

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

Name of Accredited Unit: Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

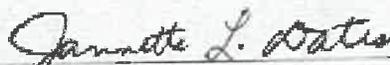
Name of Institution: North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University

Name of Administrator: Gail Wiggins, Interim Chair and Professor

Date of Original Site Visit: January 19-22, 2016

Revisit Date: January 21-23, 2018

Revisit Team Chair:



Dr. Jannette L. Dates

Revisit Team Member:



Dr. Paul Voakes

Revisit Team's Recommendation: **Reaccreditation**

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

Standard 4: Full Time and Part Time Faculty

Reasons cited:

At the time of the site visit, the faculty was seriously understaffed. Although the chair had launched the needed replacement searches and other appropriate measures, the lack of adequate faculty had serious negative implications for advising, research, resources and service.

Despite their heavy teaching, service and advising loads, full-time faculty were reported to have taught an average of 83 percent of core courses in the three academic years 2014-2015, 2013-2014 and 2012-2013, trending upward from the 83 percent average in the 2012-2013 year. Most full-time faculty taught a 4/4 load annually. A duty agreement for full-time faculty represents an understanding between faculty members and the department chair. In it, the general weights, which are standards for units in the College of Arts and Sciences, are that teaching must constitute 50 percent of time and effort for reappointment, tenure and/or promotion.

The department faculty members reflected a sound balance of background in professional and educational experience. All had scholarly and/or professional backgrounds in journalism and mass communications. However, there were lines for nine full time faculty members, and only five were filled. Four searches were under way. In addition there were nine full and part time adjunct faculty members. The unit needed to assess the steps that could be taken, with the assistance of central administration, to lessen the burdens weighing down the faculty that caused them to be weaker in scholarship and spread too thin on advising and mentoring students — and take those steps.

Overall, the significant faculty understaffing, important in itself, also had negative implications across the unit, affecting scholarship, advising, mentoring and service, and was sufficient to require non-compliance on this standard.

Standard 9: Full Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Reasons cited:

In 2010, the department approved an assessment plan that used different program learning outcomes to guide the gathering of direct and indirect data. In 2014-15, during the process of completing the self-study, however, and after a close examination of the assessment plan's direct and indirect measures, the department revised the plan. The revised assessment plan was to be implemented for the first time during the 2016 spring

semester—during the time of the ACEJMC site team visit. Thus, the team was unable to assess the effectiveness of the plan over time.

During the 2016 visit, the team observed that since the unit was structuring and designing its plan for assessment, the team would offer some recommendations that might be useful:

- * That the unit design a well developed and executed assessment plan with a curriculum that: (1) reflects ACEJMC's 12 core competencies and values and (2) systematically focuses on awareness, understanding and application of the values and competencies at identified points within the curriculum that are clearly indicated in their syllabi.

- * That the unit offer a focused system for identifying where their courses fit with ACEJMC's 12 core competencies and values, using a matrix that would make it easy to see which courses are focused on which aspects of the core competencies and values. For example, they need to be certain that the courses identified as focusing on *awareness* include among the objectives and assignments within the syllabi of those courses *activities that increase awareness*. The same needs to be done with *understanding* and *application*. These can be identified on the unit's curriculum grid and in the course syllabi.

- * That the unit develop a loop between what they have found (in patterns over time) from assessing cohorts of students who completed the program - and a plan for using that information to strengthen the academic program.
 - a. A comprehensive assessment instrument: The team recommended both a pre-test and a post-test to assess how well the program develops students' skills and abilities.
 - b. Individual internship site supervisor's evaluations: The team encouraged the unit to analyze the internship data/evaluations in the aggregate -- over time -- looking for patterns that may suggest ways to improve the curriculum and instruction; the evaluations can focus on items from the internship site coordinator that assess demonstration by the student — of clear, accurate writing skills, accuracy in applying numerical concepts, etc. — rather than a focus on attendance, attitude, and the like.
 - c. Electronic portfolios: The team encouraged the unit to have faculty (not students) define the values and competencies the portfolio measures and have outside professionals (including alumni) evaluate them. After they receive the evaluations, the faculty members can look carefully for patterns that may suggest ways to improve curriculum and instruction.

