytelling.

(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.

The School acknowledges that its greatest challenge has been recruiting and retaining diverse faculty. Since the last accreditation, the School has lost eight female faculty members, three of whom were women of color. One retired and the others reportedly left for better opportunities and higher salaries.

During this period, the School also lost faculty lines, limiting its ability to hire new and diverse faculty. The current full-time faculty includes one white woman, one Black man and nine white men (one is an LGBTQ, disabled veteran). The School had six part-time/adjunct faculty members teaching in the 2021-2022 school year: two white women, two Black women and two white men. That represents a significant improvement from 2015, when there were no adjuncts of color.

The School demonstrated intentional efforts to hire diverse faculty when lines were available but was mostly unsuccessful. Since the last accreditation review, the School hired four white males (one of whom is LGBTQ and a disabled veteran), one Black male, and one Asian female (who left after two years). Offers were declined by two Black men and a white woman, with salaries reported as the major reason.

The hiring pools were diverse for all positions, yielding 24 women, nine of whom were finalists for the positions, and 15 people of color, six of whom were finalists for the positions. The School has a current open search for an assistant professor of Journalism. The School Director expressed a strong commitment to fill that position with a person of color and a woman.

The budget for the faculty searches was \$2,500 each, including the costs of bringing in candidates for interviews. That limited paid advertising, but the positions were posted in all the major journalism and minority journalism organizations as well as through the women's and minority divisions/commissions of AEJMC and BEA. Faculty members also made significant efforts to recruit candidates.

The School also conducted four separate searches for a director. The advertising and recruiting budget for that position was more substantial and yielded two women and one Asian man as the faculty and Dean's first choices for the job. All three turned down offers made to them. A member of two of those failed searches said the two women candidates were quite enthusiastic about coming to the School, but the salary offer was not feasible.

The School Director recently requested two new faculty lines to hire a Black woman and a Black man, both with long affiliations with the School. The two would have a substantial impact on the diversity of the faculty and would bring extensive professional expertise and teaching experience to the School's highest student interest areas, broadcast journalism and podcasting, and sports journalism. The Black woman currently teaches part time in the School and is highly visible as the supervisor of WKU Public Media's student radio station. The Dean of the College is considering the request.

(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 School of Media's student population mirrors the demographics of the state of Kentucky, its designated service population. Compared with the state, the School has slightly higher percentages of Black students (9.9% vs 8.6%), Hispanic/Latino students (4.6% vs 4.2%), and Asian students (2.0% vs 1.7%), a significantly lower percentage of mixed race students (3.0% vs. 10.2%) and a lower percentage of white students (79.9% vs 83.5%).

While the School lacks a comprehensive recruitment plan, it actively participates in College and university recruiting events and hosts a number of visits and tours for potential students each year.

External recruitment has targeted high schools in Kentucky and Tennessee with substantial enrollments of students of color as well as organizations that serve such populations. For example, a group from Prominent Youth of America's Louisville chapter visited the School last year, and during the site visit, a dozen high school students involved with the Black Male Scholars program spent the day at the School. Broadcast faculty members reached out to a predominantly minority high school in Lexington and a rural high school outside of Bowling Green, both of which have broadcasting programs. Students were invited to visit the School and faculty plan to host workshops in the schools as a next step.

The School also developed a Summer Media Workshop designed to bring a diverse group of high school students to campus to experience its programs, tour its facilities and work with faculty. The initial two workshops were canceled because of COVID; the first workshop was held in summer 2022. Sixteen students attended, including four from underrepresented groups. Three of the four high school seniors who attended enrolled in the university, two in the School. One of those was a student of color.

A second summer workshop, Xposure, has been sponsored by the independent WKU Student Publications for the past 37 years. It specifically targets students of color and low-income high school students. While it is small, bringing in a dozen students from across the country annually, it has been successful in attracting students to the university and the School. From 2012-2019 (before COVID shuttered the program for two years), 36% of participants enrolled in the university, with the majority coming to the School of Media. Most of the coaches in the program are School alumni who work at national media outlets.

Because nearly a third of the university's enrollment consists of first-generation students, many of whom come from underrepresented groups, the School established a Living Learning Community specifically tied to its majors. First-year students in the community live in the same dormitory and interact through classes and extracurricular activities, aiding the transition to college and retention.

