

Report of On-Site Evaluation
ACEJMC
Undergraduate program
2013– 2014

Name of Institution: The University of Tennessee at Martin
Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: Tom Rakes
Name of Unit: Department of Communications
Name and Title of Administrator: Robert Nanney

Date of 2013 - 2014 Accrediting Visit: February 2-5, 2014

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

Date of the previous accrediting visit: February 10-13, 2008
Recommendation of the previous site visit team: Reaccreditation
Previous decision of the Accrediting Council: Reaccreditation

Recommendation by 2013 - 2014 Visiting Team: Reaccreditation

Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: Joe Foote, Dean, Gaylord College of Journalism & Mass Communication
Organization/School: University of Oklahoma

Signature _____

Team Members

Name and Title: Doug Boyd, Professor of Communication
Organization/School: University of Kentucky

Signature _____

Name and Title: Kristin Gilger, Associate Dean, Walter Cronkite of Journalism & Mass
Communication
Organization/School: Arizona State University

Signature _____

Name and Title: Ward White, Strategy Officer
Organization/School: Edelman

Signature _____

Name and Title:
Organization/School:

Signature _____

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Institution: The University of Tennessee at Martin

Name of Unit: Department of Communications

Year of Visit: 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
- 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.

Tennessee House Bill 264 Chapter 27 proposed that the school offer four years in agriculture and home economics and that the name be changed to The University of Tennessee Martin Branch. The legislature passed the bill, and Gordon Browning approved it on Feb. 15, 1951.

Further, The University of Tennessee at Martin is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, Telephone number 404-679-4501) to award bachelor's and master's degrees.

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: Feb. 10-13, 2008

5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC? 1996

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

The Department of Communications' mission is to provide students with a broadly based, hands-on education that gives them the opportunity to strengthen the skills fundamental to succeeding in a communications career or graduate study: writing, speaking and producing. These skills, combined with instruction in ethics, theory, law and modern professional practices, comprise a well-balanced preparation that will advance students in careers as professional communicators and enhance lifelong learning in the areas of News-Editorial, Broadcasting (Radio and Television), Public Relations and Media Design. To buttress that preparation, the faculty engage in professional scholarly and creative activities in order to stay current in this fast-changing field and to explore more effective ways to communicate to the masses. The Department also stresses the value and responsibility of student and faculty service to the campus, community and profession.

Last revised: Fall 2008

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of 15 weeks

Quarters of _____ weeks

Summer sessions of 5 weeks

Intersessions of 3 weeks (Maymester)

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

10. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience. Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit. 3 semester hours

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

<u>Name of Sequence or Specialty</u>	<u>Person in Charge</u>
Broadcasting	Dr. Gary Steinke
Media Design	Dr. Tracy Rutledge
News-Editorial	Tomi M. Parrish
Public Relations	Dr. Jeff Hoyer

12. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution: 5,927 (Fall 2013)

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):

Name of Sequence or Specialty	Undergraduate majors
Broadcasting	55
Media Design	12
News-Editorial	12
Public Relations	57
<u>Others not specifying sequence in Banner*</u>	<u>24</u>
Total	160

**NOTE: Our students do not have to indicate their sequence until they file for senior standing. These students have not entered their sequence in our Banner advising system.*

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.

SKILLS COURSES ENROLLMENT FOR SPRING 2014 (TERM DURING VISIT)

<u>Course</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Section</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
Communications 200	News Writing	Section 1	17
		Section 2	17
		Section 3	18
Communications 210	Intro to Journalism	Section 1	15
Communications 240	Intro to Media Design/PR	Section 1	19
		Section 2	17
Communications 250	Intro to Broadcasting	Section 1	18
		Section 2	18
Communications 305	Copy Editing and Design	Section 1	9
Communications 315	Writing For Broadcast Media	Section 1	12
Communications 320	Features and Editorials Writing	Section 1	10
Communications 323	Basic Web Design	Section 1	15
Communications 323	Basic Web Design	Section 1	16
Communications 327	PR Techniques	Section 1	11
		Section 2 (online)	15
Communications 329	PR Strat's. and Implement.	Section 1	20
Communications 341	Photojournalism	Section 1	16
Communications 355	Broadcast Performance	Section 1	10
Communications 360	TV Production	Section 1	12
Communications 381	Practicum in Radio	Section 1	8

Communications 382	Practicum in TV	Section 1	4
Communications 383	Practicum in Journalism	Section 1	1
Communications 475	Internship	Section 1	9

15. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2013 – 2014 academic year: \$714,091.00
 Percentage increase or decrease in three years: 5.2% decrease*

*This is primarily because one Public Speaking faculty member (Art Hunt) was reassigned half-time in Fall 2013 to Extended Campus and Online Studies, with whom he also teaches our Public Speaking course at one or more of our off-campus centers. Half of his full-time teaching location remains with our unit. In the process, our budget decreased by approximately \$27,000.

This figure does not include Work Study students or the campus newspaper, which is funded through student fees.

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$588,296

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.

FULL-TIME FACULTY FALL 2013 (SELF-STUDY ENDING DATE)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Dr. Gary Steinke	Professor
Dr. Jerald Ogg*	Professor
Dr. Jeff Hoyer	Professor
Dr. Robert Nanney	Professor
Dr. Art Hunt	Associate Professor
Dr. Richard Robinson	Associate Professor
Dr. Teresa Collard	Assistant Professor
Dr. Tracy Rutledge	Assistant Professor
Dr. Chara Van Horn	Assistant Professor
Rodney Freed	Instructor
Tomi M. Parrish	Instructor
Stacy Freed	Lecturer

**Ogg, who had been a full-time Comm. Professor for 15 years, moved into full-time administration in Fall 2000, and currently is Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. He continues to teach one Communications course each fall.*

FULL-TIME FACULTY SPRING 2014 (AT TIME OF ON-SITE VISIT)

Name	Rank
Dr. Gary Steinke	Professor
Dr. Jeff Hoyer	Professor
Dr. Robert Nanney	Professor
Dr. Art Hunt	Associate Professor
Dr. Richard Robinson	Associate Professor
Dr. Teresa Collard	Assistant Professor
Dr. Tracy Rutledge	Assistant Professor
Dr. Chara Van Horn	Assistant Professor
Rodney Freed	Instructor
Tomi M. Parrish	Instructor
Stacy Freed	Lecture

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.)

