

# Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC  
Undergraduate program  
2013– 2014

Name of Institution: University of Alaska Anchorage

Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Tom Case, Chancellor  
Name of Unit: Department of Journalism and Public Communications  
Name and Title of Administrator: Paola Banchemo

Date of 2013 - 2014 Accrediting Visit: Oct. 20-23, 2013

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: Oct. 21-24, 2007

Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Re-accreditation

Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Re-accreditation

Recommendation by 2013 - 2014 Visiting Team: PROVISIONAL RE-ACCREDITATION

*Prepared and submitted by:*

**Team Chair**

Name and Title: David Boardman, Dean and Professor

Organization/School: School of Media and Communication, Temple University

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

**Team Members**

Name and Title: John Cochran

Organization/School: At-large Professional

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Title: Michel M. Haigh, Associate Professor

Organization/School: College of Communications, Pennsylvania State University

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

## PART I: General information

Name of Institution: University of Alaska Anchorage

Name of Unit: Department of Journalism and Public Communications

Year of Visit: 2013-2014

### 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 (Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities)  
 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.

See authorization included in Appendix I, which follows this section.

### 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: October 21-24, 2007

### 5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? 1990

### 6. Attach a copy of the unit's mission statement. Give date of adoption and/or last revision.

We prepare students for professional careers and graduate study while conveying an understanding and appreciation of the vital role that free expression and mass communication play in a global society. Through research, creative activities, and community engagement, we enrich our community and our profession.

Mission statement was revised in October 2012.

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

Semesters of   15   weeks  
 Quarters of        weeks  
 Summer sessions of  10  weeks  
 Intersessions of        weeks

**8. Check the programs offered in journalism/mass communications:**

Four-year program leading to Bachelor's degree  
 Graduate work leading to Master's degree  
 Graduate work leading to Ph.D. degree

**9. Give the number of credit hours required by the university for graduation. Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.**

120 semester hours required for a baccalaureate by university / 126 semester hours required by unit for this program.

**10. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience. Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.**

A student must work at least 50 "billable" hours for each semester-hour credit. Students may earn up to six semester-hour credits in internships/practica in our program. Typically, students earn three credits.

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

We do not have specific professors in charge of concentrations in our program.

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Person in Charge
Journalism	NA
Strategic Communications	NA
Telecommunications and Film	NA
Integrated Media	NA

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

There are 15,718 students enrolled on the Anchorage campus, and 19,825 including community campuses of UAA (Kodiak College, Kenai Peninsula College, and Matanuska-Susitna College) as of fall 2012. There are 11,511 full-time-equivalent students at UAA.

**13. Number of undergraduate majors in the unit, by sequence and total (if the unit has pre-major students, list them as a single total):**

There are 144 majors in the unit. A pre-major is not available. UAA does not require students to list their chosen concentration when they declare their major or at any point until they apply for graduation. We urge students to declare a concentration earlier and have tried to ask students who come in for advising to declare their concentration. However, because this is not

mandated, the sequence majors declare upon graduation is a better descriptor of the relative distribution. Based on 157 graduates from December 2009 to May 2013, the distribution of majors by sequence is typically as follows:

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Distribution of Undergraduate Majors
Journalism	3.1%
Strategic Communications	20.4%
Telecommunications and Film	8.2%
Integrated Media	17.3%
Pre-majors	Not applicable
Not specified	45.9%*
Total	157

In studying this issue, we have found a slim majority of students who do not specify their concentration graduate as if they were integrated media majors.

**14. Number of students in *each section* of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, etc.). List enrollment by section for the term during which the visit will occur and the preceding term. Attach separate pages if necessary.**

			Spring 2013	Fall 2013	Capacity
JPC A201	Reporting and Writing News	Fall only		14	15
	Reporting and Writing News	Fall only		14	15
JPC A203	Writing and Producing for Electronic Media	15	Spring only		15
	Writing and Producing for Electronic Media	14	Spring only		15
	Writing and Producing for Electronic Media	11	Spring only		15
JPC A204	Information Gathering			28	30
JPC A212	Copy Editing	Fall only		11	15
JPC A213	Digital Imaging			15	15
JPC A343	Radio News Reporting	12			10
JPC A344	TV News Reporting	8			
JPC A345	Web Design	16		15	15
JPC A346	Magazine Content Creation			10	15
JPC	Multimedia Journalism			15	15

A442				
JPC A445	Magazine Editing and Production I	9		15
JPC A363	Research Methods for Strategic Communications	17		25
JPC A366	Planning and Writing for Strategic	24		25
JPC A368	Commercial Photography	17		15
JPC A464	Development Communications		12	25
JPC A466	Strategic Communications Campaigns I		16	25
JPC A382	Digital Audio Production		10	10
JPC A383	TV Studio Production		10	10
JPC A384	Digital Video Production	13		15
JPC A385	Scriptwriting for Film and TV		10	10
JPC A484	Documentary Film Production I	2		10

**15. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2013 – 2014 academic year:**

Percentage increase or decrease in three years: Total spent in 2010-11: \$630,035; total spent in 2011-12: \$768,816; total spent in 2012-13: \$789,347; projected spending in 2013-14: \$802,000.

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: The university will spend \$455,904 in salary and \$142,242 in benefits for a total of \$598,146 for the six full-time faculty members who will teach in 2013-14. These are pre-merger projected expenditures.

