

# Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC

Undergraduate program

2019-2020

Name of Institution: University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Steve Angle

Name of Unit: Department of Communication

Name and Title of Administrator: Felicia McGhee

Date of 2019-2020 Accrediting Visit: February 9-12, 2020

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: February 2-5, 2014

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2019-2020 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation

*Prepared and submitted by:*

**Team Chair**

Name and Title: Carol J. Pardun, Professor

Organization/School: University of South Carolina




*Signature*

**Team Member**

Name and Title: Alan G. Stavitsky, Dean

Organization/School: Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism and Center for Advanced Media Studies, University of Nevada, Reno




*Signature*

**Team Member**

Name and Title: Gracie Lawson-Borders, Dean

Organization/School: Cathy Hughes School of Communications, Howard University



*Signature*

## PART I: General information

**Name of Institution:** University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

**Name of Unit:** Department of Communication

**Year of Visit:** 2019-2020

### 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.

The university is part of the University of Tennessee system. The UT system is governed by Title 49, Chapter 9 of Tennessee Code. According to TN Code § 49-9-901:—

(a) There is created and established by the state a campus of the University of Tennessee in Hamilton County, to be known as the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

(b) The trustees of the University of Tennessee are given the same power, authority and discretion to prescribe and offer courses, curricula and degree programs, acquire land and construct buildings, inaugurate and carry out all necessary supporting work and activities and award degrees of the University of Tennessee at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga as the trustees now have and exercise at the other colleges and schools of the University of Tennessee.

### 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: February 2-5, 2014.

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

1996

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

The principal mission of the Department of Communication at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is to provide a strong preparation in communication practice and research based on a firm grounding in the liberal arts and sciences. The department aims to provide its students hands-on opportunities to help them develop into thoughtful, caring, engaged, and skilled communication professionals and global citizens. We offer our students a flexible curriculum that allows them to pursue their own interests and professional goals under faculty guidance. The faculty is committed to making contributions to the discipline of communication through scholarship and professional practice.

Adopted by the faculty of the Department of Communication on April 12, 2017.

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

Semesters of 15 weeks

Summer sessions of 5 (short) and 12 (long) weeks

**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.**

B.A. Communication

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

120 credit hours (semester hours)

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

3 credit hours (semester hours)

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

The degree has no sequences or concentrations.

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

In Fall 2019, undergraduate enrollment was 10,297, with full-time equivalency (FTE) at 9,548.7.

**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 Sequence or Specialty Undergraduate majors in

B.A. Communication 451 (Fall 2019)

**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. 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.)**

**Skills Course** **Fall 2019**

COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 0)	16
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 01)	16
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 02)	16
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 03)	15
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 04)	15
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 05)	16
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 06)	15
COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 01)	15
COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 02)	15
COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 03)	14
COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 04)	9
COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 05)	14
COMM 3330 – PR Writing (Section 0)	5
COMM 3330 – PR Writing (Section 01)	16
COMM 3350 – Publication Design I (Section 01)	13
COMM 3450 – Video I (Section 0)	10
COMM 3450 – Video I (Section 01)	16
COMM 3500 – TV News Production (Section 0)	16
COMM 3630 – Feature Writing (Section 0)	11
COMM 3700 – Photojournalism (Section 0)	16
COMM 3700 – Photojournalism (Section 01)	16
COMM 4000 – Special Topics: Social Media & Marketing (Section 0)	16
COMM 4000 – Special Topics: Social Media & Marketing (Section 06)	15
COMM 4000 – Special Topics: Podcasting (Section 01)	16
COMM 4000 – Special Topics: Rising Rock (Section 03)	16
COMM 4000 – Special Topics: Sports Writing II (Section 04)	14
COMM 4000 – Special Topics: Screen Writing (Section 05)	9
COMM 4750 – Photojournalism 2 (Section 0)	8

**Online Skills Course** **Fall 2019**

COMM 3350 – Publication Design I (Section 0)	16
COMM 3350 – Publication Design I (Section 03)	20
COMM 3610 – Advanced Reporting (Section 0)	15

**Skills Course** **Spring 2020**

COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 0)	15
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 01)	16
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 02)	16
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 03)	15
COMM 2300 – Media Writing I (Section 04)	15
COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 0)	16
COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 01)	16
COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 02)	16

