

2013-14
Revisit Team Report
for Accreditation in Journalism
and Mass Communications

Name of Program: **School of Communication and Journalism**

Name of Institution: **Auburn University**

Name of Administrator: **Jennifer Wood Adams, Ph.D.**

Date of Original Site Visit: **February 5-8, 2012**

Revisit Date: **February 9-11, 2014**

Revisit Team Chair: **Will Norton, Jr.**

Revisit Team Member: **Joyce Mireault**

Revisit Team's Recommendation: **Re-Accreditation**

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 department should stop counting practicum hours as general electives and count them as hours in the major within the allowed 40.
- Internship credit should be no more than three credits.
- The department should provide sufficient seats for majors before pre-registration/registration in order for students to get the classes they need to graduate on time.
- The department should re-evaluate the criteria it uses to categorize courses as either skills or non-skills, because the skills criteria now are too limited.

Standard 6: Student Services

Reasons cited:

- The department should demonstrate that additional resources have been devoted to advising majors.
- College advisers should refer students admitted as majors to the department adviser(s).
- College advisers should demonstrate understanding of the degree requirements of majors in order to conduct accurate assessments of progress at 90 hours and prior to graduation.

2. 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

- **The department should stop counting practicum hours as general electives and count them as hours in the major within the allowed 40.**
 - The school no longer counts practicum hours as general elective credit. The Radio/TV/Film and PR curricula were revised to count practicum as part of the hours within the major and not as general elective credit. Interviews with faculty and review of the program curriculum sheets and curriculum models in the Auburn Bulletin confirmed these changes.

- **Internship credit should be no more than three credits.**
 - RTVF and PR eliminated the six-hour internship. All three accredited programs now only offer a three-hour internship, and those hours are counted within the major hours. Interviews with faculty and review of the program curriculum sheets and curriculum models detailed in the Auburn Bulletin support the interview findings.

- **The department should provide sufficient seats for majors before pre-registration/registration in order for students to get the classes they need to graduate on time.**
 - Since the 2012 site visit, the number of seats has been increased in high-demand courses. Those courses include: Journalism Fundamentals, Public Relations Campaigns and Communication 1000. In addition, the school has created several online versions of high-demand courses so classes can be offered in the summer when students are off-campus.
 - The school no longer waits until the first week of class to add additional sections of high-demand courses. The school manages its course waitlists to ascertain if students on the waitlist need the course that semester to stay on track for graduation. Sections are added soon after registration closes so that students will know if they will get the course the next semester. Students are given an opportunity to enroll in the course if they need it that particular semester to stay on track for graduation. They told the re-visit team that the process works smoothly.
 - In fall 2011, the school hired a lecturer to teach two Public Relations and two Communication courses each semester. The school also has been able to hire adjunct faculty members and increase the number of class sections.
 - Interviews with faculty and the full-time adviser also indicated a continued effort to improve in this area, including more timely communication with students and a better alignment of registration time frames.
 - The retention rate is posted on the school's website. The improved advising has resulted in effective monitoring of the retention rate.

- **The department should re-evaluate the criteria it uses to categorize courses as either skills or non-skills because the skills criteria now are too limited.**
 - The school has broadened its definition of what constitutes a skills-based course.
 - All public relations courses are categorized.

- The Public Relations Cases Studies course, PR Survey Research course and the PR Campaigns course now are capped at 20 students.
- The new skills-based, studio courses in the Visual Media track in the RTVF major and Journalism's digital media courses average 12 to 15 students each semester.