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

Elizabeth Arnold, assistant professor

Paola Banchemo, associate professor

Edgar Blatchford, associate professor

Doug Kelly, assistant professor (starts August 12, 2013)

Joy Chavez Mapaye, associate professor (earned tenure and was promoted as of August 12, 2013)

Ron McGee, associate professor (earned tenure and was promoted as of August 12, 2013)

Mark Trahan, Atwood Chair of Journalism (starts one-year appointment August 12, 2013)

17. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2013. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2013. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2014, please provide the updated list of faculty at time of visit.)

Type of faculty	spring 2013	fall 2013
adjunct	DK Johnston (JPC A484)	Paula Dobbyn (JPC A201)
Term faculty / adjunct	Red Bradley (JPC A345, JPC A368, JPC A384)	Daysha Eaton (JPC A201)
adjunct	John McKay (JPC A413)	Bryan Meshke (JPC A345)
adjunct	Gina Romero (JPC A344)	Gina Romero (JPC A362)
adjunct	Pat Yack (JPC A211)	Anne Raup (JPC A213)
Atwood Chair of Journalism	Mike Doogan (JPC A202, JPC A490)	Mark Trahant (JPC A204, JPC A404)

**18. Schools on the semester system:**

For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 80 or more semester hours outside the major and 65 or more semester hours in liberal arts and sciences.

Year	Total Graduates	80 or more semester hours outside the major		65 or more semester hours in liberal arts / sciences	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2012-13 academic year	20	20	100%	20	100%
2011-12 academic year	28	28	100%	28	100%

Number of majors: 144, down from 203 in 2007-08.

- 19. Schools on the quarter system:** Does not apply.

**OVERVIEW:**

The University of Alaska Anchorage is the state's largest higher-education institution. It is an open-access, comprehensive university offering more than 200 degrees and certificates.

This is a young university, existing in its current form only since 1987, when a four-year program that existed since 1976 was merged with Anchorage Community College and some rural extension units. Those community-college roots remain evident at UAA, where the

curricular offerings include everything from quantum mechanics to automobile mechanics. And the student body is in many ways more reflective of a two-year than a traditional four-year institution, with a high number of first-generation college students, many of whom are working one or even multiple jobs while going to school.

Fewer than half of the nearly 20,000 students are enrolled full-time. Only about 1,000 students live on campus.

There are approximately 680 regular faculty and 710 adjunct faculty at UAA.

The Department of Journalism and Public Communications (JPC) was officially founded in 1980, in the Humanities Division of the College of Arts and Sciences. The unit is a relatively small one, with fewer than 150 majors and six full-time faculty. JPC offers four concentrations: Journalism, Strategic Communications, Telecommunications and Film, and Integrated Media.

In 2006-07, the Department revised its curriculum, the first complete revision since 1982. Under the revised curriculum, students are required to take 45 credits in JPC and 81 credits outside the major, totaling 126 semester credit hours.

Last spring, after a year of consideration, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences decided to merge JPC with the Department of Communication, effective July 1, 2013. Faculty members of the former Department of Communication bring expertise in the areas of public speaking, persuasion, interpersonal, and organizational communication. The unit has gone from six tenure-track or tenured professors to 11, as well as five additional term professors and numerous adjuncts. The Department of Communication was mainly a service department, offering four general-education requirement courses and some upper-division offerings, but it does not offer a major. JPC has not been a generator of many credit hours for non-majors so this merger will expose more students to the unit. (The site team did not review the communications portion of the program.)

UAA and JPC are under considerable financial pressure as Alaska contends with major downward pressure on its oil-based economy. The University has just begun an unprecedented process of ranking every function performed on campus – from every class to athletic offerings to food service – in order to prioritize the spending of dwindling dollars. One professor was quoted in the Anchorage Daily News as calling the process “The Hunger Games,” and the faculty around campus was on considerable edge at the time of the site visit. JPC has requested additional full-time faculty lines since the last accreditation visit but has been denied.

A highlight of the JPC program is the Atwood Chair of Journalism, a visiting-professional position. Since 2007, several distinguished journalists such as Daily Telegraph (London) foreign correspondent Julius Strauss and Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Richard Murphy have occupied the post, and this year's resident is Mark Trahan, perhaps the nation's foremost Native American journalist.

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

*The policies and practices of the unit ensure that it has an effectively and fairly administered working and learning environment.*

### 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 Department of Journalism and Public Communication has this mission statement, revised most recently in October 2012: *“We prepare students for professional careers and graduate study while conveying an understanding and appreciation of the vital role that free expression and mass communication play in a global society. Through research, creative activities, and community engagement, we enrich our community and our profession.”*

The unit also has a strategic plan, which is a recently revised version of a plan adopted in 2006, which proved overly ambitious. The plan as submitted still has ambitious goals, but it reads more like a tactical document than a strategic plan, and lacks a sense of overall direction and priorities. In light of the recent merger with the Department of Communications, we are told the unit will be revisiting the plan in the near future, which it clearly needs to do.

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

The faculty functions as a committee of the whole and meets once a month. Departmental policies, procedures and curricular changes are presented at these meetings for discussion and approval.

There are no committees. Rather, the chair assigns specific oversight responsibilities to faculty members. One is responsible for organizing question-and-answer sessions for students; one reviews scholarship applications; one works with staff members to keep the website updated.