COMM 2310 – Media Writing II (Section 03)	16
COMM 3330 – PR Writing (Section 0)	12
COMM 3350 – Publication Design I (Section 02)	13
COMM 3370 – Web Design (Section 0)	14
COMM 3450 – Video I (Section 0)	14
COMM 3500 – TV News Production (Section 0)	6
COMM 3630 – Feature Writing (Section 0)	9
COMM 3700 – Photojournalism (Section 01)	16
COMM 3700 – Photojournalism (Section 02)	16
COMM 4010 – Special Topics: Social Media and Marketing (Section 0)	16
COMM 4010 – Special Topics: Sports Writing II (Section 01)	16
COMM 4010 – Special Topics: Social Media and Marketing (Section 02)	13
COMM 4010 – Special Topics: Podcasting (Section 03)	16
COMM 4010 – Special Topics: Screen Writing (Section 05)	10
COMM 4010 – Special Topics: Travel Writing (Section 06)	13
COMM 4010 – Special Topics: Rising Rock (Section 07)	15
COMM 4020 – Special Topics: Advertising Video Production (Section 01)	10
COMM 4350 – Publication Design II (Section 0)	14
COMM 4450 – Video II (Section 0)	7
COMM 4750 – Photojournalism 2 (Section 0)	8

<b>Online Skills Course</b>	<b>Spring 2020</b>
COMM 3350 – Publication Design I (Section 0)	16
COMM 3350 – Publication Design I (Section 01)	16
COMM 3610 – Advanced Reporting (Section 0)	16

**16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2019–2020 academic year:** \$50,471 (operating, excluding salaries).

**Give percentage increase or decrease in three years:** decrease 6.1% (operating)

**Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries:** \$779,304

**17. List name and rank of all full-time faculty in the accredited unit in fall 2019. (Full-time faculty refers to those defined as such by the university.) Identify those not teaching because of leaves, sabbaticals, etc.**

Jessica Freeman, Assistant Professor

Elizabeth Gailey, Associate Professor

Angelique Gibson, Lecturer

Randy Golson, Lecturer

Chandler Harriss, Assistant Professor

Michael McCluskey, Professor

Felicia McGhee, Associate Professor and Interim Department Head

David Sachsman, Professor and George R. West, Jr. Chair of Excellence

Charlene Simmons, UC Foundation Associate Professor

James Tanner, Lecturer

Billy Weeks, Lecturer

Nagwan Zahry, Assistant Professor

John Zublick, Massengill Professor

**18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2019. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2019. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2020, please provide the spring 2020 adjunct list in the updated information.)**

Michael Andrews (Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020)

Nicole Brown (Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020)

William Davis (Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020)

Christopher Dortch (Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020)

Jessica Hayes (Spring 2020)

Mark Kennedy (Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020)

Michael Miller (Spring 2019)

Catherine Morrison (Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020)

James Tanner (Spring 2019)

**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.**

Academic Year	Total Graduates	Number in Compliance	Percent
2018-2019	79	78	98.7
2017-2018	111	111	100

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

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

The mission statement of the unit is as follows: “The principle mission of the Department of Communication is to provide a strong preparation in communication practice and research based on a firm grounding in the liberal arts and sciences. The department aims to provide its students hands-on opportunities to help them develop into thoughtful, caring, engaged, and skilled communication professionals and global citizens. We accomplish this by offering our students a flexible curriculum that allows them to pursue their own interests and professional goals under faculty guidance. The faculty is committed to making contributions to the discipline of communication through scholarship and professional practice.”

The current strategic plan runs from 2017 to 2022 and provides the vision and goals to help the faculty fulfill the mission of the department. The strategic plan is both aspirational and concrete enough to help the faculty navigate development of the department and its faculty.

The unit works with the university to provide the latest data for the ACEJMC database website in order to keep it current and consistent with the department’s internal numbers.

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

The unit has policies and procedures that embrace faculty governance. For example, all standing committees have well-developed processes. There is information about procedures for peer evaluation of faculty, faculty loads, etc, in the Department of Communication By-Laws document.

The faculty members embrace the opportunity to participate in governance at the department, college and university levels. Some faculty, for example, are currently involved in faculty senate leadership.

**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 has an energetic leader who is committed to the success of the department. Faculty are nearly uniform in support of her leadership. They welcome her enthusiasm and tireless work ethic. For example, when meeting with faculty and administrators outside the department, one administrator mentioned that if there was a committee meeting at the university level, “most likely she was on it.” Some faculty have indicated that she is relatively inexperienced in her role; however, they also noted that “she can do it,” and she is “growing into the job.”

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

The provost and dean make the decision on whether there will be a national or internal search for department head. Whether it is an internal or external search, senior administrators solicit input from the full-time faculty. Faculty serve on the search committee. The dean listens to recommendations, but ultimately, the decision on whom to hire rests with the dean.

Unit heads are evaluated according to university policy as stated in the Faculty Handbook. This involves the department head writing an annual report and working with the dean to create annual objectives. The dean then creates an annual evaluation, which both the department head and the dean sign.

