

**2023-24**  
**Revisit Team Report**  
**for Accreditation in Journalism**  
**and Mass Communications**

**Name of Accredited Unit:** School of Media and Journalism (MDJ)

**Name of Institution:** Kent State University

**Name of Unit Administrator:** Emily T. Metzgar, Ph.D., Director

**Date of Original Site Visit:** Oct. 10-13, 2021

**Revisit Date:** Oct. 23-25, 2023

**Revisit Team Chair:** Jennifer Sizemore



**Revisit Team Member:** Dorothy Bland, Ph.D.

DocuSigned by:  
  
8B8C99AF8880400...

Revisit Team's Recommendation: **Reaccreditation**

**1. List each standard found in noncompliance and the reasons as cited in the original team report. (Add additional pages as necessary.)**

Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

- Lack of racial diversity in the full-time and part-time faculty
- Lack of curricular Diversity, Equity and Inclusion content in courses throughout the curriculum, resulting in a lack of awareness among students of DEI issues and concepts

Summary from 2021:

While the student body is appropriately diverse for the service area, that is the bright spot in this standard. In the last site team report, a lack of diversity on the faculty in the unit, both full-time and part-time, was called out as a weakness. It remains one. With 10.75 opportunities to hire full-time faculty since 2015, 1.75 openings were filled with people of color and the other nine went to white candidates. The candidate pools for those searches were not appropriately diverse and in one year, no people of color applied for any part-time positions. While the curriculum has one required course that focuses on diversity, DEI lessons, exercises and assignments are not incorporated across the curriculum. In addition, multiple student groups responded with a mix of blank stares and critiques of any diversity issues regularly reflected in their coursework.

**2. For each standard that had been in noncompliance, provide a summary of the revisit team's findings regarding corrections. Provide an evaluation of compliance or noncompliance. (Present a separate narrative response for each standard in noncompliance. Add additional pages as necessary.)**

Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

Summary of revisit findings:

In Spring 2022, after the site team's finding of noncompliance on Standard 3 and the Council's decision to place the school on provisional status, the unit, calling these judgments "humbling," spun into action. That same semester, the school's Diversity and Globalization Committee drafted and the faculty approved a revised diversity statement that calls for increased hiring of diverse faculty, increased inclusion of diversity and inclusion content in the curriculum, more work to create a sense of belonging for students from marginalized communities – and the creation of metrics to measure progress in those areas.

Statements of commitment can be merely words on paper, but Kent State's School of Media and Journalism seems to have viewed those words as an immediate, actionable roadmap. As the school writes in its revisit self-study, "We have worked to reassert our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEI&B) and to ensure that

these values are infused in all that we do, in the classroom and beyond.” The revisit site team found evidence of not just efforts, but of real progress.

### **Diversity and inclusion in curriculum**

The stop-you-in-your-tracks piece of the progress are the changes to the curriculum. At the 2021 visit, students couldn’t discuss diversity in a meaningful way, and couldn’t even recall it being emphasized in their coursework. Times have changed.

The findings on the curriculum resonated for the faculty, and they felt the urgency to make immediate changes. However, being the scholars they are, they first commissioned a survey of MDJ students to learn their views about diversity and to assess the school’s performance. The survey was conducted by students in a section of Research and Measurement in Ad and PR; its results were shared at a December 2022 faculty meeting and included these findings that echoed what the 2021 site team found:

- Lack of familiarity among MDJ students with the terms diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.
- Belief that an instructor’s introduction of the MDJ’s diversity statement on the first day of class failed to sufficiently convey the importance of these values.
- Dissatisfaction with faculty outsourcing of DEI&B conversations to guest speakers.
- Desire for more explicit discussion of DEI&B in the classroom to help students make the connection between exposure to material in the classroom and its importance in the real world.
- Perception that support for DEI&B was not as strong in MDJ as in other places on campus.