There is a Faculty Handbook that outlines policies and procedures.

- (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 chair, who was re-elected to a second three-year term in May, is an impressive, energetic leader who is highly respected and liked by the faculty, staff and students.

The leadership of the College of Arts and Sciences, however, seems detached from the needs and challenges of the Department. The unit cited two decisions made by the Dean that adversely impacted the Department, without any opportunity for input.

One, in particular, had students and faculty alarmed: The Dean's Office decided to reduce by 20 percent the hours and compensation of JPC's only technology and equipment expert, who is widely regarded as an essential resource. As a result of that reduction, this staffer is planning to leave the University for a job in private business.

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

The chair is elected by the faculty and appointed by the Dean. He may evaluate the chair's performance but there is no formal review either by him or the faculty.

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

There are a variety of avenues for which faculty, staff and students may express complaints and have them addressed. These are outlined in both the Faculty Handbook and the Student Handbook of UAA.

**Overall evaluation:**

The unit has a strong sense of purpose centered on teaching students. The unit has strong leadership, but the levels above the Department seem too detached from the needs and challenges of JPC.

In light of the merger with the former Department of Communication, it is clear that large-scale strategic planning is necessary. Done well, that planning could help address some of the concerns expressed elsewhere in this report.

**COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

*The unit provides curriculum and instruction, whether on site or online, that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the Council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

- (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 the unit and meet the liberal arts and sciences-general education requirements of the institution.**

The JPC Department is in compliance with this rule for the two academic years preceding the site visit. The JPC Department instituted a new curriculum in fall 2006. The current curriculum requires 45 credits in the major and 81 credits outside, of which 66 must be in liberal arts and social sciences. A total of 126 credits is needed for the degree; 45 of these have to be JPC credits.

- (b) **The unit provides a balance between theoretical and conceptual courses and professional skills courses to achieve the range of student competencies listed by the Council.**

The unit's mission remains to provide students with broad liberal-arts education while preparing them for media careers. The JPC Department offers four concentrations: Journalism, Strategic Communications, Telecommunications and Film, and Integrated Media. The latter is more a non-sequenced program than a concentration area.

The JPC Department also offers a minor for non-majors. The unit has identified courses to meet each of the 12 ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies.

There are four courses required for all JPC majors: JPC A201, Reporting and Writing News; JPC A202, First Amendment and Media Ethics; JPC A203, Writing and Producing for Electronic Media; and JPC A204, Information Gathering.

Students must take one of three courses at the 200 level: JPC A211, Visual Literacy; JPC A212, Copy Editing; or JPC A213, Digital Imaging. Students must complete one of the following 300 level courses: JPC A312, History of Alaska Media; JPC A313, Movies and the First Amendment, or JPC A314, Documentary Filmmakers and Filmmaking. Students must also select between two 400 level-courses stressing the importance of ethical and legal realities of media from a global or domestic perspective either: JPC A404, Global Media and Communications Systems, or JPC A413, Communications Law. Finally, all majors must complete JPC A403, Communications and Media Research as a capstone course.

The remaining curriculum requirements depend on students' concentrations. In the Journalism, Strategic Communications, or Telecommunications and Film concentrations,

students must select 21 credits from the list of options for their concentrations. Three credits can be taken in any JPC concentration area. The Integrated Media students must take three courses, for a total of nine credits, and must select 21 credits from the other three concentration areas.

To summarize, the unit's curriculum includes four courses required of every student, 9 courses in the Journalism concentration, 10 in the Strategic Communications concentration, and 10 in the Telecommunications concentration. All three of those concentrations also offer independent study courses (for three credits each) and practica and internships credits worth up to six hours. The JPC Department also teaches a 100-level Media and Society course as a university-wide general-education course for non-majors. Other courses taken by non-majors include: JPC A202, First Amendment and Media Ethics; JCP A312, History of Alaska Media; JPC A313, Movies and the First Amendment, and JCP A314, Documentary Filmmakers and Filmmaking.

The JPC Department has made efforts to update curriculum to address rapidly changing professions.

**Strategic Communications:** Curriculum is adjusted to stay current with industry trends by tweaking assignments and examples in course work. Students said their courses are rigorous and encourage creativity and critical thinking. They praised faculty for strong industry ties, including inviting visiting professionals into the classroom. One weakness mentioned was the fact the JPC A366 course was not required by all Strategic Communication majors.

**Journalism:** Students praised coursework and said they believe it has prepared them for internships. A review of syllabi and student interviews indicate the curriculum is keeping pace with industry changes. Media professionals give the Department's students high marks for preparedness.

**Telecommunications and film:** The close collaboration of the radio and television stations with Telecommunications students deserves a special note. Students receive practical experience and preparation for future jobs as reporters, producers and anchors.

**Integrated Media Concentration:** Students praised this option because it allows them to take courses that match their interests and also allows flexibility in scheduling.

**Journalism and Public Communications Minor (minor):** This 18-credit minor is offered to non-majors. Students are required to complete JPC A201, Reporting and Writing News, and JPC A203, Writing and Producing for Electronic Media, the remaining 12 credits may be taken from any of the JPC courses.

