

# Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC

Undergraduate program

2018–2019

Name of Institution: Washington & Lee University

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: William C. Dudley, president

Name of Unit: Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

Name and Title of Administrator: Toni Locy, department head

Date of 2018-2019 Accrediting Visit: Oct. 28-31, 2018

If the unit is currently accredited, please provide the following information:

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Oct. 28-31, 2012

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Re-accreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Re-accreditation

Recommendation by 2018-2019 Visiting Team: Re-accreditation

*Prepared and submitted by:*

## Team Chair

Name and Title: Jennifer Sizemore, vice president and editor-in-chief

Organization/School: Starbucks Coffee Company

Signature

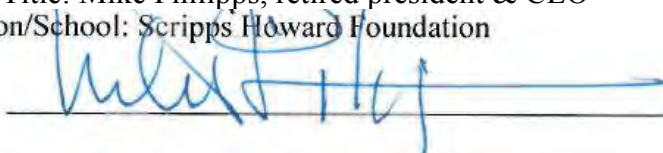


## Team Members

Name and Title: Mike Philipps, retired president & CEO

Organization/School: Scripps Howard Foundation

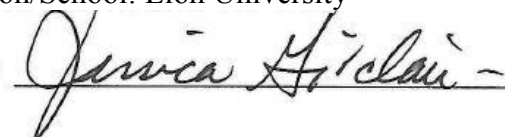
Signature



Name and Title: Jessica Gisclair, department chair/associate professor

Organization/School: Elon University

Signature



## PART I: General information

**Name of Institution:** Washington and Lee University

**Name of Unit:** Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

**Year of Visit:** 2018-19

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

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges

### 2. Indicate the institution's type of control; check more than one if necessary.

- Private
- Public
- Other (specify)

### 3. Provide assurance that the institution has legal authorization to provide education beyond the secondary level in your state. It is not necessary to include entire authorizing documents. Public institutions may cite legislative acts; private institutions may cite charters or other authorizing documents.

“In 1749, Scots-Irish pioneers who had migrated deep into the Valley of Virginia founded a small classical school called Augusta Academy, some 20 miles north of what is now Lexington. In 1776, the trustees, fired by patriotism, changed the name of the school to Liberty Hall. Four years later the school was moved to the vicinity of Lexington, where in 1782 it was chartered as Liberty Hall Academy by the Virginia legislature and empowered to grant degrees. A limestone building, erected in 1793 on the crest of a ridge overlooking Lexington, burned in 1803. The University preserves its ruins today as a symbol of the institution's honored past.” (Washington and Lee Catalog, Heritage section)

### 4. Has the journalism/mass communications unit been evaluated previously by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications?

- Yes
- No

**If yes, give the date of the last accrediting visit:**

Oct. 28-31, 2012

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

1948

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

Washington and Lee University Department of  
Journalism and Mass Communications  
Mission Statement  
Adopted 2006  
Revised 2010  
Revised January 2018

As the nation's only accredited journalism and mass communications program in a highly competitive liberal arts college, we remain committed to our first and highest mission: to educate, to broaden minds, and to inculcate habits of honor, careful analysis, reasoned discourse and excellent writing in an increasingly diverse and pluralistic culture.

As a department with professional constituencies in journalism and strategic communication and an obligation to prepare citizens to participate in a democratic society, we seek to fulfill our mission by helping students develop abilities to think critically, to communicate clearly, to understand the ethical dimensions of the decisions they make, and to fully recognize the central role of news media in a free society.

Media historians recognize that the education of journalists at our institution dates back to 1869, when printer scholarships were established. Our professional responsibility has remained the same: Educating students to perform the crucial function of informing communities.

Because the journalism and strategic communication professions rightfully expect our graduates to become competent practitioners, the department is committed to teaching students the skills and familiarizing them with the tools that are the standards of the industry. We remain committed to keeping abreast of those skills and tools as the information revolution continues.

The department must fulfill these multiple responsibilities within its commitment to a liberal arts education and the curricular standards established by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications.

Core Values

We value free expression and vigorous public discourse, the keystones of a democratic society.

We value the pursuit of truth and the sharing of information with audiences that will empower them.

We value ethical reasoning that guides ethical practices.

We value an increasingly diverse society whose members embrace their shared experience and celebrate their uniqueness.

We value the development of critical thinking, careful analysis and outstanding writing.

We value honor, civility and compassion.

We value an undergraduate education that is both broad and deep and that emphasizes the importance of serving society.

We value small classes and close mentoring relationships with students.

We value faculty scholarship and contribution to the journalism and strategic communication professions.

\*\*\*

**7. What are the type and length of terms?**

Two 12-week terms (fall and winter) and one four-week spring term

**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.**

Major: B.A. Journalism

Sequence: Journalism

Sequence: Business journalism

Major: B.A. Strategic communication

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

120 semester hours

\*In fall 2017 the university increased the required credit hours to 120 from 113, beginning with the Class of 2020.

**11. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience.**

All majors in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications are required to complete two semester credit hours of internship experience. They may earn a maximum of six semester hours of internship experience.

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

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Person in Charge
Journalism major/Journalism sequence	Toni Locy
Journalism major/Business journalism sequence	Alecia Swasy
Strategic communication major	Dayo Abah

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

1,827 (as of Sept. 21, 2017)

**14. Number of undergraduate majors in the accredited unit, by sequence and total (if the unit has pre-major students, list them as a single total):**

Name of Major or sequence	Undergraduate majors
Journalism major/Journalism sequence	16
Journalism major/Business journalism sequence	6
Strategic communication major	40
Pre-majors	N/A
Total*	62

\*Classes of 2019 and 2020 only

**15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (newswriting, 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 the preceding term. Attach separate pages if necessary. Include a separate list for online skills courses, which also must meet the 20-1 ratio. (The Council has ruled that campaigns courses are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)**

Fall 2018:

Jour 201 (Intro to Reporting): 15  
 Jour 202 (Digital Journalism): 9  
 Jour 227 (Public Relations Writing): 15  
 Jour 258 (Beat Reporting): 1  
 Jour 362 (Producing for TV and online): 4  
 Jour 371 (Reporting on Business): 15

Spring 2018:

Jour 356 (In-Depth Reporting): 9

Winter 2018:

Jour 201 (Intro to Reporting): 19  
     Section 1: 13  
     Section 2: 6  
 Jour 202 (Digital Journalism): 21  
     Section 1: 12  
     Section 2: 9  
 Jour 227 (Public Relations Writing): 16  
 Jour 258 (Beat Reporting): 8  
 Jour 351 (Editing): 6  
 Jour 362 (Producing for TV and online): 5 Jour  
 372 (Reporting on the Economy): 18 Jour 395  
 (Covering Education): 4

**16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2018–2019 academic year:**

\$138,564 operating budget

\*Excluding faculty salaries and spending from endowed accounts. Give percentage increase or decrease in three years:

2.4 percent increase

**Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries:**

As a private institution, Washington and Lee does not make public its faculty or staff salaries. The dean of the College will be happy to address any salary questions from site team members when they meet in person.

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

Dayo O.L. Abah, professor  
 Mark Coddington, assistant professor  
 Aly Colón, professor (sabbatical, fall 2018)  
 Douglas O. Cumming, associate professor  
 Kevin Finch, assistant professor  
 Toni Locy, professor  
 Alecia Swasy, professor

**18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2018. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2018. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2019, please provide the spring 2019 adjunct list in the updated information.)**

Fall 2018:

Professor Pam Luecke, (phased retirement), intern coordinator  
 Associate Professor Claudette Artwick (phased retirement), Journalism 202 (Digital Journalism) and Journalism 231 (Communications Theory)  
 Adjunct Thomas Becher, Journalism 227 (Public Relations Writing)

Spring 2018:

Adjunct Dan Allen, a professional political campaign organizer, taught Politics 295, a course geared toward strategic communication, journalism and politics majors. Allen served as the Luter Visiting Professor of Politics and Journalism for the spring term only. The course was called In It to Win It: Organizing and Financing Successful Political Campaigns.

Winter 2018:

Professor Pam Luecke, (phased retirement), intern coordinator and Journalism 190 (Beyond Google and Wikipedia)  
 Adjunct Thomas Becher, Journalism 227 (Public Relations Writing)

**19. Schools on the semester system:**

**For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communications.**

Year	Total Graduates	Number	Percent
2017-2018 academic year	25	25	100
2016-2017 academic year	31	30	97

## PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

*The policies and practices of the unit ensure that it has an effectively and fairly administered working and learning environment.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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

The department's mission statement and core values:

As the nation's only accredited journalism and mass communications program in a highly competitive liberal arts college, we remain committed to our first and highest mission: to educate, to broaden minds, and to inculcate habits of honor, careful analysis, reasoned discourse and excellent writing in an increasingly diverse and pluralistic culture.

As a department with professional constituencies in journalism and strategic communication and an obligation to prepare citizens to participate in a democratic society, we seek to fulfill our mission by helping students develop abilities to think critically, to communicate clearly, to understand the ethical dimensions of the decisions they make, and to fully recognize the central role of news media in a free society.

Media historians recognize that the education of journalists at our institution dates back to 1869, when printer scholarships were established. Our professional responsibility has remained the same: educating students to perform the crucial function of informing communities.