We don't currently have part-time/adjunct faculty.

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
2012-2013 academic year	<u>39</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>100</u>
2011-2012 academic year	<u>38</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>100</u>

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 university has a mission statement with which it feels very comfortable:

The Department of Communications' mission is to provide students with a broadly based, hands-on education that gives them the opportunity to strengthen the skills fundamental to succeeding in a communications career or graduate study: writing, speaking and producing. These skills, combined with instruction in ethics, theory, law and modern professional practices, comprise a well-balanced preparation that will advance students in careers as professional communicators and enhance lifelong learning in the areas of News-Editorial, Broadcasting (Radio and Television), Public Relations and Media Design. To buttress that preparation, the faculty engage in professional scholarly and creative activities in order to stay current in this fast-changing field and to explore more effective ways to communicate to the masses. The Department also stresses the value and responsibility of student and faculty service to the campus, community and profession.

The mission statement emphasizes “hands-on” teaching in line with the overall mission of the university, but notes the value of conceptual courses as well. There is an expectation that the faculty will engage in “scholarly and creative activity.”

The department adheres to the university's strategic plan, but does not have one of its own and does not engage in any type of formal strategic planning. The department says that it will begin strategic planning during the next cycle.

Even though the unit does no structured strategic planning, it has moved proactively to take over vacated space in its building to expand the TV studios and has aspirations of beginning a master's program at some point.

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

The university's governance documents provide ample faculty governance opportunities for the department. The chair of the department reports to the Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. There are monthly faculty meetings. The entire faculty serves as the Curriculum Committee. Other committees are the Distinguished Alumni Award Committee, the

Broadcasting Committee, the Master's Degree Exploration Committee and the Scholarship Selection Committee.

(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 department chair is entering his 14th year. The current site visit is his third as chair. As with previous accreditation reviews, the chair continues to get high marks from the faculty who appreciate his exceptional dedication, his ability to get things done and his warm interpersonal style. Even the newest member of the faculty (an eight-year veteran) was a former student of the chair's, so everyone on the faculty is used to having worked together for many years. Faculty members are an extraordinary tight-knit group that feels the chair is a true servant-leader. As an outgrowth of that leadership, the dean says "the department functions and functions well."

The chair has recently served as chair of the Faculty Senate, which has enhanced his reputation further within the university. The chair got rave reviews for two presentations he made to the University of Tennessee system Board of Trustees as Faculty Senate chair. The chair is also heavily involved in civic affairs and is widely recognized within the university and the community.

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

The Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts evaluates the chair annually. Faculty members in the department have input into that evaluation. There is no set term for department chairs. Successful chairs at UTM typically serve for many years. The university's faculty handbook lays out a clear procedure for the hiring and evaluation of administrators.

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

The university has a written process for handling grievances. The department takes pride in its rapid and sensitive handling of complaints. The chair has set a high standard for promoting student satisfaction and sets an example by his ongoing efforts to communicate with both students and faculty. Exit interviews with graduating students have yielded important information that helps the chair keep his hand on the pulse of the department and respond to emerging issues.

Summary

The University of Tennessee-Martin (UTM) is the only four-year higher education institution in Northwestern Tennessee. It is one of four primary campuses in the University of Tennessee system. The other dozen-plus universities in the state and the community college system

reside in another system. Communication instruction began in the English department in 1972. The department was established in 1978. In the 1999-2000 academic year, the department became part of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts along with English, History/Philosophy, Modern Foreign Language, Music and Visual and Theater Arts.

The Department of Communications offers instruction in four sequences: Broadcasting, News-Editorial, Public Relations and Media Design. The department also offers a communications minor. In addition to teaching journalism and mass communication, the department teaches public speaking. There are 11 full-time members of the faculty, including the public speaking faculty. For purposes of this report, the public speaking curriculum and faculty will not be included.

A strength of the department is its able leadership by a long-serving chair who also is a graduate of the program. A former chair who is the university Provost also bolsters the leadership capability of the unit. The department has a strong sense of collegiality and shared governance.

COMPLIANCE

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

The unit provides a curriculum and instruction 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 80 semester credit hours or 116 quarter credit hours outside of the unit and a minimum of 65 semester credit hours or 94 quarter credit hours in the liberal arts and sciences (as defined by the institution) outside of the unit.

The Department of Communication was in compliance with the 80/65 rule and is currently in compliance with the rule requiring 72 hours outside the major.

(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. (If the unit has more than one sequence, evaluate each sequence.)

The unit has four sequences: Broadcasting (which includes production/management and performance journalism tracks), Media Design, News-Editorial and Public Relations with a total enrollment of 136 in fall of 2013. Another 24 students had not yet declared a sequence preference. Students typically declare a sequence in their sophomore year, but there is no deadline to do so.

The largest sequences are Broadcasting and Public Relations, which represent just over 80 percent of all students who have declared a preference. In the fall of 2013, Media Design and News-Editorial sequences had just 12 majors each among those students declaring a major. While the overall number of majors has been fairly stable, the number of students in the News-Editorial sequence dropped from the 20 reported in 2008. The Media Design sequence was created in 2012 to replace a Visual Communication sequence that was struggling to find students. While it is still very small, the number of majors has been slowly growing and its classes are popular electives for students in other sequences.

The department instituted a grammar exam in the spring of 2013 for students in the required News Writing class (Communications 200). Students are to successfully complete an online grammar module before they are allowed to take more advanced communications courses. While students are assigned the module as part of the class, no one has yet been held back for failing to complete it or performing poorly. Full implementation is to begin with the spring 2014 semester.

There is a minimum of 48 hours required in the major, up from a previous 42 hours. The change took place in the 2013-2014 catalog. In the News-Editorial sequence, where Basic Web Design was added, this served to increase the amount of digital media training students receive. Students are allowed four electives within each sequence, with particular classes being recommended for each sequence. Some elective classes are offered only once a year or once every other year.

The department offers a minor in communications and its students are required to complete a minor in another area of study. The department provides service courses for the university as a whole, including public speaking and interpersonal communications, which are a core requirement for a number of units, including education, agriculture and visual and theater arts.

