

**Revisit Team Report  
for Accreditation in Journalism  
and Mass Communications**

Name of Program: Department of Mass Media

Name of Institution: Southeast Missouri State University

Name of Administrator: Jack Zibluk

Date of Original Site Visit: October 31-November 3, 2010

Recommendation: Provisional Reaccreditation

Revisit Date: January 27-29, 2013

Team Chair: Joe Foote, University of Oklahoma

Team Member: Charlotte Hall, Retired Editor, Orlando Sentinel

Recommendation: Reaccreditation

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

Standard 1: Mission Governance & Administration

Reasons cited:

- Lack of stable, permanent leadership
- University homes that have not been hospitable to the unit's performance as an accredited program
- Inadequate strategic plan
- Lack of faculty initiative regarding curriculum

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Reasons cited:

- No indication of relation of curriculum to values and competencies
- No formal use of Professional Advisory Council
- Little evidence of incorporating assessment data into the curriculum

**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.**

While the 2010 site team found the unit in compliance on curriculum, it listed deficiencies that were required to be corrected before full accreditation could be recommended:

“Curriculum—Some of the curricular initiatives under review within the department should have been resolved concerning convergence, efficiency and amount of programming.”

It also listed these weaknesses:

- Silo mentality that retards curricular innovation and convergence
- A curriculum that tries to do too much with too little

**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 1: Mission, Governance and Administration**

### **Summary of findings:**

The revisit team found a much more productive, functional environment for governance than was evident two years earlier:

1. The university's leadership remained stable, as did the department's status as an independent unit. During the previous accreditation period, the unit had been assigned three different academic homes, one of which was led by a chair not equipped to supervise an ACEJMC-accredited unit. The Department of Mass Media is now firmly stabilized as an independent department in the College of Liberal Arts. With a dean and provost in their fourth year and a president in his 14<sup>th</sup> year, administrative stability has been established.
2. The chair during the time of the 2010 visit used the momentum from the site team report and an imposed university enrollment management plan to mobilize the faculty into a full-scale, highly productive revision of the curriculum. During this exercise, the faculty suspended much of its previously insular behavior to work collegially on common goals. Faculty reported that not only was the product impressive, but that it paid dividends in long-term collegiality as well. They hope to carry this positive momentum through to the next stage of curricular review and other issues confronting the department during the tenure of the new chair.
3. The university has recruited a qualified chair to lead the department. Plans for a search began soon after the site team left campus. The university interviewed candidates in fall 2011, but the preferred candidate declined an offer. Re-advertising of the position came early in 2012. The university hired the current chair late in spring 2012.

The new chair comes from a similar-sized institution and has considerable journalism education experience as a professor. He jumped into his new position eagerly on the tail end of the probationary period. In a very short time, the new chair has focused intently on learning outcomes assessment and on implementation of the revised curriculum. University leaders have been impressed with his visibility on campus, his focus on the issues that matter and his determined role as a change agent.

4. The faculty has invested in strategic planning. A retreat held shortly after the chair's arrival produced the beginning of a new strategic plan. The faculty will be working throughout the 2012-13 academic year to finalize and implement the plan that should position the department well for the next few years.

### Summary

All of the changes have been positive regarding governance of the Department of Mass Media at the university, department leadership and faculty levels. The department is poised more propitiously than at any time during the past 10 years. A stable upper administration, a more collegial and forward-looking faculty and an energetic chair should all serve the unit well. Governance could go from a weakness to strength by the end of the current accreditation cycle.