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

The departmental by-laws explain the process by which faculty, staff and students may express concerns. For faculty and staff, they first express their grievance to the department head (with a witness if desired). If the faculty member is unsatisfied, the next step is to put the issue into writing and present it to the department head. If the issue has not been resolved, the next step is to meet with the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Student complaint processes are described in the university's "Student Handbook Policy and Procedures on Student Complaints."

**SUMMARY:**

The department has undergone change in recent years--and in a sense, is still in a state of flux. The near consensus among the faculty is that the new department head has brought the faculty together for a unified vision and a plan for moving forward. While there has been a lot of personnel changes within upper administration (including dean and provost), the feeling is that both the university and the department are on a positive trajectory toward excellence.

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

**COMPLIANCE**



## PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

Discussions of indicators b, c and e must describe and evaluate the individual academic sequences in the unit.

**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 unit is within ACEJMC's requirement of 95% compliance of 72 semester credit hours. For the most recent reporting year (2018-2019), 78 out of 79 students (98.7%) were in compliance; during the 2017-2018 academic year, 100% of the students were in compliance.

**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 unit has one major, the B.A. in Communication. There are no sequences within the major, although students can choose electives that are tailored toward their prospective career choices. While the unit has passed a revised curriculum (including switching from a B.A. to a B.S.), which it hopes to begin in Fall 2021, the review of the curriculum related to this standard, focuses on the curriculum in place during the visit as well as the six years of the evaluation period.

The current curriculum has been in place since 1992, although there have been changes to specific requirements over the years. Within the unit, students are required to take 33 credit hours, including 21 hours of required core classes and 12 hours of electives. The core classes are as follows:

COMM 1010: Introduction to Mass Communication (3 hours)

COMM 2300 and 2310: Media Writing I and II (3 hours each)

COMM 3200: Mass Communication Perspectives (3 hours)

COMM 4200: Senior Seminar (3 hours)

COMM 4510: Mass Communication Law and Ethics (3 hours)

COMM 4850: Internship or Directed Project (3 hours)

In addition to the core, students take 12 credits of electives including 1 visual communications course (Publication Design, TV News Production, Web Design, Documentary Production, and Photo Journalism are some of the elective choices). The remaining 9 credits come from a long list of skills and conceptual courses including courses such as Public Relations Writing; Advanced Reporting; Advertising Campaigns; Mass Media History; Race, Gender and the Media, etc. The department has created a number of special topics electives, which has given students flexibility to tailor their major to their specific career interests.

Even though students can lean toward skills or conceptual courses, they are required to take both conceptual and skills courses.

The students also are required to have a minor (or concentration) outside of communication and students spoke highly of this requirement, easily being able to explain how their minor helped to enhance their major.

**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.**

Students praised the faculty for their knowledge and professional experience. Students were particularly enthusiastic about the developing photography/visual communication effort, including the special topics course, Rising Rock. The national 7th place finish in the Hearst Awards is a concrete example of how the success and future potential for this effort is already paying off.

Students talked about the classes that helped them build important skills for their future careers. They appreciated new classes such as Social Media Strategy and expressed hope that faculty would continue to develop special topics courses that would address current trends in media professions.

For the most part, a review of the syllabi showed a cohesive effort to bring quality courses to the students in the department. There is a strong reflection of the use of technology in many of the classes. While some students did complain about difficulty in checking out some of the needed equipment for their classes, others said that, ultimately, they were able to get the equipment in order to complete their assignments.

**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.)**

Skills classes taught in the unit are well within the recommendation of the 20-1 ratio. The skills classes enrollment for the current and most recent semesters range from 5 students to 20 students, with the majority of classes being held at 16 students.

**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.**

While students have a choice of taking either an internship or a directed project, the majority of students choose to take an internship. The internships are overseen by faculty and follow a rubric for evaluation to assure that the students are having a robust experience.

**SUMMARY:**

While the department has experienced some frustrations as they await the adoption of the newly proposed curriculum, they have found ways to keep the current curriculum up to date and helpful to meet the needs of students in the program. A balance of conceptual and skills courses assure that students are prepared to meet the challenges of a meaningful career in communications.

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

**COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

### 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 written diversity plan that was approved in 2006 and updated in 2019. It states their definition of diversity and the inclusivity embraced by the department. The plan identifies the specifics of its support: "The faculty works to create a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment for underrepresented faculty and students, including ethnic, religious and racial minorities; people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals; the economically disadvantaged; and nontraditional and international students." The plan connects to ACEJMC diversity principles and makes its purpose and goals visible with signs in classrooms and around the building that show *Values and Competencies for Communications Majors*. Competencies number 3 and 4 on that list are guiding principles for diversity and inclusion: "Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in a domestic society in relation to mass communication. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society." There are goals and objectives delineated for the curriculum, students and faculty.