All students, beginning in 2010-2011, take four core classes: Survey of Mass Media, Introduction to News Writing, Introduction to PR/Media Design and Introduction to Broadcasting. Students must complete these classes with a grade of "C" or better to move on in the program.

History of Mass Media is taught as an elective but is typically offered only once every other year. Students do get a basic grounding in communications history in the required core class Survey of Mass Media. Media law and ethics are combined into one class, with about two-thirds of the class time devoted to media law. Students typically take this class as seniors. Various aspects of ethics are covered in a number of other classes, including the core classes of Survey of Mass Media and News Writing. Additionally, a new course, "Communication in Professional Environments," is heavily focused on ethics and is required for both broadcast and public relations students.

Core classes are generally conceptual in approach. Students are exposed to the use of digital tools and technologies in subsequent classes. Three of the sequences – News-Editorial, Media Design and Broadcasting – all require courses that focus on developing digital and technological skills. Students in the Public Relations sequence are not required to take any classes that are primarily digital in orientation. One faculty member described the sequence as "strategy heavy." Faculty members say that students are strongly encouraged, however, to take electives that will help them develop digital skills and understanding.

All students are required to take a Senior Seminar during their last semester during which they prepare for their upcoming job searches. They practice interviewing techniques, prepare resumes and letters and create portfolios of their work in binders. There is no requirement to create online portfolios, but they are encouraged. Media Design students are required to create an online portfolio. The second focus of the seminar is to increase students' global awareness, with students undertaking a study of another country's communications systems.

A summary of each of the four sequences follows.

Broadcasting:

Students are offered two Broadcasting tracks: Production/Management and Performance/Journalism Track. The two tracks are the same except that students in the Production/Management track may take Communications in a Professional Environment instead of Broadcast Performance.

Combined, the two Broadcasting sequences are essentially equal in number of majors to that of the Public Relations sequence.

Most students completing these sequences desire a career in radio and television, emphasizing either on-air or production. Broadcast students are required to do three hours of a Practicum, which can be divided into three separate experiences for one credit each. Students may work at the student radio station, the public television station located on campus or at a commercial professional media outlet. Given the relatively small media market in northwestern Tennessee, faculty have been quite successful in placing students in the area adjacent to the university and in the three regional major media markets: Jackson, Miss.; and Memphis and Nashville, Tenn.

Some students have been able to move from internships into positions of full-time employment with these media organizations. Faculty proudly note that graduates hold important electronic media positions in the state and beyond.

The three full-time faculty responsible for the two broadcasting sequences receive high teaching evaluations, are enthusiastic about their involvement with students and often remain in touch with students after graduation. Students offered a glowing assessment of the time and effort faculty devote to student course work and future careers. Students are especially pleased with the previously documented departmental advising practice of any student being able to select any faculty member as their adviser.

Media Design

The Media Design sequence is an outgrowth of the Visual Communication sequence that existed during the last site team visit. On the surface, one might question why there is a need for a separate sequence that only serves a dozen or so majors. Yet the courses in the sequence act as a draw and a “melting pot” for the other three sequences. Courses like Principles of Design, Desktop Publishing and Basic Web Design have utility across the curriculum. At least 50 percent of the students who take media design courses are not majors in the sequence.

The sequence generally draws students with a visual acuity who also are interested in improving their digital skills. Students with an interest in graphics and photography are dominant. Another type of student would be one with an interest in computer science. The Advanced Media Design class, which gets into “back-end” digital areas that allow students to flirt with computer code and practice more advanced type of Web design, has had trouble drawing students and has not been offered every year even though it is a requirement for the sequence. According to the department chair, the course will be offered once a year going forward. In an emergency, students who need the course to graduate will be allowed to take it as an independent study.

Graduates have found jobs as photographers, graphic design specialist, agency creative directors and Web developers. Popular minors include Graphic Design, Computer Science and Information Management Systems. The few who do make the leap to a computer science minor enter the workforce with a highly marketable dual set of skills.

The sequence benefits from having a highly dedicated and enthusiastic young faculty member with strong design and digital skills. While she is a magnet for the program, three other faculty (from News-Editorial, PR and Broadcasting) teach in the sequence, so students get a variety of faculty and perspectives. The faculty have debated whether this area should be a sequence or a skill set, but they have concluded that they get dual value by having a specific area of concentration in this high-demand area plus having a reservoir of courses that students from other sequences can use as electives.

News Editorial:

In addition to their four core classes, students in the News-Editorial sequence must take an additional seven classes (21 hours) in the following: Advanced News Writing, Copy Editing and Design, Writing Features and Editorials, Basic Web Design, Photojournalism, Communications Law and Ethics; and a Senior Seminar that requires a portfolio. Students also must do a three-credit practicum that consists of work at a student publication – either the student newspaper or student magazine. Most students do not do internships for credit. Students minor in a variety of other areas; popular minors include English and Political Science.

Students in the News-Editorial sequence are exposed to a variety of software programs and digital tools after they have completed their core courses. They learn basic Web design and photography and are introduced to HTML, InDesign and Photoshop. Students are encouraged to take desktop publishing and media design as electives. Because there are few prerequisites, students also are able to take electives in other areas, including broadcasting.

Instructors have professional experience in the fields they teach and extensive classroom experience.

Students described their instruction as excellent. They said instructors are generally experienced, intelligent, relatable and patient. Their only complaints were that some courses aren't offered as often as they would like and that there are only two faculty with primary teaching duties in the sequence. They said the primary News Writing instructor, who also oversees student media and print internships, tends to be overwhelmed. However, they also understand that the size of the sequence (12 students) makes assigning more faculty difficult.

Public Relations

More than half the department's current declared students are majoring in the Public Relations sequence.

Building upon the theoretical and practical base gained in the seven courses required as a core curriculum for all communications majors, the public relations curriculum offers both theory and practice.

Specifically, the required public relations program comprises seven courses – including a Principles course, PR techniques, PR research, strategies, law and ethics and a senior seminar, plus an internship. In particular, the syllabus of the Principles course includes history of public relations, regulations, professional ethics, theory and economics.