Because the journalism and strategic communication professions rightfully expect our graduates to become competent practitioners, the department is committed to teaching students the skills and familiarizing them with the tools that are the standards of the industry. We remain committed to keeping abreast of those skills and tools as the information revolution continues.

The department must fulfill these multiple responsibilities within its commitment to a liberal arts education and the curricular standards established by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications.

### Core Values

- We value free expression and vigorous public discourse, the keystones of a democratic society.
- We value the pursuit of truth and the sharing of information with audiences that will empower them.
- We value ethical reasoning that guides ethical practices.
- We value an increasingly diverse society whose members embrace their shared experience and celebrate their uniqueness.
- We value the development of critical thinking, careful analysis and outstanding writing.
- We value honor, civility and compassion.
- We value an undergraduate education that is both broad and deep and that emphasizes the importance of serving society.

- We value small classes and close mentoring relationships with students. We value faculty scholarship and contribution to the journalism and strategic communication professions.

The unit has a detailed and lengthy strategic plan that focuses on four overarching goals: strengthening student-centric teaching; improving facilities and resources; encouraging faculty in scholarship and service; and, improving diversity among faculty and majors, and raising awareness of diversity.

At the beginning of the academic year, the faculty meet to discuss the past, current and future state of education for journalism and strategic communication. The ideas and goals that become the strategic plan are revisited in monthly meetings throughout the school year. The latest round of strategic planning was completed in April 2018. The university and college are supportive of the department's plan and goals.

The dean said the unit is “on the right track” with its strategic plan and that, in particular, the specifics of outreach to build a more diverse student body were in step with the top priority of the university.

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

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

The university faculty handbook lays out governance policies and procedures. Faculty are responsible for university governance, with many roles delegated to committees and staff.

Curriculum is the sole province of the faculty, overseen by the Courses and Degrees Committee, whose members are elected for six-year terms. It is chaired by the dean of the college.

Substantive changes in the unit's curriculum or requirements must be approved by this committee.

The faculty meet monthly – for example, four times in fall 2017, three times in winter 2018 and once in spring 2018. The faculty and students have continuing dialogues about the program, including the quality of teaching and the shifting communications landscape.

The small unit conducts much of its business as a committee of the whole. It has two standing committees: diversity, with four members, and technology, with three members. Ad hoc committees tackle particular issues as they arise; one current ad hoc committee is “curricular innovations,” with three members.

**c) 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.**

The department head, who serves a four-year term and is in her second year, is described as effective and supportive. Terms such as well-connected, respected and “has vision,” were consistently used to describe her leadership, which unit faculty say has been highlighted by good decision-making to enable a digital culture.



The dean said the department chair is a “firecracker,” whose energy and tireless devotion make her a pleasure to work with even while she effectively presses for the needs of her unit. Faculty members in other departments reeled off a list of adjectives to describe her, with “respected” leading the pack. Also: “the best,” sharp, “no BS,” caring, impressive. The provost agreed, calling her a “straight shooter” who has earned respect and has a soft spot for her students. The former longtime mayor said her interactions with both the chair and the students who interviewed her over the years were always professional and fair.

And a student said, “she’s my adviser, and I knew I wanted to be just like her.”

All members of the faculty are deeply involved in service to the university through committee work ranging from Student Affairs to the Institutional Review Board. This extensive involvement is a deeply held part of the unit’s culture and something that faculty members express pride in: “The provost and dean call on us, tap us – because we get stuff done.” The unit also wants to make sure they “are players” and have a voice in decisions being made across the university. The dean said the department “contributes so much to the vibrancy of campus by being thoughtful about who they bring in” as campus speakers.

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

The dean of the college appoints the department head to a four-year term and may reappoint to another three-year term. The department head is reviewed annually by the faculty, led by a senior faculty member with input from others, resulting in a summary given to the department head and dean. The current department head assumed the role in January 2017; her term will expire in June 2020.

**e) Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.**

The unit is small, with only seven full-time faculty and two faculty in phased retirement. There is one vacant position. The unit has 62 majors, so faculty and students are encouraged to address issues on a one-to-one basis. Complaints can be escalated to the department head, but this is rare. If a complainant isn’t satisfied, the dean or an associate dean is the next stop. And if the complaint is about the department head, that is the first avenue for resolution. The current department head said neither escalation has happened, to her knowledge, during her tenure.

**SUMMARY:**

The unit – and the university – are buttoned-up when it comes to governance and administration. The mission statement and strategic planning are thoughtful and up to date. The department head is seen as an effective straight-shooter, and garners respect among her superiors, peers and unit faculty. There are clear policies for faculty appointments and reviews, as well as for complaints and concerns.

**Overall evaluation compliance / non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

## **PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**

*The unit provides curriculum and instruction, whether on site or online, that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the Council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**a) The unit requires that students take a minimum of 72 semester credit hours (or 104 quarter credit hours) required for a baccalaureate degree outside of journalism and mass communications and meet the liberal arts and sciences-general education requirements of the institution. ACEJMC expects at least 95 percent of the graduating classes in the two academic years preceding an accreditation visit to meet this requirement.**

The Bachelor of Arts degree in the Journalism and Strategic Communication majors requires 53 credit hours for Journalism and 55 credit hours for Strategic Communication towards the required 120 credit hours for graduation, which was increased from 113 credit hours beginning with the class of 2020. Courses within the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications account for 15 credit hours of Core Courses for all majors. All majors must complete a Diversity of Experience course for three credit hours that can be chosen from a list of 24 courses throughout the university. Students also can seek the department head's approval for other courses to meet the requirement. In 2018, half of the department graduates completed a double major, and in 2017, 42% completed a double major.

The registrar's office and the department head review students' degree audits to assure compliance with the 72-hour rule. Additionally, majors meet with their academic advisers for registration each of the three terms. Based on graduation audits, 100 percent of the 2018 graduates and 97 percent of the 2017 graduates complied with the rule. Students are made aware of the 72-hour rule through the checklist for the majors advising sheet.

All Washington and Lee students must complete the Foundation and Distribution requirements that are the core of their liberal arts education including proficiency in a foreign language achieved through 16-credit hours of coursework or placement tests.

**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 competencies listed by the Council.**

The department offers two majors, Journalism and Strategic Communication. Strategic Communication became a major in 2014 because of student interests in government, corporate and non-profit communications. A major in journalism leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree requires completion of at least 53 credits, including at least 35 credits in journalism and mass communications, and at least 72 credits outside the department. A major in strategic communication leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree requires completion of at least 55 credits, including at least 27 credits in journalism and mass communications and at least 72 credits outside the department.

The department had 40 Strategic Communication majors and 22 Journalism majors (16 Journalism sequence and six Business Journalism sequence) for a total of 62 majors at the time of this site visit.

The department's curriculum includes 15 credit hours of Core Courses:

- Introduction to Mass Communications – JOUR 101

- Beyond Google and Wikipedia – JOUR 190
- Introduction to Reporting – JOUR 201
- Law and Communications – JOUR 301
- Ethics of Journalism/Media Ethics – JOUR 334/345
- News/Communication Internship – JOUR 451-453/461-463

For the Diversity of Experience three-credit requirement, students identified opportunities to explore diverse topics in courses including multimedia storytelling about the history of diversity at Washington and Lee and about the status of diversity on campus today.

The department requires all majors to complete two semester hours of internship and up to a maximum of six credit hours. One hundred work hours equals one credit hour.

Journalism majors in the Journalism sequence take an additional 17 credit hours of Journalism courses and six credit hours of Journalism electives and the majors must complete a minor or cognate of 12 credit hours in another discipline. The Journalism sequence courses are:

- Introduction to Digital Journalism – JOUR 202
- Beat Reporting – JOUR 258
- State and Local Government – POL 203
- Editing for Print and Online Media or Producing for Broadcast and Online Media – JOUR 351/JOUR 362
- In-Depth Reporting – JOUR 356

Journalism majors in the Business Journalism sequence take an additional 29 credit hours and the majors must complete a minor or cognate of 12 credit hours from Economics, Business and/or Accounting. The Business Journalism sequence courses are:

- Introduction of Digital Journalism – JOUR 202
- Beat Reporting – JOUR 258
- Editing for Print and Online Media or Producing for Broadcast and Online Media – JOUR 351/JOUR 362
- Reporting on Business – JOUR 371
- Reporting on the Economy – JOUR 372
- State and Local Government – POL 203
- Introduction to Accounting (taught in School of Commerce) – ACC 100
- Introduction to Economics (taught in School of Commerce) – ECON 100
- In-Depth Reporting – JOUR 356

Strategic Communication majors take an additional 13 credit hours and 12 credit hours of electives and the majors must complete 12 credit hours of Strategic Communication electives. The majors also must complete a cognate or minor of 12 credit hours in another discipline. Strategic Communication courses are:

- Information Technology Literacy (taught in the School of Commerce) – INTR 201
- Applied Statistics (taught in the School of Commerce) – INTR 202
- Public Relations Writing – JOUR 227
- Communication Theory – JOUR 231
- Principles of Public Relations – JOUR 273

The department endorses the ACEJMC professional values and competencies, including them in course syllabi. The curriculum and course syllabi demonstrate a balance between theory and conceptual courses and skills courses.