The School also joined in a College initiative to create the Academic Journey Mentorship Program for students of color. In 2021, the first year of the program, three students of color from the School of Media were selected as peer mentors. They were paired with faculty mentors and received training on how to connect and engage with underrepresented students in the school. Additionally, a faculty member managed a series of one-day and two-day workshops for the Educational Talent Search, a program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, that focused specifically on underrepresented communities.

Underrepresented students are encouraged to get involved with student media and other organizations as a way to further integrate them into the School and increase retention. The School notes that more than 20 women and minority students currently work on the student-produced television newscast and at the student radio station. All four executive producers of the student TV news and sports shows are women, including a Latina, and the student chapter of the National Press Photographers Association has had female and minority officers since 2016. Under the leadership of the School's sole Black faculty member, the School is in the process of certifying a new student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists.

The retention data for students of color shows increasing success over the past seven years. In 2015, the School retained 54% of students of color from their freshman to sophomore year, compared with 58% for the university and 32% vs. 43.5% after three years. In Fall of 2019 and 2020, retention rates rose, exceeding the university by as much as 15 percentage points (2019 1st year: 77% vs. 73%; 3rd year, 59% vs. 45.5%. In 2020 1st year: 70% vs. 66%, 3rd year: 67% vs. 54%).

(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.

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.

The School's climate is one of equity, collaboration, understanding and inclusion. Three faculty members come from traditionally disenfranchised backgrounds (one Black man, one woman, and one member of the LGBTQ community), and all three said they feel empowered at work and their voices are heard. The School has a genuinely collegial faculty, and students interviewed by the site team said they feel included and respected. Several students of color as well as LGBTQ students said they feel similarly empowered. They also said instructors are informed about racial issues and handle them with sensitivity during classroom discussions. When asked if they felt they could bring their whole selves to the School, the students responded with an emphatic "Yes!"

The School of Media complies with the official WKU Discrimination and Harassment Policy, which details what constitutes discrimination and harassment, the processes for reporting and investigating complaints and corrective action. The School also works with the Student Access Resource Center to provide accommodation, services and advocacy for students with disabilities. The School Diversity committee monitors compliance with both of these offices. The self-study indicates that any issues are first handled internally and there have been no discrimination or harassment complaints in the last five years.

By university policy, faculty and staff are required to report any incidents of sexual harassment and discriminatory behavior. All university employees are required to complete training in Title IX. Several School of Media faculty members also have completed external diversity training.

The School’s accommodations for those with disabilities can best be described with an example. A student who uses a wheelchair and has limited use of one arm is pursuing a degree in broadcasting. A Broadcasting faculty member devised and built a tripod attached to the student’s wheelchair. The student now regularly shoots video for the student television newscast and sports program. The faculty member also found a work-around for this student and others with mobility issues to access the student television studio, which is the only classroom, lab or other space that is accessible only by stairs.

Academic year: 2021 – 2022 Full-time

Group	faculty		% of total faculty	
	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African American			1	8.3%
White	1	9.1%	9	81.8%
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
*Hispanic/Latino (any race)				
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander				
Two or more races				
Other race				
International (any race)				

*A Latina faculty member also taught in the accredited programs during this time period, but she split her time with Film. She has since been reassigned fully to Film.

Academic year: 2021 – 2022

Group	Part-time/adjunct faculty		% of total faculty	
	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total Faculty
Black/African American	2	33.3%		
White	2	33.3%	2	33.3%
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)				
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander				
Two or more races				
Other race				
International (any race)				

SUMMARY:

The School's Diversity Plan is public and lists goals and actions to achieve them. The curriculum offers multiple diversity touchpoints in the three majors accredited by ACEJMC, including a required diversity course and diversity-focused assignments in many courses. Faculty members are confident and capable in their ability to produce culturally literate communicators. However, the faculty members are largely white and male, with only one woman and one Black man in a faculty of 11, despite multiple efforts to make diverse hires. The School recruits, retains and graduates a student population consistently as diverse, and in some cases more diverse, than the university and the population of Kentucky. Outreach efforts to high school students include two prominent programs targeting students of color. The School's climate is one of collaboration, understanding and a celebration of diversity. The example of how far the School has gone to accommodate one student's disability is indicative of a willingness to go above and beyond to make sure all students feel like they belong in the School.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

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.