Standard 6: Student Services

- **The department should demonstrate that additional resources have been devoted to advising majors.**
 - The school has had faculty advisers to assist the school adviser. When they are accepted into the major, students are sent an e-mail message that tells them who their faculty adviser is. During this site visit, interviews with faculty members also confirmed their understanding of the process: Advising students to seek out the college's advisers for questions concerning core requirements and the school adviser for questions related to school courses.
 - After the 2012 site visit, the school made a concerted effort to educate pre-majors about faculty advisers. The school divided the pre-majors alphabetically and assigned a group of students to each faculty member in the major. E-mail messages were sent to students and signs were posted throughout the building to alert pre-majors of their faculty advisers.
 - In addition, the school has two internship/practicum coordinators to help assist students with questions and concerns about the required internship course and optional practicum course.
 - To help majors secure appointments with the school adviser during registration, a comprehensive five-week advising plan was developed. This policy is in effect the week before registration begins and for the four weeks during registration. The registration plan is e-mailed to all of the majors and pre-majors. Appointments the week before registration are reserved for majors who are seniors. The first and second weeks of registration are for majors only. During the third week, the adviser meets with majors and pre-majors. The fourth week of registrations is for majors, pre-majors and anyone who has expressed interest in applying to one of the school's majors.
 - While pre-majors may meet with their faculty advisers any time, they are encouraged to meet with their faculty adviser if they have a question or concern related to their major classes during the busy registration period or to see a College of Liberal Arts adviser with questions about the core curriculum.

- The school adviser is available during the summer months as well as during the academic year. Students may schedule appointments whenever she has a vacancy. Students indicated that they sometimes are advised in the office without an appointment. Indeed, students told the team that the school adviser and faculty members reach out to them to offer help and make advising suggestions. Students said they usually are able to get advice within 24 hours. They said that talking to the school adviser or to faculty facilitates timely graduation.
- Also impressive and evidence of improvement in the area of advising is the addition of Career Day (There were 12 paid companies committed at the time of the site visit.)
- **The college advisers should refer students admitted as majors to the department adviser(s).**
 - The school adviser now attends the monthly College of Liberal Arts advisers meeting. She consistently reminds the college advisers that they need to send all students with major-specific questions to her.
 - After the 2012 site visit, the former department chair and adviser met with the associate dean for academic affairs and the director of student services to talk to them about the problem concerning the college's advisers counseling students on major courses.
 - The re-visit team verified progress in this area through interviews with faculty, the full-time adviser and college colleagues.
- **The college advisers should demonstrate understanding of the degree requirements of majors in order to conduct accurate assessments of progress at 90 hours and prior to graduation.**
 - The school adviser attends the College of Liberal Arts monthly adviser meetings to keep the college advisers informed of any changes in the program requirements. When the journalism curriculum underwent a major overhaul in 2012, the journalism program director and school adviser met with the college advisers to discuss the new requirements. There was evidence during this 2014 site visit that the school has worked diligently to open the lines of communication among the college advisers, school director and school adviser.
 - To help students have an accurate assessment of their progress at 90 hours and before graduation, Auburn University launched DegreeWorks Fall 2012. DegreeWorks is a degree-auditing and degree-tracking tool. The software program provides information on current curriculum, catalog requirements in effect when a student chooses his or her major, academic standing, transfer credits used to satisfy degree requirements, a GPA

calculator and a list of conditions the student must meet for graduation. Students are alerted to unmet conditions when they log in, and advisers can enter notes when meeting with students, providing a progress report and course planning assistance. Exceptions and class substitutions also can be documented in the program. The system enables students to view degree requirements if they are interested in changing majors, and see courses that do and do not transfer, providing a “what if” analysis for those considering the change. The school’s adviser and the faculty view the students’ progress and make plans for future semesters. During the re-visit, the full-time adviser demonstrated the tool and though there are still “bugs” in the program, the combination of hands-on, very personal advising and the implementation of DegreeWorks is providing students with a high touch advising experience.

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

Weaknesses:

- Lack of sufficient seats in some courses offered in the majors being reviewed results in students being added to already-full courses two or three weeks into the semester rather than being able to register and have a complete schedule before the start of a semester.
- The single professional adviser in the department is not sufficient to advise all majors, and the college advisers who advise pre-majors and perform graduation checks are not sufficiently familiar with program options and requirements.
- Permitting students in public relations and RTVF to complete six hours of departmental internship credit, applying three credits to the major and the other three to general electives.
- Lack of racial/ethnic diversity among the faculty resulting in a faculty that does not adequately represent the university’s Alabama and Georgia service areas.
- Uneven scholarship across the faculty with as many as one-third of the faculty not meeting the department’s stated minimum annual expectations.