A review of syllabi, competency grids, class observations and faculty and student interviews provides evidence that the ACEJMC professional values and competence are explicitly met.

**c) Instruction, whether on-site or online, is demanding and current, and is responsive to professional expectations of digital, technological and multimedia competencies. Achievements in teaching and learning are recognized and valued.**

The department maintains currency through regular assessment and revisions to curriculum, regular course updates, new equipment purchases, and faculty development. Since the last reaccreditation visit, the department eliminated the Mass Communications sequence to give a more discipline-specific focus to students by creating a new major, Strategic Communication. Journalism and Business Journalism sequences were redesigned into one major, Journalism, with two sequences, Journalism and Business Journalism.

Students expressed overall satisfaction in the coursework, believing it to be current and engaging. Students were enthusiastic about the new Strategic Communication major because it meets the needs of students who enjoy writing, but do not want to be journalists. Students indicated a need to hire faculty members from the strategic communication discipline to offer courses more often and to expand the course offerings in the new major.

Technology is integrated into the curriculum through several courses, including Multimedia Storytelling Design, Introduction to Digital Journalism, Producing for Broadcast and Online Media, Introduction to Reporting, Editing for Print and Online, and Public Relations Writing. A new course, Social Media: Principles and Practice, introduces students to running a multiplatform social news service. Introduction of Digital Journalism introduces students to Final Cut Pro, Adobe Photoshop and Google Fusion Tables and coding in HTML and CSS.

Faculty participate in the university Faculty Teacher-Scholar Development Cohorts to learn and share knowledge and best practices about using technology in the classroom. All department members have been recipients of the Lenfest Grant summer funding to work on teacher-scholar initiatives including training and teaching with technology. One faculty member received funding for a class project or assignment that used digital tools through the dean's Digital Humanities Initiative. The department head nominates faculty members to attend the Associated Colleges of the South Teaching and Learning Workshop.

Capital requests for technology updates (hardware and software) are made by the department head to the dean's office. Donations from students' parents and alums also contribute to the purchase of new equipment. Technology upgrades are on a two-year rotation.

Faculty are required to administer course evaluations, which consist of 10 questions; the faculty may also add questions. The department's teaching faculty have garnered recognition for their teaching. Faculty have been recipients of the Scripps Howard/AEJMC Social Media Grant, Advertising Education Foundation of America's Visiting Professor Program, W&L Digital Humanities Grant, W&L Lenfest Grant, Mellon Grant, and one faculty member was nominated for the Outstanding Faculty Award sponsored by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

**d) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses; the ratio in skills and laboratory sections, whether on-site or online, should not exceed 20-1. (Campaigns classes are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)**

Since 2015, 92 percent of courses in the department have been taught by full-time faculty, and the student-faculty ratio in lab courses does not exceed 20:1. Small class sizes encourage student engagement in classes, faculty mentoring and one-on-one instruction. The department ranks as the fifth-largest major in the university. A university member outside the unit indicated “the major is strong and an important part of the identity of the college.”

The university technically requires enrollment of five students for a class to be offered. At the time of the site visit, there was an advanced reporting class of one student; it was a required course needed for graduation and everyone, including the dean, took that situation in stride and without surprise. The department typically offers no course with more than 25 students and is considering lowering the current cap of 15 to six in certain journalism skills courses, to manage second- and third-year student enrollment.

**e) 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.**

All majors are required to complete two semester hours of internship experience and may take up to six semester hours, at a ratio of 100 work hours per credit hour. Students are responsible for obtaining an internship and the department has an internship coordinator who assists students, through placement to completion of the internship. The department has appropriate policies and procedures in place including syllabus, supervisor evaluation of students, student evaluations of the internship sites, and internship contracts.

Forty-five students interned in the summer of 2017, including five students with internships overseas. Student internship performance is assessed by the supervisor’s evaluation (20 percent of the course grade) and the department intern coordinator (80 percent of the course grade). The unit interns received overall favorable ratings in 2017 with 37 percent of journalism students receiving an A+ from their on-site supervisor and 50 percent of strategic communication students receiving an A+ from their on-site supervisor.

Student interns were praised for their skills in research methods, artistic ability, initiative, maturity, teamwork and understanding news value. Areas for interns to improve included writing, grammar, Adobe Creative Suite and social media strategy and use. Students typically intern in the summer. Students indicated the internship coordinator provided guidance in identifying an appropriate internship site, creating resumes and preparing for interviews.

**SUMMARY:**

The unit has responded appropriately to curriculum development in the evolving disciplines of mass communications, to pedagogy development in the ever-changing demands of technology, and to maintaining a balance of skills, theory and conceptual courses. The unit and college supports faculty development through grants and workshops.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**

## Part II -- Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

*The unit has an inclusive program that values domestic and global diversity, and serves and reflects society.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**a) The unit has a written diversity plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty 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 and identify the under-represented groups.**

The unit has a diversity plan created in 2003, updated in 2011 and again in 2016.

The diversity plan notes, "The Department of Journalism and Mass Communications prepares students to live and work in a diverse world. Its mission in that regard complements that of the university, as expressed in the University's Statement of Commitment to Diversity: 'Washington and Lee University commits itself to the recruitment and retention of a broad, inclusive student body, faculty and administration . . .'" The unit plan has five goals that broadly embrace diversity, contain the department's definition of diversity and identify its under-represented groups.

While the plan contains the goals and a variety of action steps, it is not prescriptive on how the unit evaluates progress toward achievement of its goals.

The unit's overall mission statement includes both diversity and civility among nine core values.

The unit's strategic plan has among its four goals, a commitment to improve diversity in the department.

**b) The unit's curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of domestic concerns about gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. The unit's curriculum includes instruction in issues and perspectives relating to mass communications across diverse cultures in a global society.**

The unit describes itself as ahead of the university in exposing its students to "cultures and perspectives unlike our own." Diversity issues appear to be well and fully integrated into the unit's core curriculum as well as into sequence-specific elective courses and in selection of outside speakers. Students confirm an understanding of diversity and inclusiveness is required in the unit curriculum and, further, that advisers note the need for students to graduate with such sensitivities. The unit sought and received approval for a "diversity of experience" course requirement for all of its majors. The requirement insures no student can graduate with a degree earned from the unit without having been exposed to a course which specifically and directly addresses diversity issues.

The unit puts considerable effort behind bringing in diverse speakers, in person and via Skype.

**c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to recruit women and domestic minority faculty and professional staff and, where feasible, recruits international faculty and professional staff.**

The unit describes itself as "a leader on campus in achieving diversity among its faculty." Five of the nine members are female; one is black. One of four male faculty members is Hispanic. Two of the nine

faculty are in phased retirement; they are both white women. Two part-time faculty members are white females.

Since the last site visit, the department has had turnover, due to retirement and phased retirement, with the opportunity for five full-time faculty hires. While successful with hiring women, the unit has not been as successful with hiring minorities. Of the five hired, two were white women and three were males, including one Hispanic male, who holds the Knight Chair for Ethics. African-Americans were not hired, and none were finalists in the required self-study data from 2015-2018.

Six adjunct faculty members have been hired since 2015. None are minorities.

The unit describes a fairly robust program of advertising and recruiting strategies aimed at minorities and women, but these strategies have not been effective with respect to non-Hispanic minorities when compared to the university's stated service area.

**d) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit and retain a student population reflecting the diversity of the population eligible to enroll in institutions of higher education in the region or population it serves, with special attention to recruiting under-represented groups.**

Diversity is said to have been a university priority for many years. Results, however, have been, in the unit's own words, "disappointing." University and unit administration note that the university's very name may make progress more difficult. Robert E. Lee is buried on campus beneath Lee Chapel, which is a gathering space for many significant campus events with students.

The university understands the institutional problems with diversity, as was noted by the last site team. Conversations with university leaders confirm that improving campus diversity is a top priority. In response to the present national re-examination of Confederate iconography in public spaces and particularly in response to violence arising out of this re-examination, the university president convened a "Commission on Institutional History and Community" to explore how the university's history shapes its community. The commission produced a variety of recommendations in spring 2018, among them:

- Renaming three buildings bearing Lee's name.
- Placing Lee in "historical context."
- Converting Lee Chapel to a museum and discontinuing its use for speakers and events.
- Renaming a building honoring a former trustee who bequeathed slaves to the university.
- Requiring an undergraduate seminar that examines the university's place in history.
- The university's name continues to be Washington and Lee University, and its nickname continues to be the Generals.

The university trustees have rejected the commission's suggestion to rename Lee Chapel and Lee House, the home of all university presidents since 1869. The use of Lee Chapel for university events will continue, but the trustees agreed to close the doors to the room containing a statue of Lee recumbent in his Confederate general's uniform during such events. Replica Confederate "battle flags" flanking the statue were removed in 2014. In addition, portraits of Lee and Washington in civilian clothing are replacing the portraits of Lee and Washington in military uniforms on display in Lee Chapel. The trustees also agreed to the suggestion that several campus buildings be renamed. The recommended changes are still in progress.

Student recruitment is handled at the university level by the Office of Admissions. The unit has no formal role in identifying, engaging, selecting or admitting students. The unit historically has recruited for its programs from students selected by the university. During the review period, the unit has begun its own outreach to two potential feeder high schools, one in Washington, D.C., and one in Atlanta. During the period currently under review, new leadership in admissions has sought wider campus participation in expense-paid campus visits by high school students of color.