The conceptual underpinnings and professional skills appear to be combined in a way appropriate to achieving the range of desired student competencies.

The public relations faculty was built with the intent of combining real-life experience with classroom excellence. The principal professors of the PR sequence have both a Ph.D. and substantial work experience in the PR field.

Up-to-date and effective teaching is the highest priority of the department and the university. Teaching effectiveness is measured through class evaluations. Course syllabi are clear and sufficiently comprehensive.

(c) Instruction is demanding and current; achievements in teaching and learning are recognized and valued. (If the unit has more than one sequence, address the quality of instruction by sequence.)

The department, like the university, places great emphasis on teaching and service to students. Faculty are evaluated each year by the chair with the greatest weight (60 percent) being given to teaching effectiveness. The same scale applies to departmental decisions on tenure and promotion.

Faculty also serve as academic advisers, supervise internships and act as mentors to students. Faculty interact with students well and are accessible and available, and they often go beyond

the call of duty to help their students.

Most faculty members are knowledgeable and adept at teaching and using current technological tools in the profession. A Media Design faculty member proficient in multiple digital technologies has helped the department keep up-to date. This faculty member, for example, spearheaded the purchase of 10 iPads that are housed in a portable cart and can turn a regular classroom into a lab. The department plans to purchase 10 more iPads for this use in the near future. Some courses would benefit from technological updating. The senior seminar, for example, does not require students to create online portfolios, other than in the Media Design Sequence, Core classes in PR/Media Design and News Writing, while introducing concepts such as social media and multimedia storytelling, do not employ them.

Students said most instructors keep up with changes in technology, even if it means learning from students. Some said they have taught themselves some technical skills, such as video shooting and editing, as News-Editorial classes do not include this training. Some said the Senior Seminar should be offered earlier than the last semester so they are ready for job searches or graduate applications well before graduation. They said the seminar would be more useful if students created online rather than paper portfolios and that they are not exposed to social media unless they take an elective Social Media Management class. Several suggested making that class mandatory instead of the Advanced News Writing class, which they described as an extension of their work on the student newspaper, with little new material being introduced.

Most course syllabi are detailed and comprehensive. A review of the department's teaching evaluations indicates high student ratings. Many faculty who administer evaluations consistently receive above a 4 on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the highest rating.

The number of University-wide teaching awards and award nominations won by the faculty is well out of proportion to the size of the faculty, further testimony to the high quality of teaching in the unit.

(d) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses; a student-teacher ratio of 15-1 in skills and laboratory sections is strongly recommended and the ratio in each section should not exceed 20-1.

The department is in compliance, with most skills classes numbering well under 20. Some skills classes are limited to 16 students because of the size of the computer lab. Students said some classes are as small as five or six students, and they sometimes wish classes were larger in order to facilitate discussion and interaction.

(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. (If the unit has more than one sequence, address the opportunities by sequence.)

The department has a full-time faculty member who supervises internships as part of her course load. Internship requirements vary by sequence. Internships are required for students in the Media Design and Public Relations sequences. However, students in News Editorial and Broadcasting do a Practicum, consisting of three hours of credit, typically for working in campus media.

In general, students who do internships for credit must be juniors or seniors in good standing and have completed all of their lower-division Communication courses as well as all of the core courses in their sequence. Internships may be completed before students take Communication Law and Ethics, which most students take in their final one or two semesters.

Students seeking internship credit enroll in Communications 475, a three-hour course. Students must complete 180 work hours during the semester in which they receive credit. Internships may be paying or non-paying, but are generally unpaid. Individual faculty members post internship and job openings on bulletin boards and email students who may be interested or qualified, but the department has no formal mechanism for notifying students of internships or jobs.

The department has clear guidelines and evaluative measurements for its internship program. Employers are screened and assign someone to supervise each student internship. Students are to do professional work rather than be passive observers. The student and the employer must sign a clear internship contract prior to the start of their internship that outlines the department's standards, meet with the faculty internship coordinator during the semester and file an end-of-the-semester report that assesses their experience. They receive a letter grade, based in part on an evaluation the department seeks from their internship employer and in part on the coordinator's review of work products produced by the students.

A cursory review of evaluations indicates a high level of satisfaction on the part of internship supervisors, with most supervisors recommending an overall grade of "A" for their interns. Students were generally praised for their work ethic, enthusiasm and general performance. One broadcast employer contacted separately by the accreditation team commented that all college journalism students need more work as news writers and storytellers but rated UTM communications interns on par with those from other academic institutions. One newspaper employer contacted by the team also gave the students high marks but said news editorial students need to have more multimedia skills and that the department doesn't leverage its relationship with the newspaper to place more interns.

The department makes other opportunities available to students to ensure they interact with professionals in the field. Some students do one-day, on-the-job experiences shadowing a cooperating media professional; some classes visit media outlets. Students in Communications 100 Survey of Mass Media class, the first class required of communications majors, are required to do a short (two-hour) externship and write a report.

News-Editorial students generally do not do internships for academic credit. Instead, they have a number of opportunities within the university to complete three-credit Practicums. Options include the award-winning student radio station, the public television station located on campus and the editorially independent student newspaper and student magazine. While students report good learning experiences in Student Media, the emphasis on practicums reduces the likelihood that students in these sequences will do professional internships.

News-Editorial students working on the student newspaper are under the direction of other students and are advised by a faculty member, who determines whether they receive a pass or fail for the semester. The only stated requirement for how students will be evaluated is that they will work 60 hours over the course of the semester and provide "qualitative contributions" to the newspaper.

As noted earlier, broadcast students may do a combination of professional internships and

work at student media.

The site visit team emailed a satisfaction survey to employers/supervisors of the department's PR interns. Almost every employer answered. This remarkable response rate reflects the employers' high regard for the UTM internship program and for the interns themselves. "They have provided quality students who are responsible and dependable," wrote one supervisor in a fairly typical comment. "The placement of interns is closely monitored," wrote another. A third proposed that the department provide instruction on office politics and etiquette. An employer in Memphis had issues with the fact that students can't get school credit during the summer. Better skills in writing, Excel and social media also appeared on the wish list.

Summary

The hands-on curriculum and abundant student media and co-curricular activities serve students well. Student satisfaction is high in all sequences. Faculty are sensitive to changes in the industry and implement changes when needed.