4. For EACH of the other weaknesses cited by the site team, describe actions taken by the unit to correct the problem and a summary of the results. Attach any supporting documents.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of sufficient seats in some courses offered in the majors being reviewed results in students being added to already-full courses two or three weeks into the semester rather than being able to register and have a complete schedule before the starts of a semester.
 - This area of weakness has been removed; please see #2 in this report.
- The single professional adviser in the department is not sufficient to advise all majors, and the college advisers who advise pre-majors and perform graduation checks are not sufficiently familiar with program options and requirements.
 - This area of weakness was addressed in #2; please see Standard 6.
- Permitting students in public relations and RTVF to complete six hours of departmental internship credit, applying three credits to the major and the other three to general electives.
 - This area of weakness was addressed in #2, Standard 2.
- Permitting students in Public Relations and RTVF to complete as many as three credits in a practicum that is essentially an internship and applying the credits to general electives.
 - Students who complete COMM 2910 practicum have the credit applied to the hours counted toward their major. It no longer counts toward their general elective credits. Interviews with faculty and review of the report appendix program curriculum and curriculum models presented in the Auburn Bulletin provided evidence of this change.
- Lack of racial/ethnic diversity among the faculty resulting in a faculty that does not adequately represent the university's Alabama and Georgia service areas.
 - The school continues to work on this area of weakness with each faculty hire. In a search for a journalism professor in 2012, the school interviewed two Caucasians (one female and one male) and one African-American male. Ultimately the school hired the female because her skill set best fit the needs of the position.
 - A faculty position is open in Public Relations. As part of that search, letters were sent to HBCU institutions and institutions that produce many Ph.D. graduates who are of an ethnic minority. Faculty also contacted minority candidates and encouraged them to apply for the position.
 - During interviews with faculty, the Dean and Provost, all expressed a strong interest and commitment to diversifying school faculty. It is important to note that the student

population in the school better reflects the spirit of diversity. Of the 882 majors, 15 percent are students of color.

- Uneven scholarship across the faculty with as many as one-third of the faculty not meeting the department's stated minimum annual expectations.
 - The expected research requirement for tenured associate professors or professors in the College of Liberal Arts is 25 percent. Faculty are required to meet this standard in their annual reviews.
 - Research productivity will be considered during a three-year period. If a faculty member is not research productive for three years, the teaching load will be increased proportionally. During that three-year period, if he/she does become productive and demonstrates that he/she can be productive for three years then a reduction in the teaching load will be issued to acknowledge the increase in research. The definition of research is not restricted to any one category and includes scholarly and creative research, scholarly teaching/pedagogy and scholarly outreach.
 - Those tenured associate professors or professors who are not meeting the requirement for scholarly activity will be assigned heavier teaching loads to ensure that tenured faculty members have a 100 percent workload. In this case, a faculty member will be assigned a differential workload with a minimum of 10 percent research, in order to stay current in the field for teaching purposes. It is expected that a faculty member will receive an increase in the teaching load, with the understanding that he/she cannot be promoted just on teaching.
 - Post-tenure review requires tenured faculty whose annual overall performance is found unacceptable twice within any six-year period to undergo more extensive review, prepare a written plan for performance improvement, implement the plan and show progress in restoring performance to a satisfactory (or even exemplary) level. An overall "unacceptable" annual evaluation determined by the composite of the weighted evaluations of the faculty member's workload assignments will put the tenured faculty member on warning that the post tenure review process may be triggered by a second overall "unacceptable" annual evaluation received during the next five years. In other words, two overall unacceptable annual evaluations in a six-year period will trigger post tenure review.

5. Summary conclusion

Students, faculty and administrators acknowledged the positive developments in the programs during the last two years. Those students with whom we conversed were exuberant in their praise of the program.

Brief History:

During the 1920s, the English Department offered the first journalism courses on the Auburn University campus. In 1934 Journalism became a major and in 1974 an Associated Press reporter

and editor (and an Auburn alumnus), became the founding head of the Department of Journalism. He retired in 1992.

The Department of Communication began on the Auburn campus in 1949 as the Department of Speech. The department became the Department of Speech Communication in 1970 before being named the Department of Communication in 1985. There was one professor who was the head of the department during its years of major development -- 1973 until 1989.