**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 department's curriculum is discussed in its diversity plan with a stated goal to: "Strive to foster an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications. Strive to foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society."

A primary method to reflect diversity and inclusion is through course content. In the current program two required courses, COMM 1010, Introduction to Mass Communication, and COMM 3200, Mass Communication Perspectives are among courses taken early in the program that address issues related to diversity and awareness. One graduating senior stated additional upper division courses such as Rising Rock photojournalism course or Senior Seminar continue the exposure to social issues and push critical thinking for students. Several students shared examples of other courses, such as Media Writing and Public Relations Writing, in which the content or invited speakers addressed diversity issues. One student shared that while working in the Video course she elected to create a campaign in which she focused her project video on the LGBTQ community. She recalled instruction in the class and the faculty and environment supported her selected topic and the production of a video that would support and not offend a community that is not represented well. The objectives for the department's curriculum under the diversity plan incorporate a continuous review of courses that are inclusive of efforts to incorporate issues throughout courses in the curriculum.

In addition, the faculty has completed a proposal to revise the curriculum and move from a B.A. to B.S. degree and increase the number of required credits from 33 to 40 for core courses, including a required Media Diversity course and a required visual communication course. (The new curriculum is still pending.)

**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 department is actively engaged in recruiting and diversity efforts among the faculty ranks. The two most recent hires, for example, were women, including one international scholar from Egypt. The department head took proactive steps with a recent lecturer hire of a African American male, seeking institutional support to bring him on board as he works to complete a graduate degree. The current FTE faculty roster of 13 includes 6 females, of whom 2 are women of color; and 7 males, including one African American male. The interim department head is a woman of color.

**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.**

The department has experienced significant growth in majors of the last decade. According to the self-study, “Between 2006 and 2019 major enrollment grew 72.72%, from 253 majors in Fall 2006 to 451 majors in Fall 2019. The annual growth rate for this period was 4.55%.”

The department’s diversity plan identifies its goal is to continue efforts to recruit and maintain underrepresented and minority student groups in the program. The student diversity percentage in the department is greater than the university total. The program reported a nearly 25% representation of minorities with the largest groups listed as Black/African American at 13.96% and Hispanics/Latinos at 3.43% students, respectively. For example, two African American students shared they were aware when they applied to UTC it was a majority white student population; however, when they reflect on their experience as a whole they are pleased, especially with the community they have in the communication department. They are pleased that some of their courses address social issues in discussions and assignments and their professors are supportive and check on them. The outreach in the community through work of the adviser, interim head and several faculty with events in various communities also helps attract students to the program.

(Table on next page.)

**Table 5. Undergraduate Student Populations (reported in the Self Study)**

**Academic year: 2018 – 2019**

<b>Group institution</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>% of total in unit</b>	<b>% of total in</b>
Black / African-America	27	34	13.96	9.64
White	114	216	75.51	76.36
American Indian / Alaskan native	0	1	0.23	0.28
Asian	1	4	1.14	3
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	4	11	3.43	4.8
Native Hawaiian / other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0.04
Two or more race	4	16	4.58	3.43
Other race (unknown)	2	3	1.14	3.43
International students (any race)	0	1	0	1.55

**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.**

UTC sponsors a “safe zone” program to support a creative environment for LGBTQQIA members of the campus community training faculty and students through education, resources and advocacy regarding gender and sexual diversities. The Department of Communication is a safe zone (as is the dean’s office).

The department also is located in the same building with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and the Mosaic program. Faculty have observed a growth in majors who are on the autism spectrum and supports them and any other students with different abilities. The DRC works to provide accessibility for students, and the Mosaic program provides support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. One student mentioned how proactive faculty are in supporting her; she has a disability and was immediately referred to DRC and provided the necessary assistance to continue successfully in her courses.

The department throughout the building posts campaign signs reading “Did You Know ... Know More@UTC,” which is a university campaign to inform students of sexual misconduct and harassment issues and resources available. The department is supportive of this campaign and assists in the promotion. The site team meeting with representatives from different units on campus such as Social Work, Student Services, Fine Arts, Disabilities Office, Enrollment Management and others was reflective of comments of support of the engagement of faculty and students from the communication department across the campus.

**SUMMARY:**

The unit has a diversity plan that is clear and posted for review. It states its goals and objectives for the curriculum, students and faculty. There are visible efforts within the curriculum and the department of a culture of inclusion. The recruitment of faculty shows a continuous effort to seek diversity among the ranks when hiring with the most recent two hires being women, and one a woman of color, as well as an African American male joining the faculty in the past year. There is evidence of diversity in the student body with about one quarter students of color.

