

Revisit Team Report for Accreditation in Journalism and Mass Communications

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

Name of Institution: **Norfolk State University**

Administrator: **Wanda Brockington, chair**

Date of Original Site Visit: January 23-26, 2011
Recommendation: Provisional Re-accreditation

Revisit Date: **January 27-29, 2013**

Recommendation: **Reaccreditation**

Team Chair:

**Barbara Hines, Professor and Chair, Graduate Program in Mass
Communications and Media Studies, Howard University**

Team Member:

**Dr. Phillip Jeter, Professor, Department of Mass Communications, Winston-
Salem State University**

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

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Reasons cited: The unit needs to place a high priority on ensuring compliance with the 80/65 rule. The current curriculum lacks a clear delineation of students seeking careers in news, public relations, advertising and TV/radio production. Currently the faculty talks informally about how classes and curriculum can evolve. There is no formal procedure established. No curriculum changes have been made since the 2007-2008 catalog.

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Reasons cited: The unit needs to devise and implement an appropriate assessment plan that incorporates accrediting standards that may lead to enhancements in courses and curriculum. The unit has been inconsistent with assessment since 2005 and the team saw no evidence of the current plan being tied to ACEJMC's Values and Competencies.

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

- The promotion and tenure guidelines need to be tested. There is a lack of clarity about the tenure/promotion process.
- The TV studio and audio/video editing labs are not open enough hours to handle 'crunch time'.
- Students need to be able to transfer their work onto hard drives to complete work on laptop computers.
- The scholarship/research record for faculty is weak, but there is little to no funding to support research efforts (including lack of travel support) and the faculty are on 4/4 teaching loads, leaving little to no time for pursuing worthwhile grants, writing projects or viable research studies.

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

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Since the provisional decision, this faculty did some real soul-searching. The informal talks about minor changes (i.e. course titles) became serious discussions reflecting industry growth and development. Those talks produced a major overhaul that identified capstone courses, addressed media convergence, plans for streamlining the curriculum, modernized the offerings and recognized that all mass communications and journalism students needed a similar skill set. The unit has worked to insure that every student understands the accreditation process, with particular emphasis on curriculum. An academic adviser was designated specifically for mass communications and journalism students.

As a result of the discussions, a plan to combine the Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications and the Bachelor of Arts in Journalism into a new degree, the Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications and Journalism is being developed. There will be three tracks: Multimedia Production, Journalism and Strategic Communications. Some course titles have been changed (i.e. Web Design has become Web Design and Online Content Management), and other courses have been created (Crisis Communication), realigned (Principles of Advertising and Principles of Public Relations) or reintroduced (Sports Broadcasting and Radio Broadcasting).

With the addition of the Legacy Media Institute in June 2012, founded by actor, director-producer and filmmaker Tim Reid, the unit has expanded its instruction in convergence and training of young filmmakers of color. The unit has also expanded its MCJR Week featuring alumni and other media professionals who come to campus to work with students to give them insight on how best to prepare for their chosen industry and the demands they will face in the profession.

Students the team met with were mostly interested in electronic media and want the faculty to consider creating a course in video editing or ensure that skill is taught somewhere in the curriculum. They said the lack of the ability to learn video editing will likely put them at a disadvantage for internships and jobs.

One course, Journalism 299 (Multiculturalism and the Mass Media) previously was counted as a cultural elective. Any student taking that course would not adhere to the minimum 65 hours outside of mass communications and journalism. It is now used only as a major elective for mass communications or journalism.

A rigorous advising process includes scheduled mandatory student meetings each semester to discuss changes. Each student's evaluation record is checked and rechecked for compliance. The students confirmed the importance of the town hall meetings, where they receive information about courses, internships, scholarships and other activities.

The unit is now 100 percent compliant with the 80/65 rule.

Overall evaluation: Compliance

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The unit was asked to "devise and implement an appropriate assessment plan that incorporates accrediting standards that may lead to enhancements in courses and curriculum." This has been done.

The unit has made steps toward improving its assessment practices; however, its assessment of learning outcomes remains a work-in-progress and does not "close the loop" at this time. Per course syllabi, common professional competencies are infused throughout the current curriculum. The plan includes direct and indirect measures.

The previous visit team noted that an assessment plan has "goals, outcomes, criteria, methodology, results and improvement plans." Although the current unit assessment plan has a timetable, direct and indirect measures and methodologies, the current plan has several shortcomings (because the plan is not prepared as a single document). The unit assessment plan has implied goals and outcomes, no criteria for knowing whether the student learning outcomes have been met or any results related to the plan to date. No data analysis is planned until the 2017-18 year.

The revisit team would remind the unit that refinement of the plan needs to include information on which courses would be assessed for which learning outcomes. This can be accomplished as the unit engages in curriculum reform.

Overall evaluation: Compliance

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

Enrollment in skills courses must meet accrediting standards.

There continue to be challenges to maintain the required student-faculty ratio, but the unit has made significant progress in this area. There is a coordinated effort among the departmental advisers, the faculty advisers, the unit administrator and the dean's office to maintain class size. In one instance, an extra section was added to accommodate graduating seniors.

Since spring 2011, the percentage of classes exceeding the 20-student rule has dropped from 17 percent (3 classes of 17) to 5 percent (1 class of 19) in fall 2012.

The promotion and tenure guidelines need to be tested. There is a lack of clarity about the tenure/promotion process.

NSU adopted a new faculty handbook in August 2012 that addressed one of the issues concerning clarity about the timing of the promotion and tenure process. The process remains decentralized, with a unit committee that has a discipline-specific criteria and point system. One faculty member successfully received both tenure and promotion in 2011 using these guidelines.

The TV studio and audio/video editing labs are not open enough hours to handle 'crunch time'.

Students interviewed said the computer labs were not open enough and that they could not print their work prepared on the computers in Madison Hall. A visit to the television facility found that it operates on an 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday schedule. There is currently a 41:1 student-nonlinear editing station and 33:1 student-portable camera ratio. The visit occurred early in the semester. Although the team did not observe heavy use of these facilities during the visit, television center personnel confirmed the end of semester "crunch" still exists.

Students need to be able to transfer their work onto hard drives to complete work on laptop computers.

Students say they use portable hard drives, which are becoming more affordable and have larger capacity, to save their work. Television facility personnel said a server-based data storage method for video has not been implemented.

The scholarship/research record for faculty is weak, but there is little to no funding to support research efforts (including lack of travel support) and the faculty are on 4/4 teaching loads, leaving little to no time for pursuing worthwhile grants, writing projects or viable research studies.

NSU faculty members have heavy teaching loads that affect their research and creative productivity. However, between 2010 and 2012, six of eight full-time faculty members participated in grants and sponsored research, had 15 juried papers and/or article/reviews, presented 21 convention papers and served on departmental, school and university committees.

The unit has worked with the dean's office to schedule two faculty members per semester on a reduced teaching load (3/4) on a rotating basis. It has sought and received additional financial support for faculty travel from the Honors College, the Office of Student Affairs, and University Advancement. Some Title III funds were also secured for faculty development to attend workshops, seminars, peer mentoring and conferences to improve research and teaching.

Summary/Conclusion

The faculty, staff and students at Norfolk State University continue to make strides to build the mass communication and journalism program. With a planned converged curriculum, additional faculty development support, an emerging assessment plan and usable facilities, the revisit team recommends approval of reaccreditation.