Follow-up work included Director Metzgar meeting with students in small groups and one-on-one, and commissioning of a follow-up survey for faculty derived from the student findings. That survey’s intent was to identify what faculty needed in order for syllabi, course outcomes and the school overall to better reflect its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Some faculty indicated that they had all they needed to move forward with changes; others said they needed help and resources to do so. One relevant thread throughout the survey responses was faculty concern about crossing a line and potentially offending someone. The survey was conducted as the Ohio legislature was discussing legislation that could rein in the discussion of diversity in higher education. No legislation has passed, but the political debate continues and its presence is now part of the reality for all educators at Ohio public institutions.

Despite this landscape, the unit forged on with its efforts to transform its curriculum.

In Fall 2022, the faculty voted to create a new course called Race, Gender, Class and Dis/Ability in Media Environments. It replaces an elective, Managing Media Diversity, and as of 2023-24 is required of all MDJ majors. Its prerequisite is the only previously required course focused on diversity and inclusion, Media, Power and Culture.

The catalog entry for the new course reads:

*“To introduce students to the many facets of diversity in media through the eyes and perspectives of practitioners and audiences. This class takes a critical survey of messages directed at specific members of the mass audience and how these messages help shape the culture through historical, legal, economic, political, social, and artistic influences. Media institutions are examined in terms of how and why diverse content is produced and distributed. Special attention is paid to increasing students’ level of media literacy by examining these messages. Prerequisite: MDJ 20001 Media, Power & Culture.”*

The class follows five guiding questions:

1. How can foundational concepts and approaches enhance our understanding of race, gender, class, and dis/ability in social life and across media environments?
2. How do media and perceptions of race, region(alism), and class influence each other?
3. How does Hollywood advance and undermine issues of representation across race, gender, class, and dis/ability?
4. How do sports media narratives reflect and shape perceptions of race and gender in the United States?
5. How do media and technology enable and/or constrain the ability of individuals and groups to mobilize and advocate for their communities?

The course received formal designation as a university diversity class while the site team was in Kent. This designation can now satisfy the diversity requirement for students from across campus.

The professor who planned and is now teaching the first unit of this class said the students are showing up for the work engaged and excited. While the course will continue to evolve, students expressed support for its concepts and approach. The professor designed and built a beautiful study guide/notebook/keepsake that the class is following along with, helping to make the lessons even more tangible.

Part of the impetus for the creation of this course was an October 2022 seminar with Dr. Earnest Perry, associate dean for Graduate Studies at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. He shared his expertise on embedding DEI in the curriculum, and the faculty was inspired to create this more intensive and practical DEI-centric course to pair with the existing Media, Power and Culture course.

The faculty was also inspired to adjust their own classes to include content that is more explicitly DEI-focused. The list provided by the school of those changes goes on for multiple pages and includes examples of substantive changes in 27 different classes. The number and depth of these curricular adjustments is not only impressive, it seems it will inevitably shift the school’s culture on this all-encompassing issue. Here are just a few examples:

**MDJ 20008 Research & Measurement in Advertising & Public Relations.** This entry-level course teaches students basic qualitative and quantitative research methods by undertaking a research project for a real-world partner. To fully immerse the class in topics related to DEI&B, RMAP now selects clients with this consideration in mind. Some examples in past semesters include a community center (King-Kennedy Community Center, Fall 2022) and a Women's Domestic Violence advocate program (Safer Futures, Spring 2023). In both cases, the partnership has helped increase the number of marginalized voices in the classroom (guest speakers) and deeper consideration and reflection on the DEI&B front. In addition, students are tasked with additional research questions related to diversity. Another component of the course that was added were case studies related to research ethics and diversity, such as the Tuskegee and Guatemala syphilis studies and the discussion of the ethical dimensions related to research.

**MDJ 26001 Writing for Media.** This course, which replaced Writing Across Platforms in Fall 2023, requires a textbook that includes lessons in avoiding stereotyping behaviors to help audiences see undistorted depictions of the persons covered. The class also requires students to interview someone different from them to gauge the subjects' perspectives on how the media covers their communities.