The university has several efforts underway to present a welcoming climate for a diverse body of students, including:

- Working toward need-blind undergraduate admissions.
- Eliminating financial barriers to full participation in the university experience.
- Recruiting “deep and diverse” applicant pools.
- Creation of an Office of Inclusion and Engagement.
- Expense-paid campus visits for high school students of color.

The urgency of these changes is expressed at the highest levels of university administration and dominates conversation, both formal and informal. Improving diversity is the relatively new president’s top priority, and that echoes throughout admissions, the provost’s office, the dean of the college and the unit.

Recruitment of African-American students remains a challenge and a solution continues to be elusive. The self-study describes signs of progress with enrollment of domestic students of color at the university level and the unit has made more progress than the university as a whole. The self-study describes the unit’s student body as “less white than it was at the time of the last site visit,” with modest gains among Hispanic, Asian and international students. As of fall 2018, the data show the unit has one declared major who is African-American. The area population is more than 17 percent African-American. At the time of the self-study, the department had six Hispanic students (members of the Classes of 2018, 2019 and 2020) who had declared majors; the population area is about 17 percent Hispanic. Among Asians, there is near parity with the area population of about 4.2 percent. Among whites, the unit remains well above the area population of 58.6 percent. The university and the unit have made and continue to make considerable efforts; results are still pending.

**e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and all forms of discrimination, in keeping with the acceptable cultural practices of the population it serves, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity.**

The unit has a culture of inclusiveness and students and faculty members describe the unit as free from harassment and discrimination. Civility and the university’s honor system are described as “among Washington and Lee’s most revered traditions.” The unit’s majors are recognized by administrators at the unit, college and university level as among campus leaders in celebrating diversity. Reid Hall, the academic home of the unit, fully accommodates physically challenged students, faculty and visitors. Students describe the unit as a place of safety and comfort, “a home.”

University-wide undercurrents that seem worth mentioning here:

The Commission on Institutional History and Community, mentioned above, reported among the comments it received that Lee Chapel is “problematic” and a source of discomfort for the community, and that “Confederate flags should not be allowed in dorms and fraternity houses.” Among the common



themes the commission found among students was “the normalization of Confederate history on campus and in Lexington can be unsettling.” A common theme reported among faculty was “the association with Robert E. Lee needs to be examined.”

Some students in the unit told the site team that the university’s majority Greek system culture is “exclusionary” to minorities who don’t feel comfortable in that culture. The university reports about 75 percent of the student body are members of a fraternity or a sorority. Faculty and university administrators alike said the traditional Greek system is likely an obstacle to attracting a diverse student population. There are also historically black fraternities and sororities on campus, and in an effort to provide further alternatives, the administration has established several “theme houses” for those who don’t participate in traditional Greek letter organizations.

**SUMMARY:**

The unit has created a curriculum that prepares its students to work in a multi-cultural society and has been effective at exposing its students to diversity. The team found a climate within the unit free of harassment or discrimination. Nevertheless, the unit’s student body falls short of reflecting the population which it serves. In its own words, diversification efforts have been “disappointing.” Meanwhile, with five opportunities to hire faculty, four white candidates and one Hispanic candidate were hired; no African-Americans. Six adjuncts have been hired since 2015; none are minorities.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:  
NON-COMPLIANCE**

TABLE 6. FACULTY POPULATIONS

Full-time faculty, 2017-2018

Group	Female	% of unit FT faculty	Male	% of unit FT faculty
Black/African-American	1	12.5%		
White	3	37.5%	3	37.5%
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)			1	12.5%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander				
Two or more races				
Other race				
International (any race)				
<b>Total FT Journalism Faculty</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>4</b>	

Part-time faculty, 2017-2018

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African-American				
White	1	50%	1	50%
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)				
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander				
Two or more races				
Other race				
International (any race)				

**TABLE 5. UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT POPULATIONS, 2017-2018**

Group	Male	Female	% of total in unit	% total institution
Black/African-American			0.0%	2.2%
White	5	36	77.4%	82.5%
American Indian/Alaskan native				0.0%
Asian		2	3.8%	3.4%
Hispanic/Latino (any race)		5	9.4%	4.5%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander				0.0%
Two or more races			0.0%	3.1%
Unknown				0.7%
International students (any race)		5	9.4%	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: W&L Office of Institutional Effectiveness

\*Table 5 reflects the Fall 2017 Enrollment Census, which means it includes only declared majors in the Classes of 2018 and 2019.

\*\*Data on Page 8 includes current declared majors, 63 students who are members of the Classes of 2019 and 2020.

\*\*\*The Class of 2020 includes one African-American male and one Hispanic female.

\*\*\*\*As in many communications programs across the nation, female majors in our department often outnumber males.

**TABLE 4, AREA POPULATION**

**Service Area:** Washington and Lee is a highly selective, private university that enrolls students from nearly every state in the nation and more than three dozen countries. But it draws more than 76 percent of its undergraduates from the South and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States. The following chart is a breakdown of the Area Population for the census divisions of the Middle Atlantic, South Atlantic, East South Central and West South Central portions of the nation:

Group	% of population
Black/African-American	17.39%
White	58.57%
American Indian/Alaskan native	0.45%
Asian	4.24%
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	16.96%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0.05%
Two or more races	2.07%
Other race	0.26%
Female	51.07%

## **PART II — Standard 4: Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty**

*The unit hires, supports and evaluates a capable faculty with a balance of academic and professional credentials appropriate for the unit's mission.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

#### **a) The unit has written criteria for selecting and evaluating the performance of all full-time and part-time faculty and instructional staff.**

Washington and Lee's Faculty Handbook details the criteria for the selection and evaluation of faculty. The provost's website provides further information about the tenure and promotion process.

The Journalism and Mass Communications Department approved a Faculty Development Document on May 30, 2018. The document outlines the aspirations and expectations for candidates for tenure and promotion in the unit, including effectiveness as a teacher, scholarly and creative work, and academic citizenship.

The selection of new faculty begins when the unit head receives permission to hire from the dean, which typically occurs in the fall term. The unit head chairs the search committee and invites other faculty and/or staff to join.

Advertising for a 2014 search was placed in The Chronicle of Higher Education, AEJMC Online, and Journalism Jobs. For a 2015 search, an advertisement was placed in the Asian American Journalists Association. In addition to advertisements, faculty interview candidates at professional and academic conferences. After narrowing the applicant pool, six to eight candidates may be contacted for Skype interviews and then three to four finalists may be invited to campus.

A 2014 applicant pool for an assistant professor of journalism yielded a pool of 42 candidates with one Hispanic/Latino, eight Asians, two Black/African Americans, 27 whites, one two-or-more races, and two did not disclose. In the past six years, the unit has had five new faculty hires, two retirements and two departures.

A candidate's day-long campus visit includes class teaching and presentation of research or professional work, meetings with faculty, students and the dean. The committee makes a recommendation to the unit faculty who vote on whether to further the candidate to the dean. The dean makes the final offer.

Part-time faculty teach 10 percent of courses and are hired as needed due to sabbaticals or special need to fill a particular course, for example for a photojournalist. The hiring process for part-time faculty is less formal, with the unit head maintaining contacts with professionals nearby who are familiar with the program. For more extended hires, a broader search is conducted and the unit head seeks input from colleagues and brings candidates to campus. Candidates meet with faculty and students. The dean makes the final offer.

The dean of the college assigns mentors for new faculty members.

Full-time faculty are required to submit a Faculty Activities Report (FAR) to the dean and unit head in January. The FAR includes listings and brief descriptions of their year of instructional activities, research, scholarship and creative work, university, professional and community service, honors,

awards, professional recognition, and five-year plan progress. Tenure-track faculty receive a written evaluation from the unit head in June that reflects the consensus of all tenured faculty. Additionally, faculty must invite peers to attend their classes and to evaluate their teaching.

New hires receive two-year contracts that are renewable. The new hire is reviewed by the faculty and the unit head summarizes the faculty's review in a letter. The letter is shared with the new hire and the dean. At the sixth year, tenure track faculty prepare a file for tenure review by a tenure committee that includes tenured unit faculty and sometimes faculty from other units. The committee's recommendation is forwarded to the President's Advisory Council, who forwards a recommendation to the president and the Board of Trustees. Tenure is usually accompanied by promotion to associate professor. Associate professors are eligible for promotion after five years at rank and may seek promotion any time after the five years. Similar to the process for tenure, the faculty member assembles a file for promotion review that is reviewed by full professors of the unit. A recommendation is forwarded to the President's Advisory Committee who forwards a recommendation to the President and the Board of Trustees.

**b) Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for teaching, research/creative activity and service.**

Washington and Lee follows the teacher-scholar-service model, with teaching being the most important. The university emphasizes that mentoring students is among the faculty's most important duties. Faculty-student ratio in the unit is 8:1 and no course exceeds 25 students, with many classes with 10 or fewer students.

Over the past three years, the full-time faculty have taught most core and required courses: 92 percent in 2017-18, 88 percent in 2016-17, and 96 percent in 2015-16. Full-time faculty are typically assigned a 5.5 course load that means they teach five courses one year and six courses the next. The two endowed professors have a 4.5 teaching load due to other responsibilities. The unit head received one course reduction.