COMPLIANCE

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.**

The department follows the university's Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity policies as well as the university's hiring and retention guidelines for women and minority faculty. In addition, it has a clearly articulated plan on how to bring about increased female and minority representation and retention.

- (b) The unit's curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation.**

The department has one course – Intercultural Communication – devoted specifically to diversity. The elective is offered about every other year.

A review of syllabi and course materials for 12 courses, most of which are required, showed that the majority referred to diversity goals or included exercises or readings with diversity themes. Diversity is a specific and clear component of several of the classes, most notably News Writing, Copy Editing and Design, Communications in Professional Environments and the Senior Seminar.

Students interviewed said faculty are sensitive and responsive to diversity issues. Minority students said they are not bothered by the lack of racial diversity in the faculty and that they feel included and supported. One student with disabilities said the Communications faculty have gone out of their way to accommodate her – an experience she has not had in other departments.

Students said diversity comes up in some, but not all of their classes. Students did not display a sophisticated knowledge or awareness of domestic diversity issues. They were better versed on diverse issues from a global perspective. Global multiculturalism is covered in several classes, including PR/Media Design, Principles of Public Relations and the Senior Seminar.

Many faculty are actively engaged in projects, panels, seminars and research that center on diversity. One faculty member directs the UTM Women's Center, which organizes an annual symposium and brings speakers to campus, and coordinates the Women's Studies Minor for the university. She also co-created a Women Leading Locally Thinking Globally project for minority female students. Other faculty have given talks, presented case studies and written about women and politics and public relations and gender issues. Faculty members have

helped coordinate events for a Martin Luther King Jr. community celebration, taught PR in the Philippines, participated in a three-week multidisciplinary faculty research trip to Ecuador and served on the UTM Women's Center Advisery Board and the UTM Equity and Diversity Advisery Council.

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

Of the 11 full-time faculty members, none are minority. Eleven are Caucasian and five are female. The department has not had a faculty opening for the past eight years.

There are no adjuncts presently teaching courses in the major, although the department hired one adjunct, an African-American male, who taught for two years during the accreditation period before leaving to become a high school teacher.

The department has set goals to increase the number of female faculty to meet or exceed the female student population of 62.8 percent and to hire a minority faculty member within the next two years. To help bolster its chances of success, the department is utilizing a UTM "grow your own" faculty recruitment program: It has contracted with an African-American alumna, agreeing to cover the cost of her master's program. In exchange, she will teach for the department for at least four years.

(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 student population for West Tennessee, the area primarily served by UTM, is 52.9 percent Caucasian, 24.3 percent African-American, 1.4 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 0.7 percent American Indian/Alaskan native. The Department of Communications has a minority student population higher than that of both the region and the university. The department's minority student population is 27.8 percent compared to 22.4 percent university-wide.

The university-wide total for African-Americans is 16.3 percent, while the department's enrollment is 24.3 percent African-American. University enrollment is 1.6 percent Hispanic/Latino compared to the department's enrollment of 2.1 percent. Enrollment for other minority groups is negligible for both.

The department holds an annual career day for high school students, which attracts a number of minority students from Memphis, Nashville and surrounding areas, and faculty regularly participate in UT Martin Senior Days and Spring Preview Days, university-wide recruitment events. Some faculty provide training and services to high schools in the area, although there is no formalized high school outreach program. Alumni are encouraged to individually recruit

promising minority students. One particularly active alumnus who works in the radio market in Memphis recruits several dozen students – mostly African-American males – to the annual career day each year.

The department has established active chapters of Women in Communications and the National Association of Black Journalists.

Speakers from diverse backgrounds are invited to the school on a regular basis and student projects sometimes focus on diverse topics. For example, PR students designed a logo and public awareness campaign for a community residential and vocational training program for persons with developmental disabilities and the Web design class has created websites for minority-owned business and minority groups.

Retention of minority students appears to be close to the retention rate for all students at the university. The university's Office of Institutional Research reports that of seven minority freshmen entering the Communications major in 2006, four graduated – a graduation rate in line with the department's overall rate.

(e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and discrimination, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity.

The unit follows the university's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies. The university's Student Success Center provides assistance to students with disabilities and works with departments to determine appropriate accommodations.

One minority student brought a discrimination complaint against a faculty member two years ago, according to the department chair. The case, which involved a grade dispute, was handled by the university's diversity office and it was determined that the student's complaint lacked merit.

With a few exceptions, syllabi contain language on how students with disabilities can see accommodations. Public spaces are accessible to students with physical disabilities. Students reported no major issues or problems in this area.

Summary

The department has made a concerted effort to improve diversity even though it has had no faculty openings. Diversifying the faculty should remain a paramount priority. The department has a large, highly satisfied African-American population that is involved in all aspects of the program. There is evidence that many of the classes contain diversity-related content.

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.

The department has 11 full-time faculty; one full-time faculty – a full professor with 15 years of service to the department – became UTM's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in fall 2000. He teaches one course in the department each fall semester.

The following academic ranks and tenure status apply to the 11 full-time faculty, excluding the Provost:

Full Professor, Tenured	3
Associate Professor, Tenured	2
Assistant Professor, Tenure-Track	3
Instructor	2
Lecturer	1

The department has had almost no turnover, and there has not been a faculty opening for the past eight years. Full-time faculty members have an average of 15 years of teaching in this academic unit. A reflection of faculty loyalty to the program is the fact that four faculty members have undergraduate degrees from the department. Eight faculty members have doctorates.

The department has detailed written criteria for the selection and evaluation of faculty.

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

All courses in the unit are taught by full-time faculty. The Department of Communications does not use teaching assistants, part-time instructors or adjuncts for classroom teaching in the accredited program. Faculty and some adjuncts occasionally teach public speaking and related courses at satellite campuses.

- (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.**

UTM's primary mission is undergraduate education; it is not a research university. Full-time faculty members, regardless of rank, teach a 12-hour a semester load, 4 x 4 annually (with the possibility of some release time).

Most faculty are members of professional and scholarly associations, and faculty development opportunities are encouraged by the university and Department of Communications.