**MDJ 26008 Broadcast Reporting.** A new module on diversity of sources and coverage has been added with dual goals of helping students better understand how sourcing impacts information gathering and the importance of news topics reflecting the diversity of the community. Kent State is used as an example, as the class looks at student body demographic data and applies the data to how different events and topics will impact a variety of audiences within the KSU student population.

**MDJ 31004 Digital Advertising.** A new project that tasks students to design digital identity for a minority-owned business has been added. The project requires students to make client choices that challenge them to think outside their perspectives and background. Students must conduct face-to-face research with the client during the project, design the deliverables, and write a final reflection paper. The unit also includes a discussion of related topics, such as tokenism. Business selections include racial/ethnic minority-owned businesses, LGBTQ+-owned businesses, veteran-owned businesses, women-owned businesses and businesses owned by disabled people.

**MDJ 40095 Advanced Digital Cinematography.** A lecture in this new class covers "Historical Racism, Sexism and Homophobia in Hollywood and Beyond." In addition, students complete an in-class research project focusing on representation of six diverse groups in behind-the-camera jobs, particularly relating to production and camera departments.

**MDJ 40201 PR Practice: Public Affairs.** In Spring 2023, this five-week course was revamped to include a final assignment in which students, working in teams, represented the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the League of United Latin American Citizens, and the National Disability Rights Network. They

were required to speak to at least one national representative from these organizations and at least 10 local constituents from each organization to identify their salient, unaddressed issues. In a final simulation, each team presented the most critical issues facing these groups to the 2024 presidential platform-writing committees of either the national Democratic or Republican parties. At the start of the class, most of the students had never heard of these organizations. Within five weeks, they developed a deeper understanding of the critical issues facing these diverse populations.

**MDJ 45007 Producing for Picture.** A new group presentation assignment, Diversity in Hollywood, calls for students to research a group's representation, or lack of representation, in the entertainment industry over the decades. The groups include Black, female, Latina/o/x, LGBTQ+, Middle Eastern, and Native American and presentations cover both in front of the camera and behind the camera issues. Students cite examples that have both helped and hurt in terms of the representation of their topic group in the presentation.

In addition, large forums like MDJ's signature DEI&B event, the Robert G. McGruder Distinguished Lecture and Awards event and the Dix Media Ethics Lecture series, honor and feature media professionals who have made an impact in diversity. The most recent featured speaker in the Dix series, Mizell Stewart III, recent vice president of news performance, talent and partnerships for Gannett and the USA TODAY Network, joined the faculty as professor-in-residence for the 2023-24 academic year.

And of course faculty regularly invite outside speakers to bring diverse perspectives. Twenty-six of the 91 speakers since Spring 2022 were from diverse backgrounds. Student groups continue to play an important role as well. Groups bringing in diverse subjects and individuals include: Female Filmmakers Initiative; Franklin Advertising Associates; PRSSA.

The revisit site team spent several hours with more than 250 students, and their reactions to the question of diversity issues in their curriculum, coursework and culture were completely different from the reactions at the site visit two years ago, where a representative quote was, "Diversity? Yeah, we have lots of different kinds of classes."

At this visit, students were eloquent when discussing the importance of DEI&B in their classwork, and why and how that will take shape in their professional careers. They also volunteered specific assignments that led them to important learnings. Some seniors even noted that the content features more diversity than when they first arrived at KSU. A senior double major said the emphasis on diversity has "come very far," and that they had "seen the transition" over the past two years.

"Our teachers go above and beyond," to ensure students' understanding the importance of diversity, one student said. "The assignments made me more aware and gave me skills I wouldn't have had," said another. Many students mentioned assignments that insisted they interact with, report on or advise subjects who are not like them. "There is a thread through the classes we all take," said one student.

Another student said students appreciate the faculty's effort to include diversity in advertising classes, citing examples that included international advertising as well as social issues.

The students want even more. Another student expressed concern about issues being addressed without "a lack of intersectionality," as people are multidimensional. Another student asked for "more exploration of Asian, Latino culture and not just Black and white."