Full-time faculty in the School teach the vast majority of courses, ranging from 76% to 100% over the review period. Full-time faculty members have a 4/3 teaching load, a total of 21 credit hours for the academic year. Credit hour reductions are granted for administrative duties or research on a case-by-case basis. Full-time faculty members are actively involved in curriculum development and oversee course design.

Faculty service is broad, including academic advising, student organization leadership, committee work, assessment activities and professional engagement. As support staff has been reduced, faculty have been called on to cover the gap. The School and the College both have committees dedicated to addressing faculty workload issues, which have compounded during times of budget austerity and the pandemic.

(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.

Two faculty members in the degree programs being reviewed hold terminal degrees (one MFA and one Ph.D.), while the remainder have master's degrees. Six faculty members have achieved tenure; five are full Professors and one is an Associate Professor. Three are Assistant Professors on the tenure track. The remaining two faculty members hold the titles of Professional in Residence and Instructor.

The makeup of the faculty reflects the teaching mission of the university; indeed, the School's faculty has deep professional experience, with a combined 151 years of professional experience before transitioning to academia. The faculty have robust relationships with the industry, particularly through the National Press Photographers Association as well as AEJMC, BEA, NABJ and SPJ.

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

The university prioritizes teaching in promotion and tenure. Research, creative activity or professional activity are a secondary or tertiary priority.

Expectations and criteria for promotion and tenure are clearly defined in the School's Tenure and Promotion Policy, last revised in 2018. The School does not explicitly list non-refereed or non-juried creative works as in its guidelines, despite that type of work being the dominant form of creative scholarship in which faculty engage. However, the Dean and the Director indicated that, in practice, non-juried creative work is considered meritorious of tenure and promotion. The policy is a bit outdated, making reference to the previous name of the unit.

Since the last site visit, one faculty member has been promoted from assistant professor to associate professor, with tenure, and one tenured associate professor has been promoted to tenured professor.

The three assistant professors are assigned mentors within the School and receive feedback and guidance from the Director and the School's Promotion and Tenure Committee. Most assistant professors on the tenure track and associate professors in pursuit of promotion say they feel very supported by the Director and other senior faculty in their path toward tenure and promotion.

During the period since the last site visit, three faculty members have received one-term sabbaticals to focus on creative scholarship, including one professor who is developing an archive of the 47-year history of the Mountain Workshops.

Faculty get other support through the university's Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, which offers assistance with course design, instructional technologies and teaching approaches. The School also provides \$1,000 a year for each faculty member to travel in support of traditional research, creative work, conference and workshop attendance, and teaching enhancement.

(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.

In line with university expectations, faculty members are largely engaged in creative and/or professional activities. Traditional research and publication are relatively rare. This is reflected in the table of scholarship, research, creative and professional activity included in the self-study, which includes a total of 214 non-refereed creative works, such as work presented at film festivals, art galleries, museums, private and public exhibitions and other events. Second on the list is 99 podcast episodes, and third is 11 juried creative works.

Assistant professors produced five articles in refereed journals, three scholarly books, nine invited academic papers and one book review. Faculty also produced five articles in non-refereed publications. The level of traditional research is expected to increase with the addition of a Ph.D. to the faculty in August 2022.

The faculty has received 13 internal grants, one external grant and 43 awards and honors. For example, one faculty won a first-place award in the Kentucky News Pictures of the Year competition in 2021, while others have won university awards in advising and teaching. One faculty member won the NPPA Robin F. Garland Educator Award. Grants have largely been in support of creative projects, funding equipment and travel.

The Dean of the College expressed support for what he terms "creative scholarship" and indicated the output of the faculty is well within expectations.

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

Administrators and faculty from other units on campus spoke positively about the School’s faculty and students and said the School is highly visible to the public. They said the faculty is known for its creative output, particularly in photography, and that students are “ubiquitous” in the community. Students are present at nearly every sporting event and festival in a five-county area. “When you move to Bowling Green,” one faculty member from another unit commented, “it’s in the handbill: You’ll probably be photographed by a student.”

These faculty members said they enjoy having School of Media students in their classes, describing them as outgoing, participatory, confident and fearless. They said they write well, know how to tell stories and turn work in on time.