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

**COMPLIANCE**

**Table 6 Academic year: 2018 – 2019 Full-time faculty**

<b>Group faculty</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>% of total faculty</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Black / African-America	1	7.14	1	7.14
White	4	28.57	6	42.86
American Indian / Alaskan native	0	0	0	0
Asian	1	7.14	0	0
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian / other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
Two or more race	0	0	0	0
Other race (unknown)	0	0	0	0

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

### 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.**

The department has a formal process for selecting full-time faculty and instructional staff, set forth in its bylaws and overseen by the university's offices of human resources and equity and inclusion. For part-time faculty (and full-time faculty on temporary appointments up to one year), the department head has authority to hire without a search process.

Faculty and instructional staff are evaluated annually by the department head, with review by the dean of the college.

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

Full-time faculty taught two-thirds or more of core and required courses during the three years prior to the site visit, including 84% of such courses in Fall 2019, the semester before the site visit. Four of the seven core courses are taught exclusively by full-time faculty.

Adjunct faculty are generally used to supplement full-time faculty in teaching the core writing courses (COMM 2300 and 2310), as well as the internship course (COMM 4850). Because many sections of COMM 2300: Media Writing I were taught by part-time faculty during the three years prior to the site visit, the department sought approval from the university to hire a full-time lecturer whose duties primarily include teaching COMM 2300; the lecturer started work in Fall 2019.

Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for service activities as well as for the unit's research and creative activity.

**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 department's 13 full-time faculty members have a range of professional experience, from 1 to 35 years; 6 have 10 or more years of professional experience. Teaching experience ranges from less than 1 year for 2 recently hired lecturers to 50 years for a full professor, with 28 of those years at UTC.

Ten of the 13 full-time faculty have terminal degrees: 9 doctorates and an MFA.

Faculty development programs are made available through the university's Walker Center for Teaching and Learning, which offers training workshops and an annual Instructional Excellence Conference. New faculty are required to complete a semester-long program through the Walker Center on issues related to pedagogy and curricular development.



Part-time faculty members bring considerable professional experience to the department. Of the seven adjuncts who taught during the semester prior to the site visit, professional experience ranged from 13 to 41 years.

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

The evaluation process includes consideration of student feedback through anonymous course evaluations, using a form developed by a Faculty Senate committee. The department head reviews all student evaluation forms and discusses instructional issues with faculty as needed.

In 2019 the department adopted a policy for peer evaluation of teaching, to begin during the current academic year.

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

Colleagues from across the university praised the unit's faculty for its citizenship, citing leadership on Faculty Senate and promotion of campus activities. University stakeholders noted that communication students had effective writing and verbal skills.

**SUMMARY:**

The department has a formal process for selecting full-time faculty and instructional staff. Full-time faculty taught two-thirds or more of core and required courses during the three years prior to the site visit. Faculty bring a balance of professional and academic backgrounds to the unit. Instruction is evaluated in several ways, including a new system of peer review. The department is respected across campus for its university citizenship and the quality of its students.

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

**COMPLIANCE**

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

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

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

While modest, the unit does require that tenure-track faculty engage in scholarly/creative/professional activities. As such, the unit works to support faculty's scholarly endeavors. The strategic plan emphasizes the commitment to continue to fund faculty travel to conferences. In addition, the unit is exploring the possibility of moving tenure-track faculty to a more manageable 3/3 teaching load as well as providing new faculty with course releases. The dean has expressed his commitment to moving the tenure track faculty to a 3/3 load in order to provide them with more time to engage in scholarly activity.

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

The primary mission of the university is teaching; however, it does have expectations of scholarship among its tenure-track faculty. The unit's own strategic plan supports this. The vision statement, for example, states that the unit seeks to "integrate teaching, scholarship and service." The unit interprets "evidence of competent scholarship in the profession" (UTC Handbook) as publishing in at least one of the following categories: 1. refereed journals; 2. referenced books; 3. monographs or edited volumes; or 4. "other evidence" as determined by the department.

Over the past 6 years, faculty have produced 14 articles, 1 book, 4 edited books, 7 creative works, and 24 conference papers, which taken together, yields just under 1 item per year, per tenure-track faculty over 6 years. While a modest accomplishment, given the 4/4 teaching load of the faculty, it is not insignificant.

In conversations with the dean and the department chair, the productivity level of the tenure-track faculty is considered acceptable.

