

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

Name of Program: **Department of Journalism and Mass Communication**
Master of Mass Communication (MMC)

Name of Institution: **South Dakota State University**

Name of Administrator: **Mary Arnold**

Date of Original Site Visit: **November 6-9, 2011**

Revisit Date: **November 17-19, 2013**

Revisit Team Chair: **Barbara B. Hines**

Revisit Team Member: **Scott Bosley**

Revisit Team's Recommendation: **Accreditation**

1. List each standard in noncompliance and the reasons as cited in the original team report.

Standard 2: Curriculum

Reasons cited:

Lack of fully evolved course titles and content for a distinct professional graduate program

Standard 9: Assessment

Reasons cited:

Small number of graduates to provide meaningful assessment

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.

Standard 2: Curriculum

Summary of findings:

The unit has moved with alacrity, with strong support from university leadership, to strengthen and better define the core curriculum. The core was increased from four to six courses and strengthened by inclusion of three skills courses — Cross-Platform Story-Telling, Cross-Platform Campaigns and Conducting Professional Research. In total, five of the six core courses are new.

Inspection of syllabi and observation on the D2L online system showed that course redefinitions and changes yielded strong academic rigor in the core and in elective offerings. Both alumni and students said the program solved a problem for them because the flexibility of the online courses allowed pursuit of a master's degree while juggling busy professional careers and other obligations. This, in addition to reasonable cost, yielded an opportunity they otherwise would not have had. They were enthusiastic about the quality of the courses and the skill and personal support of the faculty.

The unit also worked expeditiously to push for approval of its separate degree for the program, Master of Mass Communication (MMC), by the South Dakota Board of Regents. That occurred early this year.

The substantial work done by the unit since 2011 has enhanced the professional graduate program and put it on solid footing.

Overall evaluation: Compliance

Standard 9: Assessment

Summary of findings:

By better clarifying the Master of Mass Communication curriculum, faculty were able to generate a data set of learning outcomes for the curriculum that demonstrated the graduating cohorts' mastery of ACEJMC's professional values and competencies and of analytical and critical thinking abilities appropriate to the profession.

The MMC assessment plan includes both direct and indirect measures, including a project assessment by both a panel of professionals and graduate committee of the master's professional research project, an exit survey of graduates and e-IDEA student opinion survey.

Since the site visit, the number of graduates has increased by 400 percent, from four in the first class to 20 alumni. The largest number, 60 percent, are from South Dakota, while the others span the U.S. The students complete courses that have been developed by faculty members with assistance from the university's Instructional Design Services using the internationally-tested Quality Matters rubric. In each core course, the Professional Values and Competencies have been aligned with the QM rubric and addressed a minimum of seven times. Across electives, each of the competencies is addressed a minimum of five times.

For the capstone, a project panel (two industry professionals and one faculty member from another university or department) reviews the work with a set of program assessment rubrics. Additionally, members of the department's Graduate Committee assess each project/defense as required by the university's Graduate College.

With results from these different measures, the department has made changes in four broad areas: curriculum, faculty and instruction, culture or atmosphere (delivery and cohort), and facilities. The improvements have ranged from expanding the hands-on experiences, improving instructional delivery, developing a health journalism certificate, revamping the professional research course, increasing the number of hours that online advisers have with advisees, increasing utilization of the university's digital library, and developing a specific set of guidelines for selecting, completing and presenting the professional project.

Overall evaluation: Compliance

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.

None cited

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.

None cited

5. Summary conclusion

The MMC degree being offered by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication has been strategically enhanced since the site team visit in 2011. With the support of university administration and the South Dakota Board of Regents, it now has a stronger professional, academic and financial base and meets all of the standards for accreditation by ACEJMC.