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				Totals (14)
		Full Professors (5)	Associate Professors (1)	Assistant Professors (7)	Other Faculty** (1)	
Awards and Honors	43	14	23	6		43
Grants Received Internal	13	9		4		13
Grants Received External	1			1		1
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	3			3		3
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored						
Books Edited						
Book Chapters						
Monographs						
Articles in Refereed Journals	5			5		5
Refereed Conference Papers						
Invited Academic Papers	9			9		9

Encyclopedia Entries						
Book Reviews	1			1		1
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	5		2	3		5
Juried Creative Works	11	11				11
Non-juried Creative Works	214	179	13	3	19	214
Other (Podcast Episodes)	99	7	92			99

SUMMARY:

The faculty has robust professional experience that informs and elevates their teaching and creative scholarship. The School’s Tenure and Promotion guidelines are outdated, with less emphasis on teaching than is applied in practice and no credit for non-juried creative work, which is the bulk of faculty creative scholarship. Despite a significant decline in the number of faculty, traditional scholarship increased slightly. Faculty members are engaged with professional organizations and the professional media and are respected within the university and the larger community.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

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.

At the university level, all freshmen attend TOP (Topper Orientation Program) at which faculty from all colleges are present. There are four-year curriculum plans (recommended course sequences) available for each major at the outset of their college experience and on the School's website. Students have online access to a progress report called a degree audit that indicates if they are meeting the School and university requirements to graduate on schedule.

Students typically meet with their advisors at mid-semester, in advance of priority registration for the next semester. This timing assures that students have planned appropriately for the semester ahead and are on track for graduation.

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

For more than two decades, the School employed an academic advisor for its majors. That position was eliminated and not replaced in Fall 2021. Students entering the programs are now advised through the university's Advising & Career Development Center until they declare a major (although students are given a faculty "contact" in their presumed major). Once a major is declared, students are assigned faculty advisors. Given the widely varied enrollments in each major, faculty advising loads vary dramatically, from 10 to 12 students to as many as 40 to 60. In some cases where faculty members have heavy advising loads, a stipend is provided.

While faculty members were initially unhappy about allowing someone outside of the School to advise its students, the arrangement has worked out relatively well, according to the Director. The advisor who counsels most of the School's incoming freshmen is a School of Media graduate who works closely with faculty. In general, faculty members embraced their advising roles. As one said, "It's unbelievably important to the student, but also for us. Good advising is key to retention."

Students who met with members of the site team were unanimous in their praise of the advising they have received. They find great value in being advised by faculty who know them and their work and who understand what they need to do to prepare for their chosen professions.

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

The School keeps students informed primarily through announcements sent via email listservs specific to each major, with public information posted to social media. A few announcements are made via School-wide listservs. The School's strategic plan, diversity plan and assessment plan are posted on the website; all three were drafted in 2014 and 2015 and revised in 2022.

(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 School of Media offers a number of journalism-related clubs and organizations for its students. The clubs, each with an assigned faculty advisor, are:

- National Press Photographers Association
- Radio Television Digital News Association
- Society of Professional Journalists
- National Association of Broadcasters
- National Association of Black Journalists (application in process)

Other opportunities include:

- WWHR, the student-run alternative radio station, offers weekly air shifts, digital audio production and editing and remote broadcasts.
- WKUJournalism.com is Journalism's digital magazine featuring students' original work.
- In addition, selected students also participate in the annual Mountain Workshops, a well-known photography, picture-editing and multimedia workshop during which they work side-by-side with journalism professionals from around the country.
- Students often produce work in classes that is published in one of the university's student media outlets or by the School.
- Student media, which include the College Heights Herald student newspaper, the Talisman magazine, and the Cherry Creative branded content studio, are all operated by Student Publications, which is independent of the School but closely associated with it. (The Director of Student Publications teaches in the School and an estimated half of the School's majors participate in student media at some point in their studies.)
- Students in the Broadcasting major can participate in the weekly television newscast (News Channel 12), which is produced, written, shot and anchored by students. The Extra Point is a weekly sports program produced by students about WKU athletics and sports in surrounding communities. Both News Channel 12 and the Extra Point are simulcast live to campus cable and Facebook Live. They are then rebroadcast the same night on WKU PBS.

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

Retention and graduation data for the School compare favorably to those of the university as a whole. The School's freshman-to-sophomore retention rate was 70% compared to the university's 66% in fall 2020. The School's four-year graduation rate was 48.1%, and its six-year graduate rate was 56.8%. That compares to the university's four-year graduation rate of 42.4% and its six-year graduation rate of 55%.