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

The unit takes a broad view of scholarship and includes outlets that are particularly important to professionally focused faculty. Some faculty have written books appropriate for scholars with a long history of working as journalists. Others give presentations in a variety of venues. Still others write essays. The department (and also the college) allows for this flexibility. While there is an "unstated understanding" among some faculty that research for faculty on the tenure track (pre-tenure) means published articles in refereed journals, official documents related to tenure and promotion do not state this. Instead, the documents promote flexibility to allow faculty to choose their own approach for research.

**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 members have been relatively active presenting their work to scholars and practitioners. Of the 24 conference papers over the past six years, many were presented in major national organizations such as AEJMC, which emphasizes both academic research and professionally focused scholarship. According to the self-study, the travel budget in academic year 2017-2018 was \$4,740. This was increased to \$13,040 for the 2018-2019 academic year, which demonstrates a growing commitment to communicating scholarship activities to the academic and professional communities.

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

According to conversations with faculty, the overall sense was one of supporting intellectual curiosity and expressing different points of view. The team did notice, however, that there is a bit of tension between some tenure-track professors and lecturers. Some lecturers, for example, wondered whether the department (and university) was swinging too far toward research to the detriment of student commitment. Even so, the faculty praised their peers for their accomplishments, whatever they were.

#### **SUMMARY:**

While modest in scholarly output, overall the faculty do engage in research and creative activities and are in line with the department's (and college's) requirements for tenure and promotion. The faculty respect each other and understand that different approaches to scholarship are healthy in a diverse and vibrant department.

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

#### **COMPLIANCE**

(Table of scholarly statistics on next page)

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*					Totals (XX)
		Full Professors (3)	Associate Professors (3)	Assistant Professors (3)	Other Faculty** (4)	
Awards and Honors	5	4		1		
Grants Received Internal	2			2		
Grants Received External	0					
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	1	1				
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	0					
Books Edited	4	4				
Book Chapters	3	3				
Monographs	0					
Articles in Referred Journals	14	3	2	9		
Refereed Conference Papers	24	10	6	8		
Invited Academic Papers	2	1	1			
Encyclopedia Entries	1			1		
Book Reviews	3	3				
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	1		1			
Juried Creative Works	7				7	
Non-juried Creative Works	2				2	
Other (please specify)	0					

## PART II — Standard 6: Student Services

### 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.**

The unit is engaged in advising across the curriculum. At UTC advising starts with freshman and sophomore students being advised centrally in the university advising center. As students move into major selections, by first semester sophomore or so, they are assigned advisers in their departments. In the communication department, students are advised by faculty and one full-time professional adviser, who handles about a quarter of the students' advising. Faculty may have 20-40 students in their advising workload. The professional adviser is well-known in the community as a former broadcast personality and combines professional and academic advising to assist students. She leads the internship course so students also have contact with her as they prepare for graduation.

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

Faculty members are usually assigned between 20-40 students to advise. Office hours are prominently posted on all of the faculty doorways. Advisers can use the Navigate electronic system, which includes a calendar in which students can make appointments to meet their adviser, and advising notes can be placed on the electronic system after each meeting with students. The professional adviser holds "on demand" open hours on Wednesday to allow students a time to drop in. The My MOCs Degree assessing system is also available to students to individually track their matriculation. Some students expressed that university orientation is the first time they learn of the software. They suggested that faculty do more of what the full-time adviser does by holding more catered, small sessions to expose the students to My MOCs to track their degree progress.

Several students commended faculty on their advising and support. They recognize the faculty are overloaded but gave several examples of faculty going out of the way to assist. Students who transferred late recalled faculty helping them get on track, or when there was a special student services need, pointing them in the right direction. Several of the students shared the department has a culture of community and they feel the faculty care about their success not only academically, but personally.

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

The department is proactive in reaching out to students. There is electronic notification on the website and through electronic systems. For example, if they want to check out equipment, they go online to the checkroom system to see what is available and make reservations. On the department's website, when you click on Student Resources, there are a host of resources identified for their use.

**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.**

Information can be found on bulletin boards and posters displayed around the building denoting upcoming events, scholarships and other opportunities. The faculty also assist in keeping students

informed through their classes and websites designed to showcase work and activities. In the Rising Rock video course, all work is edited and published on [www.risingrock.net](http://www.risingrock.net). When there are events such as Photo Night, a community event showcasing alumni and current student work, the promotion is spread across the department and university. The student newspaper, The University Echo, is advised by a senior member of the communication faculty. A number of faculty serve as advisers to reconstituted student groups such as PRSSA. The full-time adviser heads the internship class and works continuously with students to identify opportunities.

**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 department is required to collect and maintain enrollment, retention and graduation data. The UTC process collects such data for the department and university in the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Institutional Research (OPEIR). The data are made public on Institutional Dashboards at: <https://www.utc.edu/planning-evaluation-institutional-research/dashboards/home.php>.