Faculty interviewed said the unit has been intentional in addressing DEIB issues, and at least two discussed the Maynard model of Fault Lines training. More than 15 faculty members interviewed on site said the changes in DEI&B culture are reflected in syllabi, class discussions, choice of guest speakers and clients. There is also "more focus on disability/accommodations as a result of the pandemic in visuals and lectures," said one faculty member.

Several faculty members said Ohio Senate Bill 83, the proposed anti-DEI legislation, has had a chilling effect and led to some "anxiety and nervousness," but has not become law in Ohio as of revisit site team's visit. Several faculty members said they have noticed some change in language used around campus to focus on "access" rather than race, gender or traditionally marginalized groups.

### **Faculty diversity**

While the work to diversify the faculty hasn't yielded quite the sweep of change as the curricular changes, it is moving in the right direction.

Since the 2021 site visit, the school has hired six full-time faculty members, three of whom are diverse. A frustrating reality of this work is that it can be two steps forward, one step back: During this same period, two other diverse faculty members left (one retired, one to another university). Still, diverse faculty members now represent 20% of the faculty, up from 9.5% (with one unreported) two years ago. There are now two Black women and two Black men, and one Asian woman, on the faculty.

While perceptions from percentages are skewed a bit by the change in faculty size (the total full-time faculty has reduced from 28.25 to 25) due to several factors. Even with the departures this is an improvement. The FT faculty makeup in the fall 2023 was 56% female and 44% male with the following racial/ethnic categories: 80% white, 12% Black, 4% Hispanic, 4% multiracial and 4% Asian. There is still more work to do going forward as the student population is 74.8% white, 10.7% Black, 4.7% Hispanic, 4.7% multiracial, 2.3% foreign, 1.5% Asian, 1.8% not identified and 0.2% Native American/Alaska Native in the fall 2023 data provided.

Unlike several of the searches in the previous review period, with tiny percentages of minority applicants in the hiring pool, there have been strong numbers of minority

applicants for each search since. The school has changed its advertising strategy, focusing on venues with an emphasis on diversity.

Hiring for part-time faculty remains a challenge for the unit. The university's provost requires that Kent State be an "in-person institution," so opportunities to hire talented and diverse adjuncts for remote instruction are off the table. While Kent State is just more than an hour from metropolitan Cleveland, potential instructors with the right skills, available during workday hours, are difficult to find. While the school is now using fewer part-time instructors, its percentage of diverse adjuncts has not improved. The unit's increased focus on diverse guest speakers and lecturers attempts to alleviate this ongoing issue.

Students notice that the faculty is predominately white, but give their professors credit for creating inclusive and safe spaces and ensuring the topic is discussed. Some students mentioned it would be nice to have more professors who "look like me and I can relate to." One student noted that she was happy to see a Black professor, but said "she had to be a doctor to get hired," while other faculty and staff – not of color – may have had different qualifications.

One faculty member said the approach to DEI&B in hiring has "changed a lot" since the site visit two years ago. "We are trying hard, trying our best – and even having success hiring diverse faculty."

### **Diversity training and more**

The school has taken advantage of local resources and sought expertise from the outside in its effort to emphasize the values of diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the MDJ experience.

Examples include:

- In Summer 2022, Director Metzgar worked with the Assistant Dean of Strategic Initiatives for the College of Communication and Information to create a four-part DEI&B virtual webinar for faculty. Materials and recorded sessions remain available. Topics include: Diversity in Content; Equity in Design; Inclusion in Teaching; Belonging in Practice.
- The previously mentioned Infusing the Curriculum workshop with Dr. Earnest Perry in October 2022. General and small-group discussion reviewed offerings and shortcomings in curriculum.
- In March 2023, Debra Adams Simmons, then National Geographic's vice president for diversity, inclusion and equity and a former MDJ adjunct professor, facilitated a virtual conversation focused on inclusive pedagogy. More than 25 faculty and staff attended.
- As a result of a reinvigorated, reconvened Professional Advisory Board, Adams Simmons, a former editor at the Akron Beacon Journal, led a wide-ranging discussion



around language and terminology, syllabus design, inclusive classroom practices, and the concern from some faculty that they may be perceived as providing lip service.