The School has used retention and graduation data to make decisions regarding the introduction of content in courses. As one faculty member explained it, if difficult material is introduced too early, retention rates can decline.

SUMMARY:

School majors meet with a faculty advisor each semester, in advance of the next semester's course selections. A degree audit report is available online for students to chart their progress toward graduation. Despite a varied and sometimes heavy advising load, faculty members take seriously the need for, and the benefits of, advising their students, and students appear to be satisfied with the advising they receive. Students have many opportunities to get involved through clubs, student media and other organizations. Retention numbers have been stable and compare favorably to those of the university as a whole.

Overall evaluation: 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 School's overall budget (operations and salaries) was \$1.08 million in 2021-2022, down about 10% from the previous year and down about 20% from the year preceding that. The reduced funding is largely the result of university-wide budget cuts that followed enrollment declines.

About 70% of the budget is devoted to salaries. As teaching lines were lost and some faculty members were moved to another department, the amount budgeted for salaries dropped 50% from the beginning of the review period. (It should be noted that enrollment dropped during this period as well).

The operating budget is derived primarily from an annual college allocation and from student program fees. The current operating budget totals about \$275,000, a reduction from about \$350,000 at the beginning of the review period (a 21% drop). The largest portion of the cuts have come in annual College allocations. The School's current allocation is 40% less than last year, although some of that is offset by other sources – primarily program fees.

The School has not had an endowed fund in the past but is in the process of creating a small endowment (about \$165,000) for discretionary spending.

(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 School has lost significant financial resources, it appears to have sufficient funds with which to operate and is treated fairly when compared to other units within the College: The self-study acknowledges this by stating that the School of Media “remains the best-funded unit in the College on a raw dollar basis and retains the budget necessary to function and to support our program and students. We are a long way from the lavish budgets of the past, but not yet at a cause for panic.”

Continued budget cuts, however, would be detrimental. On the positive side, the merger later this year with the Department of Communication will bring additional resources (although the amount has not been specified), and the Dean of the College has indicated his support of the expanded enterprise.

Another concern is a new zero-based budgeting system the College has recently put in place under which schools and departments submit a detailed, line-item budget that is locked in place months before the beginning of the fiscal year. Once its budget is approved, the School cannot deviate from any line item without going through a “tedious” approval process at the college level. According to the Director, the new system significantly limits the unit's ability to respond to unexpected costs, such as broken equipment, or unanticipated opportunities.

The School has somewhat more flexibility in spending revenue derived from student program fees, which represent about 35% of the operating budget.

The self-study also complains of a “gross imbalance of allocations across the units of the School, adversely affecting the ACEJMC-accredited programs.” Specifically, Film was awarded nearly 70% of program-specific funds in the most recent line-item budget, although it accounts for about 40% of all majors in the School. This imbalance has been brought to the attention of the Dean.

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

The School of Media is housed in Jody Richards Hall, which was built in 2003 and is shared with the university’s Division of Information Technology.

The building is attractive and spacious, with a three-story atrium, three lecture classrooms, two small lecture/conference rooms, six computer lab/classrooms, a 275-seat auditorium, administrative offices and offices for faculty and staff. The building also includes a photo gallery displaying work produced in the annual Mountain Workshops, a fully equipped photo studio, a print lab, a broadcast lighting lab, a podcasting room, a video screening room, and a newsroom and control room for the student radio station. The School controls scheduling of its labs and classrooms as well as the auditorium.

There are plentiful conference rooms and large gathering spaces for students to congregate. Stunning photographs, many taken by School faculty members, are on display throughout the building. An entire wall on the second floor displays the many Hearst awards the School has won, and Pulitzer Prizes awarded to alumni are attractively celebrated on the first floor.

Each of the three majors is situated on separate floors, with faculty offices, conference rooms, equipment checkout areas and student workspaces.

The building is open to students 24-7 except during holidays and some intersession periods. Whenever the building is open, students have access to a large university computer lab on the first floor, but students prefer the School’s labs, which offer specialized software. Those labs are open during designated hours when the School is able to staff them. An Avid lab, for example, is open Sunday through Friday, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Lab hours are expanded at the end of each term, when demand is highest.