#### **SUMMARY:**

The department is actively engaged in the support of students through advising and recruitment and retention efforts. Although faculty have a heavy teaching load, they are responsible for advising and reaching out to ensure student success. During the site team's visit with the dean, he too shared the department was in a good position in the college and university with notable student enrollment increases, recent faculty hires, and plans to move into a renovated building in summer 2020 with improved space for classes and upgraded labs and studios.

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

#### **COMPLIANCE**

## **PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment**

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

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

The department has a detailed annual budget for allocation of its resources. The budget links specifically to the strategic plan by detailing priorities related to the unit's upcoming move to Lupton Hall and the purchase of computing and video production equipment.

#### **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 departmental budget is the largest it has ever been, with actual expenditures for AY 2018/2019 totaling \$900,944. This represents an increase of 23.5% over the past three years. Lab fees charged to students have enabled the unit to purchase equipment for media production. Beginning in the next academic year, the department will be obligated to purchase Adobe Creative Cloud licenses, previously funded centrally, which may put added stress on the lab fee account.

The self-study notes that the unit had the highest student-to-faculty ratio of the 13 departments in the College of Arts and Sciences during the 2017/2018 academic year, and the fourth highest ratio at the university at about 44:1. With the addition of two lecturers in the subsequent two years, the department has been able to reduce the ratio to roughly 35:1.

A search for a new tenure-track assistant professor was successful during the site visit year, with the new colleague to begin work in fall 2020. Approval to search for another lecturer, who would start in fall 2020, was expected from the dean shortly after the site visit. With a tenured faculty member retiring after spring 2020, this would result in a net gain of one full-time faculty member, to 14, for AY 2020/2021.

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

The department is presently housed in substandard space in Frist Hall, a rundown former hospital that faculty and university leaders refer to as the worst facility on campus. Its deficiencies have been prominently cited by at least the past two site teams. The 2008 site team found the unit out of compliance on Standard 7, both because of the inadequate building and a lack of adequate broadcast equipment at the time. The 2014 site team found the unit in compliance with Standard 7 based on the university's commitment to find new space for the department, as well as purchases of new equipment and a new television studio constructed in Metro Annex, a building adjacent to Frist Hall. However, the 2014 team warned that a failure to address space deficiencies (along with ongoing equipment issues noted in the report) "may jeopardize the (d)epartment's next reaccreditation."

At the time of the site visit, the university was renovating Lupton Hall, the former library, with the unit slated to move into remodeled space on the second floor of the building in July 2020. The site team toured the department's new space, still under construction, which will include two skills classrooms,

two labs, a video editing studio with two sound booths, photo studio, an equipment room, a library, conference rooms and faculty offices. New furniture will be purchased for the new facility, which will provide the unit's students and faculty with considerably more space and vastly improved ambiance.

After the department and another UTC unit that shares the building are relocated from Frist Hall, it will be scheduled for demolition.

**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.**

During the period of the self-study, the department added new video cameras and audio recorders to its equipment collection available to students. In addition, a new "Whisper Room," a sound-proofed studio for voice tracking, was installed in Metro Annex, and new teleprompters and lights were purchased for the television studio there. Student lab fees supported the equipment purchases.

Students and faculty generally reported satisfaction with access to equipment and studios to support their work.

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

Library and information resources were sufficient to support student and faculty scholarship and professional development. The new space in Lupton Hall will include a room for the department's collection of books and journals.

**SUMMARY:**

The department has a detailed annual budget that is linked to the unit's strategic plan. The unit budget has increased significantly during the period of the self-study, driven by university investment in new positions and student lab fee revenue. The department's upcoming move in summer 2020 from substandard Frist Hall to newly renovated, and larger, space in Lupton Hall should greatly alleviate long-standing facility issues. New field and studio equipment purchased in recent years meets student demand and needs.

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

**COMPLIANCE**



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

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**a). The unit consults and communicates regularly with its alumni and 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 current department head has begun to re-engage the unit with alumni and the professional community after previous leadership had discontinued its advisory board. The board has been reorganized and numbers 21 members. The unit communicates with alumni and professionals through an e-newsletter and social media.

Local professionals contribute to keeping curriculum and teaching current through internship feedback and a survey conducted by the department, as well as through participation in the reconstituted advisory board.

**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.**

Programs addressing communication issues of consequence primarily include annual events co-sponsored with the university's Office of Multicultural Affairs to mark Martin Luther King Day. Speakers have included CNN journalists, political consultants and social activists.

The unit's new leadership has expressed interest in expanding such activities.

**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.**

Faculty contribute to the improvement of the discipline through such activities as serving as journal editors and editorial board members; reviewing journal articles, books and conference papers; and serving AEJMC as division heads and program planners.