Overall evaluation: **Compliance**

## **Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

### **Summary of findings:**

1. The department proposed bringing an outside consultant to campus shortly after the site visit, but bureaucratic delays in funding and implementing the proposal delayed the consultant visit until spring, 2012. As the department moved forward aggressively with its curricular revision, it relied on assessment data from its student satisfaction survey and exit interviews with graduating seniors. It was clear to the revisit team that the faculty was using assessment data to guide much of the curricular change. However, there were no annual assessment reports issued during this period. The move towards formalizing and expanding their assessment efforts began shortly after the external consultant issued a report in spring 2012. Since then, the department has made significant progress in formulating a plan and implementing the measures.
2. The unit has begun to use its Professional Advisory Council (PAC) more vigorously since the new chair arrived. The PAC met in November 2012 for the first time in six years and is participating in the strategic planning exercise. The Professional Advisory Council completed surveys as part of the unit's new assessment protocol that the faculty discussed during its January 2013 retreat. It is the chair's intention that the advisory board plays a large role in assessment. Also, feedback from the PAC is one of the department's new indirect measures included in its assessment plan.
3. After the consultant's visit, the department adopted a multiple input assessment plan with two direct and eight indirect measures (Attachment A). Most of the measures are new, but it also relies on measures like the student exit survey that have been in place for several years. The written plan does not include exit interviews of students that were used extensively in formulating the new curriculum, but the chair said that was an oversight. Also, the department has omitted a student portfolio direct measure for assessing professional skills comprehensively. Using a university-mandate to develop student-learning outcomes for each course, the unit has translated that initiative into one of its most valuable direct measures. Because all of the faculty have participated in this exercise, they seem more invested directly in it than some of the peripheral initiatives. Narratives on the learning objectives for each course provide a mechanism for faculty to report ways to improve classroom strategies.

### **Summary**

Rather than tweaking its assessment efforts, the Department of Mass Media has chosen to start over almost from a clean slate. Fortunately, the external consultant's efforts and the new chair's understanding of the process have made these major changes possible and

their implementation rational. As a whole, the efforts propel the department forward. The plan is a solid one with sound measures that are tied to the ACEJMC competencies. The unit has a feasible timetable for achieving its goals. The faculty is more involved in this process than it was two years ago. Each of their courses lists learning objectives clearly and has a mechanism for evaluating whether most students are reaching those objectives. This is a plan that can succeed and can produce useful data that influences introspection and change.

The negative in the process has been the lag in beginning this initiative and the unit's lack of experience in feeding back data into the system. The revisit site team would have expected the department to be much farther along after two years. The results in 2012 have been ambitious, but the assessment process remains too underdeveloped to warrant compliance at this time.

Overall evaluation: **Non-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.**

**Curriculum background:** The unit’s self-study in 2010 said that the department had undertaken “extensive revision of our curriculum” to address the previous site team suggestion to change the “rigid ‘silo’ mentality.” Yet the 2010 site team found little progress toward that goal and noted “the existence of five options (one of them with three tracks) and more than 40 courses.” In fact, the unit had recently added one of those tracks, Broadcast News, which to the team seemed misplaced in the TV & Film option rather than with the Journalism option. Meanwhile, courses in the Television & Film option had little multimedia instruction, and the Radio option was nearly on its deathbed, with low enrollments (fewer than 10 students in many classes) and little synergy with the other options. The site team also expressed concern that mass media students regularly were “doubling” their options by taking additional classes in a second option, delaying their graduation for another semester or two.

The unit was not operating efficiently, especially given its limited resources. It traditionally counted almost all classes as skills courses, and therefore only a small number of classes had more than 20 students. The SEMO administration believed that the department had three “too many” faculty lines. The site team, as well as the administration, “questioned whether the unit was trying to do too much with the resources it has been given and whether it was integrating its curriculum sufficiently in a multimedia world,” the report said.

**Curriculum today:** Everything began to change rapidly after the site team’s visit and after the university issued a new mandate that class size in all departments had to average 26. At that point, the unit’s average enrollment was 19. At stake were two and half faculty lines. By January 2011, the department had proposed to the administration a strategic plan for enrollment management and curriculum revision. By fall of 2011, the unit had developed the new curriculum and submitted it to the administration for approval, and by the fall of 2012, a three-year phase-in had begun.

The unit says multiple goals drove the plan: to increase average enrollment and recruitment, facilitate assessment, update skills instruction, strengthen integration options, streamline flow through the program, better address writing skills and diversity and expand experiential learning. But the university’s mandate to increase class size and the necessity, pointed out by the site team, to overhaul and update the curriculum to meet the needs of students in the digital age were the most significant drivers.

With strong leadership from a senior faculty member, the unit did painstaking analysis and planning for a curriculum that would meet enrollment targets and deliver a high-quality program grounded in ACEJMC’s competencies and standards. Still in its first year, the new curriculum has been impressively successful in making the unit more efficient. Average class size already has risen to the administration-mandated 26 -- a 37 percent increase.