The student television station and two radio production studios are housed in the Academic Complex adjacent to the main building, which also is used by WKU’s NPR and PBS stations. This is where students produce a weekly television newscast and sports show. It contains a digital television studio with three HD cameras and a control room with digital servers, sound board, switchers and HD graphics. A television newsroom has four edit bays and a weather center equipped to go live in the event of severe weather.

Student publications are housed across the street in the Adams-Whitaker Student Publications building, built specifically for that purpose. It has offices, a large newsroom and a branded content agency and is operated by the Student Publications department.

While space is generous, the School will need to make room for an estimated 22 new faculty from the Department of Communication later this year. That may require reconfigurations to create more faculty offices as well as additional classroom spaces. Some faculty expressed concern about the loss of community spaces dedicated to the current majors. Some also are concerned that the new configuration and merger could harm the culture and unity the School currently enjoys.

(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

Computer labs are equipped with either Macs or PCs. The School uses both Avid and Adobe editing software. Computers are replaced about every five years.

There are three equipment checkout rooms on different floors of the building. Students can check out equipment for photo classes that includes lighting kits, lenses and some camera bodies, although photography students are expected to provide their own DSLR or mirrorless cameras.

A broadcast equipment checkout lab is well stocked with a range of cameras, audio recorders, tripods and handheld and lav mics. Equipment is up to date. The most recent purchase consisted of 10 4K Sony mirrorless cameras.

A third equipment room is stocked with Canon Rebel cameras that are used by students in the introductory Media Content, Collaboration and Community course.

The School stocks Sony, Canon and Nikon cameras, lenses and video cameras.

Students reserve equipment through an online portal. In general, equipment is checked out for 24 hours at a time except on Fridays when students may check out equipment for the weekend. Students in the introductory Media Content, Collaboration and Community are assigned cameras and supporting equipment that they keep for a two-week interval during the course.

Students said there are rarely problems accessing the equipment they need and that it is in good working order.

While equipment compares very favorably to other journalism programs, the self-study expresses concerns that the School may not be able to keep up with needed upgrades and replacements, given the tight budget situation. Additionally, the School, which prides itself on giving students a technologically advanced education, is currently not in a position to substantially add cutting-edge equipment, such as mirrorless photography, drones and augmented reality

SUMMARY:

The School has outstanding facilities and equipment that compare favorably to any in journalism education. As enrollments have declined and degree programs have been moved out, the School has experienced significant budget cuts in faculty lines, staff positions and resources available for operations. A new budgeting process limits the amount of flexibility the Director has to meet unexpected needs. At the same time, however, the School is funded better than most other programs, and there is general agreement that it has sufficient funds to meet its needs. In addition, the School will see an influx of students, faculty and resources later this year when the Department of Communication is folded into the School.

Overall evaluation: 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 School of Media communicates with alumni primarily through social media, using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. It maintains an active Facebook page and Twitter account with postings about current and future events and student activities as well as a few alumni updates. The Instagram account has few posts and is not up to date. There also are separate social media pages for the Journalism and Photojournalism majors as well as for student broadcast media.

The School developed Professional Advisory Committees, primarily made up of alumni, for each of its majors. However, all except the Photojournalism PAC lost membership during the pandemic and have been inactive for the past few years. Committees are being revived, and the School is initiating the creation of an advisory committee for the School as a whole.

In meetings with the site team, alumni indicated they frequently communicate with the School as many maintain long-term relationships with faculty members. They review student work, speak to classes and mentor students. Much of the interaction, however, is informal.

Faculty members are actively involved in all the major professional journalism organizations, and several serve as judges for state and national competitions sponsored by those organizations. The School covers the cost of membership dues for faculty to join one association.

(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 communication issues of public consequence and concern.

School of Media faculty members serve as presenters and organizers of professional training programs and workshops and are actively involved in judging state and national media competitions for NPPA, SPJ, AP, NATAS, and RTDNA. In addition, they serve on the state and local boards of these organizations.

One faculty member serves as president of the Bowling Green-Warren County NAACP. During the site team visit, he made a number of media appearances and was quoted widely about a controversy that erupted when a police officer involved in the shooting death of Breonna Taylor spoke to a Republican Women's Club of South Central Kentucky.

The School also provides leadership through professional workshops, one of which, the Mountain Workshops, attracts national and international journalism professionals for photojournalism training.

The Gaines Lecture Series brings noted journalists to the university and local community to lecture on their reporting of major stories and events. The journalists also visit classes.