**c) Credentials of the unit's faculty represent a balance of professional and scholarly experience and expertise kept current through faculty development opportunities, relationships with professional and scholarly associations, and appropriate supplementation of part-time and visiting faculty.**

The unit has hired five new full-time faculty members since 2013. The full-time faculty members all have professional experience ranging from a few years to 35 years. The unit now has nine faculty – seven full-time faculty members and two in phased retirement. Five have a Ph.D. and four have master's degrees. The nine includes four men and five women, which includes seven whites, one Nigerian-American, and one Hispanic; the seven full-time make-up is five white, one Nigerian-American and one Hispanic.

There is evidence the faculty stay current in the field through the timely, topical publications produced, and discussions with students. Faculty have participated in a variety of national academic and professional conferences, such as the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, the Broadcast Education Association, and the Reynolds Center for Business Journalism. The unit has two endowed chairs: Knight Chair of Media Ethics and Reynolds Chair in Business Journalism.

**d) The unit regularly evaluates instruction, whether onsite or online, using multiple measures that include student input.**

The unit does not offer online courses.

Quality and effectiveness of teaching is measured by student course evaluations for each course, peer observations that are documented for inclusion in tenure or promotion files, and feedback from current and former students during the tenure and promotion process. Faculty are required to administer course evaluations.

Washington and Lee does not have teaching awards. The faculty share their expertise at conferences, workshops, seminars, and on panels at the university and the larger academy.

**e) The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship and the quality of education that the unit provides.**

The full-time faculty participation in university governance includes service and leadership on committees such as numerous search committees, Faculty Executive Committee, Student Affairs, Diversity Committee, College Strategic Plan Task Force, Institutional Review Board, and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Committee.

Feedback from other units indicate the unit's faculty contribute across campus through committee service, student engagement, and interdisciplinary initiatives such as team-taught courses and guest lecturing. The unit's students are appreciated by campus faculty for their ability to write, to ask good questions and their enthusiasm.

**SUMMARY:**

The full-time faculty is well balanced in academic and professional credentials. Faculty records in tenure and promotion, currency in the discipline, campus faculty feedback and student evaluations demonstrate they are effective in instruction and mentoring.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**

**PART II — Standard 5: Scholarship: Research, Creative and Professional Activity**

*With unit support, faculty members contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge and engage in scholarship (research, creative and professional activity) that contributes to their development.*

**Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**a) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity.**

There are several university-level documents, including the Faculty Handbook, that detail the expectations for the depth and quality of faculty scholarship. In a letter, the university president states his support for the “commitment to the highest quality teaching and scholarship in the liberal arts tradition.”

The handbook includes standards for merit increases, reappointments and promotions. The “intellectual activity and achievement” entry says, in part:

Judgment of a faculty member’s intellectual activity and achievement will include these considerations:

- Has attained the Ph.D. or equivalent terminal degree
- Has published reviews, articles monographs and books or the equivalent, the quality of which is meritorious
- Has conducted scholarly activities leading to greater depth and breadth in command of the academic field
- Has presented papers of quality to professional associations or their equivalent.

Faculty say they feel their research and creative work is valued and supported both by the unit and the university as a whole. “It’s great support, especially for such a small university,” said one. (In general as well, faculty feel well-cared for – with 25 percent discounts on the going mortgage rate, tuition support for children at any university, etc.)

**b) The unit specifies expectations for research, creative activity and/or professional activity in criteria for hiring, promotion and tenure.**

Merit salary increases, reappointments and promotions are based on judgment of intellectual activity and achievement as excerpted above.

In the immediate past academic year, departments were asked to articulate how the university’s principles in the faculty handbook are “manifested in that department’s methods and values.” In its response, the unit affirmed that tenure and promotion are “expected to show an ongoing commitment to producing high-quality work that contributes to the media professions’, the academy’s or the public’s understanding of issues of local, national and global importance.”

The dean emphasized that the university seeks to strike a balance between research and teaching. She said the unit does a nice job of that and she is supportive of how they have articulated their approach and outcomes: Each department is allowed to lay out its own way forward and the college understands that

means they won't all look the same.

This directive recognizes that the unit is unique in being a “pre-professional program housed in a liberal arts university.”

**c) Evaluation criteria for promotion, tenure and merit recognition account for and acknowledge activities appropriate to faculty members' professional as well as scholarly specializations.**

University-wide considerations are broad enough to recognize the kind of creative work many unit faculty – who have all worked professionally as well – engage in. They include: terminal degree; publication of reviews, articles, books or the equivalent; scholarly activities that lead to greater depth and command of the academic field; paper presentations; and, consulting leading to intellectual growth.

**d) Faculty members communicate the results of research, creative and/or professional activity to other scholars, educators and practitioners through presentations, productions, exhibitions, workshops and publications appropriate to the activity and to the mission of the unit and institution.**

Faculty deliver on both creative and academic work.

Three faculty members have either published scholarly books since the last self-study or have one under contract. Two others have published textbooks. Other output includes 12 articles in peer-reviewed journals and five book chapters, two documentaries and numerous columns, essays and articles in professional and popular publications – as well as presentations of papers and on panels at professional conferences.

See table at end of Standard 5 for more detail.

**e) The unit fosters a climate that supports intellectual curiosity, critical analysis and the expression of differing points of view.**

The university's sabbatical policy offers paid leave of one term every fifth year, or a full year at half salary. Leaves without pay are available for professional self-development. Tenure-track faculty are eligible for pre-tenure leave after two full years of service.

The unit supports its faculty in these opportunities, and multiple faculty members have taken advantage of them, for everything from book research to work as an officer for AEJMC.

Sufficient, even generous funds are available for travel for conferences and research, including a stipend specifically for scholarly or artistic projects. A grant program for improving pedagogy or expertise, “Lenfest Grants,” has been awarded to the unit 23 times since 2013, totaling nearly \$180,000. There are also “mini grants” to support pay for speakers and field trips.

In addition, the dean created teacher-scholar cohort grants to foster interdisciplinary work among faculty across the college and the university.



Faculty express enthusiasm and gratitude for the cohort grants, which are readily available. “Poof! There’s some money to do what you want to do,” said one professor, “They are really a great thing for us.” Examples of committees launched through the program include those addressing digital pre-professional excellence and sustainability issues.

The faculty widely and intensively take advantage of these opportunities to research, express and collaborate on intellectual pursuits.

**SUMMARY:**

The unit and the university are supportive of scholarship, research and creative activity. The resources available for creative approaches to teaching and learning in the form of a variety of grants are impressive. The faculty respond in kind, delivering peer-reviewed articles, books, textbooks, documentaries and presentations at a respectable level for such a small faculty.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				Totals (12)
		Full Professors (8)	Associate Professors (2)	Assistant Professors (2)	Other Faculty**	
Awards and Honors	11	4		7	11	
Grants Received Internal	38	23	8	7	38	
Grants Received External	4	2		2	4	
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored***	3	1	1	1	3	
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	2	2			2	
Books Edited	2	2			2	
Book Chapters	5	1	1	3	5	
Monographs***	2		1	1	2	
Articles in Refereed Journals	12	2	5	5	12	
Refereed Conference Papers	13	2	2	9	13	
Invited Academic Papers	1	1			1	
Encyclopedia Entries	1			1	1	
Book Reviews	3	1	2		3	
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	18	8	2	8	18	
Juried Creative Works	2			2	2	
Non-juried Creative Works	0				0	
Other: Professional conference panels	12	2	1	9	12	

## Part II -- Standard 6: Student Services

*The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

#### **a) Faculty and/or professional advising staff ensure that students are aware of unit and institutional requirements for graduation and receive career and academic advising.**

All advising at the university is handled by faculty and the university is proud of what it describes as “high-quality advising through relationships they form with faculty that often last a lifetime.”

Unit faculty all seem to enjoy advising and report finding it “exciting” and “satisfying” to interact with the unit’s students. “Our signature quality is that we know them so well . . . we even know their dogs’ names,” said one faculty member.

Students uniformly agree, citing “personal connections” and say advising is “one of the department’s strongest resources.” One double major noted her journalism adviser “is so much more ready to help” her than her economics adviser. Similar views were expressed by other double majors.

First-year students are randomly assigned an academic adviser from any department. A few days before fall term begins, first-year students have lunch with their advisers and meet to discuss the courses they will take in their first semester in college.

Students do not declare a major until the winter term of their sophomore year and at this time find or are assigned an adviser in their major. Students are required to consult with their advisers and receive approval before they register for classes in each of the university’s three terms.

Compliance with the 72-hour rule appears to be well monitored by the department head who reviews degree audits at least twice a year. The university registrar’s office also independently monitors the unit’s students’ progress toward the required 72 hours. The department created checklists for students to keep track of their progress. These forms prominently note, “72 credits must be earned outside the department.” Since 2017, an upgrade to the university’s registration system has permitted students and faculty to examine course schedules and track progress on all requirements online and students are regularly reminded about the 72-hour requirement. “If you don’t know,” said one student, “it’s not because they didn’t tell you over and over again.”

Since the last self-study, the unit has evaluated the quality of advising with a question on its annual senior exit survey and reports average results varying between 3.7 and 4.2 on a five-point Likert-style scale.