**(c) Instruction is demanding and current; achievements in teaching and learning are recognized and valued.**

Students who met with the team in one large and several small groups spoke enthusiastically of the quality of instruction they receive. They described most of their professors as well-qualified and well-prepared for the courses they teach, and expressed particular regard for three of the six.

There were repeated concerns expressed about the lack of effectiveness of one professor; the site team passed those along to the chair during the visit.

Syllabi generally supported the students' assessment of overall quality. While a few were sketchy, others were detailed and specific in outlining course objectives and assignments through which those objectives would be mastered.

The 2007 team noted, some syllabi are detailed and comprehensive, and that is still currently true. Courses with multiple sections do not necessarily have the same course requirements, and some of the syllabi for the same course do not have the same course descriptions. On the syllabi, faculty usually include a course description, but this description may not match what is in the UAA course bulletin. In some cases, faculty members said they meet with adjuncts at the beginning of the semester to ensure consistency in course work.

Faculty members described their own courses and those of colleagues with enthusiasm and with a detail that demonstrated a shared commitment to the unit's goals.

Excellence in teaching is a major criterion for retention, tenure and promotion. All faculty members should achieve a record of distinction in teaching. Tenure-accruing and tenured faculty members teach three courses per semester. Full-time faculty members teach the majority of courses, 50 to 68 percent. The percentage of full-time faculty teaching courses in the JPC Department fluctuates.

The University supports effective teaching through CAFÉ (The Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence), which offers seminars, speakers and training. Unit faculty have taken advantage of CAFÉ programs and other University training, such as instruction in using Blackboard.

**(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.**

The JPC Department is in compliance on skills classes. There is a problem, however, with the required senior-capstone class, JPC A403 Communications and Media Research, which typically has an enrollment of 20 students per section with two sections, taught fall semester only. Both students and faculty saw this ratio as unreasonable, and expressed concern for the faculty member who teaches it, along with their admiration for her.

- (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.**

This is a clear strength of this program, with faculty facilitating opportunities and students partaking heartily of them.

Internships are not required in JPC, but they are an elective in each sequence. They may be paid or unpaid opportunities. Students may earn up to six credits for internships or practica. Students are responsible for finding internships, which must be approved by the internship director. Internships must involve professional opportunities with off-campus organizations that agree to supervise the students.

Interns summarize their activities in weekly reports to the internship director due each week, and compile portfolios submitted at the internship's conclusion. Students must also have a face-to-face meeting at midterm and the end of the term (except in summer) with the internship director.

Internship grades are determined by the following criteria: 10 percent weekly reports, 10 percent meetings with the internship director, 40 percent based on the portfolio, and another 40 percent based on the practicum/internship supervisor evaluation.

### **Overall evaluation:**

The JPC Department has a strong core curriculum. The strengths of the curriculum include: students have the opportunity to work on real-world issues during class, they learn how to be entrepreneurs with their stories, and the course content reflects the changing industry. Curriculum weaknesses include: there are still some minor issues across multiple sections of the courses, the course descriptions on the syllabi don't necessarily match the descriptions in the UAA course bulletin, and some courses with multiple sections do not have the same assessment of learning objectives.

The curriculum may also be too ambitious for the faculty, at least as constructed. Some classes are infrequently offered, and difficult for students to schedule. The capstone class, which is the same for all majors, is only taught once a year, usually in the fall. Students could delay graduation by a semester if they are not planning ahead.

Another issue with the capstone course is the fact one professor teaches two sections with more than 40 students currently enrolled. During the next accrediting cycle, the JPC Department needs to offer this course on a regular basis, and they should also lower the number of students in each section. After discussion with faculty from other departments, their capstone courses usually have 15 students enrolled. This is more in line with ACEJMC guidelines. A capstone course should provide students with more one-on-one interaction and guidance for the project, and having one professor teach 80 students does not allow for this. The students spoke highly of the faculty member teaching the capstone course, but they also mentioned they had no idea how the faculty member was able to keep up with the demands of the students enrolled.

Also, several students and faculty members expressed concern that the capstone course, JPC A403 Communications and Media Research, may not be a good “fit.” Some interviewees thought working on a final campaign, video project, or writing project might be a better reflection of what a capstone course should measure. Another reason the JPC Department might re-evaluate the capstone course is because they list the course as part of the assessment process. It would be easier to use the capstone course as an assessment tool if it included a project tied to an option in JPC.

## **COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

*The unit has an inclusive program that values domestic and global diversity, and serves and reflects society.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

- (a) The unit has a written 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.**

This unit absolutely shines in this regard. The student body has diversity in line with the area's population, with 38 percent of students identifying as non-white. The faculty is even more diverse. In fact, the faculty make-up is a model of racial/ethnic/gender diversity, with one Hispanic woman, one Asian-American woman, one white woman, one African-American man, one Native American man and one white man.

The unit has a diversity plan, adopted in 2001 and updated two times since.

The values and issues of diversity and inclusion are presented to students across the curriculum, and interviews with students validated this approach.

- (b) The unit's curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of 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.**

As indicated above, diversity and inclusion permeates the air in this unit. The Anchorage area has surprising diversity, well beyond whites and Alaska Natives (there are nearly 100 languages spoken in the Anchorage public schools), and a variety of issues and perspectives emerge inside and outside the JPC classroom.

That said, there is little direct mention of diversity in course syllabi. That creates the potential for taking these issues for granted and seeing their importance erode over time.

