

**2017-18  
Revisit Team Report  
for Accreditation in Journalism  
and Mass Communications**

Name of Accredited Unit: **Department of Journalism and Public Relations**

Name of Institution: **Bowling Green State University**

Name of Administrator: **Dr. Jim Foust, chair**

Date of Original Site Visit: **October 18-21, 2015**

Revisit Date: **October 15-17, 2017**

Revisit Team Chair: **Dr. Ann M. Brill, Dean, William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications**

Revisit Team Member: **Dr. Dale Cressman, PhD, Associate Professor, Brigham Young University**

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 1: Mission, Governance and Administration**

**Reasons cited:**

“The structure and reporting lines within the School have not changed since 1996. However, the CBA remains in the process of implementation and, as a consequence, the site team found tension expressed by faculty and administrators over the governance of the Department. While some in the Department expressed concern over “autonomy,” others expressed a concern with what they perceive is an ongoing reluctance to work with the School and University administration to further the goals of the School. It is telling that the first goal under Governance in the Department’s strategic plan is to “Maintain department autonomy within the School of Media and Communication structure and clarify governance in new contract between the faculty union and the administration.” The plan was revised in August 2015 and at the time of the site team visit, there was considerable ambiguity between Department and School governance.”

“The Department does have a written mission statement and a written strategic plan. The site team heard differing opinions as to its vision and direction for the future of the Department. The aspects of the document dealing with governance are not supported by university administration outside the Department.”

“The Department has policies and procedures for faculty governance. The efficacy of those policies and procedures seemed questionable at the time of the site team visit. For example, the School director would like the Department to consider working more closely with the Department of Telecommunications, which is undergoing a name change to “Department of Media Production and Media Studies.” In another example, the site team heard that the Department’s curriculum committee approved courses in social media which were denied at the Dean’s level.”

“The Department chair’s leadership appears at odds with the vision and direction of both the School’s director and the College’s dean, such as differing ideas on the extent of the Department, other departments in the School and the overall School working collaboratively. Both the director and dean expressed the hope that the accreditation site team could give some guidance on the future of the Department and the other departments within the School. Both used the term ‘ambiguity’ to describe the situation. At the administration’s request, the department hired Trevor Brown in fall 2014 as a consultant to respond to a ‘gap analysis’ authored by the Department. The site team requested a copy of the consultant’s report and the chair provided that. The report stated: ‘The one-day visit indicated that establishing a climate of trust is a work in progress.’ At the time of the site team visit, that seemed to remain true.”

**Standard 5: Scholarship: Research, Creative and Professional Activity*****Reasons cited:***

“The university has clear policies on research, creative activity and/or professional activity and two different paths are delineated for tenured and tenure-track faculty and non-tenure-track faculty. The former path for research requires continued activity and support is available through the Currier Foundation. Given that more than half of all the research in the department was generated by a faculty member no longer at BGSU, both the Provost and the Dean of the College expressed concern that the research/creative work of the tenured and tenure-track faculty was not meeting University expectations.”

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“Two tenured faculty members also no longer have graduate status, although one gave up that status to concentrate to focus on teaching and advising.”

“The current climate does not seem to be conducive to the production of scholarship as seen by outcomes during the recent accreditation cycle.”

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

### **Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration**

#### **Summary of findings:**

At the time of the revisit, the difference of two years was pronounced. The new chair has the support of his colleagues and the administration. It is clear that the department's efforts to establish a better working relationship within the department and with the School, College and University are working. Within the School of Media and Communication, the Department now has clarity in terms of responsibilities and shared governance.

Of particular note is that while the revisit site team was on campus, the provost signed the Department's Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) document that clarifies policies and procedures for hiring, annual and enhanced review, reappointment, promotion and tenure. Since those policies were an issue at the time of the original visit, the signing of this document is a major step in the Department's governance. The School director and Dean of the College told the revisit team that the Department is ahead of most units on campus in attaining their approval of the RPT documents. The approved document allows the Department to establish criteria in teaching, research, and service to meet the needs of a professionally oriented Department and to maintain an initial level of Department review.

The approval of the governance documents impacts both Standards 1 and 5 since a key factor for the Department was working with the University to clarify its role vis-à-vis the School and University in establishing its own curriculum, etc., as well as its RPT standards.

At the time of the original visit, the Department and University were still in the throes of implementing their Collective Bargaining Agreement. At the time of the revisit, many of those issues were resolved and working toward resolution with the improved working relationships that the Department has with the School, College and University.

While there are still concerns about some aspects of governance within the Department, the revisit team found 100 percent support for the chair and support for his efforts to work with administration. It also found a renewed respect and sense of cooperation from the Director of the School and the Dean of the College.