#### **b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.**

A student-faculty ratio of approximately 8 to 1 provides ample opportunities for individual attention. Mentoring is reported to be “among faculty’s most important duties,” and faculty are expected to offer “extensive” office hours. While office hours are posted, students report that if a faculty member’s door is open, students are welcome at any time. Some faculty routinely provide their students with their personal mobile phone numbers.

Students are nearly universally satisfied with the accessibility of advisers and with the time faculty members devote to them outside of classes, praising them for the personal interest they take in student success and for the follow up.

**c) The unit keeps students informed about the activities, requirements and policies of the unit.**

The unit is represented on the university's well-designed website with a robust suite of resources including basic information on the requirements for a degree with prominent notice of the 72-credit requirement, lists of available courses, the course catalog, academic calendar, resources for advising, links to student life opportunities. In short, it is a modern, intuitive and easily accessed compendium of academic and student life.

Communication with students is via Sakai, the learning management system which includes announcements, email listservs, classroom calendars, assignments, tests and quizzes, a gradebook and other modules. Every course at W&L has an associated Sakai site. Students report they are kept well informed about policies and activities.

**d) The unit and the institution provide students with extra-curricular activities and opportunities that are relevant to the curriculum and develop their professional as well as intellectual abilities and interests.**

A variety of student media opportunities are available. All are independent of the unit. They include:

- **Ring-tum Phi:** The student newspaper, published in print on Mondays and online throughout the week, during the school year.
- **InGeneral:** An independent student-run magazine, published twice a year with a staff of about 20 students from across the campus. It was founded by a journalism major and journalism majors often serve in its top editorial positions.
- **WLUR:** The 175-watt campus FM radio station providing NPR's morning edition and BBC in the mornings with music in the afternoon and evening. Once part of the journalism department, it now is operated by the university's Office of Communications and Public Affairs.
- **Office of Communications and Public Affairs:** There are opportunities for work-study or interns, to write press releases, take photos and assist with W&L's social media accounts.
- **Mock convention:** A simulated student-run political convention held every four years. Students spend months conducting research in advance of the political primaries to predict who the party out of power will nominate to run for president.

Opportunities provided within the unit include:

- **“Rockbridge Report”:** Described by the unit as “its pedagogical showcase,” this is a weekly live cable newscast and website student laboratory used in various courses to teach announcing, beat reporting, producing and editing. There is an additional weekly 10-minute update. Student-reporters cover beats in the Rockbridge County region, such as city government, schools, business, cops and courts and the environment. Students also manage the “Report's” social media sites. The “Report” also operates equipment allowing students to broadcast live remote reports from news scenes. The “Rockbridge Report” is highly praised in the Lexington community.
- **Society of Professional Journalists** chapter.

- **Public Relations Student Society of America** chapter.

Students report they have ample opportunities for para-professional learning and engagement. Some students noted that because of the small size of the university and the town they have opportunities to interview local coaches, community leaders and political figures.

The university is distinguished by its 170-year-old honor system that is administered by the students. It is not a code imposed by the university. Indeed, the students “reserve to themselves alone the authority to hold their fellow students accountable for failures of their duty of honor.” Tests are un-proctored, doors are routinely left unlocked and theft among students is virtually unheard of. Any breach of trust, such as lying, cheating or stealing, is considered an Honor Violation, punishable by a single sanction: removal from the University after a hearing by the all-student student executive committee. Once a final decision has been rendered, there is no appeal. Students assert the honor system is one of the most treasured elements of their student experience. As one student noted, “leaving your purse or bag with nothing to worry about is one of the best things about this place.”

**(e) The accredited unit must gather, maintain and analyze enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success. The unit annually publishes retention and graduation information on its website.**

The School maintains extensive retention and graduation statistics on an annual basis and the material is available on its website. As mentioned, the unit also gathers information on the quality of advising and other student services aimed at improving student success.

**SUMMARY:**

Students have extraordinary access to faculty and the quality of advising is thoughtful and effective. Extracurricular activities are available to students within and outside the unit. Although not strictly extracurricular, a variety of community engagement projects are included in advanced-level course work. Retention and graduation data are available on the website. The university’s student-administered honor system provides a fundamental and organic ethical foundation for its students.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/ non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**

## Part II -- Standard 7: Resources

*The unit plans for, seeks and receives adequate resources to fulfill and sustain its mission.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**a) The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.**

The department head oversees planning of operational and capital budgeting and spending, but has no control over, nor even knowledge of, faculty and staff salaries. Therefore, the budget provided to the site team contained no information on salaries. A conversation with the provost revealed that the university conducted a salary review several years ago in order to use a grant to bring salaries to at or above the median of peer institutions and to address gender pay equity.

The unit has an operating budget of about \$136,500, an increase of 13.7 percent, from \$120,000 in 2013-2014.

More than 60 percent of this budget is intended for upgrading and maintenance of equipment. This spending is clearly in support of strategic Goal 2, "Improving our facilities and resources."

Strategic Goal 1, "Strengthening our student-centric approach to teaching," includes efforts to develop a data storytelling class and to keep pace with industry developments. The budget supports these efforts as well. Goal 1 also includes hiring additional strategic communication faculty. One faculty line for this specialty is currently in the interviewing phase.

The department head and faculty are confident of continuing additional support from the college and university levels to achieve the unit's four strategic goals. The dean of the college and the provost both described the department as a differentiated, signature program for the university – "So it can't be ragtag!" according to the provost.

Funding has come through. Over the past six years, the unit purchased more than \$543,000 in equipment through a combination of operating and capital funds in collaboration with other entities at the university, including the provost's office, the dean of the college, the treasurer's office and Information Technology Services.

In addition, the unit has access to endowed funds which provide financial support for internships, both in the United States and abroad. Another fund covers the cost of an online numeracy course required of all Introduction to Reporting students.

**b) The resources that the institution provides are adequate to achieve the unit's mission. The resources are fair in relation to those provided other units.**

The unit reports, and administrators confirm, it has the largest operating budget in the college, larger even than biology and chemistry. As noted, the university has displayed a commitment to maintain unit resources and address critical issues in a timely manner. Faculty and staff are satisfied with resources provided.

**c) The facilities of the unit enable and promote effective scholarship, teaching and learning.**

The unit is located in Reid Hall, a stately red-brick building that was last renovated in 2001-2002 and remains in very good condition. The building contains nine faculty offices, three staff offices, two visitors' offices, five classrooms, a lunch/special events lounge and a green room/student workspace, two computer/teaching labs, and spaces for audio/podcasting and video production, including a full TV studio and control room. All are exceptionally well maintained and suitable for their purpose.

The "smart" classrooms are shared with other departments and unit faculty also teach in other campus buildings.

The unit has exclusive use of the two computer-equipped teaching labs which are separated by a movable divider that can be opened into a single large teaching space. These labs are equipped with a total of 30 Macintoshes or PCs, all with basic word processing software and various video production software. These rooms are transformed into a single newsroom on Thursday afternoons when student reporters, copy editors, anchors and producers create the "Rockbridge Report" website and newscast. Although this lab space is well equipped with current hardware and software, faculty believe it's due for an upgrade into a "real newsroom" space.

Adjacent to the computer lab is an edit suite, containing three fully equipped audio/media work and editing stations as well as an audio booth equipped with editing software. The suite is generally used for podcasting, but also may be used for voice tracking video-based projects.

Reid Hall's studio has had HD capabilities since 2009 and contains two rolling set pieces, including a news desk and an interview or "soft set" and enough professional-grade camera, sound, lighting and other equipment to provide an appropriate learning experience. Old and hot incandescent studio lighting was replaced with cool-operating LED lighting shortly before the site team visit. The replacement was made possible by the university, which anticipates paying for the replacement expense with decreased air-conditioning expense.

The studio control room contains seven positions for students: audio, technical director, director, remote camera operator, TelePrompTer operator, video and graphics playout and newscast producer. The control room and its equipment are modeled after a typical small-market station and are adequate for instruction.

After almost 10 years, some equipment is beginning to age and will need replacement.

**d) The institution and the unit provide faculty and students with equipment or access to equipment to support its curriculum and the research, creative and professional activities of the faculty.**

In addition to the equipment already described, the unit reports providing an assortment of digital news gathering equipment including 13 electronic news gathering kits, six with 2k video cameras and seven with 4k cameras, digital DSLRs, portable audio recorders and a drone with a 4k camera. A spot check of equipment found kits were complete and in good condition.

The unit is especially proud of its cellular-based live broadcast backpack unit that is used for live reporting by the "Rockbridge Report" news team.

The site team had access to a great majority of the unit's declared majors and none of the students complained about availability or condition of production equipment. The students praised the equipment and the technical manager's expertise and especially his response: "You email him and he arrives in seconds!"

**e) The institution and the unit provide sufficient library and information resources to support faculty and student research and professional development.**

Reid Hall is mere steps from the adjacent Leyburn Library and the Telford Science Library is nearby. Together they contain more than 725,000 volumes, thousands of periodicals in print and electronic form and other electronic sources, microfilms, and selected print and electronic newspapers. The library is a selective Federal Depository Library for U.S. Government publications. The unit also maintains a small library and reading room.