- (c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to recruit women and minority faculty and professional staff and supports their retention, progress and success.**

Faculty searches conducted during this review period all show evidence that recruiting women and minorities was a priority. Securing Mark Trahant, perhaps the nation's most prominent Native American journalist, as the 2013-14 Atwood Chair, was an outstanding accomplishment and the direct result of outreach by the chair.

There has not been success in recruiting diverse adjuncts, which should be a priority as well.

**(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 unit makes admirable efforts to attract and retain minority students – visiting middle schools and high schools to promote JPC's programs, then going the extra mile to help those students succeed in their college careers.

**(e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and 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.**

All signs are that these are well-engrained values here.

**Overall evaluation:**

Diversity is a strength of this department, which is to be applauded for sustaining it even in the face of tightening budgets. The unit should be careful, however, not to take these issues for granted. They could be more strongly systemized so that they don't erode under different leadership in the future.

**COMPLIANCE**

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

*The unit hires, supports and evaluates a capable faculty with a balance of academic and professional credentials appropriate for the unit's mission.*

### 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.**

JPC has written guidelines both for evaluation of performance and for the tenure and promotion process. Those guidelines lay out clear definitions for what constitutes acceptable professional activity in lieu of research.

Faculty members applying for tenure are evaluated first by the chair, then by the college dean, then by a peer-review committee within the college, and then by a University tenure committee. Untenured faculty are evaluated annually by the dean. Tenure-track faculty are reviewed in their fourth and sixth years.

Salaries at time of hire are determined by the dean on recommendation of the chair. From there, any increases are determined in negotiation with the faculty union.

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

Generally, tenured and tenure-track faculty have what is referred to here as "tripartite" responsibilities of teaching, research/creative activity. Non-tenure-track "term" faculty have "bipartite" responsibilities, teaching and service. One tenured faculty, who has a dual appointment with Alaska Native Studies, is bipartite.

Teaching is clearly the priority of the faculty here, and they take it seriously. The students reflected great affection and respect for most of the faculty.

That said, the percentage of classes taught by full-time faculty, as opposed to adjuncts, just barely fell within ACEJMC guidelines during some semesters of the final three years of the evaluation period. The high-water mark for classes taught by full-time faculty was 68 percent; the low mark was 50 percent.

The normal teaching load is three courses per semester. Faculty members have received course-load reductions to finish dissertations. Additionally, the chair received a one-course reduction for her year-round responsibilities advising the student newspaper, and another professor received a one-course reduction for being an adviser to the campus radio station.

**(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.**

For a unit focused far more heavily on teaching and service than on research, the staff of six has a good balance of industry and academy. Three of the six full-time faculty have Ph.Ds; two of those have significant research output. Each of the remaining faculty continue to work vigorously in journalism in various formats, including such outlets as Alaska magazine and National Public Radio.

Most of the faculty contribute significantly to service in the university and in the community. Those activities include service on the UAA Academic Integrity Committee, the Undergraduate Academic Board, the Alaska Humanities Forum and the Public Relations Society of America.

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

Student evaluations of professors are collected by the chair and put onto CDs that are available for checkout in the Learning Resource Center. The JPC faculty are generally well-rated by students, with most getting 4.5-5 on a 5-point scale (and one consistently earning a 3.5, below the Department average).

Most other evaluation of instruction appears to be ad hoc and informal, but because the department is so small and the relationships among teachers and students so strong, it is unlikely problems would go unnoticed or unaddressed.

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

The unit appears to be held in high regard on campus, and has a high profile in part due to the quality of student-media, which are overseen by JPC faculty.

**Overall evaluation:**

This is a highly committed, student-focused faculty. Because of the dearth of dedicated advising staff within the unit – exacerbated by the challenging nature of the student body – the faculty carry extraordinary responsibility for helping students navigate the university. Although the research and creative output is meager compared with many other schools, it is acceptable within the context of this university and truly admirable given everything on the plates of these dedicated teachers.

**COMPLIANCE**

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

*With unit support, faculty members contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge and engage in scholarship (research, creative and professional activity) that contributes to their development.*

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

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

The JPC Department supports research, creative activity, and professional activity. JPC supports faculty research and creative activity by designating it at least 20 percent of a faculty member's workload agreement.

The College of Arts and Sciences funds travel and research, with a relatively limited pool. There are three categories of support. Category 1 supports faculty who are giving a paper, presentation, poster, or workshop at an international, national, or regional conference recognized by the professional association in his or her field. A faculty person can be awarded up to \$1,650 for travel in this category per year. Category 2 provides support so faculty can organize conference sessions, chair events, panels, or sessions; moderate, and/or participate in informal panels at professional association meetings. Faculty can be awarded up to \$1,300 per year for Category 2. Finally, Category 3 funding supports professional development for faculty. Faculty can apply for up to \$1,050 for this type of activity. The funds are available on a "first-come, first-served basis." The maximum a faculty member can earn is \$1,650. Faculty can also be awarded funds from the Office of Academic Affairs.

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

As a supplement to the University's Faculty Handbook, the JPC Department provides new faculty members with its "Guidelines for Faculty Reviews and Rank and Tenure."

The Department chair completes an annual evaluation for each faculty member. The chair's evaluation must identify any major performance deficiencies and, if any such deficiency is identified, must provide the faculty member with written constructive feedback designed to assist the faculty member in improving his or her performance.