- (d) The unit regularly evaluates instruction, using multiple measures that include student input.**

The department follows the university-mandated process, permitting students to evaluate each class each semester. Given the high value placed on excellent teaching at the university-level, excellence in classroom instruction is essential for promotion to the next academic rank. For annual faculty evaluations, instruction has a weight of 60 percent. University policy allows tenured faculty who have received similar positive course evaluations over the course of three years to waive evaluations for a time. The policy states that faculty must be evaluated by students for one semester in each three-year period. Individual departments can require more frequent evaluations, although the department has not elected to do so. A number of Communications faculty do ask students to evaluate them more than the policy requires. For example, for the fall 2012 semester, six of 11 faculty administered student evaluations in the courses they teach. For fall 2013 and spring 2013, respectively, six of 11 and seven of 11 faculty members administered student evaluations in the courses they teach.

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

Unit faculty members are well respected on campus. They are known for their degree of involvement on campus committees and away-from-campus outreach initiatives. Many have professional media experience.

Previously noted is the fact that a professor in the unit has been the university's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs for several years. The unit chair was the university's Faculty Senate President for the 2013-2014 academic year and remains chairman of the university's Steering Committee for Strategic Planning.

Students mirror the involvement of faculty, leading student organizations, volunteering and otherwise contributing their communication knowledge and production to skills to the

university community and beyond.

Summary

The department has been able to attract and retain an experienced, dedicated full-time faculty that possess an appropriate blend of education and professional skills. Faculty offer an impressive amount of service time to the university and beyond.

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 last site team report noted that this standard was of concern and needed improvement. During the past six years, faculty have become much more active with research and professional-creative activities.

While productivity is far less than that at a research-oriented institution, it reflects the institution's 4 x 4 teaching load. University and college-level incentives have helped increase productivity. During the past six years, media-oriented faculty members in the department have received 19 internal grants and three external grants. Their productivity table lists 49 articles, 52 conference papers, 42 non-juried creative works, one scholarly book, one textbook and three book chapters. It was difficult for the site team to evaluate all of the faculty work because there was ambiguity in what was refereed and non-refereed and whether a large amount of scholarship done by one of the public speaking faculty members who has on occasion taught a mass comm course should be included. Nonetheless, productivity seemed to be higher than in the last review.

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

Given the high faculty teaching loads, the university does not specify scholarly and creative targets for faculty to be promoted or tenured. However, research and professional activity accounts for 20 percent of annual faculty evaluations; it plays an important role in the process of evaluation for promotion and tenure.

(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 department takes a broad view of scholarly and professional work. Faculty outreach to the community via seminars, talks and professional involvement are expected and valued. Given the time constraints under which faculty work, the department employs faculty who find the time to undertake projects that reflect their professional and academic interests.

- (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.**

During this accreditation period, faculty members have been active in presenting research and creative work in the state of Tennessee and beyond. They also have attended conferences and created video presentations, usually with the assistance of students, for the university, historical organizations and non-profit groups.

The university does not permit sabbatical leaves. In fact, no faculty at state institutions of higher learning are allowed sabbaticals by state law. There is, however, a UT system program that awards a very limited number of paid leaves, although no Communications faculty have been awarded these leaves over the past six years.

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

Faculty members are especially congenial and respectful toward each other, supporting and celebrating the differences each brings to the department. In fact, working-together-for-the-students is a campus-wide hallmark of the Department of Communications. The director works diligently to foster an atmosphere of cooperation, collaboration and intellectual curiosity.

Summary

Scholarly and creative productivity is appropriate for an institution whose primary mission is high-quality undergraduate education. Faculty teach four courses a semester with few opportunities for a one-course reduction.

COMPLIANCE

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.

Unique to the university, students choose their advisers; there are no pre-assigned advisers. All faculty participate, providing both academic and career counseling. A specific, concentrated time period at the middle of each semester is reserved for student advising, during which faculty are available to see any student. Students, faculty members and other department heads interviewed praised the accessibility and effectiveness of this advising system. In fact, the UTM student government at one point petitioned that the Communications advising model be adopted campus-wide, but the suggestion was not accepted.

The university's computer system does not allow a student to register for classes until the adviser removes an advisory hold, lifted only after the student has been advised. Students uniformly said they were aware of unit and institutional requirements. The university's online registration and record-keeping system allows students to securely access their own records online, verify accuracy and track progress to graduation.

Advising is rightly considered a strength of the department.

(b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

Students interviewed praised the faculty's accessibility and supportiveness. The site team verified that faculty members have posted office hours in addition to published telephone numbers and email addresses. Faculty frequently pass along their cell phone numbers to students. Faculty offices are conveniently located. Many faculty members are also accessible as advisers to student organizations, professional associations and clubs.

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

Because the number of students is not large and because the department's offices, classrooms and common areas are located compactly and in close proximity, bulletin boards and posted notices function effectively as communications vehicles. These notices inform students regarding internships, jobs, department updates, speakers, study abroad and organizational news.

Several students commented that they would prefer that job and internship notices be posted electronically on a school Facebook page or in an electronic newsletter periodically emailed to all students.

By using the university's group email system, the department can reach every student in every class. Department staff sends emails regularly to students as need dictates. The department chair sends daily emails to faculty, for dissemination to students as appropriate. The team was informed that students can follow UTM activities on Twitter and YouTube. Most professors use Blackboard and find it effective.

Overall, students report that they felt very well informed.

(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.

Student media, housed in and overseen by the department, are active and of high caliber. In 2012, the student radio station was named "Best in the Nation" for schools of all sizes by the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System and in 2013 was named among the top five nationally. The station has been chosen "Best in the South" in five of the past six years. The student weekly newspaper also has been named in the Top 10 in the South by the Southeast Journalism Conference. Students also gain experience at WLJT, the PBS station for western Tennessee, which is housed on university property.

The relevant professional organizations for students appear to be active and robust. These include Society of Professional Journalists, Broadcasting Guild, Public Relations Student Society of America, National Association of Black Journalists, Women in Communications and Media Design Club. In 2013 the PRSSA chapter was selected UTM Student Organization of the Year, in a competition among 157 campus organizations.

(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.