**SUMMARY:**

Thanks to a combination of university appropriation, revenue from endowments and continuing annual support from the college and university, the unit has adequate resources to provide a strong education for its students. Some studio and control room equipment is nearing the end of its useful life and soon will need to be replaced.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/ non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**



## PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

*The unit and its faculty advance journalism and mass communication professions and fulfill obligations to its community, alumni and the greater public.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**a) The unit consults and communicates regularly with its alumni and is actively engaged with alumni, professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching, whether on-site or online, current and to promote the exchange of ideas.**

The department and its alumni interface in a variety of ways. The unit's Facebook page, with more than 300 followers, is its main channel to keep alumni updated and informed. It is maintained by the department's administrative assistant. The department's website showcases accomplishments of students, faculty and alumni.

Some of the connection is more personal and informal – the longtime administrative assistant has a wall of baby photos sent from alums. Faculty make a point of meeting with alums when they travel, and during homecoming and alumni weekends, the department hosts open houses and invites alums to visit classes and talk to students. Each year, the department surveys the immediate-past graduating class on curriculum and pedagogy.

The unit also has an Alumni Advisory Board on which 17 alums currently sit. Alums can serve up to three consecutive three-year terms. The board meets every spring.

Professional and academic associations engagement is equally robust. In the review period, every member of the faculty has served as a panelist or member at a domestic or international professional conference or organization, including the American Press Institute, Newseum, AEJMC, PRSA and the Virginia Press Association. Faculty members have been invited to be guest lecturers at Indiana University, University of Maryland, Morgan State University and more. In addition, faculty members attend annual conferences of professional associations like PRSA, ONA, RTDNA, ASNE, NABJ.

Other professors have worked as externs to learn new social media skills and to observe and research online news websites.

**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.**

The department convenes an Ethics Institute twice a year, at which professionals reflect on and learn from recent developments. The unit's journalism ethics program was created in the 1970s, and the institutes have been convened since the mid-1990s. The winter institute is for strategic communication professionals and the fall institute focuses on journalism. Talks include topics like the Ferguson, Mo., shooting and unrest and the connection between digital and physical worlds. The department also is home to a Knight Chair of Media Ethics, whose high-profile work nationally elevates the unit's work in this area.

Business journalism, another focus of the department thanks to an endowed Reynolds Chair in Business Journalism, also brings multiple guest speakers to campus, or by Skype, every year. Pulitzer Prize winners David Fahrenthold (reporting on President Trump) and Eric Eyre (FOIA and painkillers) are examples, as well as Diana Henriques of the New York Times on the Bernie Madoff scandal. Recently, seven women alums served on a panel: “W&L women watching Wall Street,” that made working in the big leagues (Bloomberg, CNBC, etc.) seem obviously attainable for current students.

Faculty also are leaders in professional organizations, act as peer reviewers for academic journals and judge professional journalism and PR campaign contests, including the RFK Journalism Awards, Sigma Delta Chi, Scripps-Howard Journalism Awards, AP broadcasting awards, the Emmys and more.

**c) The unit contributes to the improvement of journalism and mass communication as academic disciplines by supporting the faculty’s involvement in academic associations and related activities.**

Most of the faculty are active with AEJMC in a variety of ways, for example: attending conferences; holding poster sessions; acting as peer reviewer for participatory journalism and communication technology divisions; serving as the history division’s teaching chair, secretary, research chair, division chair; reviewing conference papers/online and newspaper; serving as research chair.

Two of the faculty have been involved with ACEJMC, as site team members/leaders and on the Council representing ASJMC.

**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.**

Unit faculty give talks, participate in conferences and organize events that help illuminate issues for the community.

The provost said that by its nature, the unit, “one of our signature programs, is one of the university’s biggest outreach programs.” The dean said the impression is that the department is “constantly having events that are well-attended and foster a real sense of community.”

The department hosts debates and forums for political contests, including the commonwealth’s attorney position. The unit is seen across campus as a leader in cultivating relationships with community partners.

In addition, one of the most visible outreach efforts is part of the curriculum: The Rockbridge Report website and weekly newscast supplements the county’s weekly newspaper and commercial radio station. Students from four courses feed into reports on issues and news of importance to the community through their participation in creating the newscast from story idea to on-air report.

The provost said the Rockbridge Report is one way the community is increasingly seeing itself reflected in work produced by the department. The department chair said, “It’s a win-win-win for students who take it, in the form of confidence and polish.” Going forward, there are ambitions to incorporate the Strategic Communication major into the report. The department has “complete control” of Channel 18, where the report airs, so it’s possible to envision integration and expansion possibilities.

Students can't say enough about their multiplatform and technological experience producing the report. The editing, production, reporting, anchoring and writing that is all required to produce the website and newscast is done with current tools and up-to-date direction.

In addition, professors speak at a local retirement community, serve as moderators on panels about "fake news" hosted by local entities and one faculty member even serves as the public address announcer at the W&L home football games.

**e) The unit supports scholastic journalism through such activities as faculty workshops, visiting lectures and critiques of student work.**

Until 2013, the unit and The Roanoke Times collaborated on a summer Minority Journalism Workshop. Interested high school students came to Lexington to stay in the residence halls, have tours and go to an all-day workshop where they learned about journalistic principles and issues. The newspaper ended the program in 2014.

Also in 2013, the Virginia Association of Journalism Teachers and Advisers partnered with the department to host a "J-camp" for 45 high school students and four high school journalism teachers at a four-day residential "journalism camp." That also is no longer happening because the logistical challenges exceeded the unit's capacity.

The unit has decided now to focus on a more practical target – the county high school, Rockbridge County High. Faculty members already participate in the Rockbridge County High School Career Day (every other year), and in 2017 made new inroads that it continues to build on by hosting the Rockbridge County High journalism teacher and her students.

**SUMMARY:**

While the unit's scholastic work has fallen off in recent years due to resource constraints, the faculty does continue to participate widely in professional and community activities that further the profession and keep the faculty plugged into new and emerging trends.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

*The unit regularly assesses student learning and applies results to improve curriculum and instruction.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

#### **a) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the “Professional Values and Competencies” of the Council.**

The unit embraces ACEJMC’s 12 professional values and competencies as its goals. Curriculum matrices for each major identify where the values and competencies are primary learning objectives in required courses. Course syllabi highlight these learning objectives.

- Who is in charge of the assessment program?

The unit head is responsible for the assessment program. The unit head administers, analyzes and reports its findings to faculty for discussion and action at the faculty retreat in August.

- How has the unit verified that core and required courses cover all 12 of ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies?

Curriculum matrices for each major identify which courses emphasize which values and competencies at the levels of *introduced* (entry-level required core course), *understanding* (entry-level required courses), and *application* (upper-level required courses).

- How has the unit ensured that the syllabuses for these courses state learning outcomes that address the values and competencies appropriate for each course?

The unit core courses and required courses in the two majors list the values and competencies on course syllabi across multiple sections of courses. The unit selects courses each year to conduct syllabi audits to ensure learning outcomes that address the values and competencies are reflected in course content, teaching modules, and/or assignments.

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

The unit revised and adopted its current Assessment Plan in 2017, its sixth revision in 14 years. The plan uses six direct and six indirect measures.

- What direct measures of assessment does the unit use, where in the curriculum and when?

Direct measures are assessed annually.

The unit administers a 36-question examination as a pre-test to students in J-101: Introduction to Mass Communications and a 30-question examination as a post-test assessment to all senior majors during their final semester before graduation.

The unit uses rubrics to evaluate student work from the in-depth capstone course, J-356, to assess journalism majors, which are evaluated by the faculty and professionals on the unit’s Advisory Board.

The unit uses a rubric to evaluate the electronic portfolios of strategic communication majors by professionals.

The unit uses summer intern evaluations by on-site supervisors and the unit's intern coordinator.

The unit uses an ethics survey of Ethics Institute Knight Fellows in fall and winter terms.

The unit plans to use a choice of four courses as capstone experiences to assess strategic communication majors: Jour 225: Crisis Communications; Jour 232: Research Methods for Mass Communications; Business 370: Integrated Marketing Communications; or, Business 371: Creative Strategic Planning. This assessment is delayed due to the search for a new faculty member in strategic communication.

- What indirect measures does it use, where and when?

The unit administers an annual 38-question exit survey of majors in winter term of their senior year and an exit interview with seniors that is conducted by the unit head.

The unit administers an annual 13-question survey of journalism alumni one year after graduation.

The unit administers an annual student evaluation of the internship curriculum.

The unit compiles employment data about graduates each June.

The unit compiles student success data from regional and national competitions including the Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence and the Hearst Journalism Awards.

- Are these measures effective for assessing ACEJMC's professional values and competencies?

The direct measures have been effective in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of student learning across the 12 values and competencies. The indirect measures have been complementary to that effort.

**c) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction.**

The unit has a systematic approach to assessment and spreads the workload among unit members. Data is collected annually or every-other year. The unit applied assessment data to make changes to the curriculum including creation of a Strategic Communication major, addition of a Diversity of Experience course, and requirement of a statistics course for strat-comm majors and an online numeracy course by Poynter NewsU in J-201.

- How does the unit collect and analyze the findings and identify unsatisfactory learning of specific values and competencies?