- The PAB now comprises 50 members, some of whom have expertise implementing diverse and inclusive practices in the workplace.

### **Summary:**

MDJ has made remarkable strides in (the former) Standard 3, Diversity and Inclusiveness. Most significant have been the changes in curriculum. That said, new course descriptions and assignments are only as good as the learning outcomes, and the revisit site team found the students energized and knowledgeable about issues, perspectives, people and communities through the DEI&B lens. Faculty diversity has been less of a smashing success, but it has improved, the searches have been much more inclusive, and it continues to be top of mind for administration and faculty. In the fall 2023, nearly three-fourths of the unit's student population is white, and that's similar to what was found in the fall 2021 site visit. The faculty is 80% white in the fall 2023, and that is down from 87% in 2021. The big faculty change in diversity has been with an additional faculty member of color added in the professional-in-residence program.

**Overall evaluation:** Compliance

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

The 2021 site team report called out, and the Council noted in its letter, this weakness:

*A sequence, Digital Media Production, that is not performing at the level of the others and leaving many students deeply unsatisfied.*

- *Students express dissatisfaction with higher-level skills-based course options and frequency of offerings*
- *It is the biggest major but has only four full-time faculty for more than 250 students*

Since the 2014 site team visit, changes to the Digital Media Production major were made, based on feedback from students, faculty and industry professionals. Those changes, implemented in 2019-2020, included allowing students to take skills-based courses earlier in their course of study and new digital and multimedia special topics courses. However, at the 2021 site visit, the changes were relatively new and their impact had not been assessed. It seemed clear that additional attention and resources were needed.

In the past two years, the school has taken multiple steps to address student and faculty concerns. It has:

- Hired two new tenure-track faculty with teaching and research/creative activity expertise relevant to the Digital Media Production sequence
  - An assistant professor, Ed.D. who teaches Media, Power & Culture, Digital Video Editing and Race, Gender, Class and Dis/Ability in Media Industries
  - An assistant professor, Ph.D., who teaches Elements of Film, TV and Animation, Digital Video Editing and Production Fundamentals.
- Hired four new adjunct instructors with relevant expertise. They teach: Multimedia Engineering; Studio Television; Production Fundamentals and Digital Video Editing; Production Fundamentals and Motion Graphics for Video Editing; and a coordinator for the TV studio who oversees student media broadcasts, manages studio scheduling, and hires/supervises the students who run master control.
- Updated the curriculum to allow increased opportunities for pursuit of advanced skills
  - Five new advanced-skills three-credit courses have been developed; four are being offered in 2023-24. They are offered first as “Special Topic” courses; after two successful deployments they will be converted to permanent courses. They are:
    - Special Topic Advanced Digital Cinematography
    - Advanced Scriptwriting (still under review)
    - Special Topic Advanced Digital Video Editing
    - Special Topic Scoring for Picture
    - Special Topic Sound Design and Spatial Mixing
  - MDJ has also resumed these courses that had not run since before 2020: Multimedia Engineering and Aerial Cinematography
  - DMP majors can count all seven three-credit courses toward their required six hours of Advanced Skills Electives.
- Purchased 20 new Mac Studios and high-resolution monitors to meet DMP-specific classroom and project needs
- Invested more than \$125,000 in equipment and staffing for the Student Resource Lab. Highlights:
  - DMP students are the primary users of the Student Resource Lab and to better accommodate them, the lab’s hours have been extended from 9 to 5 to 8 to 8, Monday through Saturday.
  - Student staffing has doubled; three staff members are working at any time, to ensure better training, coverage and maintenance.
  - Upgrades to the kind and amount of equipment, including everything from 26 new Canon T8i Rebel Cameras for Production Fundamentals (\$23,000) to new light kits, video tripods, sound equipment and batteries.
- Invested almost \$400,000 in updates to the television studio including 4K projector, network upgrade, new audio/video router, set modernization and more.
- Updated the editing suites
- Provided additional engineering and facilities support
- Additional non-technical or staffing support provided for DMP students:
  - Paid entrance fees for Central Great Lakes Student Awards (3 entries, \$150)
  - Student Media’s Flash Film Commission Spring 2023 film festival served as a venue for screening DMP student work