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

The School's faculty members are engaged with the local community in multiple ways, including providing media consultation to an area church, local businesses and the Bowling Green Police Department. They also volunteer with non-media organizations in the community and across the state.

The students, supported by faculty and staff supervision, provide local news and sports coverage as well as opinion content and lifestyle stories for the campus and community through multiple digital, print, audio and video media outlets.

(e) The unit supports scholastic journalism.

The School provides strong support for scholastic journalism in the region and state.

The School hosts the Kentucky High School Media Institute, which offers programs for high school students and media teachers. Faculty and alumni lead the training. Events organized through the institute also include a one-day conference, Media Scholars Day, and the WKU High School Media Awards competition.

The School also hosts week-long summer media workshops for high school students. Each year, at least one of its faculty members present at the Governor's Scholars Program and Governor's School of the Arts, which are six-week intensive summer programs for high school students.

SUMMARY:

The School of Media brings many local, state, and national media professionals to campus and the community, many of whom are alumni. The diversity among the speakers provides multiple perspectives on the current media environment and issues, promoting campus and community discussion. The School and its faculty also enhance the profession through participation in competition judging, professional organizations and workshops.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths:

- The curriculum is up-to-date and reflects professional demands for multimedia expertise.
- The School excels in providing opportunities for its students to “learn by doing” both in and out of the classroom.
- The faculty is highly involved with and supportive of students.
- The facility and equipment are exceptional.
- After five years of interim directors, the School now has a permanent Director who is well regarded and equipped to lead the School forward.
- The School will expand significantly when it absorbs the Department of Communication.

Weaknesses:

- Assessment is inconsistent and inadequate.
- The faculty is largely white and male.
- Student enrollment has declined significantly.
- Funding has been cut significantly, pointing to the need for new revenue sources.

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

Standard 3: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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.

- The current assessment plan needs to be revised in accordance with ACEJMC’s “A Guide to Assessment of Learning Outcomes for ACEJMC Accreditation,” to include descriptions of direct and indirect measures, a timeline, an implementation plan, and a plan for using the data.
- Assessment data needs to be captured, analyzed and reported annually.
- The School needs to close the loop on assessment data by showing how specific assessment results lead to curricular and programmatic changes.

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 the recommendation.

6) If the unit was previously accredited, summarize 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 previous site team found the School in non-compliance on Diversity and Inclusiveness, citing its failure to more completely diversify full-time and adjunct faculty. While the diversity of part-time faculty has significantly improved, little progress has been made in achieving diversity among the full-time faculty. This is due in part to women and faculty of color departing for higher-paying jobs. The School has attempted repeatedly to hire faculty of color, and its most recent hire is a Black man. It has prioritized gender and race in an open search for a faculty member and has submitted an unsolicited request to hire a Black woman and a Black man into permanent faculty roles, despite an absence of approved lines.

Weaknesses noted in the previous report:

- Inability to increase levels of faculty diversity in either full-time or part-time faculty: The school has made a conscious effort to enhance diversity and has taken action through part-time faculty while trying to recruit and retain diverse full-time faculty.
- Anemic efforts in scholarship/creative activity: Faculty scholarly activity has increased somewhat, but the School's focus is on creative output, which is supported by university administration.
- Silos among many of the five accredited majors despite efforts to achieve convergence: The faculty coalesced after Advertising and Public Relations were moved to another unit on campus. The three remaining majors, all having a journalistic focus, have found synergy and collaboration in many ways, including a robust, shared, first-year core.
- Continued heavy teaching and advising demands on faculty that jeopardize their ability to perform at optimal levels: While teaching and advising loads remain heavy, a number of faculty members have received course reductions or stipends for non-teaching activities. Faculty have embraced their advising roles.
- Inability to capitalize fully on the strength of the alumni through communication at the school level: While much more could be done, alumni who interacted with the site team indicated they have a strong and positive relationship with the School and interact frequently with faculty and students.
- A student radio station that needs attention and leadership to fulfill its potential: Responsibility for the radio station has been transferred to WKU Public Broadcasting.

7) The self-study is the heart of the accreditation process. Often the quality of that document determines the degree of success of the site visit. Summarize the team members' judgment of the self-study.

The team found the self-study's concise writing and frank tone welcoming and refreshing. The document was well-edited and free of errors. However, some pieces of information, such as assessment data, were missing and had to be solicited by the site team.