The original site team also found dissension between the Department and School over some curricular issues. At the time of the revisit, it is clear that the Department retains control over its curriculum while understanding the need to seek cooperation in places where programs may overlap. A series of curriculum changes requested by the Department were approved at the School, College and provost level in early 2017 for implementation beginning Fall 2017. These

changes include revising course descriptions to address social media and other online platforms, allowing majors to take up to five hours of “Journalism and Media Electives” (which may include courses from the other departments in the School), and requiring a Visual Communication Technology (VCT) course on coding.

Finally, the impressive evidence of the University’s support for the Department and the School is the new state-of-the-art Michael and Sarah Kuhlin Center. The University and State of Ohio invested \$22 million in the \$24 million building. The School moved into the building in fall 2017 and it is not hyperbole to say the move reinvigorated faculty, staff, and students. The building also facilitates a more collegial environment among the three departments in the School.

**Overall evaluation:** Compliance

### **Standard 5: Scholarship, Creative and Professional Activity**

#### **Summary of findings:**

The Department has undertaken several measures to re-emphasize and reinvigorate scholarly activity, resulting in a total of 49 works—what faculty and administrators consider a positive trend. Since the 2015 site visit, faculty members have published six articles in refereed journals, with eight additional under review or revision. Additionally, they have presented nine refereed conference papers and two invited conference papers; and have published one textbook, one edited book, three book chapters, five book reviews, twelve articles in non-refereed publications, and one encyclopedia entry. The Dean characterizes this production as “a breakthrough and acceleration” (see attached letter).

Measures taken to increase scholarly production included soliciting research planning documents, providing additional research funding, and restructuring some teaching and committee assignments to allow faculty members additional time for research. The Department’s scholarly output has also been positively affected by the hiring of a productive assistant professor.

During the 2016-2017 academic year, faculty members were each asked to submit a personal research plan, listing research projects underway, as well as those planned for the coming year. During the 2017-2018 academic year, they were asked to expand their research plans into holistic research agendas, providing short and long-term goals. As the Revisit Report noted, these documents were intended to be aspirational in nature. The Dean stressed to the site team that the document is not intended as an evaluative device, but rather intended to motivate faculty, to “get them on track.” After meeting individually with members of the faculty, the Dean believes most members of the faculty have “embraced” the process, resulting in “increased activity.”

In order to encourage scholarly activity, the Department began offering an additional \$2,000 per year beyond the current \$2,000 available to each faculty member. Thus far, two members of the faculty have taken advantage of this foundation-provided money to travel to archives and present research.

The Department is making efforts to make more time for faculty members to engage in scholarly activities by streamlining some assignments, including committee work, assessment activities, and internship oversight. For example, rather than continuing to have each faculty member supervise a certain number of internships—above their normal teaching loads and without additional compensation—the Department now plans to assign a single faculty member to supervise internships as part of her teaching load.

Finally, the department is showcasing scholarship by asking a faculty member each month to open a meeting by reporting on research activity. This practice is regarded positively, even by non-tenure track faculty, who noted to the site team their appreciation for learning of their colleagues' scholarship.

In Fall 2016, the Department moved into a new \$24-million building that features state-of-the-art technology, co-located offices, and an open layout—all of which, faculty members reported, have reinvigorated them, improved collegiality, and fostered an environment conducive to collaboration.

The 2015 site team reported that two faculty members did not have Graduate Faculty Status, which is reserved for professors who are producing scholarship at an acceptable level. This designation determines professors' teaching loads. For example, tenured or tenure-track faculty with graduate status teach a 2-2 load, while those without graduate school status teach a 3-3 load (non-tenure track faculty have 4-4 loads). Since the last site visit, one faculty member has regained Graduate Faculty Status. The Dean told the site team of plans to move from a status-based system to one that is activity-based, meaning teaching loads will be more closely aligned with year-to-year scholarly output.

While there are still a few members of the faculty who are less productive, the site team noted an overall improvement in scholarly output and an environment more conducive to achieving it. Significantly, both the Director and the Dean believe the Department is, overall, meeting expectations. The Dean cites “a level of commitment that promises future productivity at a higher level than we have seen during the initial review period” (see attached letter).

**Overall evaluation:** Compliance

**3 and 4. Describe any other weaknesses cited by the site team in its report and any additional concerns cited by the Council in its letter to the unit regarding provisional status. For EACH of the other weaknesses cited by the site team or concerns cited by the Council, describe actions taken by the unit to correct the problem.**

- An atmosphere in the Department that was described by faculty members as “tense,” “dysfunctional,” “lacking in leadership,” “lacking in communication,” and “drama in the halls,” and is recognized throughout the levels of administration as a problem.

**Revisit finding:** The revisit team found a major difference in the atmosphere from two years ago. While any unit has its share of “drama in the halls,” the Department is a much more collegial and productive place. Conversations with the School and College administrators about the Department were positive and both cited the change in leadership of the Department as a contributing factor. The signing of the Departments RPT and the implementation of the CBA also contributed a great deal to the improved atmosphere.