Tenure-accruing faculty go through the mid-term review in spring of their third year in order to provide faculty with feedback on their performance.

- (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's guidelines state that, because of the professional nature of the program, faculty members can demonstrate achievement through accomplishments in either Research/Creative Activity or in Professional Achievement.

- (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.**

The level of scholarship, research, and creative activity has increased since the last self-study. Over the past six years, the faculty have produced 4 book chapters, 3 refereed journal articles, 25 refereed conference papers, 4 book reviews, 7 juried creative works, 23 non-juried creative works, and 6 articles in non-refereed publications. They also indicated 21 items in the category of "other."

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

To promote intellectual and professional inquiry and discussion, the Department organizes regular brown bag meetings for visiting scholars and professionals, open to students and faculty.

Formal and informal mentoring goes on between senior and junior faculty. Faculty have a wide variety of research interests tied to the practice of the profession and the study of the communication process.

**Overall evaluation:**

Although scholarly productivity is modest, partly because half the faculty is comparatively new and comes from a professional rather than academic background, the climate for scholarship has improved since the last accreditation visit.

**COMPLIANCE**

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## **PART II — Standard 6: Student Services**

*The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study.*

### **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.**

Given the nature of UAA's student body – with many students coming in and out of school over the course of many years, juggling school with full- and part-time jobs and child care (one full-time student gave birth to triplets, has another child, and is pregnant), and no requirement to declare a major until senior year – academic advising is as essential here as at any school the site-team members have visited over the years. But it clearly is not where it should be.

The unit feels it has picked up its game on advising since the last visit, but say not enough students take advantage of advising options. JPC has begun working closely with advising professionals on university staff. Each faculty member advises students who are assigned based on the student's last name (A-D, E-J, etc.). The JPC website lists those advisers and also provides a self-advising guide with a suggested matriculation guide. Faculty acknowledge they should be more aggressive in urging students to consult them. But there is no requirement, yet, for them to seek advising.

Advisers use the university's online system, DegreeWorks, to track student progress. This is a considerable improvement over the system in place at the time of the last site visit, when it could take months to determine whether a student was making adequate progress toward graduation. The self-study says that, while a great step up, DegreeWorks still has flaws. It is still possible for a student to discover in what was supposed to be the final semester that there are not sufficient credits for graduation.

Some students who graduated in 2011 and 2012 said they took several unnecessary courses because of confusion over required credits. In part this is the result of students being permitted to wait until almost the last minute to declare a major. In part this can also be attributed to the university's past reluctance to institute mandatory advising. University officials, recognizing the problem, say the decision has been made to change this and to require advising for all undergraduates. They say planning, including a pilot program for 772 undergraduates, is well underway to do this. But they forecast it will take another two years before mandatory advising is instituted campus-wide.

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

Faculty post office hours outside their doors and on their syllabus. A recent satisfaction survey showed students being "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with faculty accessibility. Students who met with the site team were also complimentary.

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

Through its website and Facebook page, the unit keeps students informed about events, jobs and other information. Fliers are also posted. This fall the faculty hosted a meeting for JPC students to discuss course scheduling. Students said the meeting was a good addition.

**(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.**

The Department assigns advisers to campus media which are independently run and supported by either student fees or advertising. The unit offers student groups of national organizations such as RTDNA and PRSSA. The chair and other faculty involve students in the annual conference of the Alaska Press Club.

**(e) The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success. Clear and accurate data are published on the accredited unit's website.**

The website provides clear data on academic good standing. Graduation rates are far below the national average, which may be expected for a university that has historically served as a community college function for the statewide system. Still, the chair regards the pace of graduation as unacceptable. Most students work their way through school. Efforts are ongoing to help move them toward graduation, especially through improved advising, but financial aid is limited.

Given the history of the university and the financial situation, many students find themselves in, JPC looks at 6-year graduations as the nearest to a norm. The most recent 6-year rate for the JPC Department is *17.9 percent*, compared to the College of Arts and Sciences rate of 25.4 percent and a national average of 56 percent.

Retention provides a slightly brighter picture at 36.1 percent, although that is slightly below the figure the entire College of Arts and Sciences. Faculty try to identify and counsel potential and actual dropouts, calling and e-mailing them.

**Overall evaluation:**

In summary, both the University and the Department are trying to do a much better job of advising students and greatly improving graduation and retention rates. The key word in that sentence is "trying." They have not yet succeeded.

**NON-COMPLIANCE**

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## **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 Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences controls the budget, which now stands at \$789,347. The unit submits its requests and ranks them in accordance with the long-range strategic plan. After the previous chair left, the faculty revised the plan which now deals with such issues as enrollment decline, a small faculty and space limitations. It was approved in May 2013.

The university has called for an institution-wide evaluation of every program. Called "prioritization," every program will be examined and ranked in five groups. The lowest ranking groups will be most in danger of reductions or elimination.

The unit has a separate fund (the Fund for Excellence through the private, non-profit UA Foundation) which is used for items not permitted by the general fund. This enables the unit to pay for expenses such as guest speakers and a barbecue for an annual gathering with students. Current balance is \$59,000.

The unit is currently about one-third of the way toward matching a \$100,000 challenge/offer for the Atwood Chair of Journalism. It has another three years to raise the rest.