One faculty member has since 1993 organized a nationally known Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression, co-sponsored by the department.

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

The unit sponsors an annual Photo Night, which showcases student photojournalism shot throughout the Chattanooga community as well as a presentation by professional photojournalists. The event, held each spring, is open to the public and draws more than 200 people. Students described it as a signature event of the academic year.

Two years ago the department launched a parallel Video Night event, featuring screening of student-produced video projects and documentaries. It also is held in spring and is open to the community.

The department also partners with the university's student media organizations to produce Rising Rock, a multimedia website containing nonfiction stories about the Chattanooga area. Stories are produced as assignments in Department of Communication classes. See: <https://risingrock.net>

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

The department supports scholastic journalism in several ways. A faculty member works with students from a local girls leadership academy to produce a radio show on public health. In addition, the unit is partnering with local high school video-production teachers to organize a contest across several schools, with the winning entries showcased at a department event. And the department head is working with a teacher at a Georgia middle school to create a photojournalism project.

**SUMMARY:**

The department is reconnecting with alumni and the professional community through a reorganized advisory board and renewed outreach through social media and an e-newsletter. The unit co-sponsors a speaker each year as part of the university's Martin Luther King Day observance. Faculty participate in the discipline by editorial reviewing and association activities. The department holds two annual public events to showcase student work, and produces a website with student-produced community stories. It supports scholastic journalism through programs with local and regional schools.

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

**COMPLIANCE**

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

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

*The Accrediting Committee and Council seek site-team reports on assessment that are appropriately detailed for a judgment on compliance that is informed, fair and consistent from one team to another. Please respond to each of these questions in your report on indicators (a), (b) and (c):*

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

The department identifies the Values and Competencies for Communication Majors, and includes posters in classrooms and throughout the building, as defined by AEJMC.

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

The department revised its assessment plan in 2017 and completed revisions in 2018. They have made progress in examining assessment measures and have started reporting the results yearly. Direct measures include assessing final exam, final portfolios, code of ethics projects and research papers. Indirect measures look at internship supervisor evaluations, retention/graduation data, alumni surveys, and graduating senior surveys, and review of student awards. The department head is responsible for gathering assessment data from the various faculty in which assessments occur in their courses, and reporting the results. The measures are used to assess 12 values and competencies.

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

The department implements curriculum changes based on assessment data collected. For example, after assessing the curriculum in 2018, which included data from previous years, one area revealed that students needed more visual communication work. So, a new curriculum requirement was implemented for one elective course to be selected from a list of visual communication courses. This new requirement was implemented in fall 2019. In addition, data showed several skills classes where they enhanced content to assist students in improving their skills.

**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 faculty regularly invite alumni and professionals to come to the Senior Seminar course to evaluate student competencies through, for example, input on portfolios.

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

The department provides a number of opportunities for student internships and maintains contact with the supervisors. The supervisors’ evaluations are part of the assessment process to provide input on the student experience. The site team members reached out to internships supervisors and received several responses on the experience with students. Overall the response was positive with several supervisors sharing positive relationships with students and the program. They expressed that students were prepared and came to internships eager and with a fundamental understanding of their field.

**SUMMARY:**

While the assessment process continues to evolve, the department has direct and indirect measures to evaluate student work and are regularly assessing the data to improve the curriculum.

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

**COMPLIANCE**

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

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

Strengths:

- A committed faculty that is engaged with both the students and the university at large.
- A renovated space in a central campus location that administrators assure will be completed by Fall Semester 2020.
- A dedicated department chair who is committed to the department and the university.
- Energetic students who take their studies seriously.

Weaknesses:

- A new curriculum that has not yet been approved by upper administration, which is having an impact on moving the department forward.
- A depressing current facility that creates a less-than-desirable environment for students and faculty.
- A program of assessment that is still in the process of being fully implemented.

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

NA

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

NA

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

NA

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

NA

#### **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.**

The deficits highlighted in the last report focused on Standard 9, which was found out of compliance. The report indicated that the department needed “a more thorough and fully implemented plan to assess student learning that gathers and applies data of a multi-year period.”

While the department has not yet fully executed its assessment plan, it has made important strides, which indicate the department is well on its way to have and maintain a vibrant climate of assessment. Even though there was a change in leadership between the last site visit and the current one, which caused a lag in assessment organization, the current department head (along with the faculty member tasked with overseeing assessment) has collected data and made curriculum changes based on that data.

**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.**

For the most part, the self-study was well written. The data were reported in a forthright manner, which allowed the team to work through the standards in a timely manner. Some information was not easily available, but the department head quickly provided all the missing information.