- A Collective Bargaining Agreement that is in the process of being implemented and is creating uncertainty over governance in the Department

**Revisit finding:** Much of this uncertainty was eliminated with the approval of the RPT document. Faculty are satisfied that they retain a voice in matters of hiring, reappointment, promotion and tenure and that the criteria for such actions meet other needs.

- Weak scholarship/creative activity that is not meeting University expectations

**Revisit finding:** The productivity of the faculty in two years is impressive – more so since with few exceptions, all faculty members are engaged in some form of scholarship. The Department also has taken steps to lessen the service loads to allow more time for research and creative activity and has made more funding for research available through the Currier Foundation. Finally, the Dean wrote to the Department with his support of the revised RPT documents, the Department’s ability to draft its standards, and clarification of his expectations of the Department as a professionally oriented program.

- No full-time faculty of color.

**Revisit finding:** The Department has had only one search since the original visit. Two applicants of color were considered but withdrew from the search after receiving offers before the Department search was able to make an offer. The assistant professor who was hired is a native of India.

- Current search for assistant professor, but after December 2015 no assistant professors in the Department. Recent departures of two assistant professors creating a gap in faculty ranks.

**Revisit finding:** The Department successfully hired Dr. Saif Shahin in fall 2016. No other faculty searches have been approved. The university's move to a performance based budgeting model has made replacement lines dependent on the number of majors and FTE hours, and unfortunately their number of majors has been in decline. Nevertheless, the Dean said he supports the Department and will seriously consider their search requests.

- Resources not proportionally allocated based on number of students in the three sequences

**Revisit finding:** The Department is moving from a sequence-centric model, and has been attempting to make the best use of its resources. Moving to the single internship supervisor model will help even out the work required for internships. Also, the Department seems more amenable to working with other departments in the School.

- The Department and School are working through a series of documents related to governance. Those documents are mandated by the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and the various campus units are interpreting the various mandates. The Department and School will need to clarify authority and autonomy on various issues for healthy mission, governance and administration of the Department.

**Revisit finding:** The Department has worked through the process and successfully gotten those documents through the University's governance. As noted above, this is a major accomplishment at this University. Issues of autonomy and governance have been clarified.

- Weak and lack of scholarship/creative work from the tenure, tenure-track faculty puts faculty longevity in peril, especially in recruitment and retention of assistant professors. The Department has faculty holding graduate faculty status and others who have lost that status.

**Revisit finding:** See response to Standard 5 above.

- The governance issue is more acute and also is mandated by the pending contract deadlines of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. In addition, the tenure, tenure-track faculty productivity must show some evidence of commitment and progress.

**Revisit finding:** See notes on Standards 1 and 5 above. It was clear to the revisit team that the Department has successfully navigated the issues raised by the CBA as well as the need for a working document on reappointment, tenure and promotion.

## **5. Summary conclusion**

The revisit team found a reinvigorated faculty working in a more collegial and productive environment. The new building is a major contributor but much of the credit also goes to the faculty and, in particular, the chair. The change in two years is easy to see and further evidence is the support the Director, Dean and University have given the Department. In talking about the faculty and building, the Dean cited his “investment” in the faculty and his plan that the Department and School become a major draw for new students.



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Arts & Sciences  
Office of the Dean

TO: ACEJMC Site Re-Visit Team

DATE: August 29, 2017

FROM: Raymond A. Craig, Dean  
College of Arts and Sciences

RE: Standard 5: Scholarship

I write to affirm that the college feels that the faculty in the Journalism and Public Relations program are meeting our expectations for scholarship, research, and creative activity for this program.

While the hyper-productivity of a single retired faculty member overshadowed that of other faculty during the initial review, the faculty have generally maintained a steady engagement in public/professional activity as well as steady engagement professionally with peer-reviewed presentations and publications. That productivity has been sufficient to maintain currency in the field and to contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge.

In the two years since the visit, the faculty have increased their focus on scholarly engagement and as the report indicates, they have had recent success in publication as well as conference presentation. We have seen a breakthrough and acceleration, but most importantly for my assessment, we have seen a level of commitment that promises future productivity at a higher level than we have seen during the initial review period. The faculty have embraced both the research plans and the faculty success plans proposals—non-evaluative activities meant to provide a foundation of success. I would add that we have hired a productive young scholar as well, which will provide additional scholarly energy for our students.

My assessment of the faculty at the time of the site visit was based on an assessment of performance I would expect of faculty in support of a *doctoral* program, but we did not and do not have a doctoral program under review. It was an unfair standard. Despite my misstep, the faculty have been sufficiently productive across time, and further, they have made clear progress towards meeting and exceeding this higher standard.