- Hosted a visit from the president and CEO of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (Spring 2023)
- Hosted multiple local/out-of-state television station recruiting visits to Franklin Hall (Spring and Fall 2023)
- Career advising workshop (Fall 2022, \$1500)
- Golden Lion Film Festival sponsorship (Fall 2023, \$1,000)
- Installation of a hook and rail display wall on the first floor for exhibiting up to 50 Production I and Production II student posters each semester (Fall 2023)

The DMP students, while thrilled about their new full-time faculty and advanced classes, are omnivores. They want more – more classes, more faculty, more equipment.

The good news is that the momentum is in DMP’s favor. Still the largest sequence in MDJ, the spotlight from the director’s and dean’s offices is on the growing sequence’s needs, both human and equipment. Since the last site visit, a full-time tenured professor has been leading the sequence administratively. She expressed optimism that both the content and the culture are in a positive and improving space, and she acknowledged that scattered student complaints about the state of equipment in the Student Resource Lab were valid. “We have invested a lot, but we are still fact-finding and there is more coming,” she said.

The angst internal to DMP noted in the past two site team reports has morphed to new issues, but remains. A large contingent of majors consider themselves film students – artists who both make and tell stories. The TV production students are there for the technical skills. The sequence is bifurcated internally and is not fully satisfying either camp. Other bubbling issues are a historical resource disparity in student media (experienced by DMP students but not a purview of the sequence) and the ability to test out or get credit for various skills courses.

It’s complex but the unit is working on all aspects, and the substantial resource investments and continued faculty growth are the immediate needs, and they are being addressed.

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

While the school was found in compliance on the assessment standard in 2021, the site team noted:

*Assessment needs to make up for lost time after two years of little testing or analysis.*

In their 2021 self-study, MDJ acknowledged that the pandemic and the departure of the faculty member who had previously overseen assessment had left a gap in assessment.

Here are highlights of how the unit has indeed worked to get back on track:

- The creation of a standing Assessment Committee rather than relying on a single faculty member. While this committee has been difficult to convene, members have been tasked with reviewing content submitted by the sequence heads.
- The hiring of a special project manager who joined the staff in Fall 2022 is focused on assessment data collection and analysis
- New entrance and exit survey tools
- Career prep insights “close the loop” on student and supervisor responses to internship evaluations
- The addition of outside professionals to evaluate all capstone classes
- A new alumni survey
- A curriculum map that tracks courses in the four majors to each program’s revised learning outcomes
- And a curriculum map that tracks those learning outcomes to ACEJMC’s values and competencies

Faculty noted that there is now almost constant attention paid to the assessment data, particularly when considering curriculum changes and even to inform their everyday teaching. The plan is certainly in place; it will be for the next site visit to judge if it is effective and the loop is being closed.

## **5. Summary conclusion and recommendation:**

**Summary:** The revisit site team found a transformed and energized unit that has actively addressed, and continues to address, the weaknesses reported in the 2021 Site Team Report. Standard 3 was the only standard found out of compliance in 2021, and the full-court press led by Director Metzgar and the faculty, supported by the dean’s office, has made impressive strides. The curricular changes, the emphasis on recruiting and the deployment of effective training have worked to create a changed culture in Franklin Hall. This is not a story about new syllabi: conversation is brimming with excitement and commitment to DEI&B.

The DMP sequence has thousands of dollars of new resources that continue to be deployed. It has two new full-time faculty and is hoping to add more even as it seeks more and more qualified adjuncts. A solid assessment plan is under way.

**Recommendation:** Reaccreditation