The curriculum has introduced a converged multimedia approach and has broken down some of the unit's siloes, both major accomplishments for a unit whose curriculum had fallen behind the times. The department reduced the number of options from five to four and did away with three tracks in Video & Film—very logical steps for a department that had been spread too thin. At the same time, the new curriculum reduced the number of required hours in core courses and the number of elective hours, while increasing the required hours in each option.

The most innovative change was the creation of a new option, Multimedia Journalism, which combined the old print-centric Journalism option, the under-enrolled Radio options and the Broadcast News track from the Video & Film option. In creating the new Multimedia Option, the unit terminated 12 courses, ranging from Magazine Feature Writing to Broadcast Field Techniques, and created four new required courses, ranging from Media News to Media Sound. All of the courses terminated were low enrollment skills courses. The new courses were a mix of skills and theory courses. The other two tracks in Video & Film merged, with one course terminated and one new course created.

The Public Relations and Advertising options underwent less change, though several courses were added and a couple terminated. Overall, the unit terminated 16 courses and created 10 new courses. The new courses included a required “feeder” course in each option, allowing second-semester freshman to try out the option before declaring their major, a creative move aimed at recruiting majors and adding a high-enrollment course.

The number of required hours in the options rose from 15 to 21, as the core requirements, taken by all mass media majors, dropped from 27 to 21. The unit's diversity course moved from an elective to a requirement in the core, strengthening instruction in one of the ACEJMC's competencies and adding a high-enrollment (theory) course to the core. Eliminated was the previously required Writing for Mass Media, a skills course. The faculty found that the writing course was not adequately preparing students for writing demands in each option and used a disproportionate share of the unit's resources. Instead, resources have been reallocated to teaching discipline-specific writing skills in each option.

Also eliminated from the core was the requirement that students take the three-hour internship/practicum. The internship program remains strong, the course is still offered as elective, and students now may also choose from a series of new one-credit experiential opportunities in campus media. Overall, the new curriculum is fairly regimented, leaving only three hours for an elective in the major. However, under the ACEJMC's revised requirement of 72 hours outside the major, new opportunities for electives could be opened.

The unit walks a difficult line between the university's mandate for greater efficiency through class-size management and the necessity of keeping skills classes at 20 students or fewer. The restructured curriculum adroitly balances both objectives. In that sense it has stabilized the department and prevented the loss of two faculty lines.

Even more importantly, the curriculum represents a major step forward in breaking down traditional silos and positioning the department to thrive in the multimedia digital environment. Could more be done? Of course, and a further step might be to develop more synergy between the Advertising and Public Relations options. But the intense teamwork that led to the new curriculum has brought the department together and created a culture of collaboration that will enable more innovation in the future.

## **5. Summary conclusion**

The strides made in governance of the Department of Mass Media are paying dividends throughout the program. Having permanent departmental leadership with an appetite for innovation and change, having a faculty much more willing to collaborate on challenging curricular issues and work for the good of the whole, and having a stable corps of upper administrators aware of the unit's needs and aspirations are making a difference. By succeeding in a major overhaul of the curriculum since the site team visit, the department showed genuine commitment to change. The assessment piece is far less developed, but is headed in the right direction. Both attitudinally and behaviorally, the department is positioned better than it has been in more than a decade.

**The site team recommends reaccreditation.**

## ATTACHMENT A

## Assessment Measurements and Timelines, 2012-2013

Tool	Direct/ Indirect	Timing	Report
Student Learning Outcomes	Direct	Semester	Narrative, frequency report
Curriculum Tracking, Analysis	Indirect	Annual	Statistical analysis
Advisory Committee	Indirect	Semester	Survey, qualitative
Employer Survey	Indirect	Annual	Statistics on student performance, quality
Admission, Retention Statistics	Indirect	Annual	Long-term analysis, comparison
Core, Capstone Syllabi Audit	Indirect	Every 3 years	Analysis of objectives, outcomes
Exit survey	Indirect	Semester	Long-term analysis
Student Competitions	Indirect	Semester	Long-term analysis
Pre-test, Post-test	Direct	Semester	Statistical analysis
Strategic Planning Surveys	Indirect	Annual	Survey, qualitative