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.

Standard 4: Full Time and Part Time Faculty

Summary of findings:

During the 2016 site visit, the team had recommended that the unit assess the steps that could be taken, with the assistance of central administration, to lessen the burdens weighing down the faculty, causing them to be weak in scholarship and spread too thin on advising and mentoring students.

In 2018, the revisit team was initially disappointed to find that the faculty had not grown significantly — only from 10 colleagues to 12. In 2017, one faculty member retired, and another suddenly passed away. The team observed that the only reason for the full-time faculty's showing even this modest growth by 2018 was that the unit hired four temporary lecturers for 2017-2018. Without those four temporary hires, the full-time faculty would have shrunk from 10 in 2016 to eight in 2018. During the same two years, the enrollment grew 6 percent, to 581. Thus the ratio of students to full-time faculty is 48:1, which, while highly problematic, is at least better than the 73:1 that would have resulted without the four temporary hires.

After the team spoke at length with department and administration leaders, however, a far more positive situation was revealed. We found that the unit had indeed been hard at work searching, and searching successfully, to fill the three tenure-track lines made available in 2016. A provost, who is no longer in that office, had rejected two of the candidates sent forward unanimously by the department. The lone candidate who was "acceptable" to that administrator accepted a faculty offer from a competing institution. In addition, the search for a permanent department chair had also stalled. However, it was made clear to the team by each administrator that this department was not singled out on the campus for the above-noted systematic rejections by this administrator — of strong candidates who were supported by the department. Nonetheless, unfortunately, by late 2017, the faculty/chair's search efforts were each back to "square one."

In August 2017, a new interim provost was installed. She discussed with the revisit team her full support for the unit and its hiring goals. In fact, at the time of the revisit, a momentum was in place that will likely result in five new tenure-track faculty members by 2019.

- 1) The search for an assistant professor of public relations has concluded, and at the time of the revisit an offer to the leading candidate was imminent.
- 2) The search for an endowed professor of journalism will be launched no later than Fall 2018.

3) The search for a department chair has been relaunched, with the goal of installing the new chair in August 2018. The chancellor said the soon-to-be-appointed permanent dean will participate in the search process during the 2018 spring semester.

4) The tenure-track line of the deceased faculty member will stay with the unit, and the current dean told the team he will authorize a search in spring semester 2018.

5) The tenure-track line of the retired faculty member will also stay with the unit, and the current dean told the team he will authorize a search also in spring semester 2018.

The provost told the revisit team that she plans to convert the four new temporary, full-time positions to either tenure-track lines or multi-year lecturer contracts, depending on the needs of the unit. Thus, not only will all five open positions be filled (see above), but also the four temporary positions will be converted to tenure lines or multi-year lectureships. This means the full-time, permanent faculty may well grow from 8 to 17 within the next two years.

The chancellor assured the team of the university's support for the unit. He revealed to the team that the university was undergoing an aggressive re-structuring plan with a goal of becoming a Research One university; that new funds have been allocated from the state and will be distributed across the campus, to include this college and department; that the interim status of some key campus administrators will shortly become permanent positions; and that new faculty resources will be made available as the university invests in programs such as this one. The chancellor also indicated his intention to transition the JOMC faculty to a 3/3 teaching load, which will be in step with most of the rest of the units on campus. Each of the administrators encouraged the leaders in the college and departments to assess their programs and request what they need in order to retain their viability.

Each faculty member now has a reduced advising load—from 80 at the time of the 2015-16 visit to 35-40 in 2018, thanks to an experiment that assigns first-year student advising to the campus advising center. In addition, an encouraging development for professionally oriented disciplines at NCAT is that in the future, the search for filling vacant faculty positions will target an overall balance of 70 percent tenure track (with doctorates) and 30 percent lecturers with professional experience.