At both departmental and university levels, the institution maintains appropriate records on enrollment, retention and graduation rates. Retention rates appear to be typically in the 70 percent to 80 percent range. According the dean of the department's college, the university's graduation rates are the second highest in the University of Tennessee system and the department's rate, nearing 50 percent, is among the highest at UTM and continues to improve. The site team verified that clear and accurate graduation and retention data is publicly available on the department's section of the university's website.

The university's standard for academic good standing is a cumulative 2.0 on a 4.0 scale and the department follows that standard.

Summary

The department's advising process is outstanding and is recognized as such throughout the campus. Students are kept informed. Graduation and retention data appear to be in order and publicly accessible. Overall, student services are appropriate to the university's mission and to the region it serves.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

The unit plans for, seeks and receives adequate resources to fulfill and sustain its mission.

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.

University budgets have been tight the past few years, but the central administration has been able to modulate the impact through use of stimulus money initially and through conservative fiscal management more recently. The result has been that the department has not been impacted negatively.

Each year, the university assigns a budget allocation to the department via the college. The departmental budget includes payroll for full-time faculty, clerical and technical staff. It also includes allocations for equipment, supplies and travel. A number of items are budgeted university-wide, including equipment and building maintenance personnel, and library and information services. The unit administrator and faculty characterize allocation of services and equipment funded at the university level as fair and even favorable to the unit.

Since 2010-11, when the department's budget was \$915,780, its allocations have increased. In 2012-13, the budget was \$978,751, a considerable increase from the prior year. For the 2012-13 self-study year, the total budget was \$1,003,542. The university is expecting a five percent budget reduction next year, but the university believes that it can absorb the cuts without having to impact the academic departments.

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

University allocations to the department have reflected or slightly exceeded the enrollment and faculty size ranking of the unit among university academic programs. Department administrators and faculty agree that the allocation of services funded by the university have been fair.

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

The department occupies much of the second and third floors of Gooch Hall, a structure that houses a variety of other college programs. The broadcast facility is on the second floor of the building. The team was highly impressed with the condition of the building and the way the facilities are maintained. The department takes great pride in its facilities and understands that they are critical to its mission.

Through a grant of stimulus money, the unit has been able to convert its television facilities to high definition. A second studio is being expanded and renovated since another department moved from Gooch Hall. Also on the second floor are radio and recording studios as well as the student 200-watt FCC-licensed radio station, WUTM-FM. The award-winning station is entirely student-operated and is on the air 24-hours per day with the aid of sophisticated automation equipment during late night and early morning hours.

This remodeling and expansion has helped transform facilities once housed in a crowded space into more suitable work and production spaces. The university recognizes the importance of the department's audio and video production facilities, allocating approximately \$300,000 two years ago for digital, high-definition television and audio equipment. The funds were wisely invested in a state-of-the-art facility.

The third floor includes offices for the department chair and administrative staff, faculty offices, classrooms and a reading room.

The university has a mandated \$55 per semester technology fee for all students. This has helped the department create and maintain a sophisticated classroom/lab with 18 Apple iMac computers utilizing MS Office 2011 for Mac, Adobe Creative Suite 5, Adobe Lightroom, and Soundslides. All departmental classrooms are "smart classrooms," equipped with overhead projectors and sound equipment.

(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.

There is adequate equipment and facilities to support faculty and student instruction, research and creative activities.

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

In addition to the university library, the department has a modestly stocked reading room that the accrediting team used as a workroom.

Summary

The UTM's Department of Communications has not only weathered the post-2008 recession but has in fact modestly prospered. Special allocations for radio and television equipment have helped the department update and replace old analog with digital equipment as well as renovate and expand radio, television and digital photography studios.

COMPLIANCE

PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service

The unit and its faculty advance journalism and mass communication professions and fulfill obligations to its community, alumni and the greater public.

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.**

Based on both pre-visit and on-campus discussions with alumni and local professionals, it is clear that the department cultivates positive, productive relationships with many organizations and individuals. These relationships serve to keep the department current on developments that bear on curriculum development.

Additional coverage of the department's communications with its alumni appears at Standard 9 (d).

- (b) The unit provides leadership in the development of high standards of professional practice through activities such as offering continuing education, promoting professional ethics, evaluating professional performance and addressing communication issues of public consequence and concern.**

Faculty members are commendably involved in many programs that raise standards of professional practice and address communications issues of public importance. The faculty and the department partner with such organizations as the Tennessee Associated Press, Tennessee Press Association and other local and regional media organizations in promoting professional standards. The chair has been a member of the Tenn. Press Association's Journalism Education Committee for more than 20 years.

- (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 members are active in the appropriate professional organizations that span the four sequences in the department. These include the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, Radio and Television News Directors Association, Broadcast Education Association, Public Relations Society of America, Public Relations Educator Academy, Society of Professional Journalists, Phi Kappa Phi and many others.

(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.

The community service of the department, faculty and students runs deep across the campus, the county and the region. Service projects provide time and expertise to a myriad of organizations, including United Way, Habitat for Humanity, Ken-Tenn Youth Orchestra and Community Development Services.

Student service is promoted through the department's support of the student professional associations, often providing fund-raising help to area non-profits.

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

As northwestern Tennessee's principal journalism resource, the department demonstrates a commitment to assist in the growth and development of high school media. Each fall the department hosts the Communications High School Visit Day. This full-day workshop brings together high school students and advisers from the region for workshops related to all four of the department's sequences.

For more than 20 years, the department chair has taught in a prestigious four-week immersion program in which high school students from across the state produce their own newspaper.

Summary

The department's substantial record of service to the profession and the public has been nurtured and sustained over time. Its representatives are prominent in university leadership. Its faculty are deeply involved in the community. Service is signature characteristic of the department.

COMPLIANCE

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.

Since the last site team visit, the department has incorporated the Council’s professional values and competencies into its assessment process. It lists the values and competencies in its plan and provides specific learning outcomes for them.

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

The department uses three direct and one indirect measure for its learning outcome assessment. The direct measures are:

1. A pre-test/post-test in the beginning writing class to ascertain improvement in writing, style and grammar.
2. An employer evaluation of the internship experience.
3. A senior portfolio required in the senior seminar course.