#### **(b) The resources that the institution provides are fair in relation to those provided other units.**

Since the last visit by a site team, the University has approved some major requests for equipment updates and a renovation of the control room. The self-study, while providing some detail on how the university determines the budget, does not address the fairness issue. Some faculty feel there is not fairness, but this appears to be a general observation without much data to back it up. Other departments with Arts & Sciences seem to have resource problems roughly on a par with JPC.

Prioritization, mentioned above, will in theory not impact JPC more than other departments, but that will be of little consolation if feared cuts result.

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

Strong points include the functionality of classrooms, faculty and staff offices, computer labs and production facilities including a large TV studio, modern control room and three video editing bays using Final Cut Pro.

On the downside, space is a problem. The Department is housed primarily on two floors of a squat concrete building almost 50 years old. It reminded the site team of the look that many community colleges have long had. While unimpressive architecturally outside, the building's

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interior does have a still modern look and has wide hallways. The JPC Department shares the building with other disciplines. The University's attempt to improve an adjacent building has, in the short run, exacerbated the problem because its occupants have moved into the Department's building. The unit expects completion of this work in 2015. At present, the unit has sole scheduling control over only one classroom. The faculty, housed primarily on the second floor, hopes it will at some point be closer to the production facilities downstairs for radio and TV. The unit will also continue to push to have the student media, Northern Light, moved from the Student Union to the same building as faculty. Adjuncts have no office space, which means no office hours for students.

**(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.**

Students and faculty regard most equipment as adequate. Some students would like more access. Computers are rotated on a four-year basis. Items such as design software seem sufficient. Broadcast production equipment is generally up-to-date with a major exception. More and better audio equipment is needed including both microphones and recorders. Often an entire class will need to use audio equipment at the same time and those requests cannot be approved under present conditions. The unit needs to double the audio equipment available and has made this a priority for the current academic year.

Only one employee is responsible for issuing and maintaining equipment, and this is not sufficient. Even worse, that very highly regarded employee was scheduled to leave for a better-paying job shortly after the site team's visit. This poses a serious problem. The TV control room is adequate but aging. The unit feels it should address this in about two years.

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

The department relies on the nearby Consortium Library, which is shared by UAA and Alaska Pacific University. The unit feels the library has been responsive to its needs including relevant electronic sources of information.

**COMPLIANCE**

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## 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 its alumni, professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching, whether on site or online, current and to promote the exchange of ideas.**

Alumni contacted by the site team were mostly pleased with the unit's outreach to them. They noted that JPC wants their ideas as well as their donations. They also noted that this has been a welcome change since in some previous years the department was haphazard in its communication with alumni. In 2011 the unit re-instituted its professional advisory board which had been inactive for most of the previous decade. The board consists of professionals engaged in several media sectors. Four alumni have served on the board. Some alumni contact faculty on an informal basis with their suggestions.

JPC has held student-alumni mixers with modest success in the hope that such networking will pay off after graduation. Alumni are heavily engaged with the Alaska Press Club, which has close ties to the department. The current president is a JPC alumna. JPC sends its student-produced True North magazine to most alumni. The department also has a Facebook page to connect students and alumni.

Alumni regularly provide advice and comment to student media. In 2012 JPC established an award to honor alumni for professional ability and service to the community.

- (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.**

Faculty members have an impressive list of outside activities, including membership in professional groups, as well as writing and providing both webcast and public television programs in support of high ethical standards and issues important to the community. Noted speakers invited to campus also address these issues. Students enrolled in Developmental Communications are required to volunteer for service with nonprofit organizations such as the Alaska Special Olympics and the Anchorage Senior Center. Faculty members have helped arrange for students to serve as interns helping to put on shows at the University Planetarium.

- (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 are involved in most of the academic associations relevant to their teaching and research. The unit supports travel within its budget constraints.

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**(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.**

Students enrolled in Developmental Communications are required to volunteer for service in a nonprofit organization such as the Anchorage Senior Center and the Alaska Special Olympics. As noted above, faculty devote considerable time to issues of concern to the community and state.

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

The unit has a strong relationship with local middle and high school teachers who are interested in film and media instruction. Middle school students have toured the unit and take part in a brief video production followed by critiques. Faculty members also visit high schools and show video productions in an effort to engage students and to encourage them to think seriously of enrolling in JPC.

**Overall evaluation:**

The connection with the Anchorage community and with its alumni is a clear strength of this program.

**COMPLIANCE**

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

*The unit regularly assesses student learning and applies results to improve curriculum and instruction.*

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

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

The Department has defined four educational goals and ACEJMC’s 12 professional values and competencies.

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

The faculty adopted its first Effectiveness Assessment Plan in May 2003, with tables showing the assessment method for each of the learning objectives. This plan has been revised over the years, and is due to the Office of Academic Affairs by June 15 every year.

There are four measures of indirect assessment: an alumni survey, internship supervisor surveys, awards won by students, and a senior exit survey. There are four measures of direct assessment: JPC A101 (Media and Society) pre-post test, JPC A201 (Reporting and Writing News) pre-post test, and JPC A202 (First Amendment and Media Ethics) pre-post test. The capstone class, JPC A403 (Communications and Media Research), is considered as a measure of direct and indirect assessment.