Data from the various assessments are collected throughout the year. The unit head summarizes the most recent data in June, writes an Annual Institutional Effectiveness Report, and shares the results with the assistant provost, assistant director of assessment, and the faculty at the annual faculty August retreat. The report summarizes the data in a narrative and in charts. Below is an example of results:

- 79 percent of 2018 respondents reported improvement in their understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other forms of domestic diversity compared to 65 percent of 2017 respondents
- 75 percent of 2018 respondents reported their studies had provided them with an understanding of the diversity of people and cultures in a global society compared to 65 percent of 2017 respondents

- 50 percent of 2018 respondents reported improvement in their confidence in numeracy skills compared to 43 percent of 2017 respondents
- 88 percent of 2018 respondents reported excellent or above average preparation in use of visuals compared to 78 percent of 2017 respondents

- What specific values and competencies had graduating classes not mastered satisfactorily?

Several assessment measures indicated a weakness in students' understanding of global diversity, the pre-test/post-test data revealed a weakness in students' application of numeracy, and various measures indicated a weakness in students' application of technology (digital skills).

- How does the unit decide how to address these areas of concern and what actions did it take to do so?

The unit head shares assessment findings with the faculty for discussion and action at the faculty retreat in August.

The unit required a Diversity of Experience course for both majors to address not only the global diversity deficiency but to improve students' appreciation of domestic diversity. Additionally, the unit identified courses in the core curriculum to include class discussions and teaching modules on domestic and global societies: J-101: Introduction to Mass Communications; J-201: Introduction to Reporting; J-301: Law and Communications; and J-344: Journalism Ethics and J-345: Media Ethics. The unit hosts the twice-a-year Ethics Institute that includes presentations by at least 50 percent women and people of color. The Institute is connected to the two ethics courses.

The unit addressed the numeracy deficiency in three ways: require strategic communication majors to take a statistics course; require students in Introduction to Reporting to take a numeracy course through the Poynter Institute's NewsU and pass the course; and plans to offer a data journalism course in fall 2019.

The unit used several methods to address the deficiency in application of technology including updating syllabi of select courses, made curriculum changes to include courses in Multimedia Storytelling Design, Social Media: Principles and Practice, and encouraged students to use online tutorials.

- How does the unit evaluate whether its actions overcame the weaknesses in student learning and what were the results?

The unit uses benchmarks to assess its progress. Benchmarks include post-tests, intern evaluations, and alumni survey results. The Annual Institutional Effectiveness Report includes a Closing the Loop section that discusses progress on key deficiency from the previous year and an Action Steps section that responds to goals set from the previous year.

- Was the program of data analysis and action effective for identifying and overcoming unsatisfactory student learning?

The unit is effective in its study and analysis of assessment data and in identifying and overcoming unsatisfactory student learning outcomes.

For example, to address deficiency in competencies 3 and 4, diversity in domestic and global societies, the unit audited syllabi, required a Diversity of Experience course, and increased the number of diverse speakers to engage with majors. As part of the Diversity of Experience selection of courses majors may take, the unit offers J-266: Cross-Cultural Documentary Filmmaking, and J-268: News Media, Race and Ethnicity. Students noted both courses as giving them depth and breadth in understanding diversity through particular teaching modules. For example, one student described a documentary about female faculty at Virginia Military Institute and another student described an assignment about religion and the media.

To address deficiency in competency 11, numeracy, the unit required all majors to pass the Poynter NewsU online course as part of the required course J-201 and required strategic communications major to take a statistics course. One strategic communication major appreciated the required statistics course because it helped her in her internship.

Finally, deficiency in competency 12, use of the tools of technology, the unit conducted syllabi audits, required majors take one of two courses on multimedia storytelling or social media, and have plans to offer a data journalism course once faculty resources are available. Students commented they felt prepared for internships due to their technology skills, editing, and AP style knowledge.

**d) The unit maintains contact with the alumni to assess these experiences in the professions and to provide suggestions for improving curriculum and instruction.**

The unit administers an annual 13-question survey of journalism alumni one year after graduation about curriculum strengths and weaknesses. One alumnae stated J-258: Beat Reporting was an essential fundamental course that taught her varied journalist skills.

Contact is maintained with alumni through the Alumni Affairs website Colonnade Connections, Find Your Alumni Chapter, the unit's Facebook page, and three university sponsored alumni weekends. With the assistance of the Office of Career and Professional Development, students connect with alums in New York City during a February Break visiting advertising, marketing and public relations companies. Faculty connect with alums during their travels to conferences, class trips, and through the Alumni Advisory Board.

**e) The unit includes members of journalism and mass communication professions in its assessment process.**

The unit involves professionals in assessment three ways: on-site supervisors evaluate student interns' work; professionals evaluate capstone portfolios for strategic communication majors and In-Depth Reporting projects for journalism majors (journalism and business journalism sequences); and, professionals take part in the twice-yearly Journalism and Media Ethics Institutes.

**SUMMARY:**

The unit administered a well-planned and executed assessment program. The unit tested and improved the measures of assessment and used the findings to make changes to improve curriculum and instruction.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:  
COMPLIANCE**

### **PART III: Summary by site visit team**

#### **1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.**

##### **Summary:**

The unit is a vibrant, current, smart program that turns out prepared graduates and enjoys considerable respect across campus. It is the fifth-largest department at the university and enjoys a well-funded remarkable student-faculty ratio. W&L is a highly ranked small liberal arts college that says it is proof that rural doesn't have to mean remote. It is steeped in deeply held traditions like a student-run honor system that creates a safe and welcoming campus. But, its challenges are also emblematic of its traditions. During the site team visit, the campus was leafletted with KKK fliers by presumed outsiders; the university president sent a campus-wide email decrying the act and restating his commitment to changing the culture. There are urgent goals and efforts around diversity; they have yet to produce anything but incremental results.

##### **Strengths:**

- Responsive curriculum and instruction, and faculty development
- Faculty engage in high-quality research and service to the academy
- Student-centered, up-to-date faculty who value their personalized approach to education
- Strategic and goal-oriented with its assessment plan, persistently tackling its most difficult competencies and values, diversity, technology, and numeracy
- Campus culture that creates a strong community for students and supports their engagement in a wide variety of disciplines and activities
- The eight students to one faculty member ratio in the department nurtures student development, learning and accountability.
- Motivated, engaged and enthusiastic students whom even faculty describe as over-achievers
- Successful internship program that results in consistent job placements

##### **Weaknesses:**

- Diversity of student body and faculty
- A new major still seeking a hire with additional expertise
- Deep-rooted university tradition, while often a strength, can also be a barrier to needed change.

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

Standard 3: Diversity

#### **3) Summarize the problems or deficiencies that should be addressed before the next evaluation (i.e., related to non-compliance with standards).**

Despite a curriculum that prepares its students to work in a multi-cultural society and exposes its students to diversity concepts, and a unit free of harassment and discrimination, the unit's student body falls far short of reflecting the population that it serves. In its own words, diversification results have been "disappointing;" they have not yet been anything but incrementally effective. Meanwhile, with five



opportunities to hire faculty since the last site visit, four white candidates and one Hispanic candidate were hired; no African-Americans. Six adjuncts have been hired since 2015; none are minorities. Standard 3 is not a new weakness for the unit and efforts to address it are undeniable; the results are what are lacking.

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

n/a

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

n/a

**6) If the unit was previously accredited, summarize the significant deficiencies noted in the previous report and the actions taken to correct them. If the unit was in noncompliance in the same standard(s) on the previous two visits, identify the standard(s) and the problems noted. Explain actions taken to correct the problems.**

**Deficiency from previous report:**

The department suffers from an extremely small number of students of color. For example, two black students, one Asian student and three Latinos were enrolled in 2012-13 – out of 59 students. Faculty and other administrators said the reason appear to be the university’s high admission requirements, high cost (although there is ample financial aid), its centralized recruiting effort, its image of Robert E. Lee as a hero of the school and its remote location.

**Action taken:**

Developed outreach to high school students at two feeder high schools; sent mailings to guidance counselors; worked with admissions office to identify minority prospects and already-admitted students with an interest in journalism; attended conferences to recruit minorities; made contacts with professional groups and news organizations to identify individuals; generate and maintain a list of minority alumni for leads.

**Deficiency from previous report:**

The small size of some classes – occasionally as few as three students – raises questions of sustainability.

**Action taken:**

No action was taken, and this site team believes that was appropriate.

The small size of the classes – on this visit, even a class of one – does not raise questions of sustainability for this department at this university. It is the fifth-largest department across the entire university and the largest department in the college. While the technical floor for class size is five, exceptions are common and have no affect on funding or perception of viability. Both the provost and the dean pronounce their dedication to and appreciation of the unit as key differentiator for a liberal arts university.

If anything, the eight-to-one student-to-faculty ratio is an asset of the program, and small classes are a natural part of that. Students report the ease of learning to work as a team, the self-confidence they can grow in a safe space where everyone knows everyone, and the individual feedback and coaching they thrive in. Faculty note students “have nowhere to hide” – and the associated accountability expresses

itself with engaged classrooms and students who say they are light-years more prepared at internships than peers from other programs.

**7) The self-study is the heart of the accrediting 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 self-study was well-organized, well-written, visually appealing and completely free of typos. Appendices were easy to access and follow.