During the revisit, the students who met with the team again asserted enthusiastic appreciation for their faculty. Many described positive experiences with professors.

EVALUATION: COMPLIANCE

Standard 9: Full Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Summary of findings:

The revisit team had initial concerns about the unit's seeming to linger at the beginning stages of assessment planning, but an up-close examination revealed good progress in implementation. The unit followed up on the team's recommendation that it use examples from other programs to help strengthen its plan for assessment. They examined assessment strategies at Elon University, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Indiana University, University of Georgia, and Hofstra University, as well as assessment strategies at other universities. They also visited and conferred on assessment planning with unit heads at different universities.

The unit gathered needed information for use in improving its instructional program. They developed a pre- and post-test analysis, changing their Grammar Proficiency Exam to a pre- and post-test that measures knowledge on several of the values and competencies. This system gave the unit some information; however, the team recommended that the same cohort of students be tested in the pre- and post-tests to give the unit even more revealing information that can be used for improving instruction. First-semester freshmen and graduating seniors would be the ideal cohorts. Over time, the department will be able to more clearly assess how well student learning is improving over the four years the students matriculate in the program. The team also recommended that in addition to the simple syllabus audit in use now, the unit invoke other ways to apply findings for the improvement of instruction.

The unit had also responded to the site team's other 2016 recommendations: It regularly invited industry professionals to evaluate students' work, developed a curriculum mapping system, included more direct measures of student learning in its assessment plan, and it now ties student learning outcomes to ACEJMC's values and competencies. They also set up a system for a faculty member to have oversight responsibility for assessment.

The unit's leading example of "closing the loop" was its response to a finding in 2017 that learning was weak in "applying basic numerical and statistical concepts" and in "conducting research and evaluating information." The Research Methods course was revised in Fall 2017 to include an original survey — for which students obtained IRB approval — of NCAT students' social media habits and time spent daily in front of a screen. The class presented the findings and analyses as a poster for the university's Undergraduate Research Symposium.

In the revisit team's meeting with students, all were familiar with ACEJMC's values and competencies, and they were able to cite and discuss many of them from memory. Many of the students described their participation in enrichment programs such as the study abroad program and the Undergraduate Research Symposium, and many of their internships were out of state, with nationally known firms and organizations.

A review of the Fall 2017 course syllabi found that every syllabus in the unit reflected many ACEJMC learning outcomes, specifically in the context of its values and competencies.

The unit has addressed much of what was recommended by the team in 2016 and is focused on moving forward, with the help of the university's administrators, to an even more complete assessment success in the future.

EVALUATION: COMPLIANCE

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

A lack of succession-planning for persons in key roles.

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

The department chair has requested a meeting with administrators of the university's Center for Leadership and Organizational Excellence (CLOE), asking for assistance in developing a succession plan for the unit.

5. Summary conclusion

Based on what we saw in the revisit report, the team initially had misgivings about both standards in question. Our investigation on campus, of both the faculty-hiring progress and the implementation of assessment measures, dramatically reversed our thinking. In our meetings with them, the dean, provost and chancellor each shared with us that the unit's failure, over the last two years, to add permanent, full-time faculty and hire a permanent chair was the fault of central administration and not the unit, and that significant additions to the permanent faculty are imminent. They each noted that this systemic problem has been rectified, and the chancellor pledged to move this unit's hiring plans to completion. In fact, the dean, provost and chancellor each stated that they regard the unit as one of the largest and most successful on the campus.

Finally, in its embrace of the 2016 site team's recommendations on assessment, the unit undertook a major overhaul of its assessment plan and has now begun to implement all of its direct and indirect measures, and to enact instructional improvements in light of its first wave of findings.

We find compliance on standards 4 and 9, and we recommend reaccreditation.