In the plan they forwarded to the Office of Academic Affairs in June 2013, the department also included two new assessment measures (senior portfolio and a writing rubric) that were not evaluated by the 2013 site team because these have not been fully implemented.

The Department administered an alumni survey in 2001 and in 2006 but not since. It says it plans to do so again this year. Senior-exit surveys, which will be conducted annually from 2001-07, have been conducted only once since, in 2012. The drop in frequency of these surveys is surprising and distressing, given that the unit was found out of compliance on this standard in 2007.

The plan for pre- and post-testing in four classes, added after the 2007 ACEJMC visit, is a good one, but it has not been executed effectively or consistently. Little was done in the first five years post-assessment, and the more recent data is either weak or incomplete. The assessment report states: “Faculty members inexperienced with the assessment process did not create a corresponding rubric to grade this instrument for the first few years the assessment was in effect.”

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**(c) The unit maintains contact with its alumni to assess their experiences in the professions and to gain feedback for improving curriculum and instruction.**

In addition to the alumni survey, the Department formed an alumni advisory board to guide its construction of the curriculum.

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

The unit has made progress in this regard, including professionals in assessing work produced in various skills classes.

**(e) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and uses the data to improve curriculum and instruction.**

Most of the activity aimed at improving assessment in this unit has occurred under the current chair, with little done under her predecessor despite the non-compliance finding in 2007. Unfortunately, it is too little, too late, with a dearth of data on which to truly perform meaningful analysis.

**Overall evaluation:**

The Department has advanced their assessment processes – but not soon enough or thoroughly enough. They now include professionals, have identified outlets for student work, and continue to identify new ways to assess learning outcomes. However, there is not enough data collected on which to foster improvement, nor enough for ACEJMC to judge the assessment process. The Department collected data mainly in 2012, just prior to the self-study being completed.

Additionally, most of the measures the unit plans to use for assessment are tied to specific courses. However, the site team was concerned, based on history, that these courses will not be offered on a regular enough basis to effectively fuel the process.

Finally, the designated senior-capstone class is cited as an assessment tool. But because of its nature as an academic-research class rather than as a true capstone practicum, it has little application for assessment.

**NON-COMPLIANCE**

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

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

##### **Strengths:**

- A faculty dedicated to students' preparation for professional careers and to extensive service to the Department, the University and the state.
- Creative and enterprising leadership in finding and using limited resources for technology and equipment.
- Outstanding opportunities for extracurricular activities in campus media that contribute to the visibility and stature of the Department and University.
- Excellent use of the Anchorage media market for professional internships and full-time employment.
- The diversity of the faculty and the student body.
- The recent merger with the Department of Communications. This affords a unique opportunity to address some of the resource shortages JPC is now suffering, especially with a creative approach to utilizing faculty expertise.

##### **Weaknesses:**

- The strategic plan still reads like a tactical document more than a strategic plan, and lacks an overall direction.
- Despite effort, students do not receive adequate counseling. Those who likely need it most are least likely to get it, given that it is student-driven. One result is shown in low rates for graduation and retention.
- Lack of adequate course offerings for students to achieve required degree credits in a timely manner. One particularly serious problem, cited repeatedly by students, is offering the senior-capstone class only in one semester per year.
- The use of the Communications and Media Research as a capstone course rather than some form of project in the student's area of concentration.
- While the assessment plan looks adequate, it has not been executed effectively as yet. There is not enough data for the site team to see how JPC measures assessment. There is also not enough data for the JPC faculty to determine how to adjust the curriculum based on the feedback and pre-post test scores.
- Not having the same learning assessments in multiple sections of a course.
- A few faculty members carry the burden of scholarship and creative activity.

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

Standard 6: Student Services

Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

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

- The unit (and the University) must do a much better job of ensuring that students are receiving adequate advising all through their education, especially because so many UAA students face daunting challenges on the way to graduation.
- Align faculty expertise, resources and course offerings to improve abysmal student graduation rates, now at sub-18 percent for six-year graduation.
- Immediately and effectively execute the assessment plan so that in two years, the unit will be able to perform meaningful analysis of its performance.

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

See No. 3 above.

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

N/A

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.**

During the 2007 visit, the site team listed that the strategic plan was based on “wish and hope rather than on rigorous appraisal of realistic resources and prospects.” The strategic plan still reads very similar to the plan the 2007 team saw. The plan was revised, but it still reads more like a tactical document.

The 2007 team found JPC non-compliant on assessment. The Department has created an Academic Assessment Plan that they turn in to the Office of Academic Affairs each year, however, they have no data to support the direct or indirect measures. The foundation of the JPC assessment plan is based on pre-post test scores in several courses. They have not collected

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pre-post tests in most of these classes due to not having a reliable and valid measuring instrument. The Department also lists alumni surveys and student exit interviews as part of the assessment process, but these have not been conducted on a regular basis since 2007. Although the Department has developed some indirect and direct measures, they have failed to implement a full assessment process that is conducted on a regular basis.

**7) The self-study is the heart of the accrediting process, and often the quality of that document determines the degree of success of the accrediting visit. Summarize the team members' judgment of the self-study.**

The self-study mainly fell on the shoulders of the Department Chair with little administrative support. Considering that, the self-study was well done. It was thorough and candid, though a bit unclear in sections. The team had a very good picture of what was taking place prior to attending the visit.