The department first offered mass communication courses in 1952. These courses formed the foundation for the Radio/Television/Film major.

The Auburn Board of Trustees combined the Department of Communication and the Department of Journalism into the Department of Communication and Journalism in 2000.

Since the site team's visit in 2012:

- In June 2013 the School of Communication and Journalism was established within the College of Liberal Arts. The school offers four areas of study: communication, journalism, public relations and radio-television-film.
- During August 2013 the school and Raycom Media announced a pioneering partnership to prepare multimedia student journalists. Professors and Raycom Media professionals work with students in a converged newsroom to reinforce classroom lessons with live reporting experiences.
- Raycom Media provided studio equipment, editing software, cameras, sets, furniture and professional expertise, a value the university estimates at more than \$350,000.
- Raycom houses a news bureau in the space. Through class assignments, students are able to contribute digital material and video packages on WSFA's (Montgomery, Ala.) and WTVM's (Columbus, Ga.) stations and websites. The partnership has enabled majors in the school to have hands-on learning experiences in a state-of-the art studio. Students talked about the value of their experience working in a newsroom to produce local news stories for television, the Web, Social media and digital devices.
- A Visual Media track (in Radio/TV/Film) was approved by the Alabama Commission on High Education last December. The track provides students with the theory and application skills for production of digital artworks and the effective use of digital communication.
- The school began a partnership with Auburn Athletics last fall. Students will be able to create content for the new SEC Network. Auburn is hiring an Assistant Athletics Director for Video Services who will oversee production and creation of all video content for Auburn Athletics' 21 sports programs. The journalism program will offer Introduction to Sports Video Production in Fall 2014. The class will be taught by the Assistant Athletics Director

for Video Services in Auburn Athletics' production facility.

The University Curriculum Committee approved the renaming of the Radio/TV/Film program to Media Studies in November 2013. Faculty members said the Media Studies better expresses the scholarly and creative work that they conduct, using a variety of research methods (including criticism and history), and artistic production (filmmaking, scriptwriting and visual communication).

Graduates include:

Journalism: Bill Barrow, Southeast Political Reporter, Associate Press; Maria Baugh, Managing Editor, *Food Network Magazine*; Ken Bradley, College Football Editor, *Sporting News*; Miranda Dollarhide, Morning Producer, WHNT News 19, Huntsville, AL; Niki Doyle, Director of Digital Operations, Alabama Media Group; Hope Holland, Producer for "Hannity," Fox News Channel; David Ingram, Producer at NBC's "Today Show" and "Early Today"; and Drew Reese, copy editor, *Boston Globe*.

Public Relations: Becca Barganier, Corporate Communications and Media Relations Liaison; Sterne Agee, Birmingham, Ala.; Abby Basinger, Public Relations Coordinator, Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood, Montgomery, Ala.; Samantha Boyd, APCO Worldwide Practice Coordinator, Washington, D.C.; Beth Clayton, The Hallmark Group, Birmingham, Ala.; Alyssa Mills Dorrough, Public Relations Coordinator, Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism, Gulf Shores, Ala.; Sarah Funderburk, Account Manager, Schroder Public Relations, Atlanta, Ga.; Payton Haisten, Account Executive, Ten Eight Software, Atlanta, Ga.; Rebecca Lakin, Global Client Knowledge Manager, Account Executive Corporate, Edelman, Chicago; Ashley Mundy, Assistant Account Executive, Weber Shandwick, Dallas, Tex.; and Patti Plath White, Marketing Coordinator/Digital Specialist, Audigy Group, Vancouver, Wash.

Radio, Television and Film: Ace Atkins, Author, Oxford, Miss.; Haley Borders, Production Manager, MLB Network; Cole Cunningham, Multi-Media Producer, Southwestern Conference; Lee Gaither, President/CEO, Basil Street Media; Bradford Law, National Network Manager, IMG Sports; Jenna Mayo, Operations Manager, ESPN; Stephen Neslage, Mornings with Al producer, The Weather Channel; Jessica Smith, Social Media Strategist, NCAA; Paul Stewart, Graphics Operator, Atlanta Braves; Brianna Yow, Production Manager.