The indirect measure is:

1. Student awards evaluation

The department has a senior exit interview that appears to be particularly productive in getting feedback on the curriculum, advising and other issues. It would be a valuable indirect assessment measure if included in their assessment plan.

These individual measures need to be linked to different competencies for the department to know whether these competencies are being met through the curriculum.

(c) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction.

Since the last review, the department has established four clear assessment measures and has established numerical evaluations for the three direct measures. What it has not done is develop a means to interpret the quantitative scores that it collects. It also does not break the overall scores into component parts according to the competences. All of the discussion in the assessment section of the self-study is related to numerical scores. For example, there is no insight on the content contained in the senior portfolios that might help faculty assess whether learning objectives were being met or that might feed back into curricular discussion. Likewise, the internship evaluations contain no evidence that the department is learning

anything specific from the cumulative employer feedback. Furthermore, it is not clear how the scores on the writing exam are being used in broader discussions.

If the faculty do not extract more from these measures, they cannot relate results to particular competencies and cannot use the data for improvement. For example, how do they determine whether competencies for history, ethics, numerical competency, etc., are being met without gleaning information regarding them from the assessment measures they have chosen? The senior portfolio and the internship evaluation could be more valuable if the faculty would assess these with an eye towards specific strengths and weaknesses that might emerge. It would also offer them a better opportunity to relate their findings to the ACEJMC values and competencies.

One question that arose during the site visit was whether PR students were getting the digital skills they need for employment if there is no required class in the sequence. Presumably, most students are taking digital design courses as their electives. How often is that the case? Do the portfolios and internship evaluations show proficiency for most students? What about with students who haven't taken the elective courses? The faculty have the means to answer these questions through the assessment process but have not developed the process to a high enough level to benefit from it.

At this point, the requirements of the portfolio packet seem too onerous on the students in light of the anemic returns for the faculty and the department. While the portfolio requirements talk about a student's "best work," the 13 examples given for inclusion in a portfolio imply that quantity is as important as quality. The individual sequence faculty might be in a better position to evaluate portfolios if students in that sequence were including fewer items but those specifically related to obtaining employment in their specialty. There is uncertainty among students about what is required and little understanding of why this exercise might be valuable to improve the curriculum and student experience. Likewise, the faculty are not extracting enough insight from the portfolios to justify the students' efforts.

In fairness to the communication faculty, the culture regarding assessment at UTM has not been particularly strong. The latest university review from the regional accreditor cited assessment as a major weakness. The dean understands that units under her "have to use data better than we are collecting." There is no evidence to suggest that Communication is doing any worse than any other department. Plus, the chair, who is tasked with the assessment responsibility, has a plate that is overflowing with responsibilities. The department has not made as much progress on assessment as ACEJMC might expect, but it has put a structure in place that with further development could yield valuable data for program improvement. As a practical matter, the faculty is so small, close-knit and collegial that information circulates freely among them, providing an ongoing, informal feedback loop.

The dean agrees that the chair should not have to bear the whole burden of assessment coordination and is amenable to providing release time for a faculty member to be assigned this responsibility and having a consultant help the department with strengthening the

feedback loop by showing faculty how to do a more useful evaluation of the measures.

(d)The unit maintains contact with its alumni to assess their experiences in the professions and to provide suggestions for improving curriculum and instruction.

The department no longer publishes a written newsletter or distributes an e-newsletter to its alumni. It does maintain a Facebook page that 641 alumni have joined. For special events, the department sends an e-mail to alumni. Recently, the department added a new alumni Facebook site to post job openings, which has 300 members. The department reports that it has e-mail addresses for a majority of its alumni. Most reside in Western Tennessee.

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

The department's advisory board meets on campus annually and stays in contact via Facebook and e-mail during the rest of the year. The board has made recommendations regarding curriculum. Specifically, the department created a portion of the Senior Seminar class for job preparation in response to the advisory board and created the special topics course Social Media Management. The board had indicated that students need not only do social media well but need to know how to manage it. The chair notes that the class was well received and will be added to the curriculum during the next academic year. Intern evaluations come directly from professionals. There is no evidence that professionals are involved in the evaluation of portfolios.

Summary

Learning outcomes assessment has progressed since the department was found out of compliance during the last site team visit. The department has tied its assessment to the Council's values and competencies and has developed three direct measures and one indirect measure. Yet, its assessment plateaued at that point. The faculty use of senior portfolios and intern evaluations from employers goes no farther than attaching a numerical ranking. The department does not have a process for gleaning qualitative meaning from these measures that might strengthen the feedback loop. There was no evidence presented in the self-study that demonstrate how direct evaluation of student work yielded much useful information. A non-compliance on this standard should not be interpreted as neglect of this area by the leadership or faculty. Important progress has been made. The Council's rising expectations mandate that units be engaged in a cycle of continuous improvement.

Non-Compliance

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths

- A student-centered environment throughout.
- Veteran, highly dedicated, collegial and effective faculty.
- Quality, well-maintained facilities with modern technology.
- Supportive university administrators of a highly respected program.
- Strong departmental leadership and high visibility across campus.

Weaknesses

- Underdeveloped assessment program that does not provide an effective feedback loop for improvement.
- Lack of faculty diversity.
- No strategic planning being done at the department level.
- Research/creative activity, while improved, remains a concern.

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

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 department should find additional ways to extract information from its assessment measures that can be fed into the faculty dialog. The department should consider making its existing exit interviews an indirect measure and find ways to measure the non-skills areas of the curriculum.

The department should have made tangible progress in diversifying its faculty.

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

N/A

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.**

“The unit must bring its assessment plan into conformity with the ACEJMC’s requirements. Specifically, it must measure student learning of the 11 Professional Values and Competencies both directly and indirectly, and it must adopt a systematic approach to using assessment data to improve curriculum and instruction”

The department has succeeded in the first requirement by incorporating the values and competencies into its plan and implementing direct and indirect measures. It still has some distance to go to use those measures effectively. The department may want to consider breaking its data into smaller units by sequence and adding a qualitative assessment to interpret the numerical ratings it assesses. The unit should address its assessment of non-skill competencies.

- 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 presented a solid view of the department and provided information in all of the required areas. The assessment section was lacking in important details of the process. There were some errors in the self-study, but the department was quick to correct them once the site team alerted the chair.